

Sor presas y sorpresas. Selección y cotidianidad monacal durante la Nueva España

Surprises and Secluded Nuns. Selection and Ordinariness. Monachal during the New Spain

Sou prisioneira e surpresa. Seleção e vida diária monástica durante a Nova Espanha

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Resumen

Los testimonios monacales presentan muchas sorpresas. La vida monacal en México durante la época novohispana iniciaba con la selección discriminatoria de acuerdo a las castas sociales. Eran pocas las monjas que podían tener cargos importantes e incluso llegar a ser las iluminadas. Las confidencias escritas por las monjas muestran desde lo cotidiano, las riñas, bromas, mentiras, tormentos, pasando por lo espiritual de los estados de éxtasis, hasta llegar a los encuentros íntimos con Dios. En estos encuentros íntimos sobresalen los senos como un medio por el cual se consigue la unión perfecta.

Palabras clave: cotidianidad, escritura monjas, estados de éxtasis. Nueva España.

Abstract

The monachal testimonies present many surprises. Monachal life in Mexico, during the era of the New Spain, used to begin with the discriminatory selection of people depending on their social caste. There were few nuns who could hold important positions or even get to be enlightened. The written confidences of the nuns show from the ordinary, like the quarrels, the jokes, the lies, the torments, to the spiritual matters of the states of ecstasy, and even the intimate encounters with God. In these intimate encounters, breasts stand out as the way of getting the perfect union.

Keywords: ordinariness, writing, nuns, states of ecstasy, New Spain.

Resumo

Os testemunhos monásticos apresentam muitas surpresas. A vida monástica no México durante a era da Nova Espanha começou com seleção discriminatória de acordo com as castas sociais. Havia poucas freiras que podiam ocupar posições importantes e até mesmo se tornar esclarecidas. As confissões escritas pelas freiras mostram do cotidiano, as brigas, as piadas, as mentiras, os tormentos, atravessando os estados espirituais de êxtase, até chegar a encontros íntimos com Deus. Nestes encontros íntimos, os peitos se destacam como um meio pelo qual a união perfeita é alcançada.

Palavras-chave: cotidiano, religiosas, estados do êxtase. Nova Espanha.

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Introduction

During the New Spain era, the difficult situation of women in society caused the creation of royal ordinances to avoid abuses towards them; and in order to comply with the laws, several spaces were created in New Spain that were offered as a refuge for women, among which were the beaterios, the convents and the recollections or houses for collections. The selection of the women so that they could enter the convents was somewhat discriminatory and the majority depended on the social castes. There were also slave women destined to serve in the convents. Among the reasons that women had to decide to enter a convent was the desire to get away from society or poverty, as well as, in the case of widows or some single women, the desire to flee from marriage, from servitude and of the violations.

The types of writings performed by the nuns of New Spain were diverse, namely, chronicles, epistles, theater and biographies (including lives and intimate diaries). From the biographies written by some of the nuns have been rescued interesting plots, such as those related to lies, almost always for the convenience of the convent; There are also lawsuits between the nuns themselves: fights for bread and the jokes that were made between them. They highlight the interesting monastic writings in which the nuns, in their states of ecstasy, relate to be tempted by the devil, including the stories in which they claimed to suffer torments and have visions of the other world, as well as conversations with the Virgin Mary and her direct communication with God.

Method

The methodology used in the present work is the hermeneutical analysis and linguistic approaches for the study of the intimate diaries of the nuns, taking into account the historical context of the New Spain era.

Discussion

In the New Spain era, the behavior of women, according to Josefina Muriel, was controlled by men; they were committed at 7 years of age, could marry them after 12 years of age, and at 25 they reached the age of majority, but they were denied the ability to make decisions before society (1992, p.315).

To avoid the abuse of women by the Spaniards, there was the Ordinance for the government of the Indians of 1546, which prohibited women from kneading bread or working in mines, being enslaved and being marked with irons. Likewise, polygamy, adultery and amancebamiento were condemned (Muriel, 1992, pp. 318-323). Despite this, there were girls who were known as:

Natural illegitimates, daughters of single men and women; and illegitimate spies, daughters of adulterers, of public women, of barraganas, of clerics, friars or nuns, and incestuous [...]. In order for an illegitimate girl to profess as a nun was required to ask for pontifical dispensation (Muriel, 1992, p. 316).

To protect women from abuses in New Spain, different spaces were created where they could take refuge during the colonial era, among which were the girls' schools, which were spaces that focused on "the specific problem of education." female in its different aspects of attention to indigenous people, mestizas, criollas and Spanish "(Muriel, 2004, p.33). There were also the beaterios, composed of single women and widows who lived in recollection "separated from society and dedicated to prayer [...] and ran schools for girls" (Thomas, Alcántar and Flores, 2010, p.22). Another space was formed by the convents, which were integrated by two types of nuns, some were the "religious roads [...] with particular cells that had dormitory, living room and kitchen, they were dedicated to the education of the girls, they had maids and slaves , [...] and [the] Discalced religious who lacked all of the above and dedicated themselves to prayer "(Thomas et al., 2010, p.23). Also, there was a space named as the recollections (also called houses for collections). These were spaces of their own "for poor women, prostitutes and widows [...] they were a way of access to cloistered and religious ways of life" (Lavrin, 2002, pp. 544-545). From the

recollections it is known that "they established themselves as houses of correction [...], [lived] in the greatest poverty and in ruinous buildings" (Thomas et al., 2010, p.24). Regarding the recollections, Muriá, in Brief History of Jalisco, notes that they closed "their doors [...] for the scandals that involved church leaders who took advantage of those held" (Muriá, cited by Thomas et al., 2010, p.24).

To choose the novices who would enter the convents of Mexico during the New Spain era, whose founders were nuns brought from Spain, there was a discriminatory selection of the nuns that would make up the monastic life. The choice was made according to the social castes: there were creoles, blacks and Indians. Not all could have important positions or become enlightened. Some complied with the work of giving orders and others assumed the obligation to obey them. There were nuns who had slaves and others who were treated as slaves. "In New Spain and even in independent Mexico, most of the nuns were daughters of 'good families' Spanish and Creole" (Lagarde, 2003, 543). The poorest entered the convents as servants of the nuns (Lavrín, 2002, p.545). The Indians could not enter the convents because they were considered pagan; For them Fray Juan de Zumárraga, towards 1530, installed schools, whose result "was the transformation of pagan girls into Christian women" (Muriel, 2001a, p.35). Separate place occupied Indian noble, called Indian caciques.

The daughters of the caciques began to be educated in the girls' schools by Spanish teachers as early as 1526 [...], starting in 1540 with the establishment of the first nunnery, the Convento de la Concepción, [created for the legitimate daughters of the conquerors], were the daughters of Isabel Moctezuma [...] granddaughters of the emperor (Muriel, 2001a, p. 38).

Isabel and Catalina Moctezuma were accepted "for their good health, to know how to read and write and to handle the numbers, together with a juicy dowry of four thousand pesos" (Sagaón, page 760). "And there were also [...] the descendants of the Emperor Cuauhtémoc" (Muriel, 2001a, p.38). In addition, Muriel points out, that the daughters of caciques from other places in Mexico, such as Tlajomulco, Michoacán, Metepec and San Juan Teotihuacan, also entered that Convent of La Concepción. And in the year of 1727, Benedict XIII confirms the provision that the Corpus Christi convent be exclusive to Indian caciques (Muriel, 2001a, pp. 38-43).

In the history of the conquest of the province of New Galicia, by Mota Padilla (1870), when writing the names of the nuns who occupied the Beguinage of Jesus Nazareno, that later was transformed into the Convent of Santa María de Gracia, says:

and a brunette who could only differentiate in color; but it was of equal virtue and perseverance, with which from his childhood he accompanied the others on the path of perfection, and is [...] one of those that have been appreciated by the bishops Garavito, Galindo and Olivera, as they also did of another brunette and two Indians, who were called Manuela de San Felipe y Regia, the current one is María de San Miguel (Mota, 1970, p. 415).

There were other women who did not enter the convents as nuns but as slaves in the company of other nuns or for serfdom of the convent. In a testament of the year 1590, in Guadalajara, among the goods delivered by Doña Ana Manrique is "a bold girl named Juana, a Creole, aged eight years [...] who is in the monastery of Nuestra Señora de Gracia in this city, in the company of the said minor daughters [...] who are in said monastery "(Gutiérrez, 2003, p 41). And in the testament of the year 1755, Doña María Isabel Zertucha, to enter as a nun to the Convent of Santa Mónica, gives a mulatto and her three children (Gutiérrez, 2003, p.303).

There were 61 monastic convents in New Spain and about 400 women, including nuns, maids, slaves and educated girls (Muriel, 1992, pp. 134 and 152). "Having a private maid and cell were cases that did not include the dowry and that competed with the nuns with ample economic resources" (Muriel, 2004, page 181). In this regard, Elisa Luque, cited by Josefina Muriel, writes that, in the year of 1775, King Carlos III gave the royal order with which he "ordered the departure of all the girls and maids of the convents" (Muriel, 2004. p.42).

As a recapitulation it can be said that one of the options of life that the women of the New Spain era had was to enter the convent. Among those who entered the convents were those women who "sought to distance themselves from society [...] those who could not marry because they did not have a good dowry [...] widows [...] and also married women whose husbands mutually agreed to profess friars "(Muriel, 1992, p.131). Other reasons to enter the convent, points out Marcela Lagarde (2003), were to avoid marriage, servitude and rape (in the great majority perpetrated by their own relatives), as well as to flee from themselves (Lagarde, pp. 531-549). The latter carried the guilt and sin of having been dishonored.

Results

Aspects of daily life reported in the writings of the nuns

The types of writings that the nuns did consisted mainly of chronicles, epistles and biographies (including lives and intimate diaries). It is known that they also wrote plays, although none of them is preserved. The chronicles were written clearly, simply and truthfully, with the intention of leaving testimony of the history of the cloisters. These chronicles began by relating the litigation and the personalities that influenced the creation and construction of the convents, the scope of the founding mothers and the records of each of the nuns who entered. The biographies, on the other hand, were written in which they documented the life of some other nun or about themselves. In these biographies, often expressed in the form of binnacles, you can perceive the personality of the nun who wrote them, their fears, their longings, their visions and their direct contacts with God. The nuns "do not write to publish, but for the intimacy of the convent" (Muriel, 1992, p.151), the theme of Hispanic American female prose had its greatest development in mysticism (Ibidem, p.16) and the theme of the world indigenous rarely appears in the writings (Ibidem, p.151).

The confidences written by the nuns contain a willing order, they show compositions that start counting the everyday as their childhood and details of their life before entering the convent. They go on to discuss aspects of their behavior in the convent. Usually the convents were presented as centers of peace and harmony, but there is no lack of the nun who dared to tell about the altercations within it, cases like throwing the loaves of bread in the face, cases like lying for a supposedly common good and cases of jokes between nuns.

Some examples of this type of anecdotes can be found in the spiritual Diary of Sister María de Jesús Felipa, professed nun of the Convent of Saint John of Penance, of the Franciscan Order, located in the neighborhood of San Juan de Moyotla in Mexico City. . Of this convent, precisely, there is a legend that is very illustrative about it. This account that the day the messenger died there was no one to bring the corn and Sr. Leonor, prayerful and merciful, devoted to the souls of purgatory, approached the corpse and whispered "get up to serve the sisters"; nobody saw anything, but later the corn appeared in the oven (Mc Cartney, 2009, p.1).

One of the anecdotes in the Intimate Diary of Sister María de Jesús Felipa is one in which lies are used to hide the scandals in the convent. In an event in which the prelate arrives to make a "very delicate visit" to the convent, the wet ones have everything to lie to him. Sister María de Jesús Felipa, in complicity with the parish priest of the convent, advised the nun that she would be the one examined, saying:

that if the prelate examined it, as they do, of the defects and faults that he had seen, both in the choir and in the convent, he would close the door with telling him that, as a newly professed, he understood nothing more than learning the virtues of all; who has not seen anything against the Rule and Constitutions (Lavrin, 2002, p. 150).

Another anecdote found in this same newspaper is that of the war of the loaves. In this case, Sister María de Jesús Felipa gave a means (which was a type of currency) to one of the porters of the convent to buy her bread, but it happened that

they brought me a cake that did not fit me [...]. The companion jumped, telling me with great anger that she had sent him; What a funny thing it had been [...]. He snatched my bread and threw it with more violence provoking me [...]. "Because of who she is, Ana Rita should not have thrown the bread in my face." [...] The fact that they treat me is strength because I serve the community (*Ibidem*, pp. 154-155).

The jokes also pay to this type of anecdotes, as is the case of a burlesque incident, in which Sor María de Jesús Felipa, who was afraid of all the animals, comes to help bathe one of the compañeras, which, pointing to the bottom of the tub, he says:

—Look what he has.

I put my hand [...] and the Lord revived my sight so I would not run into a turtle that I had. At the time I saw her I felt the horror that God only contained my natural evil so that not seeing any respect I would say some regret (*Ibidem*, pp. 152-153).

The results that caused this type of altercations with the other nuns, that caused so much sorrow to the nun Sister María de Jesús Felipa, moved to the occasion so that inverse feelings surfaced in her and she felt tempted by the devil. Precisely, after the joke of the turtle, when she takes refuge alone in her cell, she writes: "The imagination fanned me with a kind of sins, which seemed true to me" (*Ibidem*, p. 154). In the same way, after the war of the loaves, the nun Sor María de Jesús Felipa is assaulted by bad thoughts, and in this regard points out:

I was successful, and as bad as I am, I was happy. [...] The Lord vanishes the occasions with which the enemy moves these things, which are for a fiery and Luciferian natural as mine, very aware of his malice pulling me to lose patience and unload what my natural begs right. (*Ibidem*, pp. 155-156).

The presence of the devil occupies an important place in the conventual writings. The nuns considered the chosen ones were the only ones who could speak of spirituality, who constantly took on the task of measuring forces between God and the devil. Some nuns confess to having had opportunities to express their virtues as seers or as visionaries of the other world. In these spiritual writings of the chosen nuns there is the memory of the sinful nun, the sanctified nun and the redeemed nun, to later act as mediators between good and evil; some nuns of being simply mediators, manipulating religious discourse in their favor, become supplanters of divine activities. Sister Maria de Jesus Felipa writes that when she speaks with God, she assures him that he bears all the sins of his companions, just as Jesus carried the sins of the world: "As you know, I have communicated to you your crimes, which you have thrown on slopes "(*Ibidem*, p.134).

And Sister María de Jesús Felipa, who by divine favor knows the faults that pertain to her companions, worried about the repeated harmful temptations that afflict the nuns, asks God for the following:

Let him take from the devil the strength he has taken, for he can destroy it by setting fire to souls, and especially in his wives and ministers and in others, that there are many who apply themselves to surrender to his love (*Ibidem*, p.129).

Sister María de Jesús Felipa, in her Intimate Diary, also describes the stories of torments and visions of the other world. In this regard, he says he feels sorry to see his own body abused, but he is comforted by the knowledge that this sacrifice is the means to get close to God.

The body has its exercise very good [...] for what I usually feel is because I can not serve to [...] increase them to my ailment [...] there is self-mortification mortified [...] for what the flesh looks at, it is an accident that I fear , just to mention it I am devastated. (*Ibidem*, p. 137).

Sister María de Jesús Felipa longs for the martyrs described to save her from falling into anguish, since she claims to possess the benevolence of God to have visions of what rules the other world.

I was looking, on the other hand, at the anxieties, temptations and agonies of those who walk to the next world [...]. Casting the demons of the dying [...]. And it did not stop causing me horror that violent noise of noises and frightful voices. (*Ibidem*, pp. 129-130).

In their writings, the nuns describe themselves as enemies of themselves, they see themselves as incapable and weak beings that live as prey inside the convent. "Despite the credibility of the woman [...] there is someone who escapes the belief and faith of the woman, someone in whom she has no confidence, someone in whom she can not believe: she is herself" (Lagarde, 2003 , p.312). The author Lagarde, in addition, indicates it with an epigraph that heads the reasons to be nun, and that comes from the text Response to Sister Philothea of the Cross of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. The caption reads: "I thought that I had fled from myself, / But miserable of me, bring me with me / And I brought my greatest enemy in this inclination" (Cruz, 1989, p.827).

An affair similar to that of Sor Juana, is presented by Sr. María de Jesús Felipa. In a conversation he has with the Virgin Mary, she replies: "Freeing you from my pity of yourself, which is the cruelest enemy that you have as an earthly creature" (Lavrin, 2002, p.122).

Nuns who write intimate diaries are often very strict with themselves. As it shows the phrases that Sister María de Jesús Felipa uses to refer to herself: "I am the land that everyone walks on. / So wretched creature and together of a sex so incapable. / Dry trunk for your sins. / Useless straw "(Lavrin, 2002, pp. 129-154). In compensation for her humility, Sister María de Jesús Felipa is rewarded by God and receives from him kind words that describe her as: "Comeback bird and burned butterfly. / My dove / Precious stone "(Lavrin, 2002, pp. 132-142).

Regarding the different studies that specialists have done to the monastic writings, it has been observed that the nuns hold back their aspirations by moving them by prayers and sacrifices. In this regard, Lagarde points out that:

"The repression of desires generates aggression and guilt, which can manifest themselves in self-destructive actions [...]. In the case of the nuns [...] aggression is sublimated and expressed in mystical states of rapture and loving fervor to God, or is channeled into fear and hatred of the Devil and God" (Lagarde, 2003, p.534).

By the way, Sister María de Jesús Felipa takes refuge in writing and, using antithesis or contrast, expresses the discontent of her feelings, and writes the following: "And I hate God; that this is very much what I feel and I can not express love and hate as it can be at the same time" (Lavrín, 2002, p. 139).

Ecstatic states and communication with God

As part of the stories told by the writing nuns, they surprise the episodes of intimate encounters with God. According to the monastic writings, encounters with God occur when the nuns are making some sacrifice, so we can not think of a festive, but stormy encounter. During this intimate unity, the nuns usually receive from God, first, words of praise, kisses, hugs; and the most committed in their love relationship with God, in addition to prayers and sacrifices, also offer their own body, or what remains of it, as an offering to the beloved. "Sex is presented as a temptation, sometimes brutally and aggressively in demonic images of blacks and mulattoes, but always subjected at last to the triumphant virtue of chastity" (Muriel, 2000, p.500).

The diary of Sister María de Jesús Felipa, for example, describes her communication with God in the following way:

In the five senses I had communication of the same thing that the soul felt liking looking [,] smelling and hearing and feeling. [...] Faith assured me to be with me [...] I was watching him running the living blood, and to wish him and to look for him with desires, with [...] eagerness and with impatience [...] was like firewood that ignited the flame of love and provoked me to say nonsense [...] . Do not leave me in my misery and nakedness as you have left me [...]. Remember my beloved that although I am the unworthy sinner, I am a wife of the one who is holy and has to cover my nudity (Lavrín, 2002, pp. 134-136).

There were other writings made by the nuns who seem to be much more engaged in the description of their communication with God; such is the case of a fragment mentioned in the "Intimate Diary of María Lucía Celis", known as a beata trickster. According to Margarita Peña (2000, p.59), María Lucía Celis was imprisoned and processed by the Holy Office at the end of the 18th century; He was condemned to serve at the San Lorenzo Hospital. The newspaper was rescued from the Inquisitorial Branch of the General Archive of the Nation. Margarita Peña also points out that the diary highlights "María

Lucía's devastating passion for a virtual lover (Antonio Rodríguez Colodrero, Spanish clergyman), and a nonexistent son: El Niño Jesús" (Peña, 2000, p.59). The breasts protrude between the exposed parts of the body. The breasts appear as a means by which perfect union with God is achieved. The writings of the most committed love relationships often leave the face of God and take an earthly form, because "as a breeder of all things you must perpetually offer to God what is among them most esteemed" (Sigüenza, 1995, p.98).

The newspaper mentioned above is published by Edelmira Ramírez Leyva in María Rita Vargas, María Lucía Celis, beatas trickster of La Colonia (1988). And the author of the said newspaper is the Spanish clergyman Antonio Rodríguez Colodrero, who was probably his confessor. The transcriber assumes the role of narrator and intervenes between the dialogues, with phrases such as "she told him what I have taught her, and it is, how should I send whoever, for all titles, I should serve and be his slave" (Colodrero, in Peña, 2000, p.64).

Next, a fragment of the "Intimate Diary of María Lucía Celis" is reproduced. This is written in a single line, there is no separation of voices. The characters are María Lucía Celis, who appears as María, Ella or esposa; the Virgin Mary, who appears named as Lady, Mother, or Nanite Mary; Christ, appears named as the Lord; and the Baby Jesus, who are named as a husband.

The Lord said to him, and you will not give me to suck, little wife, my beloved, she said, yes dear and dear husband of mine [...]. I am Nanita María, I come to you if you want to breastfeed me [...]. She told him, and what, you will not give me even my bit to suck. The lady told him everything you want, my daughter, if you already know you can send me. [...] The lady laughed a lot and patted her hand [...]. Beloved Mother of mine, come to nurse your beloved daughter Maria, lie down in her little skirts as I did. In fact, the lady did it and began to suckle and give the same to the Lord and to her with the same virginal little mouth [...]. And her husband, who always carries a load, began to suck on her all the time she did the lady and who slept (Colodrero, en Peña, 2000, pp. 63-64).

Conclusion

The monastic writings, especially the biographies and the intimate diaries of the nuns, describe the daily life in the monasteries of New Spain during the sixteenth century until the eighteenth century and are now part of the New Spain stories. Due to the generic and thematic diversity of the monastic writings, the possibility of being studied from different perspectives is contemplated, among other things, because the aspects dealt with in each writing depended as much on the writing nuns as on the period with which they are related.

There are different genres that make up the monacal writings. For this reason, it was considered that some intimate journals define the presence of discursive types that contain specific characteristics that, because of their function and qualities, can be considered as surprising stories of monastic daily life. We studied the intimate diaries in which you can find forms that correspond to the characteristics of everyday life. Throughout its development it was intended to recognize that in monastic writings are located certain parts that move away from the types of religious writing and intertwine with various aspects of daily life in terms of the relaxation of customs in convents . For that reason, in addition, to work the monacales writings has an important value because in them the first manifestations of the feeling of the nuns novohispanas could be found.

According to the results obtained from the features of outstanding peculiarities that characterize them, they show that, as the years advance in New Spain, the monastic writings are freed from the official forms of monastic writing and present more and more peculiarities typical of the daily life and ecstatic states of the nuns. Also that, judging by the number of works, was a work widely cultivated by the nuns. These writing nuns impose their narrative faculty with the stories of everyday life and their creative faculty, with the stories of their states of ecstasy. These stories reflect the importance that the nuns conferred on personal interests and emotions, these concerns being those that provided the monacal writings with evidently expressive spaces, such as lying, quarreling and joking; in the same way, the presence of the devil and the struggle between good and evil that had to be avoided by nuns from New Spain on a daily basis, as well as the torments and visions of the other world present in their states of ecstasy, means by which nuns can achieve a direct communication with God.

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