

## 1a. The Historiography of Women's Monasticism in Europe and Latin America

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Feminine monasticism has long appealed to writers of women's history for fairly obvious reasons. First, practically speaking, religious women left more traces than most secular women, in the form of biographies, religious literature and music, and even secular literary production. Second, religious women include a goodly number of women of power and intellect whose exclusion from or traditional treatment within the mainstream canon seemed to beg reexamination within the context of committed feminist scholarship. Examples of such women abound. Perhaps most notable in their appeal to modern scholars are Germany's [Hildegard of Bingen](#), Spain's [Teresa of Ávila](#), and New Spain's [Juana Inés de la Cruz](#). [1](#)

Moreover, the convent itself, an important institution for women, appears to present a rare example of womanly power. Lina Eckenstein's early study of feminine monasticism presents the convent as a refuge from the unpleasantness of domestic duties, or from the crushing weight of male domination: monasticism, then, has been women's alternative to "domestic subjection" and represents a "refusal to undertake the duties of married life." [2](#) Josefina Muriel's classic study of convents of women in New Spain is similarly insistent on the idea of convent as a viable feminine institution. [3](#) Surveying the convents of Mexico City from their foundations to the nineteenth century, Muriel integrates convents into their colonial context, arguing that convents had an important impact on Mexican society, especially through their educative function. Indeed, she suggests, convent culture helped create Mexican feminine identity: nuns formed the Mexican woman and engraved in her character its definitive traits. [4](#) These early studies, then, though largely encyclopedic in their cataloguing of foundational histories, claim an important and positive role for the convent in women's history.

This view is very different from the essentially unnatural and dysfunctional picture of feminine monasticism promoted by Lutheran reformers, [5](#) Enlightenment philosophers, and, even, in Mexico, nineteenth-century liberals. It is different too from the dismissive view that female monasticism presents "the same face" or is "abstract and repetitive" rather than changing in different times and places. [6](#) Indeed, the insistence of women historians upon the importance of women's monasticism has led to a revision of the history of monastic women and to an ever-increasing interest in all aspects of the feminine religious experience. With this new view of the convent in mind, women set about rewriting the history of feminine monasticism from the perspective of female autonomy. [7](#) Many scholars have reversed the notion of "progress" in feminine religious history by tracing changes in its evolution that were unfavourable to women's autonomy. Such scholars see in late medieval feminine monasticism a growing differentiation between nun and

monk, heretofore more or less comparable "religious persons." <sup>8</sup> Stricter enclosure, convent reform, and the removal of privileges were expressions of a gradual foreclosing of possibility and a "privatization" that intensified after the Council of Trent. <sup>9</sup> Indeed, the history of female monasticism from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance has been seen as a decline, cramping the creativity of religious women and removing their control over the system of which they were part. <sup>10</sup>

Interest in pre-Trent feminine monasticism has led to investigation of forms of feminine religious life that were of much greater importance in the past and have faded into obscurity. The phenomenon known variously as beguinage, "open" monasticism, or semi-religiosity is among these. Similarly, scholars have studied the active orders that sprang into existence after the Council of Trent, and that provided, in some countries at least, an alternative to clausura. <sup>11</sup>

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While many scholars have produced valuable general studies of convents in various regions and periods, others have studied particular aspects of the monastic experience. One of the most important links between society, economy, and the convent relates to the elite family and the preservation of its wealth. This aspect of feminine monasticism has received much attention from scholars, particularly from social historians and those who study the Hispanic world. Spanish inheritance laws long dictated that each child should share equally in her or his parents' estates. One way to avoid the fragmentation of wealth this represented was to create an entailment or *mayorazgo*, which could be worth up to 47 percent of the total estate. <sup>12</sup> Professing male and female children in religious orders provided another way to concentrate wealth in the hands of as few children as possible. In New Spain, as elsewhere in the Iberian world, fathers seem to have designated one or more daughters as nuns to avoid both the prohibitive cost and difficulty of contracting an appropriate and honourable marriage and to preserve family wealth from fragmentation at time of transmission. It has been argued that parents' fear of "prejudicial" marriages was, in colonial Brazil, at least, the strongest motivation for placing a daughter in a convent. <sup>13</sup> As noble dowries appear to have risen steadily through the sixteenth century, <sup>14</sup> the use of the convent as a bulwark of family wealth thereafter became even more important. Convent dowries, however substantial, were always less than the dowries required to contract a respectable marriage. <sup>15</sup> Studies of the dowry and family's decisions regarding convent placement add another facet to our understanding of feminine monasticism: convent life, it seems, was often less an individual choice than a family one.

Families' economic considerations in choosing the cloister were complemented by sociocultural factors. Parents whose daughter took the veil were assured that her honour - and thus that of the family - would be both

preserved and enhanced. Indeed, proverbs illustrated the complete association of feminine honour with protection and enclosure: "The honorable woman, indoors with a broken leg." [16](#) (*La mujer honrada, la pierna quebrada y en casa*) A rather more venerable and less crude Latin saw claimed, *aut maritus, aut murus*: a woman needs "either a husband or a wall." In some European cases, the existence of this phrase was used to argue for the enacting of laws restricting women's movements. [17](#)

This is not meant to suggest that the stereotype of feminine enclosure reflected reality. The workings of class, of course, should not be ignored: as might be imagined, the possibility of preserving female honour was limited in lower-status groups. Low-status women in all periods had to work outside their homes, where they were vulnerable to sexual approach and often victims of sexual attack. If enclosure either in home or convent was not universally accessible to these women, neither was marriage. For many lower-class women, then, neither husband nor wall was a possibility. It has been argued that such women had a certain freedom denied to those "with honour." [18](#) Whatever the validity of this argument, many women obviously lived outside the parameters of proverbs. But the existence of large numbers of unenclosed women does not disprove the existence or importance of an ideology of enclosure; indeed, a perceived lack of female enclosure may well have intensified the ideology, [19](#) as I argue in Chapter 4.

Convents and similar female institutions were the expression of this societal concern; founders often used the preservation of female honour as an argument. But such institutions were also a symbol of and reinforced the ideology of feminine enclosure as honour. The convent and gender ideology enjoyed a symbiotic relationship as reinforcers of elite status. And the choice to enter a convent was made within the context of familial ambition and necessity.

Yet many historians suggest that within this context of limited choice, women may have selected the convent over marriage as a kind of corporate career option. [20](#) Electa Arenal suggests that the convent provided women of greatly divergent personalities with a semiautonomous culture in which they could find sustenance, exert influence, and develop talents they never could have expressed as fully in the outside world. In that sense, the convent was a catalyst for autonomy... In effect, nuns found a way of being important in the world by choosing to live outside it. [21](#)

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Convent as career option has attracted the attention of many historians of nuns and has informed debates among those who study the seventeenth-century Mexican nun Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, arguably the most famous nun Spanish America has produced and certainly one of its most important poets. The debate has largely concerned whether Sor Juana chose the convent as a career option more appealing than marriage, or as a refuge

because she could not contract a suitable marriage. <sup>22</sup> Historians who view the convent as a "catalyst for autonomy" have inclined toward the former opinion. In any case, the notion of convent as career option has drawn attention to the unavoidable fact that for hundreds of years, monasticism was the only thing resembling a "career" to which women could aspire.

Once the decision to enter a convent was made, for whatever reason, a woman became a member of a female cultural community. Nuns were creators of theatre, dance, music, fine arts, literature, and architecture. <sup>23</sup>

Some scholars have revisited the literary remains of exceptional monastic women of the past, examining their works through the lens of gender and using techniques of rhetorical analysis. Thus, for example, many authors have examined the narrative strategies used by monastic women writers and scholars to avoid censure from a Church often hostile to womanly scholarship. The characteristic self-abnegation of Saint Teresa of Ávila, for example, is said to be a topos adopted to minimize the

dangers of women's authorship. <sup>24</sup> Mysticism itself, famously associated with Teresa but common to many religious women in the medieval and early modern periods, has also been reexamined as a characteristically feminine experience <sup>25</sup> and, often, as a locus of female empowerment. <sup>26</sup>

As some scholars have revisited the literary output of well-known monastic women, others have unearthed hitherto little-known works. They aim to show not only that there existed "more than one Teresa," but that writing was an inherently empowering - and even subversive - act connecting diverse monastic women in a tradition of "mother tongue." <sup>27</sup> The comparative obscurity into which many of these works and their creators had fallen is sometimes belied by their importance among their contemporaries. Sor María de Ágreda, for example, was a valued adviser to Philip IV. Her work *The Mystical City of God* was widely published and read, and emphasized the role of Mary in human salvation to a degree that made some churchmen uncomfortable, leading to her investigation by the Holy Office. <sup>28</sup> Madre Juana de la Cruz (1481-1534) was visited by Charles V, and was sufficiently renowned to have merited a seventeenth-century canonization attempt. Her *Libro de Conorte*, though a less learned work than Sor María's *City*, was marked by a kind of spiritual androgyny that allowed her to combine a stance of feminine humility with a claim to spiritual authority. <sup>29</sup> Other women produced accounts of their lives that were used by male confessors to determine women's orthodoxy and as exempla for the faithful. The Mexican nun Madre María de San José, for example, produced over 2000 pages at the behest of her confessor during three decades (1691-1718). Such documents provide insight into not only the biographies of religious women but the relations between such women and the male authorities who governed them. <sup>30</sup> Even women who produced only letters, rather than literary or theological works, have been studied: for example, Ana de Jesús (1545-1621), the "most faithful follower" and defender of the legacy of Saint Teresa. <sup>31</sup> The letters of New Spain's nuns have also been interpreted as both evidence for and medium of their full participation in

extramural affairs. [32](#)

Through access to conventual archives, some scholars have attempted to assess the cultural production of less well-known, and in some cases even anonymous, monastic women. In addition to literature of various kinds, such as poems, histories, and biographies, nuns produced music and theatre for presentation within the convent. Such cultural creations were complemented, particularly in Spain and Spanish America, by a range of products offered for sale, such as sweets, artificial flowers, foods, medicines, and even religious sculptures. Both the cultural and the material products, it is argued, made for a profound cultural influence of the convent in its society. [33](#) Scholars working on convent arts in the European context also see them as evidence of women's full participation in culture and of convents as cultural forces or "purveyors of culture" within the communities that housed them. [34](#)

Not all nuns left literary remains, or wrote their *vidas*, or were exceptional enough to be written about by chroniclers. Another possibility for recovering the feminine monastic past has been to examine those women who, though not exceptional in the sense of reputed virtue or intellectual output, were exceptional in that they transgressed the codes that governed religious women. In general, such studies have used documents created by various offices of the Inquisition. Judith Brown's study of a seventeenth-century "lesbian nun" is among the best known of these, partly because of the dramatic character of the transgressions involved. [35](#) But other studies have involved women whose supposed crimes were relatively minor, even in the eyes of the Inquisitors, and whose biographies are not so different from those of the women whose *vidas* have been studied by others. [36](#) Thus, it is argued, these sources can be used as a source of women's life stories. Indeed, they bear a close resemblance in structure to the *vidas* written or dictated by women at the orders of their confessors or male clerical superiors, which were, like Inquisition testimony, often the result of compulsion. [37](#)

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Thus a new picture of feminine religious life is emerging, in which the convent is seen as a viable, important feminine institution, and religious life in general a valuable option for the many women who embraced it. Moreover, as we have seen, nunneries were important, in various ways, to the societies that housed them.

The historiography of Mexican female monasticism has developed in much the same way as its European counterpart. Josefina Muriel's *Conventos de Monjas en la Nueva España*, mentioned above, laid the groundwork for future study through its exhaustive detailing of New Spain's colonial foundations. Muriel's later works, spanning more than half a century, have continued to catalog and investigate, in turn, Indian women's monasticism in New Spain, "shelters" or *recogimientos*, feminine literary culture, and residential girls' schools or *colegios de niñas*. [38](#) Because of Muriel's encyclopedic approach

and sound research, each of these works serves as a touchstone for and cornerstone of future investigations in a broad area.

Asunción Lavrin was the first to carry out these investigations and has examined an even more broad spectrum of the feminine colonial experience, becoming perhaps the best known historian of colonial Latin American women. Through a series of important articles, Lavrin has investigated nearly every aspect of feminine monasticism in the late colonial period. <sup>39</sup> Lavrin began by studying convents from the point of view of social history. She rescued the colonial convent from an overemphasis on its picturesque qualities, or an overly pious veneration, through a detailed study of female religious communities' administration and economic activities. Lavrin details disputes between convents and their ecclesiastical supervisors and the controversy that resulted when administrators attempted to force a return to "common life," or a more typically communitarian form of monasticism that faded from the scene in the seventeenth century. <sup>40</sup> She has also conducted a great deal of research on the economic activities of women's religious communities, which served as landlords, lending institutions, and bulwarks of elite control. <sup>41</sup> In contrast to the nineteenth-century liberal view of convents (and other corporations) as obstacles to social and economic development, Lavrin establishes a picture of the convents as vigorous, autonomous institutions which nonetheless reflected and were tied to the changing circumstances of colonial economy and society. She extends her purview into the nineteenth century, describing governmental attempts to control and extract money from religious communities. <sup>42</sup> Most recently, Lavrin has turned from convents as institutions to their inhabitants, investigating how New Spain's female religious experienced religious life and what role they played in the culture of the colony. <sup>43</sup> The tremendous breadth of Lavrin's work and her integration of convents into the social and economic life of New Spain make her scholarship an indispensable base for any student of women's monasticism.

Because of the scope and quality of Muriel's and Lavrin's research, the study of Mexican women's monasticism has quickly achieved not only breadth but depth and sophistication. Subsequent and current scholars, working from such a sound base, have been able to examine very particular questions and have studied topics such as the financial dealings of specific institutions, particular foundations, convent education, and daily life within different orders. <sup>44</sup> For the purposes of this study, two particularly fruitful veins of scholarship have been opened. The first continues to delve into women's experience of monasticism, going beyond how women experienced the routine and rigors of convent life to examine the childhood and development that in some cases led to the taking of the habit <sup>45</sup>; nuns' experience of their bodies <sup>46</sup>; and nuns' spiritual writings. <sup>47</sup> The second puts colonialism squarely at the centre of the study of Latin America women's monasticism, emphasising the importance of convents and their inhabitants to the creation of colonial society. <sup>48</sup> In a sense, this issue returns us to Muriel's pioneering

study, in which she insisted upon but did not investigate the importance of nuns in creating colonial society. So too, in their important survey of nuns' writings in the Hispanic world, Arenal and Schlau point out the symbiotic relationship between colonialism and feminine monasticism. [49](#) This relationship is the focus of a very recent study that situates religious women at the heart of the transference of Spanish culture to the New World and the subsequent "mutation" of that culture into something new and recognizably Mexican. [50](#)

Oddly, however, the development of this new area of study has not led scholars to investigate the sixteenth century, when that transference of culture began and when the colonial endeavor was being defined. [51](#) This study attempts to do just that, and thus to contribute to a field of study that is both venerable and vital.

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### Notes:

**Note 1:** St. Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179); St. Teresa of Ávila (1515-1582); Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1648-1695). [Back.](#)

**Note 2:** Eckenstein, op. cit., 5. [Back.](#)

**Note 3:** Muriel, *Conventos*, op. cit. [Back.](#)

**Note 4:** "Nuns were the ones who formed the Mexican woman and the definitive traits of her personality" (*[monjas] fueron las que formaron a la mujer mexicana y esculpieron en ella los rasgos definitivos de su personalidad*) Ibid., 502. [Back.](#)

**Note 5:** For a recent, sympathetic view of the Lutheran attack on feminine monasticism, see Steven Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled: Family Life in Reformation Europe* (Harvard, 1983), 15-25. A more critical view of Lutheran anti-monasticism is presented by Lyndal Roper, *The Holy Household: Women and Morals in Reformation Augsburg* (Oxford, 1989), 2-3, 18, 206-67 passim. See also Ulinka Rublack, "Pregnancy, Childbirth and the Female Body in Early Modern Germany," *Past and Present* 150 (February 1996), 84-110; 87-8. [Back.](#)

**Note 6:** Gill, op. cit., 16. [Back.](#)

**Note 7:** Here Joan Scott's second trait of herstory - critiquing received notions of progress - comes into play. See Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, op cit., 18-19. [Back.](#)

**Note 8:** Penelope Johnson, *Equal in Monastic Profession: Religious Women in Medieval France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991). [Back.](#)

**Note 9:** Morris, op. cit. [Back.](#)

**Note 10:** Eckenstein, op. cit., 482. [Back.](#)

**Note 11:** Elizabeth Rapley, *The Dévotes: Women and Church in Seventeenth-Century France* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990). [Back.](#)

**Note 12:** Schwaller, op. cit., 10. [Back.](#)

**Note 13:** See Susan Soeiro, "The Social and Economic Role of the Convent: Women and Nuns in Colonial Bahia, 1677-1800." *HAHR* 54, #2 (May 1974), 209-232; 218. Also see Lavrin, "Women in Convents." [Back.](#)

**Note 14:** Ibid. Unfortunately, studies of the dowry in Colonial Spanish America tend to concentrate on the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. See, for example, A. Lavrin and Edith Couturier, "Dowries and Wills: A View of Women's Socioeconomic Role in Colonial Guadalajara and Puebla, 1640-1790," *HAHR* 59, No. 2 (May 1979), 280-304. [Back.](#)

**Note 15:** This was true in the Middle Ages as well; see Johnson, op. cit., 24. [Back.](#)

**Note 16:** Julian Pitt-Rivers, "Honour and Social Status," in Peristiany, ed. *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society* (London, 1965) 21-77; 45. Pitt-Rivers calls this an ancient saying, but provides no provenance. [Back.](#)

**Note 17:** For the quotation, see Elizabeth Rapley, op. cit., 19. [Back.](#)

**Note 18:** See Solange Alberro, "Beatriz de Padilla: Mistress and Mother," in David Sweet and Gary Nash, eds. *Struggle and Survival in Colonial America* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California, 1981), 247-256; 255). [Back.](#)

**Note 19:** See Mary Elizabeth Perry, *Gender and Disorder in Early Modern Seville* (Princeton, 1990). [Back.](#)

**Note 20:** See Soeiro, op. cit., and "Catarina de Monte Sinay: Nun and Entrepreneur," in David Sweet and Gary Nash, eds., *Struggle and Survival in Colonial America* (op. cit.). [Back.](#)

**Note 21:** Electa Arenal, "The Convent as Catalyst for Autonomy: Two Hispanic Nuns of the Seventeenth Century," in Beth Miller, ed. *Women in Hispanic Literature: Icons and Fallen Idols* (Berkeley: University of California, 1983); 147-183; 149. [Back.](#)

**Note 22:** Electa Arenal, "Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz: Reclaiming the Mother Tongue," *Letras Femeninas* 11, Nos. 1-2 (1985); 63-75. Arenal summarizes the debate in "Comment on Paz's 'Juana Ramírez'." *Signs* 5, No. 3 (Spring 1980); 552-55. For a very different view, see Octavio Paz, *Sor Juana: or, the Traps of Faith* trans. Margaret Sayers Peder (Harvard, 1988). Volume 16, No. 3 (1983) of *The University of Dayton Review* is entirely dedicated to Sor Juana. [Back.](#)

**Note 23:** Touring Seville's Monasterio de Santa Paula, I was shown a beautiful snail-shaped staircase which was designed by one of the convent's nuns: a woman, I was proudly told, utterly without architectural training. [Back.](#)

**Note 24:** Alison Weber, *Teresa of Ávila and the Rhetoric of Femininity* (Princeton, 1990). [Back.](#)

**Note 25:** That is, an experience most often associated with women, but by no means foreign to men. [Back.](#)

**Note 26:** See, for example, Caroline Walker Bynum, "The Female Body and Religious Practice in the Later Middle Ages," in *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, Vol. 1, ed. Michael Feher with Ramona Naddaff and Nadia Tazi (New York: Zone, 1989), 161-219; 171 passim. Jean Franco argues, however, that the writings of mystical women confirmed the identification of women with the irrational and therefore "ceded discursive space." See "Writers in Spite of Themselves: The Mystical Nuns of Seventeenth-Century Mexico," in Jean Franco, *Plotting Women: Gender and Representation in Mexico* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 3-22. [Back.](#)

**Note 27:** Electa Arenal and Stacey Schlau, *Untold Sisters: Hispanic Nuns in Their Own Works*, with translations by Amanda Powell (New Mexico, 1989). [Back.](#)

**Note 28:** T.E. Kendrick, *Mary of Agreda: The Life and Legend of a Spanish Nun* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1967); Joaquín Pérez Villanueva, "Sor María de Ágreda y Felipe IV: un epistolario en su tiempo." In *Historia de la Iglesia en España*, Vol. IV, *La Iglesia en la España de los siglos XVII y XVIII*, ed. Antonio Mestre Sanchis (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1979); 359-417. See also Pérez Villanueva's added bibliography, on 359-60. [Back.](#)

**Note 29:** Ronald E. Surtz, *The Guitar of God: Gender, Power, and Authority in the Visionary World of Mother Juana de la Cruz (1481-1534)* (Pennsylvania, 1990). [Back.](#)

**Note 30:** Kathleen Ann Myers, *Word from New Spain: The Spiritual Autobiography of Madre María de San José (1656-1719)* (Liverpool University Press, 1993). [Back.](#)

**Note 31:** Concepción Torres, *Ana de Jesús: Cartas (1590-1621): Religiosidad y vida cotidiana en la clausura femenina del Siglo de Oro* (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 1995). [Back.](#)

**Note 32:** Asunción Lavrin, "De su puño y letra: epístolas conventuales," in Manuel Ramos Medina, ed., *El monacato femenino en el Imperio Español: monasterios, beaterios, recogimientos y colegios*, Memoria del II Congreso Internacional (Mexico: Condumex, 1995), 43-59. [Back.](#)

**Note 33:** Josefina Muriel, *Cultura Femenina Novohispana* (Mexico: UNAM, 1982), 41 passim. [Back.](#)

**Note 34:** See the essays in Monson, ed., *The Crannied Wall: Women*,

*Religion, and the Arts in Early Modern Europe* (op. cit.). [Back.](#)

**Note 35:** Judith C. Brown, *Immodest Acts: The Life of a Lesbian Nun in Renaissance Italy* (Oxford, 1986). [Back.](#)

**Note 36:** See, for example, Luisa Ciammitti's study of a seventeenth-century Ursuline brought before the Holy Office of Bologna on charges of false sanctity: "One Saint Less: The Story of Angela Mellini, a Bolognese Seamstress (1667-17[?])," In Muir and Ruggiero, eds., *Sex and Gender in Historical Perspective* (op. cit.), 141-76. [Back.](#)

**Note 37:** See Anne Jacobson Schutte, "Inquisition and Female Autobiography: The Case of Cecilia Ferrazzi," in Monson, op. cit., 105-118; 106. [Back.](#)

**Note 38:** *Las indias caciques de Corpus Cristi* (Mexico: UNAM, 1963); *Los recogimientos de mujeres: Respuesta a una problemática social novohispana* (Mexico: UNAM, 1974); *Cultura femenina novohispana*, op. cit.; *La sociedad novohispana y sus colegios de niñas* (Mexico: UNAM, 1995). [Back.](#)

**Note 39:** For a general view, see her "Religious Life of Mexican Women in the XVIII Century" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard, 1962). For a synthesis of her research and of the field, see "Female Religious," in *Cities and Society in Colonial Latin America*, ed. Louisa Schell Hoberman, Susan Migden Socolow (New Mexico, 1986), 165-95. See also her two edited collections: *Sexuality and Marriage in Colonial Latin America* (Nebraska, 1989); and *Latin American Women: Historical Perspectives* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1975). [Back.](#)

**Note 40:** "Ecclesiastical Reform of Nunneries in New Spain in the Eighteenth Century," *The Americas XXII*, No. 2 (October 1965), 182-203. [Back.](#)

**Note 41:** See her "Role of the Nunneries in the Economy of New Spain in the Eighteenth Century," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 46, No. 4 (November 1966), 371-93; "El Convento de Santa Clara de Querétaro: La administración de sus propiedades en el siglo XVIII," *Historia Mexicana XXV*, No. 1 (July-September 1975); and "Women in Convents: Their Economic and Social Role in Colonial Mexico," in *Liberating Women's History: Theoretical and Critical Essays*, ed. Berenice Carroll (Chicago: University of Illinois, 1976). [Back.](#)

**Note 42:** "Problems and Policies in the Administration of Nunneries in Mexico 1800-1835," *The Americas XXVII*, No. 1 (July 1971) and "Mexican Nunneries from 1835 to 1860: Their Administrative Policies and Relations with the State," *The Americas XXVII*, No. 3 (January 1972). [Back.](#)

**Note 43:** See her "Values and Meaning of Monastic Life for Nuns in Colonial Mexico," *Catholic Historical Review* 58 (October 1972), 367-87; "Unlike Sor Juana? The Model Nun in the Religious Literature of Colonial Mexico," *University of Dayton Review* 16, No. 3 (1983), 75-92; "Women and Religion in Spanish America," in *Women and Religion in America*, Vol. II, *The Colonial and Revolutionary Periods*, ed. R. Radford Ruether and R. Skinner Keller (Harper and Row, 1983), 42-78. [Back.](#)

**Note 44:** See the essays in Manuel Ramos Medina, ed., *El Monacato Femenino en el Imperio Español: Monasterios, beaterios, recogimientos y colegios* (Mexico: CONDUMEX, 1995). Most of the essays relate to New Spain, though other regions of the Hispanic world are also represented. [Back.](#)

**Note 45:** See Myers, op. cit. [Back.](#)

**Note 46:** Rosalva Loreto Lopez, "La sensibilidad y el cuerpo en el imaginario de las monjas poblanas del siglo XVII," in Ramos Medina, ed., *Monacato femenino*, op. cit., 541-556. [Back.](#)

**Note 47:** The definitive work remains Arenal and Schlau, *Untold Sisters*, op. cit. [Back.](#)

**Note 48:** Op. cit., 293 passim. [Back.](#)

**Note 49:** Op. cit., 293 passim. [Back.](#)

**Note 50:** Elisa Sampson Vera Tudela, *Colonial Angels: Narratives of Gender and Spirituality in Mexico 1580-1750* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000). [Back.](#)

**Note 51:** Kathryn Burns' work on the convents of Cuzco, for example, has not been matched for New Spain. See her "Convents, Culture, and Society in Cuzco, Peru, 1550-1865" (Ph.D., Harvard, 1993); "Conventos, criollos, y la economía espiritual del Cuzco, siglo XVII," in Ramos Medina, ed., *Monacato femenino*, op. cit., 311-318. [Back.](#)

### [Escogidas Plantas: Nuns and Beatas in Mexico City, 1531-1601](#)