

H I S P A N I C T H E O L O G I C A L I N I T I A T I V E

P E R S P E C T I V A S

O C C A S I O N A L P A P E R S

F A L L 2 0 0 9

Guadalupe and Resistance: Ancient and Contemporary
Counter-imperial/Colonial Discourses

David Sánchez

Guadalupita: La Virgen Peregrina
An Ethnographic Study

Rebecca Berru Davis

Who is our Lady of Guadalupe?
Guadalupana Testimonials

Theresa Torres

Santa Frida with Aura and Aroma:
On Frida Kahlo's Kitchen and her "Broken Column"

Vítor Westhelle

Doctoral Studies as *Llamamiento*, or How We All
Need to be "Ugly Betty"

Loida Martell-Otero

Perspectivas

About the Journal

Perspectivas features the scholarship of Latina/o scholars in theology and religion addressing Latina/o real life issues within the United States.

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PERSPECTIVAS

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The Hispanic Theological Initiative (HTI) began the publication of *Perspectivas* in 1998 to feature the scholarship of Latina/o scholars in theology and religion, and to address the scant number of journals dedicated to featuring the contributions of Latinas/os as an important and critical means to stimulate further dialogue and research in theological education.

After a decade of successful publications, *Perspectivas* is now a peer review journal. The new submission guidelines solicit shorter features in Art and Theology, the World and the Church, Crossing Borders, and Theology within the Latina/o Church Context. Our hope for future publications is to broaden our network of contributors as well as our audience.

We trust you will find *Perspectivas* insightful, and we invite you to share comments and responses to any of the articles.

Please look for current and past issues of *Perspectivas* in seminaries and religion and theology departments at universities and other institutions throughout the United States, and Puerto Rico. If you would like additional copies free of charge, please e-mail us at hti@ptsem.edu.

Joanne Rodríguez-Olmedo
Director, HTI

INTRODUCTION

This, our thirteenth issue of *Perspectivas*, presents yet another collection of the fine works by the gifted scholars who we proudly call our *hermanas* and *hermanos*. We introduce you to these writings with a synopsis of their respective topics.

Winner of this year's HTI Book Prize, David Sánchez presents an essay based on the lecture he delivered during the annual HTI Summer Workshop in June of this year. His winning submission, *From Patmos to the Barrio: Subverting Imperial Myths*, is brought to life with his thoughtful analysis of the phenomenon that is found in the vivid representations of the Virgin of Guadalupe, splashed throughout the neighborhood of his youth, in East Los Angeles. We travel with him through time as he presents this most revered icon's roots found in the woman of Revelation 12, then fast-forwarding to seventeenth-century Mexico, ending in modern-day East Los Angeles where the image's transformation into a powerful symbol of indigenous resistance is vividly portrayed in the colorful representations produced by the Chicana/o resistance movement as it continues its struggles.

The following two articles also address the topic of the Virgin of Guadalupe. Rebecca Davis assumes the role of both observer and participant in the veneration given to the delicate representation made of molded plastic that has been adopted by the parish of St. Joseph the Worker. The author marvels in the tireless efforts that were exerted by the mostly Latino parishioners to ensure that their *Guadalupe* was given a place of honor in their church, paralleling their efforts to attain a position of respect in their community.

A study of a group of the revered Virgin's followers is documented by Theresa Torres, who presents the results of interviews with members of *La Sociedad de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*. Presenting varied beliefs, the findings result in a devotion that

led to the society's members to engage in civic and social activism. Whether the society's members attribute their devotion to the Virgin as mother or as a symbol of self-identity, their fervent convictions empower them to halt the closing of their church, making sure the doors remained open, now as a shrine to their patroness.

Yet another image is brought to our attention by Vitor Westhelle, whose fascination with the work of Mexican artist Frida Kahlo comes to life as he beckons the reader to revisit the artist's creations that tell the story of her profound physical and spiritual pain. The author also awakens our senses as we accompany him into his kitchen where we breathe in the aromas of Frida's recipes. While the art she bequeathed to the world in her paintings and writings, including her recipes, are a source of admiration and wonder, the question remains: Can her truth be replicated?

Imagery, a constant throughout this issue, is also found in the last article by Loida-Martell-Otero. She examines the tenacious young woman seen in the television program, "Ugly Betty," who is relentless in her struggle to be accepted as an equal in the clearly Anglo American world of her fashion magazine workplace, without losing her very Mexican essence. Betty is constantly at odds with herself, knowing she must adapt and, in doing so, possibly lose some of her soul. This battle is all too familiar for Latinas in higher education who, while slowly growing in number, must overcome obstacles not faced by their Anglo colleagues. *La lucha* is still an uphill battle, but one that must be fought.

It is our hope that our readers find these writings to be engaging, enlightening, and worthy of sharing and, as always, we invite our growing audience to submit articles for consideration by our seasoned peer review board. Those interested in doing so may review the submission guidelines found at the back of this issue. ¡Gracias!

Maria Kennedy

Guadalupe and Resistance: Ancient and Contemporary Counter-imperial/Colonial Discourses

David A. Sánchez

Winner of the 2009 HTI Book Prize for *From Patmos to the Barrio: Subverting Imperial Myths*

David A. Sánchez is an Assistant Professor of New Testament Studies at Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles. He received his Ph.D. in Early Christianity and Christian Origins from Union Theological Seminary, New York, in 2006. Dr. Sánchez's current research interests include the excavation and foregrounding of the apocalyptic origins of first-century Christianity and postcolonial and postmodern approaches to reading early Christian literature.

My initiation into the analyses of interpretations of scripture began in the winter of 1998 as a doctoral student at Union Theological Seminary, New York in a seminar entitled 'African-Americans and the Bible'. My contribution to the seminar and the ongoing project was a descriptive socio-religious analysis of the public art or murals located on 125th Street in Harlem that incorporated both general religious and specifically Christian themes. It was in that seminar that I was first introduced to the strategy of foregrounding the world of the interpreter while concurrently back-grounding the world of the text. This postmodern reorientation, in the words of African-Americans and the Bible director, Vincent Wimbush:

[a]rgues that the point of departure for and even the crux of interpretation not be texts but worlds, viz. society and culture and the complex textu(r)alizations of society and culture...[I]t argues that this point of departure should begin in a different time—not with the (biblical) past but with the present, that is, with the effort to understand how the present is being shaped by the Bible (which then provides warrant for forays into the past).¹

The rationale promoted for beginning in the present is:

[S]o that we may learn first how to recognize our positionality and how to relate that positionality to critical probing. Then we can determine what questions we [will] need to raise and what problematics we shall need to identify, what languages we need to study, what verbs we need to parse, what research agenda we should adopt—and why.²

The experience was both a breakthrough moment in my development as a biblical scholar and a methodologically destabilizing moment that challenged my previous text-centric training to unearth first-century authorial intention. Now I was being challenged to consider the postmodern notion of the *multivocality* of texts—and primarily of Christian Scripture.

What I have come to learn in the decade since that initial exposure is that the foregrounding of texts *or* their textual representations is not an either/or quandary. Rather, employing both texts and their subsequent textual (i.e. literary and artistic) representations leads to a more complex and textured engagement of the "...

¹ Vincent L. Wimbush, "Introduction: Reading Darkness, Reading Scriptures," in *African Americans and the Bible: Sacred Texts and Social Textures* (ed. Vincent L. Wimbush; New York: Continuum, 2000), 19.

² *Ibid.*, 19.

whole quest for meaning (in relationship to a [sacred] text)."³ Therefore, this methodological orientation privileges neither the ancient nor the modern but uses both together to negotiate the intricate matrices of meaning conjured in the Bible and in the role the Bible has played in shaping the modern Western World. It recognizes—and explicitly encourages—the acknowledgment of multiple interpretive possibilities of Biblical texts. As a result, the methodology also recognizes that the interpreter's perspective or social location explicitly influences his or her interaction with texts. It is therefore a continued moving away from claims to interpretive *textual* objectivity in favor of an explicit acknowledgment of the subjective relationship between texts and their flesh-and-blood readers.

The point of departure for this essay is a series of photographs taken in the summer of 1994 of murals of the Virgin of Guadalupe in East Los Angeles, California.⁴ Their artistic format is unique in that they are representative of public art, *public* expressions of the cultural sensibilities of a people, certainly not traditional museum pieces. On this matter Clifford Geertz notes:

[T]o study an art form is to explore a sensibility, [and] that such a sensibility is a collective formation. ...[Art forms] materialize a way of experiencing, bringing a particular cast of mind out into the world of objects, where [people] can look at it.⁵

The murals are also targeted for a specific audience of Mexican immigrants and Mexican-Americans, some of whom maintain a socio-political disposition of defiance and resistance (on occasion, these Mexican-Americans refer to themselves as *Chicanas/os*). The

³ Ibid., 9.

⁴ Photos of these murals can be viewed in, David A. Sánchez, *From Patmos to the Barrio: Subverting Imperial Myths* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008). Appendix 3.

⁵ Clifford Geertz, "Art as a Cultural System," *Modern Language Notes* 91 (1976): 1473-99.

murals also have a distinctive genesis, the late 1960s and early 1970s, that is, during the height of the Mexican-American or *Chicana/o* Civil Rights Movement.

My *initial* ethnographic impressions of the murals of the Virgin of Guadalupe were threefold:

1. Guadalupe was everywhere in these specific neighborhoods in East Los Angeles. Even though I had grown up in these environs, it was not until I set out to study her representations that I became explicitly aware of her omnipresence.
2. Although her multiple representations were framed in various ways, the core of the murals generally maintained a fairly traditional depiction of Guadalupe.
3. Modern representations of her in the barrio were at least in part related to the customary Mexican Catholic apparition tradition in which she is said to have appeared to an Aztec man named Juan Diego in the Mexican town of Tepeyac in 1531 C.E.; a mere ten years after the Conquest of Mexico by Spain.

Based on these early impressions, I originally concluded that the modern Guadalupan mural tradition functioned primarily as a commentary on the apparition event that theoretically transpired in 1531. However, after deeper probing and ongoing consultation, I came to discover that the tradition was much more complex and had its genesis not in Mexico but on the rocky shores of the Greek island Patmos in the Aegean Sea where the Christian prophet John (the author of the Book of Revelation) claims to have had his *apocalypsis* (ca. 96 C.E.).

The twelfth chapter of Revelation begins:

- 1 And a great sign appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.

With the exception of the crown of twelve stars on her head, the literary description explicitly mentions two notable features found on the original Mexican icon: a woman clothed in the sun who has the moon under her feet.⁶ The correlation is both powerful and distinctive. Subsequent twentieth-century representations incorporate a crown or a crown of stars to make the icon match the literary description exactly. There can be no doubt of an “*inter-textual*” relationship between Revelation 12, the original sixteenth-century Mexican icon—and by extension—modern depictions of Guadalupe in East Los Angeles in mural form.

So what are we to make of this relationship? How and why did this artistic *midrash* come to be? What would later appropriators find so compelling about the vision of the heavenly woman of Revelation 12 that they would evoke her so habitually? In short, what is the queen of heaven of the Book of Revelation doing splashed all over the public walls of contemporary East Los Angeles? It is at this point that the traditional work of biblical exegesis can offer some insight.

Most biblical commentators today are in agreement that the Book of Revelation was produced by an otherwise unknown Christian prophet named John on the once desolate island in the Aegean Sea known as Patmos during the reign of Emperor Domitian around 96 C.E. Tertullian writes that John was imprisoned on the island for unspecified offenses with the sentence of *relagatio in insulam* (banishment to an island)⁷ and John specifically states in Rev. 1.9 that he was at Patmos “on account of the Word of the Lord and the testimony of Jesus,” leading most commentators to conclude that John was exiled to Patmos for preaching a charismatic, apocalyptic, and sometimes critical message

⁶ It should also be noted that the original icon includes stars on the cloak draped over Guadalupe’s head, shoulders, and body.

⁷ Tertullian, *De praescriptione haereticorum*, 36.

against Rome and the Roman Empire to the Seven Churches of Asia Minor. Internal evidence from the letter itself supports this thesis. More than likely—John, like the seven churches to whom he writes—was a victim of Roman Imperial rule in a region of the empire where the Imperial Cult flourished.

The composition of Revelation 12 plays a prominent role in the ongoing (albeit subliminal) critique of the Roman Empire in that it is a Christian redeployment of the Greco-Roman Leto-Python-Apollo (LPA) myth vital for early imperial propaganda⁸ The Leto-Python-Apollo myth recounts the tale of Leto (a human), pregnant with the gods Apollo and Artemis by the god Zeus, fleeing the volatile dragon-monster Python who is poised to devour her offspring. The trio is protected by the god Neptune on the island of Delos where she eventually gives birth. Four days later, Vulcan provides young Apollo with arrows which he uses to exact vengeance against Python on behalf of his mother. The myth combines neatly with the emerging Roman contention of Apollo’s paternal role in the birth of Augustus Caesar. As a result, the first Emperor of Rome can now be directly linked to the genealogical lines of the gods as a *son of god* (*divi filius*). Augustus and Apollo—father and son—are established as ushering in the new golden age and the era of peace and prosperity of Rome and the lands under its subjugation.

John of Patmos, acutely aware of this mythological tradition and its function in imperial propaganda, especially in late first-century Asia Minor, simultaneously appropriates and subverts it by employing the basic story line of the Leto-Python-Apollo myth while concurrently substituting its characters. In Revelation 12, a woman in the final stages of her pregnancy is pursued by a

⁸ In this area of investigation I am greatly indebted to the work of Adela Yarbro Collins. See esp. *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation* (Missoula, Montana: Scholars, 1976).

dragon as she is about to give birth to a male child. The woman is unnamed, the dragon is later identified as Satan (12.9), and the child is alluded to in subtle messianic terms (Rev. 12.5: “a male child who will rule the nations with a rod of iron;” cf. Psalm 2.9). From a Christian perspective this child can only be the Christian messiah, Jesus. In a powerful redeployment of a myth vital to Roman Imperial propaganda during the rise of the emerging *imperium*, a Christian author subverts the mythological basis for—and justification of—Roman rule by substituting his Christian messiah and kingdom in place of the Roman Empire and its protagonists in the myth. It is a powerful example of how the “Christian margins” negotiated the “Roman center” in the late first century of the Common Era. John, in no position to deflect Roman power either politically or militarily, appropriates and subverts a mythological tale that portrayed Roman domination and expansion as justified and reckoned by the gods (an ancient precursor to manifest destiny). In the hands of this Christian author, Roman rule was framed as an aberration and as Satanic, thereby completely inverting the initial intention of the LPA myth.

With this early Christian negotiation in mind, we return to the observation that the original Mexican icon and its subsequent re-representations in contemporary East Los Angeles are artistic commentaries on the first verse of the twelfth chapter of the Book of Revelation. The question that must now be addressed is: what can we say about this relationship? Is it possible that the sixteenth-century Mexican Guadalupe tradition (the artistic template for all subsequent artistic depictions) also participates in a critique of the colonial ambitions of Spain and employs the basic strategy of Revelation 12 to make its argument? To answer this question it is essential to examine pre-Columbian traditions in Spain to see if a tradition existed that the Mexican Guadalupe tradition is attempting to usurp.

To my astonishment, in the year 1340, King Alfonso the Eleventh of Spain—in commemoration of a Spanish *reconquista* victory of the city of Salado against the Muslim occupiers—commissioned the building of a cathedral that would become home to the national icon of the Spanish Virgin of Guadalupe! According to medieval sources, the *Spanish* Guadalupe tradition is also based on an apparition account and predates the Mexican Guadalupe tradition by at least one and a half centuries.⁹ The cathedral dedicated to her is also located in a region of Spain named Extremadura that was the home province of many of the first *conquistadores* including Hernán Cortés. Indeed, Cortés himself bore the image of the Virgin on his battle standards and made a common practice of leaving Marian images in Aztec temples:

In Christianizing non-Christian sacred spaces with images of Mary, Cortés was following the common Spanish practice of turning mosques in conquered Moorish territories into churches by dedicating them to [the Virgin Guadalupe].¹⁰

The Guadalupan myth was no doubt well entrenched in Spanish sensibilities long before any expeditions to the New World. The comforter of the Americas made her first appearance in the New World as *la conquistadora* of the Americas, a transformation that should not go unnoticed.

Based on a cursory review of sixteenth-century accounts of the conquest, I am compelled to recognize that the introduction of the cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe to the indigenous peoples of Central Mexico came not with the epiphany at Tepeyac but rather

⁹ For an excellent discussion on these sources see Jacques Lafaye, *Quetzalcóatl and Guadalupe: The Formation of a Mexican National Consciousness, 1531-1813* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 217 ff.

¹⁰ Louise Burkhart, *Before Guadalupe: The Virgin Mary in Early Colonial Nahuatl Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 2.

as a result of Spaniards bringing her from their homeland.¹¹ I suggest that the European roots of the Virgin of Guadalupe do not dilute or discount her later appropriation and veneration by generations of Mexicans, but rather highlight the colonial or imperial phenomenon in which subjugated peoples appropriate and subvert the foundational myths of their conquerors. In other words, what I am trying to extrapolate is how and why the myth became so embedded in Mexican Catholic identity and Mexican notions of nationalism if indeed the story's roots come from Spain, Mexico's conqueror and colonizer.

To answer this question we must now turn our attention to seventeenth-century colonial Mexico. This century becomes relevant because until this time, specifically 1648 and 1649—117 years after the traditionally recounted apparition date, the icon of Guadalupe functions without an Americanized form of the myth. Up until that time, the shrine's principal clientele was the Spanish population of Mexico City.¹² What happened in 1648? A Creole priest named his *Imagen de la Virgen María*, which is recognized as the foundational account of the Americanized version of the apparition of the Virgin of Guadalupe, and he uses *Revelation 12* as his interpretive optic. In fact, a large portion of his *Imagen* is an exhaustive line by line exegesis of *Revelation 12*!

Also illuminating is the description of the tense relationship between the peninsular Spaniards and the American-born Spanish Creoles:

Though the only difference between criollos and peninsular Spaniards was their place of birth, the criollos saw themselves as marginalized. Disdained by the peninsulars, excluded from the topmost positions of local government, and fettered by what they regarded as second-class citizenship, they reacted by developing a strong sense of group identity...criollismo...¹³

The script was in place. Sánchez had willingly adopted the peninsular Spanish tradition of Guadalupe and had reframed it as the myth of origins for the new chosen people, the Creoles of New Spain, through the interpretive worldview of *Revelation 12*.

In 1649 the myth is appropriated once more. Again, it is a Creole priest, Luis Laso de la Vega, who adopts it, but his appropriation of the myth expounds a quite different agenda than Sánchez's account. De la Vega writes his *Huei tlamahuiçoltica* in Náhuatl, the native tongue of the Aztecs (Sánchez had composed *Imagen* in Spanish). It was, according to Jean-Pierre Ruiz, "an explicit effort on his part to appeal to familiar language and symbolism in order to encourage Marian devotion among [Aztec] audiences."¹⁴ In contrast to Sánchez's reading in favor of Creoles, de la Vega stresses the Virgin's "love and concern for the [Aztecs]."¹⁵

What is acutely evident is that within 130 years of the conquest at least three forms of the Guadalupan myth are circulating and competing in New Spain: one version advocating for and justifying Spanish colonialism, another promoting the rising Creole agenda, and another advocating for those Aztecs whose social, cultural, religious, and political worlds had been displaced by

¹¹ Here I make no scholarly judgment as to the validity of the 1531 Mexican apparition tradition; I only argue that Guadalupe's initial coming to the America's is facilitated by Spanish conquistadors prior to 1531.

¹² In 1573 a British corsair named Miles Philips describes a specifically Spanish devotion to "Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe." For a full discussion on this issue see Stafford Poole, C.M., *Our Lady of Guadalupe: The Origin and Sources of a Mexican National Symbol, 1531-1797* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997), 69-70. Note that Philips describes a silver statue as the central icon of devotion rather than the miraculous *tilma* of Juan Diego.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁴ Jean-Pierre Ruiz, "The Bible and U. S. Hispanic American Theological Discourse: Lessons from a Non-Innocent History," in *From the Heart of Our People: Latino Explorations in Catholic Systematic Theology* (eds. by Orlando O. Espín and Miguel H. Díaz; Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1999), 113.

¹⁵ Poole, *Our Lady of Guadalupe*, 119.

Spanish colonialism. Even more important for this essay is that at least two of them—Sanchez's *Imagen* and de la Vega's *Huei tlamahuiçoltica*—are in critical conversation with the twelfth chapter of the Book of Revelation, as was the original Mexican icon housed in Tepeyac, Mexico.¹⁶

In the late 1960s and early 1970s the Virgin of Guadalupe's public and popular iconography (murals) was an omnipresent institution in contemporary East Los Angeles.¹⁷ What can be deduced about her presence and late twentieth-century modes of Chicana/o resistance as well as about this icon's possible relationship to Revelation 12? We must begin by asserting that her earliest manifestations in public art can be attributed to the Chicana/o Resistance Movement of the 1960s and 70s. At that time, she is representative of a Chicana/o political consciousness. The genre of public art or more specifically muralism is itself embedded in and reflective of resistance:

[Muralism] was clearly an art of advocacy, and in many cases it was intended to change consciousness and promote political action...The role of the arts was to restore understanding of and pride in the heritage and cultures that the concept of [imperial] superiority had subverted.¹⁸

¹⁶ The dating of the original icon is still under debate. Stafford Poole argues that as early as 1556 there was a painting in the *ermita*. However, this painting was attributed to an indigenous man named Marcos. It is certain that the icon was present in the *ermita* by 1606 because it is reproduced by a Basque artist named Baltasar Echave Orio; see Poole, *Guadalupe*, 108 and 216.

¹⁷ Here I specifically argue that it is in this early period of el *Movimiento* that we are able to discern a pattern of anti-neocolonial resistance. I argue more extensively in *From Patmos to the Barrio* that later depictions of Guadalupe in East Los Angeles are predominantly "domesticated" representations (i.e. less or non-empire critical).

¹⁸ Shifra M. Goldman, "Mexican Muralism: Its Social-Educative Roles in Latin America and the United States," in *The Chicano Studies Reader: An Anthology of Aztlán, 1970-2000* (eds. Chon Noriega, et al.; Los Angeles: Chicano Studies Research Center Publications, 2001), 281.

As you can see, the critique of the center of power is not difficult to discern here. But for what is this art specifically advocating and what is it opposing? Evidence for this line of inquiry is available through analysis of some of the literary productions of the Chicana/o Movement during this era. One manifesto in particular is illuminating: *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán*, a derivative of the Chicana/o Liberation Conference held in Denver, Colorado in March of 1969. In *El Plan*, Chicano leaders laid the groundwork for the movement crystallizing their critique of American social policies by promoting equal access to education, fair and equal protection under the law, economic opportunities, and cultural autonomy. Along with these demands was a call for a spirit of Chicana/o Nationalism, political autonomy, and—most important—a return of the lands confiscated by the United States in the wake of the Mexican-American War of 1846-1848. The plan explicitly mentions this in its prologue:

In the spirit of a new people that is conscious not only of its proud historical heritage but also of the brutal "gringo" invasion of our territories, we, Chicano inhabitants and civilizers of the Northern land of Aztlán from whence came our forefathers, reclaiming the land of our birth and consecrating the determination of our people of the sun, declare that the call of our blood is our power, our responsibility, and our inevitable *destiny*.

What I find most fascinating about this proclamation is the explicit use of the term *destiny* in appealing for the return of the land once known as Northern Mexico. The reverberations should be quite obvious in that *El Plan* is a counter-mythology to United States notions of manifest destiny employed in the confiscation of these lands in the mid-nineteenth century. To refresh our memories, I quote John L. O'Sullivan—editor of the *Democratic Review*

and co-editor of the *New York Morning News*, who wrote just one year before the Mexican-American War (1845) that it is:

...the right of our manifest destiny to over spread and to possess the whole of the continent which Providence has given us for the development of the great experiment of liberty and federalive development of self-government entrusted to us. It is a right such as that of the tree to the space of the air and the earth suitable for the full expansion of its principle and destiny of growth.¹⁹

As their climatic departure for discourses on education, human welfare, politics and economic issues, the drafters of *El Plan* delved back into their history to challenge a moment in United States history (and hence its foundational documents) which justified U.S. expansion into Mexican territories, a moment that would mark the amplification of strained relationships between U.S. pioneers supported by the U.S. government and the indigenuous inhabitants of the Western United States. Also, the explicit employment of Guadalupan iconography in the late twentieth century may also serve as a counter-icon to two very prominent U.S. deployments of feminine icons: Lady Providence as imagined by the art work of John Gast's *American Progress* (1872)²⁰ in his support of the expansionist ideology behind the U.S. myth of manifest destiny; and Lady Liberty in New York Harbor just a short distance from Ellis Island. Modern depictions of Guadalupe

therefore attempt to undermine and counter the artistic justification in U.S. popular culture that promotes their God-given sovereignty to the land and mocks U.S. claims to being the receiver of the impoverished masses of the world. The Chicana/o Movement therefore challenged both the foundational mythologies and the supporting artistic representations of U.S. claims to Western territories with treatises such as *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* and murals of Guadalupe in East Los Angeles.

The East Los Angeles mural tradition of Guadalupe—like its sixteenth-century (artistic) and seventeenth-century (literary) counterparts—are both active participants in an ongoing religious and socio-political critique of the center by the margins. Both traditions tacitly conspire to undermine the dominant mythologies of the center and their accompanying icons by appropriating and subverting the very myths and icons employed in their domination. As such, both are indebted to the twelfth chapter of the Book of Revelation as the ideological point of departure for their subversive worldviews.

¹⁹ John L. O'Sullivan, *New York Morning News*, Dec. 27, 1845.

²⁰ Gast's work is provocative in its depiction of Lady Providence floating westward with willing Euro-American settlers following close behind as well as "civilized" progress in the form of telegraph wires, railroad tracks, trains, ships, bridges, and weaponry. The sky is even brighter in the east from where she/they come. To the west of Lady Providence are the fleeing "beastly, cowardly, and uncivilized" indigenous of the western territories, their beasts of burden, and herds of buffalo. *American Progress* has been reprinted in Sánchez, *From Patmos to the Barrio*, 84.

Guadalupita: La Virgen Peregrina An Ethnographic Study

Rebecca Berru Davis

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Nothing touches the Mexican's heart, and by extension all Latinos in general, as much as the Guadalupe experience. [She is a] powerful symbol that has spoken to the people of this continent for hundreds of years. What remains unexplained is the deep, deep emotional attachment.

Father Crespín, November 8, 2007

The apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe as a young *mestiza* woman in December of 1531 to Juan Diego, an indigenous person newly baptized into the Catholic faith, continues to inspire countless Mexicans and Mexican Americans. As Father Crespín, pastor emeritus of St. Joseph the Worker parish expresses above, she captivates the imagination of Latinas/os in inexplicable ways. Her appearance in the hills of Tepeyac, outside the capital city of Mexico was strategic and her message brought hope to a demoralized native population at a time of European colonial subjugation. An excerpt from the *Nican Mopohua*, a seventeenth-century text relays what were said to be the Virgin's words to Juan Diego:

Listen and hear well in your heart, my most abandoned son: that which scares you and troubles you is nothing; do not let your countenance and heart be troubled; do not fear that sickness or any other sickness or anxiety. Am I not here, your mother? Are you not under my shadow and my protection? Am I not your source of life? Are you not in the hollow of my mantle where I cross my arms? What else do you need? Let nothing trouble you or cause you sorrow.¹

This passage provided great comfort to an oppressed people. The message continues to be relevant today to a Latina/o population that deals with challenges related to discrimination, immigration, economic hardships, and the desire for educational equity and reform. The "Guadalupe Phenomenon," as Father Crespín calls it, elicits appeal beyond Latinas/os that draws together diverse cultures, ages, genders, and that cuts across class.² Her image is compelling, made up as it is of hybrid symbols and iconography that was understood by an indigenous population and reflected in her alliance with a *mestizo* race.³ She is acknowledged as instrumental in perpetuating an enduring conversation

¹ From "The Text of the *Nican Mopohua*," in *Guadalupe: Mother of the New Creation* by Virgilio Elizondo (New York: Orbis Books, 1997) 14 -16.

² Latina theologian, Jeanette Rodríguez maintains that the Virgin of Guadalupe represents an eschatological hope for all those who believe in her. Rodríguez says, "Consequently, Guadalupe calls forth the cultural memory of the people by entering into their history and incarnating their culture, symbols, and language. In doing so she validates them and thus empowers them. She restores their dignity and facilitates their liberation by demanding that they participate in the reclaiming of their own voice." Cited in "The Power of Image: Our Lady of Guadalupe," in *Cultural Memory: Resistance, Faith and Identity* by Jeanette Rodríguez and Ted Fortier (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007) 24.

³ Detailed description and interpretation of the indigenous and European overlays of the iconography of the Virgin of Guadalupe can be found in: Louise M. Burkhart, "The Cult of the Virgin of Guadalupe in Mexico" in *South and Meso-American Native Spirituality*, Gary Gassen, ed. (New York: Crossroads, 1997) 198-227 and Jeanette Rodríguez, *Our Lady of Guadalupe: Faith and Empowerment among Mexican-American Women* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994) 22-30.

between the human and the divine. Her devotees venerate her with affection and turn to her time and again in petition and gratitude.

Guadalupe has intrigued academics from diverse disciplines whose scholarship scrutinizes the phenomenon from multiple perspectives.⁴ Some center on an analysis of the image, others on the significance of the event. What always remains is the sustained affection of the people, kept alive through images in the homes, devotions, songs, and celebrations. Her image is often the primary shrine within a church's interior sacred space. It is also a ubiquitous image in the secular world, appearing on murals, cars, labels, T-shirts, labels, and tattoos.

For the community of St. Joseph the Worker Catholic Church in Berkeley, California, the Virgin of Guadalupe holds an esteemed place in the life of the parish. As a parishioner for the past year and a half, I noticed her shrine prominently located in a side niche in the sanctuary. Fresh flowers grace the small altar located at the base of her framed image. After mass on Sunday, devotees are seen kneeling before her image, lighting candles, or touching the frame as they pray.

My interest in the Virgin of Guadalupe was centered on a small sculpture used by the congregation of St Joseph for home visits (fig. 1). This Guadalupe, called *La Virgen Peregrina* (The Traveling Virgin), moves from one home to another each week.⁵ Using ethnographic methods of observation, recording field notes, conducting interviews, and simply being with the people of the parish, I sought to understand what Guadalupe means for the community in general, and for those engaged in the home devotion in particular.⁶ So, I attached myself to this little Virgin and accompanied her along a memorable path to the many events and the people with whom she was connected.⁷

I initially approached this study as an art historian, employing methods familiar to me: keeping the image or object at the center of the research, tracing the sources of the imagery and its related traditions, attending to the iconography, and regarding the image within its contexts and locations. As a student of theology, my interest was in observing how this devotion to Guadalupe was as an expression of popular religion and in understanding the

⁴ A sampling of studies on the Virgin of Guadalupe include anthropologist Eric R. Wolf, "The Virgin of Guadalupe: A National Symbol" in *Ritual and Belief: Readings in the Anthropology*, David Hicks, ed. (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2001); historians D.A. Brading, *Mexican Phoenix: Our Lady of Guadalupe: Image and Tradition Across Five Centuries* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), Stafford Poole, *Our Lady of Guadalupe: The Origins and Sources of a Mexican National Symbol, 1531-1787* (Tucson and London: The University of Arizona Press, 1995), William B. Taylor, "The Virgin of Guadalupe in New Spain: An Inquiry into the Social History of Marian Devotion" *American Ethnologist* 14 no.1 (Feb., 1987) 9-33; art historian Jeannette Favrot Peterson, "The Virgin of Guadalupe: Symbol of Conquest or Liberation." *Art Journal* 51 no. 4 (Winter 1992) 39-47; and theologians Virgilio Elizondo, *Guadalupe: Mother of the New Creation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997) and Jeanette Rodriguez, *Our Lady of Guadalupe: Faith and Empowerment Among Mexican-American Women* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994).

⁵ The tradition of a *Virgen Peregrina* (Traveling Virgin) dates back to medieval Spain, when local saints and Marion statues were carried from their shrines to the local churches and celebrated with processions made up of musicians and dancers. See Chapter 3 "Chapels and Shrines" in *Local Religion in Sixteenth-Century Spain* by William Christian, Jr. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981).

⁶ For this project, I draw on Latina theologian Ada María Isasi-Díaz's insights outlined in her book, *En La Lucha: A Hispanic Women's Liberation Theology*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993). In Chapter 3, she asserts that by using ethnographic methods that focus on the quotidian experiences of people (particularly women's), fresh insights and pertinent questions will arise related to the way theology is understood. "Doing theology" using ethnography, places emphasis on the dialogical relationship between the researcher and those being researched. I find great affinity in her methods of seeking understanding and meaning from ordinary people. I also share her conviction that all voices, particularly those overlooked, hidden, silenced, and marginalized populations, warrant attention in the theological discourse.

⁷ This paper highlights the period between September and December 2007; however, the study is an on-going one.

significance of the Virgin's place within the parish community.⁸ These methods and motivations directed my work and helped to establish a background for the image. Yet, the ethnographic strategies kept me attentive to the foreground.⁹ Thus, by attending to the points of contact between the individuals, the community, and the image, the words and the experience of the people are established as a primary source of interpretation.¹⁰ At the same time, the interdisciplinary aspects of the study worked organically to illuminate the visual, historical, and religious tradition.

As a second generation Mexican-American woman, I know and appreciate the Virgin of Guadalupe as a revered icon. In my family, devotions to her were not central, so I am perhaps more alert to explicit displays of piety and to deeper expressions of veneration than others more accustomed to her presence in their piety. Yet throughout this investigation, my familiarity with the Mexican culture helped me to move easily through assorted experiences

with individuals and groups. My encounters in various settings always involved Spanish. Although I am conversant with Spanish, occasional situations demanded fluency beyond my capabilities. This was not necessarily a disadvantage. Instead, it made me a keen listener to words, inflections, and silences. I was also always conscious of space, movement, postures, and gestures. In sum, I was attentive not only to what I observed, but attuned to multiple ways of knowing and intuiting.¹¹

What follows are four snapshots that serve as entry points. The snapshots, like prisms, refract cultural and religious impressions of Guadalupe's place or *lugar* in each scenario: the parish, the Sunday mass, the home rosary, and the December celebration. Excerpts from my fieldwork notes are used to create the scenes and further commentary is integrated into the written descriptions. Like photos, these snapshots are images that record particular events and in the process evoke the affective aspects of the experience. They are not meant to be the definitive "word" on the Guadalupe phenomenon. Nonetheless, the links between the current devotion and the historical tradition, the glimpses into the life of this parish, and most important, the words of the devotees themselves illumine the place and the meaning of *La Virgen Peregrina*. But first, let me introduce you to the Virgin.

La Morenita, La Madrecita, La Virgencita, La Lupita: These are all names of endearment given Our Lady of Guadalupe by her devotees. The Virgin I became enchanted with is a small statue about

⁸ Orlando Espín in *The Faith of the People: Theological Reflections on Popular Catholicism* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1997) asserts that popular Catholicism is a place where the cultural reality of Latinas/os continues to act as an "indispensable bearer of values, traditions, symbols, and worldview for and among U.S. Latino communities. The importance of popular Catholicism in the cultural self-definition and self preservation of U.S. Latinos cannot be exaggerated." (23) He further contends that this faith be taken seriously as a true *locus theologicus* (2-3) and as genuine expression of living the Christian gospel (144). Thus attention to popular devotions like the "Traveling Virgin" merits scholarly consideration.

⁹ Regarding the value of ethnographic work in theology, liturgy, and religious studies, Mark Searle in "New Tasks, New Methods: The Emergence of Pastoral Liturgical Studies" *Worship* 57 (1983) 291-308, posits three tasks related to the field of pastoral liturgical studies: the empirical, hermeneutical and the critical. In his discussion of the "empirical task" he asserts that attention to ethnographic data, particularly the description of ritual worship and what is experienced in the pews, will serve to inform liturgists and theologians. For an overview of the contributions, issues, and debates related to ethnographic research related to religion see James V. Spickard, J. Shawn Landres, and Merideth B. McGuire, eds., *Personal Knowledge and Beyond: Reshaping the Ethnography of Religion* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2002).

¹⁰ Drafts of this paper have been shared and discussed with the parish clergy and key women participants in this study. On-going conversations continue to refine interpretations.

¹¹ Sources for ethnographic strategies include P. Atkinson, et al., *The Handbook of Ethnography* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2001), particularly "The Ethics of Ethnography" by E. Murphy and R. Dingwall (339-351) and "Ethnographic Interviewing" by B. Sherman Heyl (369-383); James Spradley, *Participant Observation* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1980); and Robert M. Emerson, et al., *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).



The Parish of St. Joseph and the Worker

Figure 1

Photo by Rebecca Berru Davis

María Hernández with Guadalupita.
Señora Tere (left). María Moreno (right).

eighteen inches high.¹² She is made of molded plastic and stands gracefully in a *contraposto* position. Her sweet face is turned slightly to the side and her eyes seem to look off into the distance. She is attached to a mahogany stained wood base where a crescent moon peeks out from behind her cape and a small angel-like figure hovers closely to her supportive cloud. A brightly colored Mexican flag is furled protectively around the Virgin's feet. Her striking mandorla of soft red and gold plastic plumes frames her figure. At one time a light was attached to the back of the sculpture which, when plugged in, would illuminate the fanned back of the mandorla. A rosary is always draped over her turquoise mantel. Her small, delicate hands are pressed together in a gesture of prayer.¹³ She is called *Guadalupita*.

¹² This twenty-first century Virgin is not unlike the traveling Virgins of late medieval Spain or colonial Latin and Central America in that she is easily transportable. However, this contemporary Virgin is fashioned of molded plastic. The bodies of the traditional European and colonial dressed Virgins were constructed of a wooden framework. *Cofradías* usually assumed responsibility for maintaining the wardrobe and dressing the Virgins. For more on this tradition and how traveling Virgins and saints were used see: Barbara Doyle Duncan, "Statue Paintings of the Virgin" in *Gloria in Excelsis: The Virgin and Angels in Viceregal Painting of Peru and Bolivia* by Barbara Duncan and Teresa Gisbert (New York: Center for Inter-American Relations, 1986) 32-57 and Edward W. Osowski, "Carriers of Saints: Traveling Alms Collectors and Náhua Gender Roles" in *Local Religion in Colonial Mexico*, Martin Austin Nesvig, ed., (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 2006) 155-186.

¹³ The iconography reflected in this little Virgin follows the traditional symbolism associated with Our Lady of Guadalupe, except for the inclusion of the Mexican flag and the addition of the rosary swathed over her figure. Guadalupe's iconography had particular significance for the indigenous people who interpreted the visual symbols in this way: Her dark face links her with the indigenous people. She is depicted showing compassion and her eyes directed downward indicate humility. Her turquoise mantel associated her with a deity. And the stars on the mantle, as well as the angel at her feet, signified the beginning of a new era or civilization – the *mestizo* race. The maternity band around her waist designated that she was pregnant. She was linked to key elements in native cosmology - the sun she stood before and the moon she stood on. Her hands are held in the traditional indigenous gesture of "offering." Taken from "The Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe," Mexican American Cultural Center, n.d. For a more comprehensive discussion of the European prototype, iconography and indigenous connections see chapters 4-6 in *Our Lady of Guadalupe: The Painting, the Legend and the Reality* by John F. Moffitt (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2006) 47-87.

I lingered outside the church after mass enjoying the sunshine and taking in the sights from the top of the stone steps. As on most Sundays, a long table was set out on the sidewalk below. Today's advocacy group was the East Bay Sanctuary Movement. Their five volunteers were enthusiastically answering questions and passing out leaflets. At the end of mass, from the ambo, a representative from their organization shared a personal story of family members who had suffered torture at the hands of political death squads in Central America. They fled to the United States, seeking asylum and the East Bay Sanctuary was there to assist them. With that, the representative went on to explain the organization's purpose and services. I wondered how many in this Spanish-speaking congregation had had similar first-hand experiences.¹⁴

Flanking the information table were vendors and their carts. Each Sunday, two or three hand carts spilled over with enticing snacks. There were fresh slices of mango and papaya in small plastic bags sprayed with limón (lime), crispy chips squirted with chile and elote (corn on the cob) on a stick slathered with mayo and parmesan cheese. Occasionally raspados (shaved snow cones) or algodón de azúcar (cotton candy) made an appearance. Business is always brisk for these vendors at this opportune noon hour. For the forty to fifty minutes after mass each Sunday, the St. Joseph Latino parishioners find themselves intermingling in this social space where remnants of their old country and the realities of their new county merge. (October 28, 2007)

Father Crespín, a retired diocesan priest in his early seventies, has lived at St. Joseph's parish since 1981. On October 28, 2007 he recounted the history of the parish to me.¹⁵

St. Joseph Workman, as it was originally called, was established by the Irish Sisters of the Presentation in 1878. It was formally inaugurated in 1879. It had its origins as a working-class parish made up of Italian and Irish immigrants. After the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, with the reshuffling of the Bay area population, it grew significantly. Beginning in the 1930s and 1940s a Mexican community began to appear in the Oakland/Berkeley area. As their population increased, Father John García and four others were assigned by the Bishop to work with these urban communities and in those throughout the San Joaquin Valley, wherever there was a sizeable Spanish-speaking population. During the 1960s, the growing Mexican community of St. Joseph parish gathered weekly for Sunday liturgy, but their mass in Spanish was relegated to an offsite location at the Women's Mobilization Center. Nonetheless, a *Guadalupana* organization was formed and flourished. By the late 1960s, the community raised their own funds, and petitioned for, and received permission to organize an annual mass in Spanish to be held within the church building in honor of the December 12 Guadalupe celebration. Not until the 1970s, under Father Bill O'Donnell's leadership, was the Mexican community more fully incorporated into the life of the parish. He designated a mass in Spanish on Sundays at 11 a.m., a prime time for families. The 1980s brought an influx of refugees from Central America. During that time, St. Joseph became widely known for

¹⁴ Representatives from social service, healthcare, educational, or activist organizations are regularly provided opportunities to speak briefly at the conclusion of 11 a.m. mass.

¹⁵ In addition to this interview, historical information was drawn from Jeffrey M. Burn and Mary Carmen Batiza. *We Are the Church: A History of the Diocese of Oakland*. (Italy: Editions du Signe, 2001), 37 & 102 and Peter Thomas, Conmy, *A Parochial and Institutional History of the Diocese of Oakland: 1962-1972 and Two Centuries of Background*. (Mission Hills, California: Saint Francis Historical Society, 2000) 110-118.

their commitment to providing sanctuary for those who lacked proper documentation. In 1995, when Father Crespín became pastor, the cost of the Guadalupe festivities was built into the parish budget, catechesis was taking place in Spanish and English, and many of the ministers were bilingual.

Today the parish is made up of families from Mexico, El Salvador, Peru, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic and other Latin American countries. There are still Anglo parishioners, but sixty-five percent of the total church population is Spanish-speaking. Seven out of ten weddings and eighty percent of the baptisms are performed in Spanish. A look at a Sunday church bulletin reveals an array of bilingual religious educational opportunities, prayer groups, and social and community activities directed at the Latino population.

As Father Crespín told me the story of the Virgin of Guadalupe, I realized that securing her place within the church paralleled the Latino community's efforts to be included at St. Joseph. He explained that initially a small, framed reproduction of the Virgin was brought out only in December during the week of the Guadalupe events and then relegated to storage for the rest of the year. Later the image was situated on a column near one of the side altars throughout the year, and then moved to a more prominent location in the sanctuary for the December celebration. One year after the festivities concluded, the image was left enshrined in the sanctuary niche. Guadalupe remained despite some protests from the Anglo community that "their Virgin" be returned. In 2006, a large framed replica of Guadalupe was brought from the Basilica in Mexico to replace the parish's smaller reproduction. With great celebration, the immense image, framed elegantly like her counterpart in Mexico, was formally installed in its present location within the sanctuary. Her consignment to a significant space within the church officially established her *lugar* (place) and also affirmed the *realidad* (experience, existence, and reality) of the

Latino community within the parish. It was during the Guadalupe celebration in 2006 that the little statue of the Virgin was donated by a parishioner and that the home visits were initiated.

Every week at the beginning of Sunday mass, along with the celebrant and the ministers, this little statue of the Virgin is processed up the center aisle of the church (fig. 2). A member of her host family carries her into the sanctuary and then places her atop the side altar of the shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe. She resides in that place of honor until the conclusion of the mass when she is passed on to the next family and taken home.



La Virgen Peregrina at Sunday Mass

Figure 2

Photo by Rebecca Berru Davis

Señora Rosa Salazar awaiting the entry procession into Mass.

At the end of mass, after the announcements were made, Father Stephan (the associate pastor) invited the Madrid family to come up to the altar. While the husband and wife and their two sons made their way up the center aisle of the church, the couple who had hosted the Virgin in their home the previous week, gathered up the statue from the side altar and brought her over to the front center of the sanctuary. When all were assembled, Father explained to the community that the Virgin would be sent home with the Madrid family and that her presence would serve to bring together friends, family, and neighbors. He then extended his hand in blessing over the Virgin and asked us to do the same. In Spanish, he prayed that the week spent with the Virgin would be a special time for the family; a time of renewed hope and strength, and that her presence would continue to bless all those who surround her. (October 14, 2007)

With that final blessing, Father Stephan, the acolytes, and the family with the Virgin lined up at the foot of the altar steps, bowed deeply, then turned and processed down the aisle. *Guadalupe* was on her way out of the church and to a new home.

Over this past year the Virgin has been a guest in more than fifty homes. At present there are over ten families in line to receive her. These families place their name on a list and await their turn to host the Virgin. Most of the homes she visits are within the parish boundaries; however, some of them have been as far away as Richmond, Pinole, and San Pablo. Former parishioners who have moved further up the interstate corridor still wish to stay connected to St. Joseph's by requesting a visit from the Virgin. *Guadalupe* continues to move across geographic boundaries dissolving lines between sacred and secular space.

As Father Stephan, newly installed pastor at St. Joseph, pointed out to me, "*La Visita de la Virgen*" ("The Visit from the Virgin") has taken on a life of its own.¹⁶ She has allowed community members to connect with one another on a more intimate level. He sees the devotion as a way to help people to pray. For Father, when he has been able, it has provided him an opportunity to get to know parishioners by visiting them in their homes. He is hopeful that out of the devotion, as people come together for prayer and for fellowship, an interest in *comunidades de base* (small Christian communities of support that link faith and justice) will emerge.

*We were greeted at the door by two women, probably in their late twenties or early thirties. The greetings were warm and gracious. As we entered the small living room, I was taken aback by the elaborately tiered "shrine" or altar that had been created for the Virgin. Lovely shrines were typically created for the Virgin's visit, but this one was especially extravagant. Set up against the fireplace, the *Guadalupe* sculpture was the centerpiece of this shrine.¹⁷ She was situated below a large picture of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The mantel was lined with images of St. Jude, the pope, small reproductions of the Virgin of Guadalupe and a few family photographs. A string of little white lights lined the fireplace and acted as a frame for the Virgin. The Virgin's *mandorla* was surrounded with an array of pink roses. At her feet was*

¹⁶ Interview October 13, 2007.

¹⁷ C. Gilbert Romero. *Hispanic Devotional Piety: Tracing Biblical Roots* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991) 83-84. In Chapter 6, "The Home Altar," Romero discusses the tradition of creating and decorating home altars for Mary, Christ and the saints. He points out that associating the home altar with the "hearth" or fireplace, "is a more determinative and conscious attempt at localizing divine presence" within the central space of "power" in the home. Thus, the sacred space of the altar in church is associated with the sacred space in the home.

a small bouquet of pink buds. On the tier below was a doll-like figure of the Niño Divino (the Divine Child) lying on his back, dressed in what looked like a hand-crocheted white outfit. An open bible, displaying a portrait of Guadalupe's face, was positioned against El Niño. Set below the bible, was another doll-like figure lying on her back and dressed in a delicately, embroidered pink gown. The hostess explained it was the Virgencita Durmiendo (the Virgin sleeping). She reminded us that the La Virgen never died, but instead was assumed into heaven. The fine details of the sculpture were impressive. The Virgin had pierced diamond earrings and eyes with tiny lashes that opened and closed.

As the five of us were making ourselves comfortable on couches and chairs in the room, Marcela, Estele, and one other woman walked in. The two young women hostesses who were *cuñadas* (sisters-in-law) were busy bringing in extra chairs. María situated herself in a corner, kneeling on the floor, began pulling out the song sheets from her canvas bag and organizing the books needed for the recitation of the rosary. Once we were all settled, María began the prayer. (November 28, 2007)

When I first began this project, I was directed to María. María Moreno is a reserved Mexican woman in her early fifties with a compelling presence. She regularly attends the 11 a.m. Sunday mass and is frequently seen in the vestibule of the church before mass greeting people as they arrive. Individuals stop and share their *noticias* (news); often requesting prayers from her. During mass, she stations herself towards the front side aisle close to the choir and can be seen kneeling reverently during the Eucharistic Prayer. She commonly contributes to the announcements at the end of mass, informing the congregation of details related to an upcoming prayer event. She is the person responsible for main-

taining the list for the *Virgen Peregrina* and organizing the home rosaries. She typifies a *rezadora*; a respected woman known for her service to the community, her wisdom and her personal faith.¹⁸

The rosaries in the homes I attended all began in the same way. María called us to prayer. She centered us by asking us to leave our distractions behind and with the help of the Holy Spirit, place ourselves before the Virgin (fig. 3).¹⁹ It was an effective way to move us into a quiet space for prayer. Women then took turns leading a decade of the rosary. At the conclusion of each decade, Marcela led us in song. The women's voices were strong and robust. Within the small quarters of the living rooms, the engaging melodies and deep tones reverberated within our bodies. The lyrics often affirmed who we were and what we were about.²⁰

¹⁸ This term appears in Ana María Díaz-Stevens, "Analyzing Popular Religiosity for Socio-Religious Meaning" in *An Enduring Flame: Studies on Latino Popular Religiosity*, edited by Anthony M. Stevens-Arroyo and Ana María Díaz-Stevens (New York: Bildner Center for Western Hemisphere Studies, 1994) 22. Orlando Espín in *The Faith of the People: Theological Reflections on Popular Catholicism* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997), states that "The ministers of Latino Catholicism are primarily the older women. They are deemed wiser and usually in possession of greater personal and spiritual depth than the men. Women are the center and pillars of the families and Latino popular Catholicism is definitively woman-emphatic." (4)

¹⁹ Throughout this ethnographic study I was struck by the close associations made between the Virgin and the Holy Spirit. An explicit connection was *Himno al Espíritu Santo*, a hymn evoking the Holy Spirit, sung at the beginning of each rosary. Orlando Espín raises some "intuitive" questions related to links between the Virgin and the Holy Spirit, discussed in the Introduction of *The Faith of the People: Theological Reflections of Popular Catholicism* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997) 6-10.

²⁰ Latina theologian, Jeanette Rodríguez points out "Stories of human relationships with historical depths, myths proverbs and songs tell us who we are and who we can be. These narratives, relationships spiritually are lived out and meditated through culture." in "Latina Activists: Toward an Inclusive Spirituality of Being in the World," in *A Reader in Latina Feminist Theology: Religion and Justice*, edited by María Pilar Aquino, Daisy L. Machado, and Jeanette Rodríguez (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002) 117.



The Home Rosary

Figure 3

Photo by Rebecca Berru Davis

A home altar with Virgin.

*Yo también soy morena
Y te vengo a cantar,
Como el indio Juan Diego
Te traigo rosas y una oración.*

*Yo también soy morena
Y te vengo a pedir
Que me cubra tu manto
Y a todos los de mi hogar.²¹*

From the refrain, *Canto a La Virgen de Guadalupe*

After the songs, there was always time for silence before the petitions began. It was through these prayers of petitions that I began to get to know the women as individuals. Many of the women began by first acknowledging that the Virgin understood the experience of suffering and loss through her Son. In their petitions they expressed their own concerns for vulnerable children, non-compliant teens, deceased husbands, family members undergoing surgery, aging parents, and those struggling with disintegrating marriages. They also addressed their concerns for the greater sorrows of the world: those who were ill and in need of medication, the homeless and hungry, soldiers and civilians caught up in war, children without parents, and always for those in purgatory. They placed all their worries and concerns before the Virgin. During this time, they also expressed their gratitude for the many gifts bestowed. They prayed in thanksgiving for the opportunity to participate in the home rosaries, for the larger community of St. Joseph, and particularly for the friendships that continued to deepen through this shared experience. All of this they asked in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit and calling on the intercession of the Virgin of Guadalupe.

²¹ "I also am dark-skinned and I come to sing, like the Indian Juan Diego I bring roses and a prayer. I also am dark skinned and I come to ask that with your mantel you cover and protect me and all those in my home."

It was during one of these petition periods, that one of the young hostesses for the evening, who had been kneeling before the altar, tearfully expressed how difficult it was to be so far away from their family. She asked that her mother and mother-in-law back in Mexico experience the love that they, their family here in the United States, had for them. She asked the Virgin, a mother herself, to intercede in a special way, by filling their mothers' hearts with comfort and cariño (caring love). I looked around the room at the semi-circle of women and for a moment sensed their familiarity with the pain and felt the intensity of their understanding. Many of these women had undergone similar experiences as young married women, of being separated from loved ones in Mexico. These older women were supporting this young woman in prayer—so it seemed. (November 28, 2007)

A core group of eight to nine older women of the parish faithfully accompany the Virgin on her visits. They help to lead the rosary and support the family in prayer. Marcela, one of these women, explained to me “God to us is not someone far away. On the contrary, He is with us all the time and we talk constantly to him, aloud and mentally. We do the same with the Virgin of Guadalupe.” Latina theologian, Jeanette Rodriguez points out that “Theology done by women deals with concrete experiences. Daily life is the point of departure. For Latinas a religious view of faith as mediated through culture has played a primary role in their lives. Through their faith as lived out in their spirituality, they have found a source by which to recognize significant values that they draw from for developing self esteem, confidence and a commitment to resist all forms of sustained injustices.”²²

²² Jeanette Rodríguez, “Latina Activists: Toward an Inclusive Spirituality of Being in the World,” in *A Reader in Latina Feminist Theology: Religion and Justice*, edited by María Pilar Aquino, Daisy L. Machado, and Jeanette Rodríguez (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002) 115.

Indeed, it was during the spontaneous prayers that followed each decade of the rosary that the women found the space to express their gratitude for lo cotidiano, the very ordinary and the most exceptional blessings and needs in their lives. Each prayer request presented, no matter how detailed and specific or how broad and encompassing, was received and confirmed by the group with the utmost support. Often what followed was affirmation, empathy, or a new perspective offered in the form of a prayer response by another woman. In this way the group becomes further linked together with each subsequent decade.²³

These evenings were not only a time of prayer but also a time of fiesta. After the rosary was completed, traditional Mexican dishes such as *mole* (a spicy sauce usually poured over chicken or pork), *tamales*, *pozole* (a dish made with hominy and pork), *guisos* (traditional dishes), *frijoles* (beans), or *arroz* (rice), and drinks like *chocolate* (hot chocolate made with milk), *agua de tamarindo* (a drink made with tamarind) or *agua de horchata* (made with rice and cinnamon) were served.

While it was clear that María presided over the prayer, the table conversation was a free for all. Most of the women were animated as they talked about food preparation, recipes, diet, how dishes were cooked in their families or previously in Mexico. A couple of times María turned to me, smiled, and said in Spanish, “Are you able to follow the conversation? Are you getting all of

²³ In this shared prayer, the women call upon the divine (the Virgin) and reveal to each other the wide spectrum of their needs and the support they hold for one another, demonstrating what Jeanette Rodríguez describes as “complex relationality.” Rodríguez explains the assumptive world of Latina women and the way in which they understand the events in their lives: “The way these women come to make meaning of their world, or their overall assumptive world, is powerful and has at its core what I term complex relationality. Complex relationality refers to the way in which women’s experience is grounded in interpersonal relations and extends itself even into the realm of divinity.” Jeanette Rodríguez, *Our Lady of Guadalupe: Faith and Empowerment Among Mexican-American Women* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994) 115.

this down in your notes?" Later she said, "You see, first we fill our spirits with prayer and now we fill our bodies with food." (November 8, 2007)

Through shared prayer and food, parishioners who previously sat side by side each other in the pews on Sunday as strangers become acquainted. Marcela summed up the benefits of the home rosaries with a *dicho* (saying). At church it is like this: "*Caras vemos, corazones no sabemos,*" (We see the faces, but the hearts we don't know). It was in spending time together in homes with the Virgin and with others that individual's particular concerns and hopes were expressed, revealed, understood, and supported.

Guadalupita was nowhere to be seen. Last night after the Serenata (serenade), I located her lodged within the flowers at the base of the shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe. She was almost completely hidden; enveloped by the profuse array of roses in vases which fanned out in multiple tiers and descending rows from the side altar. Today, as hundreds gathered around outside the church for the procession, she was nowhere to be seen. I asked Father Stephan, who was bustling about, where she was. He stopped abruptly, looked surprised, and then asked me to follow him into the rectory quickly. There she was. He told me she had spent the night in his office. He then asked me to make sure she was part of the procession. Once outdoors, I located a familiar face in the parish, a teacher of religious education who was attempting to assemble a group of children behind their banner of Guadalupe. This seemed to be an appropriate group for the Virgin to accompany, so I handed Guadalupita over to the woman in charge. (December 9, 2007)

This year's Guadalupe celebration at St. Joseph the Worker parish consisted of a variety of events. The *Serenata* to the Virgin, on Saturday evening, featured a *ballet folclórico* (traditional dance troupe), an *obra* (reenactment) of the Guadalupe story, songs to

Our Lady and refreshments of *tamales* and *atole* (a corn drink). On Sunday, a procession, mass and dinner consumed the greater part of the day beginning at 11 a.m. And the traditional *Mañanitas* (a birthday song of celebration) took place at 5 a.m. on the morning of December 12 followed by mass and *chocolate* and *pan dulce* (sweet bread).

It was Sunday's procession before mass that for me particularly shed light on what the Virgin meant for the community. At least 500 persons participated in a procession that circled the neighborhood, blocks beyond the church property. Father Stephan had acquired a permit and had made arrangements for a police escort to keep traffic at bay for the half-mile journey. For weeks he had been inviting parishioners to participate by preparing *carros alegóricos* (parade floats depicting "The Story"). He had no reason to be disappointed. There were at least four waxed pickup trucks, each with a scene from Tepeyac in their flatbeds. The picturesque backdrops were fashioned out of cut cardboard or masonite, crumpled painted paper, and handmade flowers made from brightly colored tissue paper. Children dressed as Juan Diego and the Virgin, attempted to remain motionless on these moving stages. A group of around thirty indigenous plumed dancers, of all ages and sizes, walked solemnly in two lines. A deep sound resonated from the conch shells being blown randomly by the leaders. A small truck followed, transporting María and Marcela seated in two low chairs, secured in the flatbed of the truck. With microphones in hand, Marcela led the procession in song, alternating with prayers in Spanish from María. Numerous children dressed as Juan Diego or the Virgin walked with their families. Mothers, with richly woven skirts, embroidered blouses, and colorful ribbons in their braids held babes in arms or children by the hands. The little ones were dressed in miniature versions of their parents' regional dress. Men sported elaborately designed and painted Guadalupe T-shirts. A bell rung every ten minutes



Celebration

Figure 4

Photo by Rebecca Berru Davis

Our Lady of Guadalupe procession.

by a *capataz* (captain) signaled the four *costaleros* (porters) to put down the small *paso* (float) that carried a framed image of the Virgin of Guadalupe and a small plaster figure of Juan Diego. This tradition, still carried on in Central America has deep roots in sixteenth-century Spain (fig. 4).²⁴

I wove in and out of the procession taking in the experience from all vantage points. I also located myself outside the procession, standing with some of the onlookers in the neighborhood. It was an impressive sight. These were individuals normally invisible in the community. Together with the Virgin, they were visibly marking the space as sacred by moving through the neighborhood.²⁵

“Un Nuevo Camino”

The New Path

It was during this evening’s rosary, at a point of petition, that a woman named Violeta, made an “announcement.” She had been thinking and praying about a name for the group. She reminded the others that since the group’s inception last December they still had no name. Here was one. She felt a name had been “given” to her. She wanted to place the name before the group. She had it written on a little piece of paper which she pulled out of her purse: “Un Nuevo Camino con La Virgen de Guadalupe de San José El Obrero.” They all agreed that it was a good name. María’s approval seemed to act as confirmation. (October 5, 2007)

²⁴ For a comprehensive history of the *Semana Santa* (Holy Week) processional traditions see Susan Webster’s *Art and Ritual in Golden-Age Spain: Sevillian Confraternities and the Processional Sculpture of Holy Week* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998).

²⁵ Karen Mary Dávalos discusses the negotiation of sacred space enacted by a “multidimensional event” through a neighborhood in Chicago in “The Real Way of Praying: The Vía Crucis, Mexican Sacred Space, and the Architecture of Domination” in *Horizons of the Sacred: Mexican Traditions in U.S. Catholicism* by Timothy Matovina and Gary Riebe-Estrella, eds., (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002) 41-68.

I sensed that this “naming” was a significant point in the life of this devotion. I felt privileged to be present and to witness this event. *Guadalupita* was now associated with “*Un Nuevo Camino*,” (“A New Path”) a new way to proceed. However, as I was beginning to understand, she had always been forging a “New Path” for the Latino community. This was a path that I realize now is connected to the meaning of the *Virgen Peregrina*.

Historically, Guadalupe had been instrumental in incorporating the Latino community into the greater life of the parish at St. Joseph. She had done this physically and symbolically as a permanent place was secured for her image within the church space. Her prominent visual presence signified greater acceptance of the Latino congregation into the established parish community. However, a permanent home with a stationary image was not enough. Another kind of image, in the form of a little sculpture, was a reminder to the community that her presence is not static or can it be contained; it moves. Guadalupe is transportable in the form of a new symbol providing a means for the church community to carry *La Virgen Peregrina* beyond the church building. *Guadalupita* has a significant place in the Sunday liturgy, asserting a visible link to the community’s beloved Virgin by her placement on the altar shrine. Later, as she is carried away from the looming image of Guadalupe in the sanctuary from the sacred space of the church, she travels into the secular world. Her visits to homes throughout the parish and beyond transcend lines of demarcation bringing different people together. A religious devotion with sources rooted in an Iberian past still finds relevance in the present for this immigrant and multigenerational community of Latinas/os.²⁶

²⁶ Espín discusses that Latinos often take refuge and find comfort in the familiar religious world of popular Catholicism. Orlando Espín, *Faith of the People: Theological Reflections on Popular Catholicism* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1997)138-140.

Guadalupita’s presence in the homes provides host families the opportunity to creatively express their devotion and affection for the Virgin. This is evident in the elaborate shrines they create. Appreciation is also felt for guests, as old and new friendships are affirmed through hospitality and food. The home rosaries provide a means for laity, particularly women, to lead prayer and shape devotion outside of clerical control.²⁷ The homes provide an intimate space for particular concerns and hope to be expressed. Like any honored guest, Guadalupe’s visit generates respect, pride, and joy.

Finally, *Guadalupita* was a central part of all the pageantry and celebration associated with her feast. Most noteworthy among the Guadalupe events was the procession. As the Virgin made her way around the block, accompanied by over 500 Latino parishioners, a new path was forged. This time it penetrated into and incorporated the neighborhood. In doing so the parishioners were drawing attention to their parish community and to themselves, and to the Virgin they esteemed. Through it all, *La Virgen Peregrina* accompanied them. As I located *Guadalupita* carried by a young woman in the midst of the processing children, I recognized that for the parishioners of St. Joseph the Worker, this ever-widening circle acted to establish and affirm her place among them and their place in the broader community.

²⁷ Theologians, James Empeur, and Eduardo Fernández discuss characteristics of Hispanic popular religion, citing that “the practices were not usually led by clergy,” they were communal in character, they were intimately bound up with self-identity, and they affirmed the physicality of elements and objects such as candles, statues, flowers, etc. in *La Vida Sacra: Contemporary Hispanic Sacramental Theology* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2006) 24-25. *La Vida Sacra: Contemporary Hispanic Sacramental Theology* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2006) 24-25.



Figure 5
Photo by Rebecca Berru Davis

Guadalupe on her way to the University of California Berkeley
December 9, 2007.

Epilogue

La Virgen Peregrina is still traveling. Where is she now? She is spending the week with students in a dorm room at the University of California Berkeley (fig. 5). It is "Finals Week" and the needs and concerns are great. This again is remarkable, as *Guadalupe* continues to cross generational lines and claim physical space, moving into the hearts of people of all ages. Nonetheless, she will also be present at the 11 a.m. mass on Sunday at St. Joseph the Worker.

Who is Our Lady of Guadalupe? *Guadalupana* Testimonials

Theresa Torres

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“Who is Our Lady of Guadalupe?” is the central question of this article. The multifocal images of Guadalupe have been revered, challenged, re-envisioned, and recreated to meet the needs of her devotees. One such group of devotees, known as La Sociedad de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe (The Society of the Our Lady of Guadalupe), or simply “Las Guadalupanas,” is composed of ardent followers of her message and vision. This article examines the significant role of religious and ethnic identity for this particular group of Latinas and how their beliefs have inspired them to local activism on Our Lady’s behalf.

Our Lady of Guadalupe is a central symbol for many Mexicans and Mexican Americans and a focus of their religious commitment. Given this symbol’s pivotal role, in this article my research focuses on a case study in Kansas City, Missouri called the Society of Our Lady of Guadalupe whose members are known as *Guadalupanas*. I describe my interdisciplinary methodology and examine the rich meaning systems I gleaned from my interviews and analyses of the religious practices and beliefs of women members of the Society of the *Guadalupanas*. My research highlights the

effects of this devotion on these women’s lives, especially in terms of their civil and social activism.

When the Roman Catholic Diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph began the process of closing their church and merging their parish with Sacred Heart Parish, the *Guadalupanas* organized their relatives, current and former members of the church, neighbors, and friends to save their church and turn it into a shrine to Our Lady of Guadalupe.

The *Guadalupanas* are an organization of non-clerical leaders that promote devotion to their patroness through an annual novena (nine days of preparatory prayer) and a December 12th celebration. The Society is part of an earlier tradition of confraternities, (religious societies) called *cofradías*. The ecclesial tradition within medieval Spain and colonial Mexico promoted *cofradías* as a way to transmit and maintain religious belief and practice of the people in local churches. These societies focused their practices on Christ (also known as the Sacred Heart) or particular saints (revered individuals who have died and are honored for having lived a sacred life), holding annual celebrations on the feasts of their patrons. In the local parish, the celebrations were opportunities for both the practice of their religious devotions and communal *fiestas*. Spanish and Mexican *cofradías* like the *Guadalupanas* promoted a certain degree of equality among the members and relative autonomy from ecclesial authority in that the members had a particular role within the local church, which empowered them to function as lay leaders.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Mexicans settled in the Kansas City metropolitan area. The local Catholic community started the parish of Our Lady of Guadalupe for Mexicans in 1914 with a temporary chapel. In 1919, diocesan authorities officially established the parish of Our Lady of Guadalupe. In 1937, the confraternity of Our Lady of Guadalupe began in conjunction with the parish and was composed entirely of women until 1990.

Currently, the membership consists of 10 men and 165 women whose ages range from 16 to 90 years. The majority of the members is middle-class and has a high school education. Presently, the parish of Sacred Heart-Guadalupe has approximately 600 families.

The *Guadalupana* Society is a place for women to exercise leadership roles within the largely hierarchical and male dominated ecclesiology of the Roman Catholic Church. Without specialized religious pastoral education, few lay leaders are able to claim the few opportunities for pastoral leadership. The *Guadalupanas* have in short managed to find a social space and even to exercise a measure of leadership within a male-dominated church structure.

The bulk of my research consisted of twenty-one interviews with *Guadalupanas* who spoke openly about how they dealt with their life situations through prayer and petitions to Our Lady of Guadalupe and how much they depended upon their faith in God and Our Lady of Guadalupe to get them through difficult times in their lives. These interviews I structured around the following questions: Who is Our Lady of Guadalupe to you? Why did you become a *Guadalupana*? What role, if any, does the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe play in your faith? Do you participate in religious and civic activities? If so, please explain the types of activities.

While the women's narratives are too lengthy to be presented here in totality, I have selected recurring themes from the women's narratives as a way to highlight the most salient features of their faith and the ways that their beliefs have supported and affected their lives. To protect the identities of the women, in recording their stories I have changed their names and some of their personal characteristics.

Of all the women's narratives, I selected five to present in depth because they nicely reflect key themes present in nearly all of the interviews. The five women's stories reveal various levels

of participation in religious and civil pursuits. Two of the women, Roberta Romero and Norma González, were involved in politics and expressed a desire to run for local office and are leaders in their parish. Roberta was the head of her own business and started several businesses. Norma held a political position in the city and was a local leader in the Mexican American community. Both were single parents.

While not active in the civic realm, a third woman named Clara Herrera volunteered at Sacred Heart-Guadalupe parish and in diocesan events, helping with Guadalupana fund-raisers, and working with young children. From her experience of sharing her faith with children, Clara gave rich descriptions of her belief in Our Lady of Guadalupe. Fourth, I present Raquel García who worked with the elderly and enjoyed volunteering at the parish, which she did on a limited basis because of family duties. Finally, I present Anita Rosas, who, though not involved in civic activities, was an active leader in the Church/Shrine when Our Lady of Guadalupe was a parish and later volunteered at the parish of Sacred Heart-Guadalupe. Anita Rosas also worked at an agency that assisted immigrant families.

Following the principles of grounded theory, I carefully analyzed the interviews of Clara, the third of these women, coding her description of Our Lady of Guadalupe.¹ Grounded theory includes looking carefully at the multivocal meanings present in the interview. So, for example, Clara's interpretation of a picture of Our Lady of Guadalupe refers to childhood, pain, and motherhood. Besides identifying with Our Lady of Guadalupe as a mother, Clara also stresses the importance of her patroness as a validation of her own self-identity and ethnic identity.

¹ Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998), 57-71.

On the basis of my analysis of Clara's interview, I chose the following themes to describe her experiences. First, her experience of Guadalupe is transformative; she felt herself changed by her experience. Second, Clara's experience of the Virgin is as a mother and is related to her experience of her grandmother. Third, Clara's sense of self and ethnic identity is closely tied to Our Lady of Guadalupe. Fourth, Clara relates her affective experiences in her devotion to her patroness as a source of strength, guidance, and protection.

After studying all of the women's interviews, I selected the following themes from them: Our Lady of Guadalupe as mother (inclusive of the image of Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus), transformative prayer experiences, self-identity (inclusive of ethnic identity), the web of relations, and home (which refers to the Shrine.) Although data from all of the twenty-one interviews contributed to the determination of themes and categories, limitations of time and space meant I selected only five representative women's stories, stories that exemplified how their understanding of Guadalupe embodied motherhood, transformation, was helpful in understanding their own identities, in realizing the web of relationships of which they are a part, in understanding home, and *la fuerza* or strength.

Mother

Each of the women interviewed describe Our Lady of Guadalupe as mother. Although Anita refers to Our Lady of Guadalupe as mother, her description focuses on her various titles such as Blessed Mother, Our Lady of Fatima, Our Lady of Lourdes, and Our Lady of Perpetual Help. While she uses titles to explain her understanding, Anita also compares her patroness to her mother, describing both as humble women. Anita refers to the story of Juan Diego when Our Lady Guadalupe tells him that she is his mother and not to be afraid. Thus, Anita like Clara has

an affinity with Our Lady, both women referring to her in a manner that expresses their feelings of closeness, and connecting their experiences with other important women in their lives, such as their mother or grandmother.

Norma describes how as a young child she understood Our Lady of Guadalupe, calling her Blessed Mother, Mary, and the mother of Jesus. Like Clara and Anita, Norma finds that her faith has been transmitted through her relationships with her mother and her Aunt María, both of whom had strong devotion. Roberta similarly associates Our Lady of Guadalupe with Mary. Roberta describes Our Lady of Guadalupe as Mary and uses various titles of Mary. She also emphasizes the distinctiveness of Our Lady because she is Mexican and someone with whom she consequently has a strong affinity. She describes her close identification with her patroness as part of her ethnic heritage and because Our Lady is a mother. Although Roberta unlike the other women does not directly tie her faith to her mother or her grandmother, she does link her relationship to Our Lady with another person in her life, her friend, who recently died and who was someone with whom she shared her faith and received support during difficult times of personal loss.

Raquel describes her interpretation of Our Lady of Guadalupe with her ethnic ties. She also associates Our Lady of Guadalupe with the Blessed Mother, and has affinity with her as a mother. She ambiguously describes the relationship between Our Lady of Guadalupe and Blessed Mother. Raquel explains that she does not necessarily see the two as the same but notes that they are supposed to be the same, yet she does see a distinction. Unlike the others, Raquel does not refer to other women as part of her relationship with Our Lady of Guadalupe. She does, however, note the important role of relationships within the *Guadalupanas* that encourage her involvement in the group and in religious activities.

While the image of mother appears to be a constant for Our Lady of Guadalupe in the *Guadalupanas'* interviews, several of the women add further insights to this interpretation. Clara calls her the mother part of God. Raquel says that she does not know if she believes that Our Lady of Guadalupe is Mary, the mother of Jesus. She cannot explain why she believes there is a difference. Roberta offers an explanation that distinguishes between Our Lady of Guadalupe and Mary, because for her, Our Lady of Guadalupe is the Mexican Mary. Roberta also notes the difference between Our Lady of Guadalupe and Guadalupe, arguing that non-Catholic Mexican Americans can also identify with Guadalupe because for them she is an icon of Mexican identity, part of Mexican culture, history, and folklore.

Summing up, for these *Guadalupanas* Our Lady of Guadalupe is a mother, both human and divine, and is one who mediates their relationship with God. Clara maintains that for her, Our Lady of Guadalupe is part of God, whereas Raquel expresses uncertainty regarding the relationship between Our Lady of Guadalupe and Mary. Roberta notes the importance of her role as an ethnic icon for Mexican Americans.

Transformative Experiences

Each of the women depict moments in their lives where they felt transformed or changed by an encounter with the divine. Clara's transformation makes her "feel... like a child," suggesting a closeness with Our Lady and a sense of being protected and secure. In a follow-up conversation, Clara stressed the importance of her prayer because she believes that Our Lady of Guadalupe intervenes and helps her through difficult situations, not only by helping her to cope but also by changing the situation itself for the better.

In a manner similar to Clara, Anita also describes her Guadalupan encounter as enlightening and empowering as well as noting the overwhelming and humbling sense of experiencing Our Lady's great love. Anita describes being humbled by encountering the devotion of the indigenous people present at the basilica. Furthermore, Anita's devotion to Our Lady is evident in her commitments in supporting the Shrine and in her volunteer activities at the parish.

Norma's description is in some ways comparable to Anita's description because one of her first exposures to Our Lady of Guadalupe was also at the Basilica in Mexico City. Illustrating the overpowering nature of the encounter, Norma describes it as "an awesome feeling of peace and joy." Later in her life, during a difficult time, she believes that her patroness helped her get through an ordeal that she could not handle. Norma explains that in response she promised the Blessed Mother that she would return to the church and do whatever was requested. (Norma here exchanges the terms of the Blessed Mother and Our Lady of Guadalupe.) As a result of her promise, Norma is active in supporting the Shrine and the parish. Norma described herself before she recommitted to her faith as an unfeeling person, who cared only about having a good time as a way to relieve the tension from her stressful job. Now that she has a regular prayer life, Norma tries to help others in need, and believes she is more sensitive to others, and prays as a way of dealing with the difficulties that she faces at work.² Thus, Norma, like both Clara and Anita, understands that through her encounters with Our Lady of Guadalupe her life changed and she was empowered to become more involved in religious activities.

² Norma González shared her insights in another part of the interview that was not taped. Sometimes the women shared the best parts once I turned off the tape recording or as we were leaving.

During a difficult period of her life, Roberta felt overwhelmed with the pressures of being both a single mother and the head of her own business. One day, when she was at prayer before the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the words of her prayer card read “I who am your mother,” which Roberta experienced as words spoken directly to her. Like Clara, Anita, and Norma, Roberta believes that she was changed in that moment. She explains no longer feeling alone now that Our Lady of Guadalupe is there for her and her children. Claiming she experienced a conversion through her prayer, Roberta says she has learned how to pace herself in her work and commitments. Furthermore, she feels accepted, which is something that she had not felt for a long time in her life. Roberta is active in various volunteer activities in her parish and the community, and believes that it is through prayer that she is able to accomplish all that she has done. Roberta places a high value on praying for her various projects and stresses the importance of prayer for guidance and direction.

Unlike the other women’s experience of finding Our Lady of Guadalupe’s presence in the form of a picture or encounter in a church, Raquel’s transformative experience was in the form of a person who came to her door. During a difficult time in her life when she was dealing with loss, a man came to her door asking her if she knew how to pray the rosary. When she admitted she did not, he gave her a rosary and a leaflet on how to pray it. When she returned to the door with a donation, the man was gone. She believes that her encounter changed her because she now prays the rosary daily and claims that her prayer life has saved her sanity. Raquel values her prayer life and shares her belief with her co-workers. While Raquel’s experience differs from the other women, she is like Clara, Norma, and Raquel because since her experience, she is more active in the parish and in the *Guadalupanas*.

With the exception of Anita, each of the women describe times in their lives when they were dealing with difficulties and through prayer found the ability to change themselves and deal with the hardships. These experiences empower the women into action, as we saw in the cases of Norma, Clara, Roberta, and Raquel. All of the women voiced a strong belief in Our Lady of Guadalupe as well as a commitment to participation in their religious activities. Their activities are part of their commitments to their religious beliefs and their belief in the importance of reaching out to the poor. As a result of these commitments and transformative experiences, the women translate their beliefs into participation in the civic realm as well.

Self-identity

For these five *Guadalupanas*, and all of the twenty-one women interviewed, ethnic identity is an important part of their self-description. The five interviewees all stress how important it is to them that Our Lady of Guadalupe is Mexican, and thus someone with whom they identify. Arguing the importance of role models for herself and for children, Clara strongly identifies with the Mexican dark-skinned picture of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Anita, like Clara, points to the dark-skinned nature of her patroness, identifying with her and comparing her with Clara’s mother. Like the others, Norma, Roberta, and Raquel express that the Mexican aspect of Our Lady is important to them since she validates their identity as Mexican Americans. Clara, Roberta, and Raquel also self-identify with Our Lady of Guadalupe as a mother.

Web of Relations

All five of the women illustrate their interpretation of Our Lady of Guadalupe through a social network of relationships. These relationships are the means and construction of their worldview. They describe their affective relationships with her through their

understanding of human, familial relations. They relate to other members of the sacred realm, whether Jesus, other Marian images, or God in terms of their close familial and friend affiliations.

Clara connects her relationship with Our Lady of Guadalupe and the *Guadalupanas* with her experiences of her grandmother. Clara's memory of grandmother's love for Our Lady and the times she witnessed her grandmother praying the rosary brought her a sense of affiliation for Our Lady of Guadalupe at a young age. Clara further explains that she feels a connection with her patroness and her grandmother when she participates with the *Guadalupanas*. She also finds a close affinity with the saints, and described an occasion on which she was continually praying to St. Anthony for something that was lost. She believes that she finally received an answer that what she was looking for was not lost but stolen. By this example, she illustrates her close connection between *lo cotidiano* and the sacred.

Similar to Clara's depiction of closeness with the saints, Anita calls the saints her friends. Her portrayal of her prayer life illustrates her relationship with several saints through her various prayers and religious practices. Anita's relationship with the saints and Our Lady of Guadalupe connotes a friendly, familial closeness. While Anita does not describe her other human relations as tied into the complex of saints and Guadalupan popular religious expressions, her close connection to the Shrine Association and involvement with extended family members in supporting and promoting Shrine activities shows the interconnections between her human and her sacred relationships and commitments.

Like Clara and Anita, Norma's description of her prayer life is one of love and close friendship with her patroness. She has made promises to Our Lady of Guadalupe in return for having her prayers answered. Norma refers to both her mother and her aunt as having encouraged her to participate in the parish, the Shrine, and the *Guadalupanas*. Similarly, Norma depicts her relationship with Our

Lady as the reason why she got immersed in the Shrine Association, thus connecting her familial and sacred realms. Like her mother and her aunt, Norma's relationships extend to the saints.

Roberta's description of her relationship with Our Lady of Guadalupe is similar to the other women's portrayals of closeness. She feels an intimate connection with her patroness and ties this feeling to her mother, who recently died. She has a rich tradition of praying to various saints and has an affinity for each of them. Roberta extends her connections by praying to a friend who recently died and asks her to intercede for her.

In her interview, Raquel also depicts her close relationship with Our Lady of Guadalupe. While she does not describe a relationship with saints, she does explain that her relationship with her Aunt María was the reason for her activities in the parish and the *Guadalupanas*, which is like Norma's experience.

Careful scrutiny of the five interviews discloses the importance of the women's social relationships. Indeed, these relationships are the focus of their religious expressions, whether these relations are within the divine or human realm. The women cross these realms without concern for the seeming division between sacred and profane, human and divine, living and dead. They believe that the dead and the divine are not distant, and describe this combination of sacred and profane as all being part and parcel of quotidian life, *lo cotidiano*. Furthermore, their relationships are at the center of this world and are the heart of their religious expressions.

My research supports the importance of *lo cotidiano* as a source for theology because it is through their daily lives that the women find strength and support for their actions as leaders in their community. Hence, *lo cotidiano* is the place where the women encounter God, Our Lady of Guadalupe, human relationships, and find the source of support for their activities in their families, parish, Shrine, and community.

Home

In addition to their commitment to Our Lady of Guadalupe, all of the twenty-one interviewees claim, to differing degrees, the importance of the Shrine to the Mexican American community of Kansas City. Indeed, many of them describe Our Lady of Guadalupe as “home.” In a discussion regarding the importance of the Shrine, Anita articulates the meaning of the Shrine by using a metaphor and declaring, “The Shrine is the struggle of the Mexican people,”—thus linking the struggles her parents and grandparents had in establishing themselves in Kansas City with the same struggles that continue today. Besides highlighting the importance of Our Lady of Guadalupe for the Mexican people, Anita transfers this meaning to her Shrine in Kansas City. She argues that the Shrine represents the struggles of the Mexican people when they come to this country.

In Anita’s interview, she compares the Shrine with the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico. The Basilica is the home of the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe and is for the Mexican people their identity, and their hope. The image of Our Lady of Guadalupe is a visible symbol of the Mexican people and has been with them through numerous occasions of struggles, through wars, protests, and revolutions. Hence, Anita’s interpretation of the Shrine brings forth these meanings of Our Lady of Guadalupe from the Basilica in Mexico.

In their interviews, other *Guadalupanas* contribute analogous reflections of the Shrine’s multifarious layers of meaning. Raquel ties the Shrine to her childhood and her relations with the priests who worked there. Norma and Clara compare the Shrine with Our Lady of Guadalupe saying that it is in the Shrine they experience her presence. Norma clarifies that the building itself is not Our Lady of Guadalupe, but that the building is where she experiences and can express her faith. Roberta emphasizes her

experiences at the Shrine by pointing to the important familial and community experiences of weddings, baptisms, and funerals held there, traditions for which the community gathers at the shrine. Roberta explains that Our Lady of Guadalupe has meaning for all Mexicans and Mexican Americans whether they are Catholic or not, because they can identify with her image as an ethnic icon of their Mexican heritage. She points to her image as a symbol that represents Mexicans in their local community such as the social service center, Guadalupe Center, Our Lady of Guadalupe Shrine. Roberta argues that her patroness is another ethnic representation of Mexican identity in Kansas City.

First, Our Lady of Guadalupe is their mother. The feminine image of their patroness connotes a rich tapestry of multivalent expressions. The women refer to her in terms of their own mothers or nurturing characteristics with which they also self-identify. In her presence they experience love, dignity, and self-worth.

They tie Our Lady of Guadalupe’s presence to the story of her appearance to Juan Diego. The women connect the question she said to Juan Diego, “Am I not your mother?” as if she were speaking directly to them. They express the feelings of love, peace, joy, and serenity in their experiences of her presence and explain that she is with them during their difficulties, like a mother who protects and guides her children. Several of them name instances when they felt her love and presence during moments of difficulty or during the ordinary times of life, *lo cotidiano*. The women believe that they can turn to Our Lady of Guadalupe because she knows their suffering and understands them, offering them compassion.

Moreover, the women overwhelmingly connect Our Lady of Guadalupe to their own mothers. One woman explains that her mother looked and acted like Our Lady, because her own mother was a humble person. The women also express that this maternal aspect is part of the nurturing relationships that they have with

other women, particularly their grandmothers, aunts, and close female friendships. Thus, they connect Our Lady of Guadalupe with humility, support, and sustenance.

Whose mother is Our Lady? The women have multiple answers to these questions. While the most prominent response is to depict her as the Mother of God and the Mother of Jesus, others believe that she is the Mother of the Mexican people and do not agree that she is Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Some of the women also tie her to Mary and various titles and images of Mary: Our Lady of Lourdes, Our Lady of Fatima, and *Nuestra Señora de los Lagos*. These images differ with several women's responses describing their patroness as the maternal side of God and the divine mother. The multivalent images reveal the complexity of their interpretations.

Second, the women describe Our Lady of Guadalupe in terms of their personal stories of transformation. The women speak of an intimacy of their relationships with Our Lady of Guadalupe that connects them with a depth of religious faith and their close relationship with God. They find the strength, hope, and courage to continue in their daily struggles of life and through their experiences of daily contact and special moments of transformation in their prayer life they are empowered and supported.

Some of the *Guadalupanas* experience moments of transformation in the midst of *lo cotidiano*, and they explain that these occurrences are, upon reflection, opportunities for growth and change. They believe that the experience of her presence empowers them to face difficulties and gives them a sense of protection and freedom as they act. They stress they no longer feel alone and are aware of her acceptance and presence in their lives.

Through their transformative experiences, the women value these opportunities for deepening their faith. They feel a call to prayer, to change in order to be more like Our Lady of Guadalupe by answering the call to be both humble and responsive to the needs of others, and to act, particularly on behalf of the

Guadalupana society, the Church, and society as a whole.

Third, the women see themselves when they look at Our Lady of Guadalupe. She is dark-skinned with indigenous features that many of them share. She is Mexican and, although the vast majority of the women describe themselves as Mexican American, they identify with her as part of their own ethnicity and self-description. In her, they find a belief in their own self-worth and validation because she represents their ethnic heritage, which is often rejected in the dominant culture. In the face of Our Lady of Guadalupe, they see themselves and the other important women of their lives. Her beauty and honor extend to the women as they come to accept their own *mexicanidad* (Mexican-ness). Their understanding of themselves they see reflected in the eyes and face of their patroness.

Fourth, the women discuss the value of having a sacred place to experience Our Lady of Guadalupe. The Shrine is her dwelling with them and is a home. In the Shrine, they have experienced a sense of being at home and feeling a strong connection to her, their past, their families, and friends. The Shrine is a place where they connect with their Mexican identity.

Furthermore, they reason that the Shrine is connected to the struggles of the Mexican people in Kansas City. In this way, they also see that the Shrine and thus Our Lady of Guadalupe is a reflection of their Mexican and Mexican American community. Besides this comparison with the people, the women refer to the Basilica in Mexico City where the image of Our Lady of Guadalupe is hung as a place where they experience her overwhelming presence. Our Lady of Guadalupe is present to them as they enter the Shrine and the Basilica in Mexico. These places are more than buildings, for they represent and bring to life the reality of Our Lady of Guadalupe for the people and are reminders of the presence of the larger Mexican community. So, the Shrine is a place of dwelling of Our Lady of Guadalupe, for they believe that

it is there that they most experience her presence.

Fifth, the *Guadalupanas'* social networks form a web of relations that links them with Our Lady of Guadalupe, their families, friends, neighbors, and ethnic community. Our Lady of Guadalupe, as the religious connection of these networks, is a central point not only of religious ties but also a place of ethnic and community bonds. These bonds are renewed and refreshed in their religious and community commitments.

The web of relations contains their many commitments. The *Guadalupanas* describe their understanding of themselves in terms of these associations and attendant responsibilities. While they believe that both God and Our Lady of Guadalupe are central figures in their socially constructed world, they also link themselves with their intimate family and friends and describe their relationships within the sacred realm, such as with the saints. These various relationships are the foundation of their meaning system that supports and empowers them. The women believe that their self worth is closely tied to being of service and support to others. Furthermore, these relations are part of the way they describe their world because both the human and divine worlds are not divided but are one within their unity of vision: this world encompasses God, Our Lady of Guadalupe, themselves, their families, parish, and community.

Solidarity is also part of the web of relations because the women united to save their church by forming a non-profit organization and invited men to join with them. Their resistance bonds them, bringing together both present and former members of the Westside neighborhood and carrying them through the difficulties with the diocese as they struggle to maintain their church. Likewise, the *Guadalupanas*, individually and at times with other members of their ethnic group, extend their solidarity by working on behalf of the poor, immigrants, and those who

have experienced discrimination. These experiences on behalf of those without agency or voice call them to new levels of solidarity, unity, and empowerment.

Sixth, several of the *Guadalupana* leaders portray their actions to save the Shrine as being a "struggle." Likewise, the history of the Kansas City Westside Mexican American community depicts a community of resistance. On the basis of these reflections, this sixth and last category I entitle, "*la fuerza*," or strength, which is the strength of the people to maintain their stance of counter-hegemonic response to the external challenges to their community. Our Lady of Guadalupe is an example of *la fuerza* because she is their model and champion and agent of empowerment. As the *Guadalupana* leaders disclose their understanding of Our Lady of Guadalupe, they depict her story as both solace and challenge. In the story of the apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe, she appears to Juan Diego telling him not to be afraid because she is with him. This appearance bears a price because she also challenges him to request that the bishop build her a church. This request requires Juan Diego to speak out. The *Guadalupanas*, too, while accepting the gift of Our Lady of Guadalupe's presence in their lives, feel a challenge to respond to her requests.

One example of her requests was like Juan Diego in the social drama of the Shrine. The women fought the closing of their church, and like their other engagements in local community struggles, resistance is at the heart of the history and present identity of Mexican people's story in Kansas City. The collective and individual experiences of poverty, discrimination, neighborhood segregation, and isolation are part of the cause for resistance and are what inspired the bonds of solidarity against injustice. Our Lady of Guadalupe is connected to this struggle as the one who gives them their dignity. She is their face and the face of human worth and value in a society that often devalues or ignores their

existence. Her presence and validation of them gives them hope. Inspired by their patroness, they recognize that she leads them on their journey for justice. Like Juan Diego, the people asked their bishop for her church. Like Juan Diego, they were initially rejected but did not give up because she was with them. She is their hope.

Who is Our Lady of Guadalupe?

The *Guadalupanas'* interview responses are filled with rich imagery, performative behaviors, and polysemic explanations. The previous analyses of the data defy simplistic interpretation and given the complexity of the data, the use of the categories—mother, transformative experiences, self-identification, web of relations, home, and *la fuerza*—points to the opacity of the answer. How does one explain the depth and fecundity of the multiplicity of meanings ascribed to her? This case study is but one example of how a dedicated group of followers testify to the living reality of their belief in Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Santa Frida with Aura and Aroma On Frida Kahlo's Kitchen and her "Broken Column"

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July 6, 2007 marked 100 years of the birth anniversary of Frida Kahlo, the legendary Mexican artist. Just before her death in 1954, Frida wrote in her diary, "I hope the exit is joyful and I hope never to return."¹ More than half a century has gone by, but has Frida really left us? Doesn't she return to me every time I cook shrimp tacos in green sauce and gaze at her self-portraits? Frida wrote with her eyes and through her cooking; she spoke through her canvas and she loved with a broken body. In my revisitations of her portraits, in my remaking of her dishes, i.e., in my representations of Frida, can I encounter her aura and aroma? But then Frida

¹ Heyden Herrera, *Frida: A Biography of Frida Kahlo*, (New York: Harper Collins, 1983), p. 431

can never be re-presented, for in the many representations of her, be it through her paintings or cuisine, her self and her reality occlude. The real Frida is inimitable. Frida always insisted that she did not paint dreams but her own reality and her tears were her lenses. Frida was an extraordinarily beautiful mélange of a person who did not justify herself or her work. This then is my task in the following pages—to salute a gem of a genius and her work without justifying or negotiating her truth...

In Frida's Kitchen

Let us start in the kitchen. Among the various culinary books of Frida Kahlo's recipes, I have one that is published by Guadalupe Rivera² who was Diego Rivera and Lupe Marín's daughter. Diego married Lupe in 1923 after having met young Frida.

There is much more than potatoes, onions, rice and meats in the kitchen. It has been some years since I was in a restaurant in Mexico City savoring some dishes which were made from the exotic recipes of Frida. In the restaurant there was even a replica of her kitchen in La Casa Azul. It was and probably still is a sanctuary dedicated to her hybrid cuisine and one that scoffs at an insipid and pedestrian palate. Judging by the fame and flavor of her dishes, which were a taboo in her own mestiza mother's kitchen, not to mention her Jewish-Hungarian-German father, in Frida's kitchen they became a totem. She practiced what Oswald de Andrade in his "Manifiesto Antropófago" (published in 1928 when Frida was only 21 years old, before her marriage to Diego) prophesized: "the permanent transformation of taboo into totem."³

² *Mexikanische Feste: Die Fiestas der Frida Kahlo*, Guadalupe Rivera, texto, Marie-Pierre Colle, recetas, Ignacio Urquiza, fotos (München: Christian Verlag, 1995).

³ Oswald de Andrade. "Manifiesto Antropófago," *Revista de Antropología I*/ 1 (1928). Reprinted in "A utopia antropológica," in *Obras Completas de Oswald de Andrade* (São Paulo: Globo e Secretaria do Estado da Cultura de São Paulo, 1990).

Frida's culinary is one thing; the books of her recipes or the replica of her kitchen another. Her culinary is an event that is not incarnated in the cook books I have or the replica of her kitchen that I visited. Frida's cuisine cannot be replicated. It is irreproducible and unique. It belongs to her parties, the places and occasions, when and where they were celebrated. The dishes that I relished in the restaurant I visited, or those that I myself cook are unique creations inspired by the tastes, spices and vices that Frida recorded and found their way into the collection of cookbooks I have; but her party menus were not from her recipe books. Yet Frida's cuisine, since she left this world with a joy and hope of never coming back, is not really totally inaccessible to us. Frida indeed comes back; she comes back in the cook that uses her recipes, in the reproductions of the art she cultivated in her kitchen, in her studio, in her bed or wherever the spirit drove and inspired her to create.

I start with the kitchen because whoever risks the proximity of the pans and ovens and uses the alchemic and transforming powers of the fire in the preparation of a dish is able to tell the difference between the reproduction of a recipe from a cookbook or from a loose paper inserted between its pages, and the irreproducible ephemeral marvel of a dish prepared for an occasion. It is never reproducible even when one attempts to imitate it or reinvent it. The culinary reproduction is always at its best and worst a replica, a simulacrum of an original that remains for ever inaccessible, as inaccessible, subtle and evasive as the aroma and taste of the dish I am preparing; and the reader would not know it if she had not been at my table when I served it.

The paintings of Frida Kahlo, the profusion of self-portraits that she rendered into canvas are only "Frida" to the exact extent as it is "Frida" the food I concocted out of her recipes. Between what Frida cooked, painted and wrote, and what I know about her from her recipes, paintings and engravings reproduced in

books, posters, and printed on coffee mugs—the reproductions—, and the production of Frida in the kitchen—her original works—there is a disproportion that corresponds to the precise difference between the aroma of the plate that she cooked and the smell of the ink and the paper of the book of recipes that she composed and left behind.

This difference is by itself important but still more important is a simple fact that we often forget. We assume that there is continuity between the production and the reproduction of a work. Confusing as it is, the difference between these two is not unlike explaining a poem in prose and thinking that the latter is only a simple extension of the former. The fact that there is continuity between the two forms of representation obliterates the fundamental discontinuity. In a classic essay by Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” this question is raised emphatically. What an artwork loses in its reproduction is its “aura,” its authenticity. In the moment when “the mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitic dependence on ritual....the function of the art is reversed. Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice—politics.”⁴ In other words, in the moment that the artwork becomes independent of its original time and place and enters the field of the economic and political transaction it is subject to a game of hegemonic rules of power, even when it is an artwork that is intended to be a protest against this very game. What it gains by losing the aura is called the exchange-value and is determined by the established rules of a market.

So far, so good. However, what happens in this migration of the work of art from its original place and time is not only the surrendering of its aura but also the recreation of its own representation

in an endless conundrum of multiplications. The painting of Frida Kahlo that will be discussed later, for example, already comes demarcated, defined and framed by its accessibility; its exchange value makes it accessible to me, which I then bring into play in order to enunciate some ideas about “Frida.” The concepts and ideas I use in the context of this essay will then have an exchange value determined by the academic market in which it circulates. This value grows not in proportion to apperception of the “true Frida” that I purportedly represent in my reading. This “Frida” that I “invent” is my own creation in order to augment the bargaining power I amass in the expectation of a profitable academic exchange. Walter Benjamin aptly named this transformation of the production of an art work into its reproduction as “politics.” He goes on to verbalize it quite adeptly and calls it “the situation of politics which Fascism is rendering aesthetic.”⁵ Each reproduction of a work of art, including that which I am invested in doing here, is already entangled in a Fascist trap.

Following Benjamin, Gayatri C. Spivak offers an in-depth analysis of the consequences of this phenomenon on subaltern people. In her essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?”⁶ Spivak explains the Fascist mechanism Benjamin describes by defining the two meanings of the concept of representation that are often confused or not discerned. One is the representation as in the poetic expression of the reality of its author, the creator’s production; the other is as it is represented in the transaction of an identity in the field of symbolic exchanges. The example that Spivak uses is the one of the ritual of sati, the practice of self-sacrifice of a Hindu widow in the funeral pyre of her husband, or even in her refusal to undergo the terminal rite. The moment when this is witnessed by other

⁴ Walter Benjamin. *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*. (New York: Schocken, 1968). p. 224.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

⁶ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak,” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, eds. (Urbana: UIP, 1988), pp. 271-313.

eyes, it is represented by the colonial West (a typical instance of representation) as the voice of the woman, but now inscribed in a semantics governed and structured by colonialism. Thus, when she “speaks” through a proxy that purportedly tells her story, it is no longer she who speaks. The colonial writers (often for the best intended reasons) have taken her gesture out of the ritual in which it was framed and placed in a politically charged field, and voiceless she is.

In the height of the European surrealist movement, André Breton, in a condescending tone, said that surrealism never reached Mexico, it was already native to the country, and Frida Kahlo was its living proof. Frida, though, protested saying that her work was not surrealist, what she painted was her own *reality*. She would not let others speak for her. The protest of Frida is evinced in this distinction between the Frida that becomes present without reproduction in her work and the “Frida” whose exchange value is determined by the art market regulated by schools that barter its worth, or what it is not worth. Or as it is formulated by Walter Benjamin: “When the age of the mechanical reproduction separated art from its basis in cult, the semblance of its autonomy disappeared for ever.”⁷ In the same vein: in the reproductions of Frida Kahlo her own self and her reality are occluded.

It is Frida Kahlo herself that finds words to describe this difference of which I speak—between the representation as in a poem and its reproduction—in a poem she wrote in her journal:

*Tragedy is the most
ridiculous thing “man” has
but I am sure that
animals suffer,
and yet they do not exhibit their “pain”
in “theatres” neither open nor*

⁷ Benjamin, op. cit, p. 226.

*“closed” (their “homes”).
and their pain is more real
than any image
that any man can
“perform”
as painful.⁸*

Frida knew that she was among “men” in the theater of this world in which the practice of “representation” is inescapable, while the pain of animals remains unrepresented. Yet to undo the inevitable was her art. To present herself, in spite of the representations her character undergoes, is what she strived for, and this was her triumph. Therefore she was militant, non-conformist, lover of Trotsky and promoter of his arch-enemy Stalin, all enfolded in a non-reproducible whole. For Frida, the political representation that she herself made plenty use of was only the raw material of the art which she recast in visual poetry. “I am writing to you with my eyes”⁹, she said. And so she did.

But, alas, this then is my impasse! If I am to talk about Frida, her paintings, in other words, to represent her, she vanishes in my very act of representing her. How am I to deal with this impasse? Do I restore the cult and encounter the lost aura?

This is a fundamental query of postcolonial theory. The possible solutions there presented oscillate between two poles. One is what is called the vernacular option and the other the cosmopolitan one.¹⁰ The first challenges the political representation of the subaltern in a market that is already hegemonically saturated,

⁸ *The Diary of Frida Kahlo: An Intimate Self-Portrait*, introduction by Carlos Fuentes. (New York: Abrams, 2005), p. 239. The translation attempts to keep her handwriting in which italics are her normal writing, underlined regular characters are words that she underlined, the quotation marks are the same.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹⁰ For further discussion of these options, see Vitor Westhelle, “Margins Exposed: Representation, Hybridity and Transfiguration,” in *Still at the Margins: Biblical Scholarship Fifteen Years after Voices from the Margin*, R. S. Sugirtharajah, ed. (London: T&T Clark, 2008), pp. 69-87.

which in the sphere of the arts is the rejection of the reproduction, aiming at the unique possibility of the reestablishment of the cult, the experience of the aura, located and non-transferable. The other option suggests the possibility of the subversion of the hegemony through an oppositional practice in the very heart of the dominant market. In the work of art it takes the form of dissemination of non-canonical work as it happened with the artistic *Avant-Garde* movement of the early 20th century. If the first option, in respect to the authenticity, leads to isolation, the second, in the name of the oppositional political effectiveness, leads to the abandonment or the oblivion of the poetic representation, the identity, the voice, of the producer, in the frantic search to destabilize the hegemonic ways of representation. This was the merit of the surrealist movement always aiming for the dissonance, the shocking intervention into the hegemonic stability. Nonetheless, surrealism revealed the same problem as the *Avant-Garde* once it too became common currency in the art market and was by it assimilated. There is an anecdote that conveys this impasse of the cosmopolitan strategy. It is told that when the Spanish film director Luis Buñuel visited André Breton in his death bed, the self-proclaimed “pope of surrealism” took Buñuel’s hand in his and said to him: “Do you realize that nobody is surprised anymore?”

At the end of his text mentioned earlier, Walter Benjamin suggests that the response to the Fascist option of rendering politics aesthetic is to politicize art.¹¹ But that is what the reversion of the process means when art migrates to the sphere of political transaction. It suggests a move from the practice of representation and reproduction of art and return to poetics, that is, back from the politics of art to encounter again the aura of production. But how is that possible?

¹¹ Benjamin, op. cit., p. 169.

Once more I return to the kitchen in search of an alternative to the isolationism of the “vernacular” and the forgetfulness of the “cosmopolitan” option. If I prepare one of the recipes of Frida, that which I cook is my production, it is my plate and meal. The one that I savor is not the same plate in which Frida herself relished. Nevertheless, there is something in the taste, in the flavor that gives me a taste of Frida allowing me to commune with her via the palate and the aroma. The old principle of Horacio, *Sapere aude*, which the Enlightenment translated as “dare to know” can also be translated as “dare to taste!” The verb *sapere* means both “to savor”, “to taste”, or “to know”, “discern” and “understand”. There is something sacramental, sacred or, to use the expression of Walter Benjamin, cultic in the tasting of a plate. Or in the words of Feuerbach in his masterpiece, *The Essence of Christianity*: “Therefore let bread be sacred for us, let wine be sacred, and also let water be sacred! Amen.”¹² In the boldness of the flavor in the palate is the knowledge that conquers forgetfulness. Better still: With the emanating aroma communes the creator, the cook, in an analogous way as the painter or poet communes in the pristine aura of her or his creation.

It is worth noticing that aroma and aura share a common etymology. There is something that flows and emanates from both—one in cooking and the other of an original artistic production. Aroma and aura commune in the senses they evoke and bring it to memory what the dominant senses of vision and tact obliterate. And in this calling to memory what is gone and beyond reach, as in Frida’s *fiestas* or in her pains and paintings, is no longer only a work of yore and yonder, but finds a place here and now through the aura and the aroma.

In his theses on philosophy of history,¹³ Walter Benjamin coined a term which allows for the possibility of a temporal and spatial

¹² Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity* (New York: Harper, 1957), p. 278.

¹³ Benjamin, op. cit., pp. 253-264.

reversibility: *Eingedenken*.¹⁴ This neologism can be translated as “empathic memory” or a “memory of the senses,” an “aromatic” and “spirited” memory that can open a closed past of tragedy and unveil messianic possibilities. Empathetic memory allows for glimpses into the here and now and are the messianic openings to times and places whose history is yet to happen, which is open and hopeful. As he said in a letter to his colleague, Horkheimer, it is no longer possible to be a historical materialist without theology.¹⁵

This is the impossible possibility of the recovery of the art and the author when the dissemination of simulacra evanesce the aura of the work. This then is my task, to look into this possibility, by way of the analysis of a painting of Frida Kahlo, “The Broken Column”.

“The Broken Column”¹⁶

It is necessary to exorcise the evanescent illusory power of the simulacra in reproductions. However, exorcisms are laborious; they demand an entry into a work at the exact point in which it (the work of art) places at issue the very identity of the represented object, the precise point in the representation where it inserts a pitch of dissonance that remains there even if tamed by reproductions. To cite a few known examples of how this happens, consider the smile of “Gioconda,” the filament of light of a lamp in the devastated “Guernica” of Picasso, the wounds in the body of the crucified one in the passion painting of Grünewald, the look of terror in the face of “*Angelus Novus*” of Klee, Velásquez’s disconcerting self-presentation in “*Las Meninas*”, “The Wounded Angel” of Hugo Simberg, the feet of the peasants of Portinari, and we could go on. A work of art always carves its own inscription and finds its identity in transcending its own frame. Works of art

¹⁴ Idem., p. 255

¹⁵ Walter Benjamin, *Ausgewählte Schriften II* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1955), p. 311.

¹⁶ For a good view of the painting, see http://www.newyorker.com/images/2007/11/05/p465/071105_kahlo06_p465.jpg

destabilize a presumable and unequivocal identity and, better still, produce a certain dissonance. Not that these inscriptions are irreproducible enigmas. They are reproducible; but precisely those elements that do not conform to the logistics of the reproduction, the aura, which are always a direct and unequivocal communication that the simulacra lack. To uncover the ambiguity is to undo the logic of the reproduction, to terminate the presumable direct communication, to discover what lies beyond and ruptures the limit of the frame of the work. It becomes, thus, an instrument of empathic memory that directs the glance beyond the reproduction, that which is proper to the representation. In her last book, *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Susan Sontag’s discussion on photographing tragic events shows what reproduction, without these dissonant transgressive inscriptions, is able to do. “The problem is not that people remember through photographs, but that they remember only the photographs. This remembering through photographs eclipses other forms of understanding and remembering.”¹⁷ Her criticism of photography is the criticism of an art that is unable to transgress its frame exactly because it can be endlessly reproduced.

“The Broken Column”, a 1944 self-portrait, marks the crucial decline in the health of Frida. The body is naked, were it not for the corset that supports and holds her body together, and a cloth that covers the waist. The nail of her right thumb, the only one visible, is painted, something unusual, since Frida shunned cosmetics and make up. Her personal resistance to “produce” herself went in opposition to the exaggerated display of it in her self-portraits, as in the excess of facial hair that went against the etiquette and canons of beauty of the day. The corset she is wearing is therapeutic; sustains her column. Corsets were used outside therapeutic contexts to highlight the silhouette of ladies of the high

¹⁷ Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2003), p. 89.

society. For Frida Kahlo it was something different. Her accident, two decades before, left her almost paralyzed and with a broken column. In the painting her spinal column is exposed to the gaze. And it is a Greek column! It is ruptured in six different places. The entire body is screwed in with nails and her skin is pierced with pins and needles disparaging crucifying pain. Nevertheless, while some of the objects piercing her body are nails, others are so very small that they seem more like needles of acupuncture, thereby portraying a surprising yet perspicacious vacillation between that which produces the pain and the process of cure. The ambivalence of the Greek word *pharmakon*, simultaneously remedy and poison, assumed, in the nails and pins (needles) scattered throughout the body, a subtle yet sharp allusion to a crucifixion-like tragedy on the one hand, and redemptive-therapeutic motif, on the other.

Frida is weeping. She cries copiously. It is with tears that she sees herself. Her beauty is only apparent in the torment when in the weeping she is confronted with the horror and the pain inhabiting the depth of her existence. The self-realization that Frida Kahlo revealed in her paintings, her culinary, her writing, through her tears becomes a priceless bequest that empowered her; it was power that flowed from her tears. Bernard of Clairvaux called it *dona lacrimarum*, the gifts of the tears.

A contemporary of Frida, Spanish poet León Felipe, long exiled in Mexico, exquisitely captured this lament in Frida's weeping in a book, *Español del éxodo y del llanto*, published in 1939. The two, it seems, had neither met nor known each other, but what León Felipe says in the poem, five years before Frida Kahlo painted "the broken Column", is nothing but a commentary to her tears:

Spaniards:
ours is the weeping
and also the tragedy...
Because there is still the weeping,
the creature is here still standing,

standing and carrying anguish in the shoulders,
the infinite treasure
to buy the mystery of the world,
the silence of the gods
and the kingdom of light.
All the light of the Earth
the creature will see
through the window of a tear ...¹⁸

Frida is standing up and beautifully so. She stood up even when clothed only with her anguish and pain, her anguish anchored in the corset that enveloped her shoulders down to her waist. In a few years (1953) she would have her right leg amputated due to gangrene. It is in that state of loss that she writes in her diary beneath a sketch of two feet being served in a tray: "Feet, what do I need them for, if I have wings to fly."¹⁹ She still stands, tall and towering.

The beauty of Frida Kahlo is in the exposure, in the stark disclosure of the pain endured by a broken spine. But the broken column is a Greek column! One cannot forget that the culture that sustained the western civilization for more than two millennia is the symbol used by Frida Kahlo to display her brokenness, which is only exacerbated in the play of meanings of the nails, pins and needles scattered all over her body. The broken column is the pillar, the frame of thought, the art and all the canons of the western civilization and rationality. This is the column that in her valiant life (that became larger than life) Frida Kahlo declared untenable, and yet it was the only column that she had to sustain her broken existence. The cultural soil on which she stood was crumbling, but was the only ground she had to spread her wings and fly. Frida Kahlo, said Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes in the introduction to

¹⁸ León Felipe, *Antología de poesía* (México: FCE, 1993), pp. 103s.

¹⁹ *The Diary of Frida Kahlo*, p. 274.

her published diary, had “a capacity to convoke a whole universe out of the bits and fragments of her own self and out of the persistent traditions of her own culture.”²⁰

The truth of Frida Kahlo is not negotiable in reproductions as much as they abound. Her truth is beyond her engravings and the plethora of their reproductions; it is nailed into her body. It is the truth, beyond the painting and in its trespassing. In this trespassing the memory of Frida Kahlo is evoked. In this, Frida lives. She is immortal like her weeping, for tears can never become a commodity and do not have an exchange value. Frida sails on the surface of the tears she shed; she takes wing in the aroma of the plate of shrimp tacos in green sauce with potatoes that I cook; she sighs in the aura of her memory that I breathe.

²⁰ *Idem*, p. 15.

Doctoral Studies as *Llamamiento*, or How We All Need to be “Ugly Betty”

Loida Martell-Otero

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Introduction

Nosotros también teniendo en derredor nuestro tan grande nube de testigos, despojémonos de todo peso y del pecado que nos asedia, y corramos con paciencia la carrera que tenemos por delante. (Hebrews 12: 1, VRV)

An English-language television program titled “Ugly Betty” starring Honduran-American América Ferrera is a comedy developed by the Mexican actress/producer Salma Hayek. A variation of a popular Colombian telenovela, titled “*Yo soy Betty, la fea*” the U.S. version is about the misadventures of a young woman who works for a fashion magazine publisher. Betty is supposedly

unsophisticated—what we call in Puerto Rico *una jíbara*.¹ She is culturally out of her element in the world of fashion—a cutthroat environment of U.S. individualism and competition. In this world, dividing lines have been drawn, alliances formed, and foes identified. In such a world, Betty is the quintessential outsider. Her status is clearly depicted in the first episode when she shows up in a poncho that proclaims in very loud colors “Guadalajara.” This entrance lets everyone know that a Latina has entered the world of Anglo America.

Throughout the series, as Betty gradually learns about this world, she also inevitably is changed by it. In order to survive, she must learn to discern *how much* to change, and *what* changes could damage her very soul. Her colleagues at work, while inspired at times by her and always affected by her giftedness, never feel compelled to know her. These privileged inhabitants cross the borders of her world, oblivious to what that entails or its effect on Betty and her community. They have no need to know, for it affects them only marginally. They rarely enter her world for altruistic purposes. They do so only when it suits them—when they have a need for something that their “ugly” colleague can provide, most often to request that Betty run an errand for their convenience. As far as they are concerned, they have no need of her in order to thrive in their world. She is only “the help”—someone who exists in the outer boundaries of their day-to-day existence with the sole purpose of making their lives easier. In a word, she is a *sobraja*.²

¹ Technically, the particular Puerto Rican term for “peasant.” However, the word can be used in various connotations, from pejorative to terms of endearment. In its pejorative meaning, it refers to a “country bumpkin,” with implications of naïveté or foolishness.

² Translation: “leftover.” Ada María Isasi-Díaz conveys this idea with the term “surplus person,” in “*Un Poquito de Justicia – A Little Bit of Justice: A Mujerista Account of Justice*,” in *Hispanic/Latino Theology: Challenge and Promise*, eds. Ada María Isasi-Díaz and Fernando F. Segovia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 329.

What consistently helps Betty maneuver and survive this foreign world is, on the one hand, her insistence on being true to herself—which implies that she is aware of her self-worth and the gifts of her world—and, on the other hand, the faithful love of her family. This show has often been praised for its “heart,” and it seems to me that its heart lies precisely here in the relationships between Betty and her *familia*. To a certain extent, this *familia* symbolizes the communal ties that resonate with many in the Latin@ community.³ Betty’s strength comes from a family that believes in her. Although they do not understand her dreams, her work, or this world she has entered, they express their love for her and support her in significant ways: from making birthday pancakes to putting “bling-bling” on her cell phone, from confronting those who would hurt her to enveloping her in hugs. She is often unaware of the quiet things they do on her behalf: organizing surprise celebrations or warning those who gratuitously would hurt Betty that they “have her back.” She is their Betty and they will do all they can to ensure that she not only survive but thrive, and that she not only work but dream.

As I watch this show, I cannot but help make connections to my experience as a Latina obtaining a doctoral degree. I am a bi-coastal, bi-lingual, multicultural Puerto Rican, an ordained American Baptist minister who has completed a Ph.D. in Constructive Theology. In my journey, I have met some extraordinary people, Latin@s and non-Latin@s, Protestant and Catholic, men and women. Today, I give witness to the support and love of this “cloud of witnesses,” this *familia*, that has reminded me repeatedly *why* I was called and by *whom* I was called. I am especially

³ Throughout this essay, I will use Latin@ to represent to express gender-inclusivity. I will preclude the discussions provided in numerous other sources that discuss the appropriateness of such terms as “Latin@” or “Hispanic” to represent such a diverse community.

thankful for *las mujeres evangélicas* who became a spiritual and intellectual support for me.⁴ It was only after I completed a very difficult journey that I realized how often I was unaware of the myriad ways that they “had my back.” As a community of faith, they often sustained me by believing when I had barely believed in myself or in the possibility of completing my studies.

There is a pressing need to continue to increase the community of *evangélicas* as well as *evangélicos* in the academy. I suggest here that in order to do this we must become an “Ugly Betty” community. In this essay, I explain why we are called to do this by presenting the challenges that Latinas face as they seek to enter and successfully complete doctoral studies. These challenges include the consequences of kyriarchy and institutionalized racism that lead to a lack of sufficient “social capital.” This lack prevents Latinas from effectively negotiating the structures of power and privilege in academia. I then discuss who calls us by discussing the concept of *llamamiento*/vocation. With such a theological foundation, I challenge the Latin@ Church and academic institutions to understand *llamamiento* as a Spirit-empowered communal reality. I argue that such an understanding of vocation demands metanoia/conversion. This permits Latinas to have “spiritual capital” that not only provides hopes, but sustains them in their journey. To be an “Ugly Betty” community is a different paradigm of vocation that challenges both the Church and the academy in prophetic ways.

⁴ Unlike the English, “evangelical,” the Spanish term simply translates as “Protestant” and has no political connotations, nor does it imply similar theological understandings as “evangelical.” *Evangélic@* refers to the *mestiz@* popular Protestantism that arose in Spanish-speaking Americas and Caribbean, with an underlying heritage of popular Catholicism, as well as indigenous and African spiritualities, that merged with the various strains of Protestant traditions resulting from early twentieth-century missiological efforts. See Loida I. Martell-Otero, “Liberating News: An Emerging U.S. Hispanic/Latina Soteriology of the Crossroads,” Ph.D. diss., Fordham University, 2005, 7-8, 111-112.

Healing the Broken Bones

Los que sembraron con lágrimas con regocijo segarán. Irá andando y llorando el que lleva la preciosa semilla, mas volverá a venir con regocijo trayendo sus gavillas. (Psalm 126: 5-6, VRV)

The complexities of the issues of poverty, racism/ethnocentrism, classism, sexism, poor educational attainment, and sundry others faced by Latin@ communities in the United States have been amply documented in various studies.⁵ While the scope of this paper does not permit a full discussion of all of them, I do want to underscore the existence of these “-isms” because they have an effect upon the obstacles faced by Latin@s who desire to study in doctoral programs, but most especially on the Latinas among them.

I have often likened this complex array of interlocking factors to a “compound fracture.” There are basically three types of fractures. A simple fracture is a bone that has broken in two and is often repaired with a cast or splint. A comminuted fracture is more complicated, since the bone has broken in two or more places and may need surgery to mend it. A compound fracture is the most complicated and dangerous because bone has punctured the skin, exposing it and other tissues to infection. Muscles, nerves, blood vessels, and skin suffer damage. Thus the problem has been “compounded” by various factors. Similarly, the issues facing our communities are compounded. They are not only interlocking, they are generational. They are not only expressions of the external institutional sins of the United States, but also of those internal to our Latin@ culture. They are social and personal. It is no wonder that theologians describe such fractures as “powers and principalities” that “disempower and ravage whole communities of people.”⁶ A simple “fix” is grossly insufficient. Such

⁵ Including some of the studies cited throughout this essay.

compounded social and cultural sins demand a profound analysis in order to begin healing in our communities. Due to their complexity, I cannot address them all. However, I believe that it is relevant for this discussion that I address *kyriarchy* and *institutionalized racism* insofar as they result in the impoverishment of *social capital* for Latinas.

Kyrios is the Greek word for “Lord.” Jesus was referred to as *kyrios* by certain post-Paschal communities.⁷ From this root word, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza coined the term *kyriarchy* to underscore a “complex pyramidal political structure of dominance and subordination, stratified by gender, race, class, religious and cultural taxonomies and other historical formations of domination” that entails a “multiplicative interdependence of gender, race, and class stratifications.”⁸ *Kyriarchal* structures have often been tolerated, or celebrated, as a “natural” state of things, ordained by God, in which men have dominance over women, people of color are considered inferior to whites, adults of a certain age can treat older or young people from a position of superiority, and the poor are considered in some fashion to be “deficient.” The oppression suffered by women of color, including Latinas, cannot be fully appreciated unless one considers the insidious effects of the “multiplicative interdependence” of these various levels of dominance. Schüssler Fiorenza prefers the term *kyriarchy* to *patriarchy* because she recognizes that the issues are more complex than sexism alone. This is not to dismiss sexism as a social sin, but rather to underscore the complex web in which it is often

⁶ Margaret D. Kamitsuka et al, “Sin and Evil,” in *Constructive Theology: A Contemporary Approach to Classical Themes*, ed. Serene Jones and Paul Lakeland (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 130, 134. Stephen Charles Mott, *Ethics and Social Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 6-10.

⁷ For a discussion of Jesus as *kyrios*, see Edward Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology*, trans. Hubert Hoskins (New York: Crossroad, 1995), 415-416.

⁸ Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 115.

expressed.⁹ In a kyriarchal society such as ours, those in positions of privilege typically consider Latinas to be unimportant and with little social value.¹⁰ Latinas are often perplexed about why their ideas are dismissed, their way of speaking is devalued, and their work is considered deficient by instructors and even peers until they understand the kyriarchal dynamics at play. In academic institutions, they are thus treated as “ugly Bettys.” Consequently, they suffer from a profound lack of self-worth and low esteem. A supportive community could mitigate these effects to some degree, but more profound structural changes are needed.

While racism is another dimension of kyriarchy, I want to address its expression within the framework of educational institutions. Joseph Barndt defines racism as “the intentional shaping and structuring of an institution so that it effectively serves and is accountable to one racial group and does not effectively serve nor is accountable to other racial groups.” He underscores that institutions and social structures in the United States are constructed such that they ensure white privilege and power.¹¹ In such a social construct, Latin@s are always considered “illegal aliens” who have intruded into the insular space of white privilege. We are always “other.” Institutionalized racism in academia is expressed in sundry overt and subtle ways that have long-term effects among Latin@ students interested in pursuing doctoral studies. For example, Clara E. Rodríguez and others have documented amply the process of “tracking.”¹² Rodríguez reports how Puerto Ricans are often “tracked” into special education programs or into vocational schools, while Euro-American students are encouraged to enter competitive academic programs that will eventually

lead them to college and graduate studies. Kenneth G. González et al., document how Latin@s often are “tracked” into two-year community colleges that neither prepare them academically nor orient them properly to enter four-year programs—pathways not only into graduate schools but critical for successful completion of degree programs.¹³ As a pastor in the Bronx, I was horrified but not surprised by the number of young people who informed me that their guidance counselors had encouraged them to drop out of school, take a General Equivalency Degree examination, and pursue a “career” in McDonald’s or as a janitor.

The cumulative factors of kyriarchy and institutionalized racism result in poor educational attainment among Latin@s and their parents. Scholars have found that less than half of Latin@ students come from homes in which a parent has attended college, and even fewer homes with parents with Bachelor degrees or higher.¹⁴ This, in turn, leads to financial deficits that affect Latin@ communities in myriad ways. More to the point, this tri-fecta of oppressions contributes to a severe lack of social capital for Latin@s. Social capital is the knowledge, power, networks, and privilege passed on by parents and others to students to ensure their success in all fields of life, particularly in the educational arena. It enables them to discern what is essential for reaching educational goals and navigating postgraduate processes.¹⁵ Social capital includes the ability to network: to have mentors, peers, and communities who sustain, encourage, and guide students through the maze of postgraduate work. In academia, this crucial network provides access to professors and peers who constantly

⁹ I address the issue of sexism within the Latin@ culture later in this essay.

¹⁰ Cf., Isasi-Díaz, 329.

¹¹ Joseph Barndt, *Understanding and Dismantling Racism in the United States: The Twenty-First Century Challenge to White America* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 153-154.

¹² Clara E. Rodríguez, *Puerto Ricans: Born in the USA* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 33.

¹³ Kenneth G. González, Carla Stoner, and Jennifer E. Jovel, “Examining the Role of Social Capital in Access to College for Latinas: Towards a College Opportunity Framework,” *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education* 2, no. 1 (January 2003): 149.

¹⁴ Watson Scott Swail, Alberto F. Cabrera and Chul Lee, “Latino Youth and the Pathway to College” (Washington, D.C.: Pew Hispanic Center, 2004). Accessed from <http://www.pewhispanic.org>, April 2008.

¹⁵ K. González, Stoner and Jovel, “Social Capital,” citing McDonough, 148.

remind students of the rationale behind their particular academic pursuits, and chart paths that suggest how best to carry out important tasks. Mentors model how to be holistic scholars of high caliber. They explain where one can find information, and how best to process that information. They engage students in dialogue that fuels hearts and minds to generate creative thinking. As a result of social capital, students have access to a network of people who “watch their backs.” Academia is as much a political arena as it is an intellectual one. Thus power is essential to the success of anyone involved in educational institutions. Without social capital, Latin@s in general and Latinas in particular are hampered in obtaining their degrees. They are power-less and often lacking in access to the means that would allow them to navigate successfully these political minefields.

The lack of mentors and peers that provide Latinas with social capital is underscored when one examines the presence of Latin@s in theological education. In 2007, the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) reported that throughout its 252 member schools in the United States, Canada, and Puerto Rico, a total of 5,731 full-time students were enrolled in “advanced theological research” programs.¹⁶ This included students in Master and doctoral degree programs. Of that total, 2,373 were Euro-American men and 779 were white women. In comparison there were only 216 and 106 African-American men and women respectively, and 106 Latinos and 41 Latinas. The situation is even bleaker when one examines only those enrolled in doctoral (Th.D. and Ph.D.) programs. Out of a total of 3,657 students, only 59 men and 34 women were Latin@s (compared to 1,374 men and 591 women from the Euro-American community and the 96 men and 73 women who are

African American.).¹⁷ The lack of social capital is underscored further for Latinas when one considers the dearth of full-time Latin@ faculty. The ATS reports that in 2007, there were only 99 Latino and 25 Latina faculty members. That same year, there were 158 male and 68 female African American faculty and over 2,382 male and 684 female Euro-American faculty members.¹⁸

If it is true that faculty tend to be more supportive of those of their own gender and background, then the resulting sense of isolation among Latinas in doctoral programs cannot be over-emphasized.¹⁹ We are unable to navigate the internal politics of academic departments, form productive alliances, articulate our thoughts in “cultural” or linguistic Spanish, or deal with themes that transcend the overwhelmingly Eurocentric curricula that reign in most doctoral programs.²⁰ Latinas must know twice as much and work twice as hard. We are challenged constantly in subtle and overt ways. We are rarely encouraged to publish any of our research or to give presentations at guild meetings because our writing and critical thinking skills are often suspect. When we are assigned teaching assistantships, our authority and knowledge are challenged by students.²¹ In an interview with the Hispanic Theological Initiative in 2000, I was asked to reflect on my experiences in the doctoral program I was then attending. I described it as follows:

¹⁷ Ibid., Table 2.10-A and Table 2.13-A.

¹⁸ For member schools, see Table 1.1-A. Full-time faculty by rank and gender is reported in Table 3.1-A. Given the categories reported by the ATS, it is difficult to ascertain how many of those 25 Latinas are *evangélicas*.

¹⁹ Helen M. Berg and Marianne A. Ferber, “Men and Women Graduate Students: Who Succeeds and Why?” *The Journal of Higher Education* 54, no. 6 (November-December 1983): 639.

²⁰ Juan Carlos González, “Academic Socialization Experiences of Latina Doctoral Students: A Qualitative Understanding of Support Systems That Aid and Challenges That Hinder the Process,” *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education* 5, no. 4 (October 2006): 358.

²¹ Ibid., 350, 357-358 for further information. Also, Caroline Sotello Viernes Turner, “Women of Color in Academe: Living with Multiple Marginality,” *The Journal of Higher Education* 73, no. 1 (January / February 2002): 81-82.

¹⁶ For this and ATS-related data cited in this article, refer to Association of Theological Studies “Data Tables 2007-2008,” at <http://www.ats.edu/Resources/FactBook/2007-08AnnualDataTables.pdf>. For total enrollment figures see Table 2.2A. Accessed February 2008.

The doctoral process is, by its very nature, a very isolating and impersonal one. This makes theologizing difficult for Latinas/os, since we are communitarian, and tend to do *teología en conjunto*. The difficulty is compounded as one begins to embark on a project that may not command the respect or interest of professors, or in some cases, of one's peers. As Jeremiah once did, one is compelled, however, to press on, perhaps inspired by a flash, a vision, an intuitive sense that one is neither mad nor a fool.²²

While not fully comprehending the factors leading to my sense of isolation and despair, I believe that I was articulating what it felt to be a Latina with no social capital, trying to survive in a doctoral program in the United States.

Latinas not only face challenges of kyriarchy and institutionalized racism with the resultant lack of social capital, they must also face a myriad of "internal challenges." These are challenges that arise from the realities of our Latin@ culture and praxis.²³ While the Latin@ community cannot always adequately overcome the institutional realities of poverty and financial limitations, limited educational attainment, and the external "multiplicative interdependencies" of color, class, and culture oppressions, we can and must face the sexist cultural expectations that make an already precarious journey of doctoral studies become almost impossible. The subtle messages of sexism that are communicated by men and

women contribute to Latinas' self-perceptions about their intrinsic worth as scholars and a sense of their value as full human beings. For example, Latinas often are given the impression that education, and certainly postgraduate study, is not of primary importance for women. Many Latinas have shared with me how they grew up hearing, "Go study, *mi'ja*, so that if your marriage fails, you have something to count on to survive."²⁴ I know of no Latino who has ever been told, "Go study, *mi'jo*, so that if your marriage fails you have something to count on." Thus education is seen as a *secondary* goal for women, presumably because their *primary* calling is to be a wife, homemaker, and mother.

This message is buttressed by the unequal sharing of responsibilities in the home. I do not mean to marginalize or devalue those roles but to emphasize that neither women nor men are created as one-dimensional beings. It is very difficult to deal with the enormity of academic work and responsibility—doctoral work is extremely "time intensive"—when one is faced with the myriad mundane daily chores that many women carry out. Latinas often must wait to attend to academic responsibilities until after they have dealt with chores associated with their home lives. It is not my intention to create caricatures, and certainly there are exceptions to this scenario. However, by and large, this is the reality of many Latinas. Writing requires a high degree of creative energy. It is an energy too easily dissipated in the day-to-day (*lo cotidiano*) routines that are part of the existential fabric of most Latina scholars.

Latinas must also deal with the challenges that are the result of the various theological views that justify treating women in the Church as second-class citizens. Women are often associated with the sin of Eve, whereas men are associated with the weakness of Adam. This has led to an unspoken, but no less real, assumption

²² Loida Martell-Otero, "Neither Mad Nor a Fool," *Journeys: A Newsletter of the Hispanic Theological Initiative* 1, no. 1 (2000): back page.

²³ Roberto S. Goizueta has defined praxis as "life as it is lived." Our religious worldviews inform our praxis on an everyday (*cotidiano*) level. It gives a rationale to how we behave, and how we relate to others. In this sense, praxis transcends any notion of "practice" or simply "doing." See "Rediscovering Praxis: The Significance of U.S. Hispanic Experience for Theological Method," in *We Are A People! Initiatives in Hispanic American Theologies*, ed. Roberto S. Goizueta (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 57.

²⁴ These diminutive terms of endearment are contractions of "mi hija" / my daughter and "mi hijo" / my son.

that while men “do” sin, women embody it.²⁵ This, in turn, has led to the marginalization of women’s roles in many faith communities. Consequently, there is a reluctance to support Latinas in theological education. This lack of encouragement contributes to the fact that there are only 25 Latinas in full-time academic roles, and that as of 2008 there were approximately 15 *evangélicas* with doctorates.²⁶ If it is true that the academic world is alienating, and that it is negatively affecting the humanity and self-esteem of Latinas, then the Latin@ church and other justice-minded institutions must be attentive to their roles as life-giving communities for Latinas rather than being obstacles that they must overcome.²⁷

Llamamiento: Communal Vocation of the Christian Church

El Señor me ha dado lengua de sabios para darle palabras de consuelo al cansado. (Isaiah 50: 4, VRV)

Llamamiento is the *evangelic@* understanding of vocation. The meaning of vocation is derived from the Latin cognates *vocatio*—to be summoned, and *vocare*—to be called.²⁸ Specifically, the Latin@ community understands *llamamientos* as callings from God for service. We are called to advance God’s Reign in history. As such, the concept of *llamamiento* offers the Latin@ faith community a new paradigm applicable to doctoral studies. It serves

²⁵ Yvonne Gebara, *Out of the Depths: Women’s Experience of Evil and Salvation*, trans. Anne Patrick Ware (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 4-7. See also Elieser Fernandez, *Reimagining the Human: Theological Anthropology in Response to Systemic Evil* (St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2003), 111-117. Elisabeth Gössmann, “The Construction of Women’s Difference,” trans. John Bowden, in *The Power of Naming: A Concilium Reader in Feminist Liberation Theology*, ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996), 199-201. Margaret D. Kamitsuka et al, “Sin and Evil,” in *Constructive Theology: A Contemporary Approach to Classical Themes*, eds. Serene Jones and Paul Lakeland (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 123.

²⁶ My thanks to Angela Schoepf, Assistant Director of the Hispanic Theological Initiative, for this information. E-mail communication, April 2008.

²⁷ Alberta M. Gloria, Jeanett Castellanos and Verónica Orozco, “Perceived Educational Barriers, Cultural Fit, Coping Responses, and Psychological Well-Being of Latina Undergraduates,” *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 27, no.2 (May 2005): 162-163. Also, J. González, “Academic Socialization,” 357-358.

²⁸ *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. “Vocation.”

as a corrective for any understanding of vocation as a movement out of the world and into the church. It is my firm belief, born out of my experience and the *testimonios* of my *evangélica* colleagues, that pursuing a doctorate in the field of theology is a calling, un *llamamiento*. *Llamamiento* as a communal responsibility enables the Latin@ church to respond to the challenge of supporting Latinas’ vocation in theological education. This shift in the self-understanding of the Latin@ church and its understanding of *llamamiento* becomes a source of empowerment for *evangélicas*, and as such a subversive source of “spiritual capital.”

Yet for a calling to become a subversive source of spiritual capital, the Latin@ church must remember that callings are always an invitation from God. As invitation, they are an act of grace. *Llamamientos* are not so much about what we do, but about who is gifting and what has been gifted to us. As an act of grace, *llamamientos* are never simply “event”—they cannot be identified with a defined moment. Rather, vocation is an ongoing, life-long process. Herbert Alphonso considers it a “life script” given by God.²⁹ Renata Furst rightly points out: “Vocation is not a target you aim for, but an opening up, an unfolding of a particular, unrepeatable, unique grace in the life of an individual.”³⁰ Yet, *llamamiento* is more than just an individual’s call. God calls communities for community. The Christian Church has affirmed the belief that the God who invites us into this process is not just any God. It is God Triune—Parent, Child, and Spirit. While many may consider the doctrine of the Trinity a theological conundrum that is to be avoided at all costs, in reality what the doctrine most affirms is that we can trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and the Spirit who brings God’s future into our present because they are *not servants*

²⁹ Herbert Alphonso, *Discovering Your Personal Vocation: The Search for Meaning Through the Spiritual Exercises* (New York: Paulist Press, 2001), 38.

³⁰ I am grateful to Dr. Renata Furst for this insight about vocation. Personal communication, April 2005.

of God, but rather *are* God. They are the God who is Community-in-Godself. This, in turn, has two important implications. First, that when evangélicas assert that we have been anointed by the Spirit—“el Espíritu de Dios me ha ungido”—we are assured that God has called and anointed us.³¹ We are not being subcontracted by a subaltern. We are not second-hand citizens who are invited as a second thought. We have been anointed, seduced, filled, and empowered by God through the Spirit. The first epistle of Peter expresses it in this way:

You are a chosen people [*pueblo*], a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim mighty acts of the [Triune God] who called you out of darkness into God’s marvelous light. (I Peter 2: 9, NRSV)

Thus as Latinas, we may not have the human social capital that sinful structures hoard for their own, but we have the source of knowledge and wisdom that derives from the One who has called us from the darkness into the light. This is our spiritual capital.

Affirming that the One who has called us is the God who is Community-in-Godself is what allows us to assert that God never calls *individuals* but rather God calls *persons* in the context of a believing, affirming, sustaining, praying community. In other words, *llamamientos* are never subjective private affairs. Rather, they are always directed to communities and expressed through the various gifts/charisms of persons in that community. Scripture articulates this concept through the image of “the Body of Christ.” This is the context of the Ephesian text:

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Parent of all, who is above all and

through all and in all...The gifts that God gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. (Ephesians 4:4-6, 11-13 NRSV)

The term “equip”—or in the Spanish translation, *perfeccionar*—in this passage is a translation of the Greek *katartismos*. This term has multiple meanings, including “setting a fracture” or “mending a torn net.”³² *Llamamientos* must be communal because we are broken and powerless in the face of overwhelming institutional, cultural, and personal sin. There can only be healing of the “broken bones” of our people through and by the grace of God who has invited us into this process through the outpouring of the Spirit and the gifting of charisms. To be called is to experience humbly God’s salvation in the midst of human sin. What this implies, then, is that a community that responds to the Triune God’s *llamamiento* must be willing to undergo transformation. *Llamamiento* includes metanoia/conversion.

For the Latin@ Christian community, God’s call to conversion is three-fold. First, we must convert from a model of vocational individualism to one of communal responsibility. This change of paradigm is what will give *evangélicas* the hope and strength to face the hurdles of institutional racism in their respective schools. Educational scholars generally agree that in light of the lack of social capital, financial resources, mentors, the insidious effects of discrimination, and other factors discussed in this article, Latinas tend to survive and successfully complete doctoral studies if they

³¹ “The Spirit of the Lord has anointed me” is a paraphrase of the words spoken by Jesus in his inaugural sermon as recorded in Luke 4:18.

³² Markus Barth, *Anchor Bible Commentary*, Vol. 34, *Ephesians 4-6* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1974), 439.

have a strong community.³³ The Latin@ Church, as *familia de Dios*, is called to be an “Ugly Betty” community. We are called by God who is Community-in-Godself to serve as spiritual capital for Latinas.

As a consequence of this *llamamiento* to be a “communally called people,” we are then called to change our understanding of calling to doctoral studies, particularly for Latinas. We must realize the enormous burden that Latin@ students face precisely as Latin@s, but even more to realize how that burden is multiplied for Latinas in academia. We cannot expect them realistically to juggle the multiplicative demands of academic work while also living amid a community that insists on roles that sustain a status quo. To be an “Ugly Betty” community is to be willing to “have the backs” of Latinas in ways great and small. It means that *la familia de Dios* shoulders the burden with her in palpable ways. It entails a subversive overturning of traditional roles. It implies giving her space to learn and grow as a scholar. In so doing, we remind her and are reminded that her journey is not simply “her calling” or “her studies”, but our *llamamiento*. She never journeys alone. We go forth with her. We have her back. Thus we contribute to the spiritual capital of Latinas.

Finally, *llamamiento* also means changing our paradigms about the priority of academic studies for women. This means that, as an “Ugly Betty” community, we honor, treasure, and communally affirm that Latinas called to this ministry are anointed with charisms from the Triune God. Therefore, we communally acknowledge their *llamamiento* by God to enter the world of doctoral studies not as a secondary priority, but in obedience to God. It is a communal affirmation that they go forth not as *ancillary* citizens, but as an anointed *pueblo* of the Lord. It is sharing in the communal joy that they are called to speak in tongues, not in the

confines of the church building, but in the world of written texts that will reach out and transform others. We can be an “Ugly Betty” community that sees with spiritual eyes what the world is too blind to acknowledge, and honor those whom the academy refuses to appreciate. In this way, we are sources of further spiritual capital for Latinas in doctoral programs.

Llamamiento: Communal Vocation of Academic Institutions

Dios te ha declarado lo que es bueno, y qué pide el Señor de ti: solamente hacer justicia, y amar misericordia, y humillarte ante tu Dios.
(Micah 6: 8, VRV)

“Ugly Betty” is a show that ultimately demonstrates that Betty is not the ugly one at all. She is, in fact, truly beautiful. The real “uglies” are the institutional values of the world of fashion that reduces people to ciphers determined by classism, ageism, and financial competition. In this “ugly world,” family and friendships are sacrificed in order for one to “get ahead” regardless of the cost to others, or to one’s own humanity. The Latin@ community and other communities of color in educational institutions can serve as foils that expose what is concretely “ugly”: kyriarchy, institutionalized racism, and cultural and religious biases that rob people of their worth and beauty. Latinas in academia are not the “illegal aliens” of citadels of privilege, nor are they the “Ugly Bettys” of intellectual halls. Through their *teología en conjunto*—a collaborative and communal theological dialogue—the pedagogical enterprise is enriched as Latinas expose teachers and students alike to heretofore marginalized contexts and perspectives. Consequently, theological education becomes a more holistic endeavor.

What can be done to ensure *evangélicas* and other Latinas’ presence in, and successful completion of graduate programs? A full discussion that could engender responses to these questions certainly lies beyond the purview of this article. Nevertheless, I offer what I believe to be some social, theological, and ethical imperatives

³³ J. González, “Academic Socialization,” 350. Also, K. González, Stoner and Jovel, “Social Capital,” 152, 154-155. Roberto Haro, “Programs and Strategies to Increase Latino Students’ Educational Attainment,” *Education and Urban Society* 36, no. 2 (February 2004): 216.

that can help theological institutions become welcoming spaces of learning for Latin@s and other students of color.

Academic institutions in general and theological programs in particular must face the reality of institutionalized racism and its subtle and overt expressions. Academic administrators, faculty, and staff must engage in serious dialogue about racism and kyriarchy in academia, and how these are often inscribed in curricula, admissions, and in the daily/*cotidiano* treatment of students of color. Students must also be part of this conversation because “ugly” values of oppression are internalized as an integral part of their praxes that transcend the classroom.

Schools must acknowledge the importance of having Latinas in their institutions. Academicians must be willing to enter the cultural and theological world of Latinas divested of paternalistic attitudes. They must be capable of realizing that transformative and holistic theological education cannot be carried out unless the worldviews of Latinas and other communities of color are incorporated into the very DNA of academia. Such an approach would allow teachers to acknowledge, for example, oral histories as a proper venue for research or Spanish as a valid theological language. The Wabash Center’s “Colloquium on Diversity in the Classroom” is a beginning step to help theological schools and programs wrestle with issues of diversity, but it is only a beginning step.³⁴

Diversity is not simply about placing people from different backgrounds in a room. It entails an acknowledgment of the importance that these backgrounds provide. Institutions in general and faculty members in particular must become as knowledgeable about contexts and cultures other than their own as they are about varying theological arguments. This requires an intentional

³⁴ Charles R. Foster, “Diversity in Theological Education,” *Theological Education* 38, no. 2 (2002): 15-37. Matthew Ouellett, ed., *Teaching Inclusively: Resources for Course, Department, and Institutional Change in Higher Education* (Stillwater: New Forums Press, 2005).

movement into worlds heretofore considered “irrelevant” to their theological and pedagogical tasks.

Space must be made so that Latinas can have a sense that academic institutions are welcoming. Edward W. Soja has noted that the apportioning of space—to which he refers as “spatiality”—is rife with political, ethical, and social implications.³⁵ For too long, the praxis of academia has claimed that its institutional space is the privileged purview of an elite group representing a dominant culture. To be other is to be an “intruder” into these “sacralized” spaces of higher learning. Given these circumstances, Latinas, as well as women and men of color, are always suspect, regardless of their qualifications or efforts. Academic institutions must remember that their *llamamiento* to teach is a calling of God who is sovereign over all created spaces (Psalm 24: 1).

Like churches, academic institutions also have a mandate to provide community and to create community. Space is made when institutions provide equal voice, equal power, and make available equal resources to all its students. Steps must be taken not only to consciously diversify academic institutions, but also to begin to provide “social capital” resources for students of color, and particularly for Latinas. Thus provision of financial resources, access to mentors, and a valuation of the presence of Latinas and women of color must be an intentional goal of graduate schools. Latinas should be able to believe that the institutions “have their backs.” Such schools must become “Ugly Betty” communities for Latinas if we are to make serious headway in increasing both student enrollment and the development of faculty.

The Hispanic Theological Initiative (HTI) demonstrated the success of such an intentional approach. The HTI is a granting program that includes workshops to train Latin@s in various

³⁵ In *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Versa, 1989), 4, 79-80, 213-125.

aspects related to theological education that ensure the successful completion of graduate studies as well as mentoring, networking, and financial aid.³⁶ This program helped increase significantly the number of Catholic and Protestant Latin@ scholars engaged in graduates. Some of its first grantees are now respected full professors who have, in turn, become agents for change in their respective schools. Under the leadership of its first director, Rev. Dr. Daisy L. Machado, one of the few evangélicas with a Ph.D. at the time, the HTI developed venues of networking and support for Latinas, including the “Latinas in Theology” group.³⁷ These efforts have begun to bear fruit as new evangélica scholars prepare to join the ranks of theological faculty throughout the United States and Puerto Rico. The HTI has become an “Ugly Betty” community for Latinas, particularly for evangélicas. Yet such efforts should not be carried out solely by the Latin@ theological community. Ultimately, the larger academic world must recognize that society is enriched by the contributions of Latina scholars. It is to the benefit of this larger academic world to participate in communal efforts to develop future Latina scholars of the caliber of well-known Latina scholars such as Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, Nora Lozano Díaz, Daisy L. Machado, Zaida Maldonado Pérez, and others.

Conclusion

Particularly in the case of *evangélicas*, and precisely because doctoral studies are seen as *llamamiento*, the role that churches play as “Ugly Betty” communities cannot be overemphasized. Churches provide *evangélicas* with their earliest theological foundation, indirectly through preaching and teaching, or more directly through Bible institutes and denominational colleges. Thus the Latin@

Christian community can be an important source of “spiritual capital” by subverting the cultural values of sexism within Latin@ culture and intentionally opposing the structural messages of racism present in wider societal institutions. Churches must have the backs of *evangélica* scholars for them to thrive in academia. The Latin@ church must be the collective voice called *llamada* to challenge the larger Church, theological educational institutions, and society.

The alarming lack of Latinas in academic institutions should not simply be the concern of the Latin@ community. Society has become an increasingly globalized reality. Viruses from one obscure part of the world now become wide-spread pandemics; the economic downfall of one country becomes the financial crisis of global markets. Within the borders of the United States, churches are confronting the challenges of a society that reflect this globalization. Neighborhoods are filled with people from various nations, religious backgrounds, ethnic composition, cultural values, and linguistic abilities. As such, the Christian Church is beginning to understand what it means to be a diverse and global church in order to remain relevant in a diverse and global world.

Theological institutions of learning will become increasingly irrelevant in such a changing landscape unless they undergo a metanoia from their established Eurocentric educational paradigm. To prepare the Church for a globalized reality, theological education must expand its own horizons of knowledge and experience. Yet such a call is not simply about expediency. It is not simply about knowing one more thing in a list of subjects. It is *llamamiento*: an ethical imperative to fully embrace diversity. A holistic Trinitarian theology and Christian faith demands it; otherwise “Christian” theological education cannot fully claim to be such.

If these three aspects of theological education—academia accepting its vocation as a diverse community, educational insti-

³⁶ For more information see <http://www2.ptsem.edu/hti/>.

³⁷ Dr. Zaida Maldonado Pérez, an HTI grantee herself, became HTI's second director. “Latinas in Theology” continues to gather at AAR/SBL under the leadership of the HTI's current director, Joanne Rodríguez.

tutions and organizations accepting their vocation as “Ugly Betty” communities, and the Latin@ church accepting its prophetic *llamamiento* to transform sinful structures—work together, we can hope to increase the presence not only of Latina *evangélicas*, but of other people of color, in theological education. Only then can such institutions claim to be a prophetically transforming presence in the world.

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