

## *Introduction*

---

---

### *The Other Voice: Atlantic Nuns*

In the early eighteenth century as fleets of European ships navigated the currents of the Atlantic, five Capuchin nuns boarded a Spanish vessel at the Port of Cadiz. They were about to embark on a remarkable journey that would literally take them across two continents and an ocean in between. This was a watershed moment for Europe: the Spanish War of Succession (1701–14) was still ongoing and the decaying Spanish Empire was fast yielding to more powerful nations such as Britain and Holland.<sup>1</sup> In these turbulent times, an amazing voice emerged from a woman who documented the compelling story of the foundation of a new convent in Lima, Peru.

María Rosa, the mother abbess of the future Capuchin convent in Peru, wrote a unique and fascinating manuscript, originally titled, “Account of the Journey of Five Capuchin Nuns.” It was later polished and edited by another nun, Josepha Victoria, in 1722.<sup>2</sup> María Rosa held many things in common with other religious early modern European writers: she was brought up under the strict regulations of a Post-Tridentine doctrine and, until her journey, she had lived her life within the cloistered walls of a convent. What makes this document unique is that the sisters’ lives were turned upside-down when they accepted the challenge of leaving Madrid and traveling to the New World to establish a convent in Peru. Their legacy is a riveting travel narrative of adventure on the high seas, pirates, violent storms, and the crossing of the Andes. María Rosa’s account documents this experience and paints the sights and sounds of their travels through colorful brushstrokes. She enriches our perceptions of the Atlantic world by adding the depth and specificity of her personal experience. Hers is a remarkable text because it is one of the few travel accounts written by a woman for other women of this time period. It alters the traditional perspective that only men traveled and wrote eyewitness accounts of the Iberian Atlantic. Moreover, it attests to the direct

1. Holland, along with parts of Belgium and France, was originally known as Flanders.

2. The narrative is written primarily in the first person from the mother abbess’s perspective, but there are several instances when Josepha Victoria interjects her own observations. These are usually short asides that mention whether or not a certain person had since passed away or had changed rank.

participation of early modern women in the expansion of the Atlantic world. Up until now María Rosa's voice has been relegated to the outermost margins of history. Thanks to this series, the English translation of her account is now accessible to scholars, students, and all those interested in women's history.

### *Women's Role in the Atlantic World*

The latest studies on gender and religion are providing a nuanced view of how early modern Spanish and colonial women negotiated the minefield of a patriarchal and misogynist society.<sup>3</sup> This body of scholarship suggests that women, including nuns, learned to work within the church-driven gender codes that governed their behavior. Those gender codes were put in place at the last session of the Council of Trent, December 3, 1563.<sup>4</sup> The Council mandated the strict enclosure of nuns within cloistered walls. An exception was made, however, for the founding of new convents.<sup>5</sup> The Capuchin nuns of Madrid

3. See Kathryn Burns, *Colonial Habits: Convents and the Spiritual Economy of Cuzco, Peru* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1999); Stephanie L. Kirk, *Convent Life in Colonial Mexico: A Tale of Two Communities* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007); Jacqueline Holler, *Escogidas Plantas: Nuns and Beatas in Mexico City, 1531–1601* (<http://www.gutenberg-e.org>, 2002); Nora Jaffary, *False Mystics: Deviant Orthodoxy in Colonial Mexico* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004); Elizabeth A. Leffeldt, *Religious Women in Golden Age Spain: The Permeable Cloister* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005); Joan Cameron Bristol, *Christians, Blasphemers, and Witches* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2007); Allyson Poska, *Women and Authority in Early Modern Spain: The Peasants of Galicia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Bianca Premo, *Children of the Father King: Youth, Authority & Legal Minority in Colonial Lima* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); Kimberly Guaderman, *Women's Lives in Colonial Quito: Gender, Law and Economy in Spanish America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003); Daniella Kostroun and Lisa Vollendorf, eds. *Women, Religion, and the Atlantic World* (University of Toronto Press, forthcoming).

4. *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, ed. Rev. H. J. Schroeder (London and St. Louis, MO: B. Herder Book Co., 1941, 1960), 220–21 [Twenty-fifth session, December 3–4, 1563, chapter 5].

5. Kostroun and Vollendorf affirm that the negative and isolating character of enclosure in cloistered convents has been overstated. They have written: "The mandate to enclosure for religious women cut some religious communities off from their livelihoods, yet opened up opportunities for engagement with education and reform, as seen in the influential case of Teresa of Avila's Discalced Carmelites." Introduction to *Women, Religion, and the Atlantic World*, 12. In reference to the Tridentine reforms Leffeldt opines: "By examining the intertwined issues of monastic discipline, opportunities for religious expression, and secular patronage, it is apparent that Spanish religious women and their supporters negoti-

were following church mandates when they selected five sisters who were willing to undertake the transatlantic venture in order to create a monastery in the New World. María Rosa, one of the five selected, took it upon herself to chronicle the daily events of their travels so that their future sisters in Lima (and back in Spain) could trace the footsteps of their pilgrimage. The five original founders and their posts were: Madre María Rosa (abbess), Madre María Estefanía (vicarress), Madre María Gertrudis (turn keeper [*tornera*]), Madre María Bernarda (novice mistress) and the Madre Josepha Victoria (council member [*conciliaria*]).

“Account of the Journey” shows that the voyage and subsequent foundation of their new convent was also in accordance with the Spanish Crown’s desire to imprint Spanish Catholicism onto Peruvian culture.<sup>6</sup> The use of missionaries to build empire had begun as early as the first voyages of Columbus and would continue until independence.<sup>7</sup> What makes this manuscript special is that it enables us to see, through María Rosa’s narrative lens, that women played an active role in the colonial enterprise. She was among the first women to document her experiences as a woman of the church traveling from Spain to the New World.

---

ated a modified application of the reforms.” *Religious Women in Golden Age Spain*, 11. Also see Ulrike Strasser for a discussion of nun’s agency in Catholic Bavaria. She has written: “Nuns still were among the most powerful and influential women of the early modern state; because of the Counter Reformation’s preoccupation with chastity and the Virgin Mary, some rose to greater prominence than they previously enjoyed.” *State of Virginity: Gender, Religion, and Politics in an Early Modern Catholic State* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 3.

6. For a general overview on missionaries in Peru see Juan Carlos Estenssoro Fuchs, *Del paganismo a la santidad: La incorporación de los indios del Perú al Catolicismo*, trans. Gabriela Ramos (Lima: Instituto Francés de Estudios Andinos, 2003), 36–46. See also Rubén Vargas Ugarte’s *Historia de la iglesia en el Perú (1570–1640)* (Burgos: Imprenta de Aldecoa, 1959), II.225–68. See Holler for a similar discussion of the role of religious women in Mexico City. She considers them “as participants in and instruments of a conscious process of social transformation.” *Escogidas Plantas*, 5.

7. According to Amy Turner Bushnell and Jack P. Greene, “The European encounter with the Americas inaugurated by the Columbian voyages provided the first step in the reconstructions of the Atlantic—and, more particularly, the American world. Over the next 350 years, Europeans, operating under the aegis or the blessing of the national politics taking shape on the northeastern fringe of the Atlantic Ocean, engaged in a plethora of efforts to bring the vast spaces and numerous people of the Americas under their hegemony.” Introduction to *Negotiated Empire: Centers and Peripheries in the Americas, 1500–1820*, ed. Christine Daniels and Michael V. Kennedy (New York: Routledge, 2002), 1.

“Account of the Journey” was not a complete break from similar works produced by their male counterparts or from the constraints of patriarchal society. On the contrary, María Rosa (through later editing by Josepha Victoria) created a hybrid of several different genres accessible to her at the time. It took three years for this small group of nuns to navigate the Atlantic to their final destination of Peru. During the two years they were delayed on the Iberian Peninsula, they were very likely exposed to ideas and even books pertaining to the New World. Upon close examination, we can see a tapestry of influences in this manuscript, including the style of foundation narratives of new convents, travel writing by women (Saint Teresa of Avila), Post-Tridentine doctrine, and the traditional chronicles of the New World (especially that of José de Acosta).

María Rosa’s writing style is lively and multilayered. She forces us to rethink many of our assumptions about early modern religious women, especially that of the nun isolated from the outside world. What’s more, her text takes account of the politically complex landscape of the Atlantic world and is a salient example of women’s roles in that world. For example, throughout her writing we see how these nuns were treated with reverence and high regard. Whenever they arrived in a large city, such as Santiago or Lima, the local population would come out in droves just to catch a glimpse of the nuns from Spain. The sophistication of her account is impressive, particularly since María Rosa, like other religious women of her time, had access only to informal mechanisms of education.

### *María Rosa and the Capuchin Order*

We know little about María Rosa, other than what is found in her “Account of the Journey.” She was born in Madrid on January 14, 1660. Her parents were Joseph de León y Ayala (from Seville) and Estefanía Muñoz (from Villa de Herrera de Guadalupe). Her given name was Josefa de León y Ayala, but, as was customary, she changed it to María Rosa upon becoming a nun. She entered the Capuchin convent of Madrid at the age of seventeen in 1677. After she was appointed the first mother abbess of the new convent in Peru, she left Spain in 1712 with the four other founding mothers, none of whom was ever to return to her homeland. A month before her death on August 14, 1716, she stepped down from this position and her cofounder María Gertrudis

Again, the parallels between these two descriptions of birds of the Americas are striking. María Rosa compares these birds to those of Spain, just as the chapter by Acosta does. Acosta invites future chroniclers to cite other birds found on both continents; and although it may be a coincidence, María Rosa answers his call by describing the partridge, a bird mentioned only in passing in Acosta's account. Was the Capuchin narrator actually filling in some of the blanks that Acosta left open for future chroniclers, such as in this section on native birds? Although María Rosa never makes any direct reference to Acosta (or to any other chronicler), at the very least she must have read or heard about parts of his natural history. It appears quite possible that she drew on several sections of Acosta's natural history, particularly those dealing with exotic fauna, to inform her own account. But we should not rule out the possibility that María Rosa was influenced by other chroniclers. As mentioned with Garcilaso de la Vega, it was common practice for these authors to "borrow" from one another's works; many of their depictions of wildlife are quite similar.

There are some critical differences, however, between Acosta's work and María Rosa's account. Her references to natural history are limited and make up only a small part of her overall narrative. She places much more emphasis, for instance, on painting a picture of other nuns and convents visited on their long pilgrimage. One of Acosta's main goals in writing his history was to create a document that would later help the Spaniards better understand the New World and with this deeper understanding be able to convert the indigenous peoples. The nun's narrative had little to do with the conversion of the indigenous peoples whom she viewed with skepticism and in some moments as ugly heathens. On the contrary, she wrote this unique chronicle for her sisters. The influences from the chronicles of the Indies are definitely tangible in this tale of Atlantic nuns, but it is only one of the many threads that run through this well-woven narrative.

### *Content and Analysis of "Account of the Journey"*

María Rosa is a master storyteller. Despite some repetition—she goes into great detail about the kindness and pious nature of all the nuns they meet along the route—for the most part, her narrative is lively and engaging. We can catch a glimpse of her unique voice as she weaves graphic descriptions of each new experience into her account,

combining elements of humor, drama, and suspense. She takes the reader across the great plains of Spain, the coast of Portugal, the open waters of the Atlantic, and the towering peaks of the Andes. We are introduced to many well-known places, like the Giralda in Seville, that are considered major tourist destinations even today. Ultimately María Rosa treats her reader to the sights, sounds, and tastes of two continents. Yet, this is only one layer of this multitextured account. In addition to the route and fascinating journey, her text is complex because the author draws on several narrative techniques available to her at the time. In essence, it both espouses the windy rhetoric marshaled by the Catholic Church and is a staging ground for resistance.

María Rosa often crafts the account by using the third person, but there are certain instances in which she switches to the first person. Early in the document, for example, she does this when she is selected for the foundation; in all probability she felt empowered by her elevated status as a founder and the new mother abbess. It is clear that María Rosa's "Account of the Journey" is a highly edited version of the account, but these examples bring to light her use of oral textual strategies commonly found in a typical *vida* (spiritual autobiography). Along the same lines that hagiographies were spiritual biographies of saints or religious figures, the *vida* refers to the genre of spiritual and confessional autobiographies written by religious women. One colloquial phrase that María Rosa repeats several times is: "returning to my narration and what I was saying...." This type of conversational tone is reminiscent of Saint Teresa's natural speech in her *vida* and can be interpreted as a rhetorical strategy devised to circumvent the power of the church that viewed women's writings as suspect at best.<sup>72</sup> According to Arenal and Schlau, "An analysis of the act of writing, and especially linguistic usages, can illuminate questions of power and domination, submission and subservience, and can reveal some less obvious aspects of the society's hierarchical structure. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Hispanic nuns circumvented an ideology that promoted women's silence and learned to couch their thoughts in language acceptable to authority."<sup>73</sup> In this case, perhaps María Rosa incorporates the use of a more colloquial language to present herself in a position of submission, someone who does not have a formal education and does

72. For a comprehensive study on Teresa of Avila's oral language, see Weber, *Teresa of Avila and the Rhetoric of Femininity*, 5–16.

73. *Untold Sisters: Hispanic Nuns in Their Own Works*, 16.

not want her male contemporaries to think she is trying to surpass them in her literary prowess.

As discussed previously, María Rosa intended the final document to be an official historical account of the astounding journey and the establishment of their convent. Her Capuchin sisters constitute the audience that guides the overall content and style of her narrative. María Rosa specifically states as much: "My beloved daughters, mothers and sisters, I want to inform your esteemed reverences of the reasons why our Capuchin community decided to sponsor this new foundation..." (2). Thus she keeps both the journey and the retelling of their adventures within the sphere of a marginal world dominated by women. This differs from the traditional *vida*, however, because normally the female author would use some form of rhetoric of humility, declaring that holy obedience (*la santa obediencia*) to her confessor had obligated her to put quill to parchment. Distinct from those texts, María Rosa is direct about her intentions. She writes this account not because of a male ecclesiastical authority, but because she has received a request from her sisters: "I am writing this account of our journey because my beloved mothers and sisters of this house, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, have asked me to do..." (1).

From the very first pages of her account we see how María Rosa does not always conform to the rigid constraints of empire directed by men. According to several scholars, women in the colonial world "exist in a symbiotic relationship with the page, with official space, but provide a space for contestations and escape."<sup>74</sup> Through her retelling of the journey, the narrator provides her sisters with a feminine perspective of the Atlantic world. For instance, María Rosa always showed great respect for the male authorities, but when it came time for the selection of the five founders for the new convent, there were nuns who refused their charge. For whatever reason, they did not want to travel across the world; they voiced their objections, and their opinions were heard. María Rosa records this in her text. Furthermore, in another section the consolation of eternal salvation seems secondary to the passing of their beloved Madre Estefanía. She writes: "Our grief and that of our father confessor was beyond words since we had witnessed her leave the cloister only later to die in a foreign land" (20v, 21). She then goes on to say that it was all done for God's glory, but this seems more like an afterthought. It is one of

74. Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert and Ivette Romero-Cesareo, *Women at Sea: Travel Writing and the Margins of Caribbean Discourse* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 7.

the unique moments in the text when María Rosa expresses some resistance to the foundation.

The majority of the Capuchin nuns would never leave their convent in Lima, but they would always have the opportunity to “escape” to the exotic environs portrayed by María Rosa in her account. The history of their foundation had been written by one of their own. Furthermore, they are treated to a fascinating glimpse of life on the road in the early eighteenth century. María Rosa includes many details such as their daily prayer schedule, modes of transportation, sleeping accommodations, diet, the countryside, and the people they met along the route. The five nuns traveled in a carriage pulled by six mules, an extremely bumpy and uncomfortable mode of transportation. María Rosa tells us that her sisters were dizzy and sick especially at the beginning of the trip: “My sisters began to feel motion sick because all of the carriage curtains were tightly closed. One of my sisters really worried me: from the moment she stepped into the carriage she was extremely queasy” (28v). We learn also that the nuns were traveling in a small caravan. Among several other Spaniards heading to the New World to fulfill appointed positions, they were accompanied by Joseph Fausto Gallegos (their father confessor), by his brother Ignacio Gallegos (the future *oidor* of Chile), by Doctor Don Cipriano de Santa Cruz (the future precentor [*chantre*] of the Cathedral of Guamanga), by at least one male lay brother, and by the whole team of mule drivers.

When possible, the five nuns stayed in convents or houses of noble contacts, but there were times when they needed to spend the night in country inns (*posadas*). On some occasions, they were offered beds with luxurious sheets and mattresses, but the pilgrims always slept on the floor or on the hard wooden frame with just one blanket. The narrator often makes reference to the austere lifestyle of their Capuchin order. When an experience is particularly difficult, they enjoy offering their suffering up to God. Such humble rhetoric is part and parcel of María Rosa's narrative style. Furthermore, as part of their austere lifestyle, their order permitted them to wear only the habit on their backs and to have two undergarments. María Rosa mentions this fact several times along their journey, and it is difficult for the modern reader to fathom the condition of these garments even after a few weeks of travel, not to mention after three years on the road.

On some days the women's diet appears to be much more bountiful than their accustomed asceticism in their Capuchin con-

vent. At the beginning of the journey, the bishop of Toledo made them promise that they would obey their confessor's wishes and not fast during the trip. Subsequently, whenever María describes a meal she reminds the reader that she and her companions were thoroughly distressed that they had to eat such items as sponge cakes (*bizcochos*), ring-shaped pastries (*rosquillas*), roasted chickens, and partridge. Seeing many tears and long faces she would encourage her companions to eat these delicious foods out of obedience: "I tried to encourage them so that our father confessor would not feel hurt. I reminded them that their obedience was also a type of sacrifice" (41v).

It is impossible to know the truth behind these self-sacrificing statements. Humble rhetoric was very common to nuns' writings during the period,<sup>75</sup> and although the five companions' opinions might have differed on issues, such as their diet during the journey, the narrator was unlikely to express these views in an account destined to be the official history of the convent. This was also going to be a public testimony, open to the male ecclesiastical community and, of course, members of the Inquisition. Thus it is not surprising that the narrator follows the traditional rhetoric expected of a woman of her status. Only in subtle instances, as in the introduction dedicated only to female readers, can we see a hint of María Rosa's unique voice.

Despite this humble rhetoric, María Rosa's narration offers valuable insights into Spain of the early 1700s, both to her sisters and to the modern reader. When entering Andalusia she was delighted by a bagpiper and his son who entertained the group. The rough mule drivers even danced to the music. They witnessed Andalusia at the peak of the olive harvest: "It was the olive harvest, the trail was full of olive trees, and many people were gathering them" (50v). Also, she makes a point of saying that they often had to close the curtains because many country folk were curious to see the traveling nuns. After visiting many small towns along the way, the group spent eighteen days in a convent in Seville (this later would be their place of residence for a year and a half after losing all of their official licenses to the Dutch corsairs). While in Seville the pilgrims had the opportunity to visit La Giralda, an obvious tourist destination even three hundred years ago. The women were very impressed by the tower:

75. For an excellent analysis of the rhetoric of humility, see Weber, *Teresa of Avila and the Rhetoric of Femininity*, 48–50; and Arenal and Schlau, *Untold Sisters: Hispanic Nuns in Their Own Works*, 15–17.

The distinguished canons honored us in many ways and they delighted us by taking us to see the famous Giralda. It is truly marvelous, because it is so high that you do not need to climb any stairs to go up it—even a sedan chair can easily go up. In order for us to hear the tremendous force of the bells, they were rung outside the ordinary prayer schedule. The bells were many and large and even though we were ready, they nearly scared us to death (60).

With such detailed observations, this narration at times falls more into the category of female travel literature than a typical narrative about the foundation of a new convent. Her depictions of Andalusia are lively and upbeat. As mentioned earlier, María Rosa was re-creating the marvels of southern Spain for her sisters who stayed behind and for those in the new convent in Lima. Most of them would never leave the cloistered walls of their convent, but like armchair tourists they were able to relive some of the sights and adventures of their sisters through the narrator. Not only has she and her four companions undertaken this incredible transatlantic voyage, but she makes it possible for others, through her writing, to relive their experiences.

In the section on the capture by the Dutch corsairs, María Rosa changes the tone of her narrative dramatically. She graphically reproduces for her sisters the pitiful situation of the Spanish galleons in comparison to the power of the Dutch (and later the British).<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, she exposes the nuns to a totally foreign culture, one that she finds strange and repugnant. According to María Rosa, the Dutch showed no mercy toward the majority of the prisoners. They looted and sacked all the cabins, including that of the wife of the Chilean presiding magistrate (*presidenta de Chile*). The nuns suffered when they witnessed their cruelty to the other passengers:

The Dutch crew hauled down our king's flags and raised their own with great pride and celebration. This was very distressing to all the prisoners, whom they

76. As a former territory of Spain the Dutch had a long-standing tradition of animosity towards the Spanish. Moreover, at times the Dutch government sponsored corsairs and justified their attacks on Spanish ships as part of their fight against Catholicism. For a detailed study on piracy during this period, see Kris Lane, *Pillaging the Empire: Piracy in the Americas 1500–1750* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1998).

began to treat with unspeakable tyranny, for they beat some of them with staves. Others, of higher status, although they were not treated like that, were taken to the enemy ships and given nothing better to eat than barley gruel; as they had taken all the provisions from our ships with them (71v, 72).

The only passengers who received some form of clemency were the five nuns. Apparently one of the Dutch captains treated them with the utmost respect. From the very beginning, the women were impressed by his genteel manners and courtesy. He ordered sentries to guard their cabin and offered them beer and butter (neither of which they accepted). María Rosa writes: "In this man I observed many good qualities: he was kind, well mannered, and not a tyrant like the rest" (83). The women took advantage of his kindness and hid ten or twelve passengers in their cabin. However, despite their kindness, the Dutch took all their possessions, including the five vestments they used to celebrate mass and all the other items they brought along for the new foundation.

After six days at sea "in the company of these barbarians" (76v), the Dutch commander finally decided to take the fleet to the Port of Lisbon. On April 2, 1710, when they reached the port, their situation was grave. Except for their habits, the nuns had lost all their possessions and most importantly the official licenses for the new foundation in Peru. Their benefactor, Joseph Gallegos, had been stripped of his entire fortune. Ninety Jesuit missionaries made it to shore with just the clothes on their backs. The future archbishop and viceroy of Lima, Pedro Levanto,<sup>77</sup> never left the ship; instead he was taken as prisoner to Holland where he would have to wait a year and a half before the Spanish Crown would trade prisoners for his release. María Rosa was horrified at the way the Dutch treated this very important figure of the Catholic Church. According to her account, not only did they mistreat him physically by practically starving him

77. Pedro Francisco Levanto Vivaldo (Seville 1662–1729). After his release, Levanto traveled back to Spain from Holland via land. He made two memorable stops on the way home. First he was greeted in France by Louis XIV and later in Madrid he kissed the hand of the new Spanish king, Philip V. Subsequently Levanto renounced his position as viceroy and archbishop of Lima and accepted another post as the bishop of Badajoz, Spain. This was an apparent step down, but in light of his lengthy ordeal Levanto obviously wanted to remain in his home country. See Justino Matute y Gaviria, *Hijos de Sevilla señalados en Santidad, Letras, Armas, Artes o Dignidad* (Seville: Oficina de El Orden, 1887), II.121–23.

but they ridiculed his Catholic faith: "They mocked the religious prints right in front of him, they smeared the image of the Señor Saint Joseph with bacon, and they used the holy oils that he had brought as a dressing for their food" (75v).

The Capuchin nuns did receive a surprise when they made their final preparations to leave the ship. During their farewells, María Rosa tells us that the captain took her hand and tried to kiss it. She pulled back and did not let him do so, but she used the occasion to ask him to return some prints that had been left on the altar (soon thereafter he sent them to her). The nuns were later told that he was secretly a Catholic.

The Dutch captain could have been Catholic; after all, the Low Countries had been a part of Spain until the late 1500s. Moreover, there still was an underground Catholic presence in the Netherlands at this time.<sup>78</sup> Whether it is true or not, it certainly adds to the suspense of this narrative. María Rosa plants a seed of hope even at the lowest point of their journey. According to her myopic vision, only truly good people must be Catholic. It would not have been possible that they could have been treated so well by Protestants. In her introduction to *Crossing Boundaries: Attending to Early Modern Women*, Anne Lake Prescott writes that "religion may have provided women with opportunities for transnational contact and for escaping restrictive spaces within nations, but religion may also have challenged notions of ethnic or cultural differences."<sup>79</sup> In this case, the five women are exposed to a man from a totally different culture; however, his kindness and later confession that he is secretly a Catholic challenges their prejudices against the Dutch. This captain in particular is not seen as a "barbarian." By documenting this in her account, María Rosa is exposing her readers to a new way of looking at a different culture.

Much later in their journey, in Valparaiso, Chile, the nuns were to meet three French captains who offered them passage on their ships to Lima. In stark contrast to her dislike of the Dutch (with the exception of the captain), María Rosa was very impressed with these men. She makes a point of stating that they were observant Catholics. She did not seem at all concerned that they were Frenchmen, an

78. See Christine Kooi, "Popish Impudence: The Perseverance of the Roman Catholic Faithful in Calvinist Holland, 1572–1620," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 26, no. 1 (1995): 75–85.

79. Anne Lake Prescott, introduction to *Crossing Boundaries: Attending to Early Modern Women*, ed. Jane Donawerth and Adele Seeff (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2000), 20.

attitude that coincided with the mindset of the Spaniards during that time period: their new king was French, and they saw the French as their main allies during the Spanish War of Succession. Furthermore, Catholicism was a much more uniting factor than nationality.

The nuns had the same positive reaction toward the Portuguese. It did not matter that Spain was at war with Portugal at the time. When the nuns entered Lisbon's harbor, they felt a sense of relief to be in Catholic waters. This is the point where María Rosa incorporates some humorous moments into her narrative. Not only does the narrator seem interested in edifying her new community, but she has an eye for drama, spicing up certain parts of the journey. After being captured by Dutch corsairs, for instance, the five pilgrims were required to spend six weeks as "prisoners" in two Lisbon convents while they waited for safe passage back to Spain. This part of the chronicle is quite humorous because María Rosa lets us glimpse her annoyance at the opulence and lack of religious piety in the Portuguese convents—evidently the nuns were from the upper echelons of Lisbon society. She pokes fun even at their status as "prisoners" because they were treated like royalty. Clearly the Portuguese nuns were thrilled to have the Spanish pilgrims as their guests. They lavished the Castilian women with gifts and would not let them have a moment of peace.

In contrast to the Portuguese, the indigenous culture of the Southern Cone was totally foreign to the Spanish pilgrims. Before crossing the Pampas to the Andes, the women spent several weeks on a *chácara* (the narrator informs the reader that this is the term used in the Indies for hacienda). They spent fifteen days on the rustic ranch owned by a gentleman from Buenos Aires, Don Joseph Arregui. This was the nuns' first experience with the native population. According to María Rosa, there were about a hundred "barbarian" Indians living at the hacienda (almost all of them women and children since the men of their tribes had been killed in war by the Spaniards). With the help of a Franciscan friar, Don Joseph took it upon himself to indoctrinate the indigenous population in the Christian faith, and the nuns admired him for his dedication to those people.

María Rosa dedicates only a small section of her narrative to her portrayal of the ranch and the native peoples. Her worldview is obviously colored by the Spaniards' overall impression of the Amerindians as an inferior race. She takes pity on their status as heathens, while she praises Don Joseph's efforts to indoctrinate them. She writes:

When we arrived at the aforementioned *chácara* there were close to one hundred Indians living there. The majority were very young. There were also a few old women who were completely unable to grasp anything pertaining to our holy faith. It was pitiful to see them in this state. That fine gentleman had the utmost concern that both the old women and the children be taught and instructed in Christian doctrine (152v).

These are her brief observations. It is very difficult to ascertain the real treatment of these native peoples from her narrative. However, we know that the situation was not as idyllic as she describes it.<sup>80</sup> In her editing of the account, Josepha Victoria interjects: "I have since heard that the Indians got smallpox (*viruela*) and more than eighty have died..." (153). Her words were a dark premonition: by the end of the nineteenth century virtually all the Southern Cone's indigenous population would be completely decimated by war and disease.

These nuanced discrepancies in María Rosa's observations remind us that we must be careful not to take her descriptions at face value. Since her account was soon to become a public document, she had to be wary of its content. The men of the Arregui family were powerful players in the colonial enterprise of Argentina and Peru. They were also potential donors to the new convent, so it makes sense that María Rosa would praise them.

Criticisms of Spaniards living in the New World are absent from the document, but María Rosa is not inhibited in passing judgment on certain places, such as the frontier town of Mendoza. The

80. At least one source specifically calls into question the benevolence of the Arregui family towards the indigenous populations: The *Diccionario Biográfico Nacional* from Buenos Aires has an entry on Juan de Armasa y Arregui, one of the Arregui brothers who visited the nuns on the hacienda. According to the entry he was originally from Buenos Aires and the brother of Gabriel Arregui, the bishop of Cuzco. At the end of his life Juan Arregui would also become the bishop of Buenos Aires. He first held the position of the *corregidor* of Cuzco and later became the governor of Tucumán in 1732. According to this biographical entry, he was inept at his job, cruel, and vengeful: "Dando margen con su inacción a una de las más cruentos y formidables invasiones de los naturales que recuerdan los anales de la historia local de aquel territorio" (His lack of action made way for one of the most bloody and formidable invasions by the natives that has ever been recorded in the local annals of that territory). The viceroy dismissed him from his post in 1735. He died a year later on December 19, 1736. See Carlos Molina Arrotea, et al, "Juan de Armasa y Arregui," *Diccionario Biográfico Nacional* (Buenos Aires: Rivadavia, 1877), I.336.

small party stayed approximately eighteen days in Mendoza while their confessor sent for mules and saddles to cross the Andes. María Rosa was far from impressed with this small town on the edge of Spanish civilization. Although she thanked the governor's wife and also the vicar for their generosity, she made a point of discussing the plague of giant bedbugs (*chinches*) that attacked them in the late evening hours: "The adobe walls were infested with creatures quite similar to bedbugs, but they are much larger; each bug is four to six times the size of the ones in Spain. You don't see them at all during the day, but every morning we would awake covered in bumps" (162). These graphic descriptions of life on the pampas probably were quite accurate. The sisters had all taken a vow of poverty, but they were accustomed to a more civilized lifestyle in the capital of Spain.

In this section of the account, María Rosa has no qualms about expressing her obvious dislike for the uncivilized areas of the peripheries.<sup>81</sup> Her description speaks to the whole social milieu that made up colonial society. It is my impression that her portrayal of Mendoza would be very similar to that of any other Spaniard (male or female) who had just arrived in the New World.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, at the end of the narrative, María Rosa sharply juxtaposes this dusty town of the Pampas to the opulence of Lima.

In spite of María Rosa's criticisms, for the most part her narration leans toward awe and wonder. In addition, she intersperses elements of humor that provide surprising moments of comic relief. One such example comes from the most difficult part of the journey: the crossing of the Andes. In this section, the nuns would abandon the relative comfort of their ox carts for the backs of mules. They were to traverse one of the most treacherous mountain ranges in the world. María Rosa had never ridden on the back on any type of animal, nor had she ever seen a woman undertake such a feat. She describes herself and Bernarda as horrible riders. They fell on at least two separate occasions. Also, María Rosa feels sorry for the mules because she is quite large: "We were both poor riders [referring to Bernarda] and I had the additional problem of being quite fat, causing the mules to

81. See Turner Bushnell and Green for their discussion of the division within the colonies. They posit that the colonies were divided into core areas (the cities) and the peripheries (areas dominated by indigenous populations). "Introduction," *Negotiated Empire*, 2.

82. Unlike their experience in Mendoza, the four women really enjoyed their stay in Santiago. The narrator declared this city to be the closest to Spain they had seen so far, especially because the people and the climate were both very similar.

tire easily..." (164v). María Rosa's playful voice shines through in this vivid illustration. She does not mind poking fun at her rotund figure, while she provides the reader some comic relief.

It would take another five months until the founders would finally enter the doors of their new convent. May 14, 1713, was chosen as the official day of their foundation. The last chapter of the manuscript is dedicated to the last days before this official date. By this time the four women had been living in Lima in another convent for several months and had visited with all of Lima's dignitaries and met most of the nuns living in the other twelve convents. In political terms the pilgrims from Spain had paid their respects to the upper crust of Lima's noble society, and they had secured the necessary funds to finish the construction of the cloister and the church, which was completed in 1721.

On May 14, 1713, the four sisters left by coach the Convent of the Madres Trinitarias. After being dropped off at the cathedral, they walked in procession the five blocks to their new convent. According to María Rosa, the streets were packed with people; everyone wanted to see the nuns who had made such an incredible journey from the other side of the world: "Everyone in Lima, both healthy and infirm, came out to see us; the route was so filled with people that they could not all fit in the streets" (200v). Whether or not throngs of people really came out to greet the nuns, it seems clear that María Rosa shapes her narrative to emphasize the sister's spiritual role in the New World. Ultimately she positions herself and companion nuns from Spain as cultivators of a new spiritual garden in Lima.

The end of the manuscript follows the traditional format of foundation narratives.<sup>83</sup> First, María Rosa records all the names of the *colegialas* who then took vows as new Capuchin nuns. She then thanks their confessor, Joseph Fausto Gallegos, who funded the entire trip and continued to function as their spiritual advisor. Next, she documents the building of the new convent and the church, making references to specific monetary donations. In particular, the new abbess carefully includes all the names of the men and women who had made the foundation possible. She views the new foundation as a collective endeavor, one that was ultimately guided by God, whom she thanks at the very end for making all of this possible: "May His Divine Majesty be eternally praised for His works and especially this one that

83. For a concise overview on the typical contents of a foundation narrative, see Josefina Muriel's introduction to *Crónica del Convento de Nuestra Señora de las Nieves*, 13, 14.

has required innumerable trials and tribulations. . . ." (207v). She hopes that "His Divine Majesty" will be praised by all that they have endured. To a certain extent she also puts the authorship of this official history in God's hands. Inasmuch as this is a public document—open to both her sisters and any male ecclesiastical authority (with the potential of being scrutinized by the Inquisition)—she closes it in a protective layer of humble rhetoric.<sup>84</sup>

### *Significance and Afterlife of María Rosa's Account*

"Account of the Journey of Five Capuchin Nuns" provides testimony that Spanish women actively participated in the widening of the Spanish Empire. These nuns were a part of the microcosm of the complex Atlantic world. During their long pilgrimage, they came into contact with people from all the major European powers: Dutch, English, Portuguese, Genoese, and French, and, to a lesser extent, the disappearing indigenous population of the Southern Cone. They traversed two continents and an ocean between to reach their final destination. Through the lens of María Rosa, we witness firsthand the consequences of the Spanish War of Succession and its far-reaching effects even on the fringe of the Spanish empire. At one point, when referring to the British navy, the narrator even comments on waning Spanish power.

The manuscript is rich and diverse. To create this unique account, María Rosa draws on a multitude of sources readily at hand, creating a patchwork quilt with many colorful pieces. The "Account of the Journey" sews together elements of the early chronicles of the New World, particularly José de Acosta's descriptions of the natural world. María Rosa's narrative style also includes elements of traditional rhetoric from hagiographies and *vidas*. It is influenced by Saint Teresa and other religious foremothers. Foremost, María Rosa crafts her account for her Capuchin sisters. She is writing the official foundation narrative for the new convent and they are her audience. This manuscript joins the ranks of travel literature written by women and for women. María Rosa (along with the editing skills of Josepha Victoria), acknowledges the help she received from her male counterparts, especially that of her father confessor, but ultimately this document attests to the power of women in a time when misogynistic doctrine and thought dominated Spanish society. Despite a publication of the ac-

84. Neither María Rosa nor her writings were ever investigated by the Holy Office.

*Chapter I*  
*Some of the Things that Preceded the Acquisition of the*  
*Foundation License,*  
*How It Was Obtained and the Nuns Appointed*

My beloved daughters, mothers, and sisters, I would like to inform your reverences of our community's motives to accept this foundation. For years, many prayers had been offered for this to happen. On several occasions, the Lord had shown his pleasure at this prospect; nonetheless, He never revealed in what part of the world the new convent would be established. It was only known that it would be in a far off land and that to reach the foundation a sea voyage and crossing of many rough roads would have to be endured. The nuns who were to make the journey and all those who would accompany them could be seen [in a revelation]. In later revelations they learned that a church was being secretly built without a license from the king. Upon asking about the church and the convent, they were told that it was for Capuchin nuns.<sup>3</sup>

On another occasion as the nuns were praying after compline,<sup>4</sup> one of these good souls sensed that she had gotten distracted from her prayers when she saw five nuns prostrate [*postradas*].<sup>5</sup> For this reason she could not see their faces, but their number remained imprinted on her brain. When the time came for the appointment of the nuns and there was some discussion about allowing six, she replied: "I am certain that God only wants five. I know this because I have not been wrong with the other events I have foreseen, least of all in this one, since I paid careful attention to it. I also noticed that one of them was dressed in white. At first this made me believe that she was a sister of the third order [*hermana lega*], but I later realized that she was not part of the group of five because she still had to become a novice and everything else that this entails." She also saw that a nativity scene

3. The Spanish version of this paragraph is also very vague. María Rosa never directly says who received the revelations, but it appears that she is referring to one or more nuns from the Madrid convent (perhaps even herself).

4. Compline is the last of the canonical hours, usually said just before bedtime. It is part of a series of prayers said at fixed hours throughout the day, otherwise known as the Divine Office. See introduction. See *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. F. L. Cross, 3d ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

5. In English, the word *prostrate* implies lying face down, as in submission or prayer, but in addition to this definition, according to the *Real Diccionario de la Academia*, the word *postrar* can also mean to kneel down.

must have been set up because [the nuns] were prostrated in front of it. Everything happened to the letter of the word.

On yet another occasion, the same nun, as she was praying in her cell to the images of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, saw the Lord holding the foundation in His hands in the form of a globe of light with two people kneeled before Him. The nun recognized the one woman, but she did not know the man. She could only sense that he was a very special person and that His [Divine] Majesty had destined him to protect his work. The Lord made this even clearer when He said: “For her (pointing to the woman) I do this work and he (pointing to the man) will play a large role in it.”

We have seen the results of both those two souls. First, Madre María Jacinta<sup>6</sup> (may she rest in God’s presence) was the one who attempted, with her great spirit, to obtain what seemed to be the impossible. With her pious zeal she launched the founding mothers from Spain [to Lima] to establish this house for the most austere religious order of God. Although she did not have long to live in this world, the Lord granted her prayers for help by providing her with the Illustrious Señor Don Juan González de Santiago who at that time was a fiscal minister of the high court and later—at the time of his death—the bishop of Cuzco.

This gentleman so enthusiastically took up the cause of promoting this poor house, that through his position he was able to obtain the license from His Majesty<sup>7</sup> [the king]. With his own money and everything he was able to collect, he paid for the construction and materials until his death. The brevity of this account does not provide space to specify all his admirable qualities and virtues, but let it suffice to say that God had granted him great attributes. I<sup>8</sup> can also say the same of Madre Jacinta, leaving for another time a description of all the things that the Lord instilled in her soul and in this house and many details about her life. I will now continue narrating the rest of

6. Madre María Jacinta and her husband Nicolás de Dios were founders of the original house for orphaned young girls (also referred to at times as a *beaterio* and *colegio*—see introduction), and she later sought to have the house to become a convent.

7. Carlos II granted the royal decree for the *beaterio* to become a Capuchin convent in 1699. This letter granting the license from the king and several others concerning the foundation are housed in the Archive of the Indies. See *Cartas y expedientes: personas eclesiásticas* (1704–15), Signatura, Lima, 536, Archive of the Indies.

8. This is an important moment in the account, because it is the first time María Rosa uses the first person.

the story, all of which has already been manifested to the world.

The Illustrious Señor Don Juan González and Madre María Jacinta wrote to our convent in Madrid asking for founding mothers for this house of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. They said that the aforementioned Madre María Jacinta and her companions were fervently prepared to follow a religious lifestyle. As has already been stated, our community was well aware of God's wishes for this foundation, and therefore their request was accepted. After everything had been received—all the letters with the licenses from this city, a report from the viceroy and all the other necessary documents that were to be processed by the council—our prelate spoke to the señor cardinal of the request. He said that if His Eminence did not object, then our convent in Madrid was already prepared to execute the request from Lima.

After his Eminence saw that all the required documents were in order and the nuns—whose obedience was clear—were eagerly prepared to embark on the journey, he gave both his authorization and blessing for everything to proceed as necessary. The king and the councils, once they had been informed of our request, also gave their approval without any further ado.

All the necessary steps were being carried out with such joy that it seemed miraculous. Never in their previous foundations (there had been five that had stemmed from our [Madrid] convent) had everything gone so smoothly.<sup>9</sup> Everything was moving along so quickly that they thought they were going to be able to take the first available ship. However, great works are never achieved without the counterbalance of difficulties. These calm seas soon erupted into such a fierce storm of contradictions that everything that had been achieved now seemed to be lost. His Eminence, who at first had been so supportive, all of a sudden changed his mind, saying that it would be impossible for nuns to travel to such distant places. Although he was given several examples, like our foundations in Mexico<sup>10</sup> and Sardinia, and several people went to speak to him on our behalf, he would hear nothing of it. When the Viceroy Castell dos Rius<sup>11</sup> said that the founding

9. These five foundations were: Toledo (1632), Plasencia (1636), Cordoba (1655), Sassari, Sardinia (1673), Coruña (1683), and then later Lima (1713) and Guatemala (1725). Many of these foundations went on to found even more convents. See Iriarte, *Las capuchinas: Pasado y presente*, 47.

10. The convent in Mexico was founded by nuns from Toledo. See preceding note.

11. Manuel de Oms y Santa Pau de Semanat, Marqués de Castell dos Rius (1651–1710, Barcelona—Lima). He served as viceroy of Peru, 1707–10.

mothers could accompany him, this seemed like a sure thing. Despite the fact that he liked this proposal, it turned out that this was not the right time for him, and he posed many obstacles to the responsibility of chaperoning the nuns. The viceroy's reluctance gave His Eminence more grounds to deny his permission for the nuns to travel until there was a peace treaty.<sup>12</sup> He said that he felt a great love for our convent, but if he signed the license for them to travel, and then they were taken prisoners, he would never forgive himself because we were the apple of his eye. Although he really wanted the new foundation, he would not permit it as long as he was still alive.

Despite His Eminence's resistance, the señor bishop of Cuzco still sent him letters informing him of the situation, but nothing could convince him. On various occasions many gentlemen, both ecclesiastical and secular, all with authorization from Madre Jacinta, approached the cardinal, telling him about their great wish to chaperone the nuns, but all these requests fell on deaf ears.

After some time had passed, they returned [to the cardinal] to remind him that the servants of God [in Lima] anxiously wanted to become nuns. He was also told about the building that was to be constructed. He responded by telling them to return another day. They left, happily believing that the cardinal was prepared to grant them their wish. The nuns conducted extraordinary exercises and prayers in the community, and they returned to the bishop to see if he had had a change of heart. He granted them an audience, called all his servants to come into the room and then said: the reason that I have gathered together all my people is so that they can serve as witnesses to the fact that I deny the license for the Capuchin nuns to travel to Lima during wartime.

The community was devastated by his decision. Nonetheless, they venerated the esteemed judgments of the Almighty and knew that His power could also achieve the impossible when it was His will. Prayers kept pouring out to the Lord, imploring Him to shorten the wait, and seven months after the meeting, the Señor Joseph Fausto Gallegos arrived from Lima. He delivered letters from Madre Jacinta with new appeals. Actually we hardly had the heart to listen to the grievances expressed by this servant of God and all her daughters. They explained in the letter that the bearer of the letter was a person of true virtue and that he very much wanted to accompany the founding mothers to Lima because he felt great

12. She is referring to the Spanish War of Succession (1701–14).

esteem for this house and he was their current confessor. He spoke to the mother abbess who brought him up to date on all the details surrounding the foundation. She told him that, barring a miracle from God, they had lost hope. When Joseph Fausto Gallegos heard these words he laughed and said: “My daughters have faith, keep me in your prayers and I will take care of the rest.”

He did everything possible to make this happen, exerting great effort to sway the cardinal in our favor. His Eminence was very gracious to him, but gave him the same response he had used with everyone else. Furthermore, he said that many people had come to him, speaking of their zeal for the foundation, but that they had only used this as an excuse to achieve their own ends. Joseph Fausto Gallegos politely and humbly answered him and he never stopped visiting His Eminence while he was still alive. He also visited several members of his inner circle who were of very high rank (and also very adamantly against the foundation); he left no stone unturned in an attempt to change their minds.

As he had no authority over these people, the Lord led him on a new path by taking away three subjects who had the greatest influence on His Eminence. It was clear that this was not a punishment because they had good intentions and were guided by prudent decisions, but the Lord, who was ready to console that community and make its members’ wishes come true, began to cut a path through impassable terrain that had detained this foundation for so many years.

The cardinal was struck by an illness that worried everyone at court, especially us. We had always been very fond of him (we knew that his unwillingness to grant us the license stemmed from his love for us, just as a vigilant Shepherd keeps his flock out of danger). His illness took a turn for the worse and the time came for the Lord to take him out of this world, which broke our hearts.

Our father Don Joseph Fausto Gallegos<sup>13</sup> was the first to offer his condolences to us. After he had paid the customary words of courtesy in that matter, he changed the subject and said: “My daughters, now our happiness will begin. I will soon depart for Toledo where I will present our case to the gentlemen of the city council. I have confidence that the Divine goodness will arrange everything for me. Your reverences should not stop asking Him to grant us this because it will all be for His honor and glory. We increased our petitions and prayers and he left for Toledo. He had to be very persistent in his business

13. The Peru transcription calls him José Justo Gallegos.

because he was confronted with countless obstacles; before [the death of the cardinal] the foundation only hinged on one voter, and now the whole council was against it. Yet his great virtue and patience helped him bear these mortifications that seemed never-ending. He took refuge and solace by visiting Our Lady of the Tabernacle [*Nuestra Señora del Sagrario*]. He entreated her [the Virgin] to intercede on behalf of his request—I mean to say his goal<sup>14</sup>—and asked her to let those gentlemen see the light and that she grant him the right words to sway the hearts of those who had been so against the proposal.

The Señor Bishop of Sión Don Benito Madueño de Ramos, who was then the governor of the archbishopric, was also strongly against the foundation (as he later acknowledged). On the occasions that he would travel to Madrid, we spoke to him about our endeavor, but he would try to hide his true feelings because he was a very discreet person. Nonetheless, he could not help but become angry at what he considered a very misguided proposal. Our father confessor<sup>15</sup> went to talk to this prince of a man. He spoke to him in great detail of his plans, updating him on the status of the licenses from the king and council that had all been granted. He told him of the *colegialas*<sup>16</sup> yearning desire to become nuns which was increasing by the day. He also said that there was an opportunity to embark on a very decent and safe ship. Don Andrés Martínez de Murguía's ships would be sailing to Buenos Aires with a document of safe conduct granted by Queen Anne.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, the passengers were all very respectable and if we

14. The author corrects herself here. She does this several times during the account. This use of colloquial language could also be a writing strategy—perhaps she even purposely corrects herself to appear less erudite to a male reader. See the section on “Content and Analysis” in the introduction.

15. María Rosa refers to Don Joseph Gallegos as their father or father confessor throughout the account. In most instances I have chosen to use “father confessor” instead of just “father” to avoid confusion with other priests.

16. These were the young women in the *colegio* (informal school) in Lima who were yearning to become nuns. The narrator refers to the young students in the *colegio* as *colegialas*. These girls are to be the convent's future novices. Throughout the document she uses the terms *colegio* and *casa* (house) interchangeably. This seems appropriate since the informal *colegio* (also referred to as a *beaterio*—see introduction) was housed in the home of the original founder, Madre Jacinta.

17. Queen Anne of Great Britain (1665–1714) ruled the British Crown during the Spanish War of Succession (1701–14). Although England supported the Archduke Charles II of Hapsburg to succeed to the Spanish throne, by 1710 England was ready to seek peace. It was most likely for this reason the queen had granted the passage of safe conduct for this Spanish fleet.

lost this chance we would not have another one for many years. Our father confessor gave His Illustriousness full control of this endeavor and told him that since he was a great supporter of God's glory he should use all his influence to set the wheels in motion for this blessed purpose. All these arguments made an impact on his expert judgment and he completely changed his mind. He offered to present our case to the distinguished canons, and he also enlightened our father confessor on the best channels through which he could achieve his goal in the shortest period of time.

His Divine Majesty saw to it that the reports presented by His Illustriousness started to soften the hearts of the city council. When the city council met on October 9, 1709, some of the gentlemen were ready to give their approval and others still said no. The señor bishop spoke to them with great fervor and eloquence. He told them of the importance of this foundation and how he believed it would be for God's glory and the salvation of souls.

Finally the time had come that had already been determined by the Almighty. The Holy Spirit spoke through the bishop, moving everyone's heart and every single one of the council members voted for the foundation. They later acknowledged that they did not know what had come over them, as they had all changed their minds. Praise be the Lord who does not need to depend on any of His creatures when He wants something.

*Chapter VII*  
*Concerning All the Things that Happened*  
*before We Were Taken Prisoners and Brought to Portugal*

I have already mentioned the great kindness we received in this convent. Although we thought our delay would be only a few days, our departure was held up for forty-six days, since setting sail involves many unforeseen circumstances. We were well cared for by the holy company at the convent, and it seemed we were all one in love and sincerity. Although their order differs from ours in many ways, especially in the established schedule, we share much in common and we attended as many of their community activities as possible. We took comfort in this and also from [the nuns] who were genuinely pleased with the time we spent with them. There will always be a special place in our hearts for this convent, which is one of the most perfect we encountered during our entire pilgrimage.

From the convent we saw the arrival of the fleet with many ships; although they were to detain us even longer, we had a great time watching them from here. This very beautiful convent had wonderful views of the sea, thus allowing us to see the fleet's arrival and praise God for it. A few days later our prelate, Señor Levanto, arrived. Señor Levanto then extended us the favor of a visit, which was his custom. We were also visited by the señor bishop of that city [Cadiz], and by the bishop of Buenos Aires who was to set sail with us. During one of his visits, the bishop of Buenos Aires was inspired by divine grace and said: "My sisters, I am very pleased to travel with you, but I fear greatly that the restless Enemy [the Devil] of this undertaking might try to set a snare for us."

Our departure was arranged for the Feast of Our Father Saint Joseph [March 19, 1710] to the dismay of the holy sisters of the convent who told us they could scarcely resign themselves to our going. Although we felt bad, the wish to go on with our purpose held greater sway over us. Near midday we were summoned to the turn to meet with a captain of one of the ships on important business. I was quite alarmed, and seeing me in this state, the captain told me to calm myself, because even though he did not bring good news, there was nothing to fear. He told me that it was still not time for our departure because His Majesty had sent an order to delay the ships until the arrival of a judge, whom he was sending to Buenos Aires. We had to offer up to God the postponement of the day of our much anticipated departure.

My heart was in my mouth from the moment the fleet arrived because I was told that the sea would be filled with our enemies as soon as they learned of the assembled fleet. With this new delay, I feared that by the time we set sail they would know all about us. I did not tell a soul about this, but afterwards we found out that the very day we were supposed to have set out was when the Dutch left their ports to capture us. The aforementioned city judge arrived at last and our departure was set for the Feast of the Incarnation<sup>63</sup> [March 25, 1710]. On the appointed day Señor Levanto came to take us out of the cloister. The señor bishop of Cadiz excused himself due to illness; but instead he sent us his confessor, his attendants and his own carriage so that they could accompany us. Countless people filled the church and its portico. The Señor Bishop of Buenos Aires Don Fray Pedro Fajardo<sup>64</sup> and many other important people gathered to be with us.

Everyone was waiting for our father confessor, who surprised us by not being the first to arrive. He was late, and we feared the worst because of his delay. He was searched for everywhere and after about an hour he arrived, looking extremely pale, and spoke in private to the señor archbishop and the bishop of Buenos Aires. He told them he had been delayed because he had received a very troubling message that two corsair ships were lurking just outside the harbor. In order to confirm this, he had sought out the governor who told him that a fishing vessel had also seen these ships. Our father confessor then called on Don Andrés de Murguía, the owner of our ships, telling him that under no circumstances would he depart until he found out whether this message were true. He convinced our father confessor that all had been a misunderstanding and assured him that there was nothing to fear, especially since he had the greatest [financial] interest in the voyage and for his own assurance had procured a safe-conduct from Queen Anne. Seeing our father confessor's alarm, Andrés de Murguía spoke all the more encouragingly, but he later admitted when we saw him again that he had been sick with fear.

What is clear is that Our Lord allowed them all to make mistakes and in doing so gave us a chance to become more deserving. When the señores who were waiting had heard this, they said that there was no cause for alarm. If we met with the English, we had Queen Anne's safe-conduct and if the corsairs were Moors they would

63. More commonly known as the Feast of the Annunciation.

64. Pedro Fajardo (1664–1729) was appointed bishop on May 22, 1713, but was not ordained in Buenos Aires until January 19, 1716.

never dare to attack such large ships. We placed ourselves in God's hands and, with this fear and our sorrow at seeing the teary-eyed nuns, we made a very sad departure. We reached the bay where our well prepared vessel awaited us. The Señor Archbishop Levanto and the bishop of Buenos Aires accompanied us to our cabin where they blessed us, telling us that they would come the next day to say Mass. Things occurred quite differently because we would not see them until more than a year later, after all involved endured indescribable trials, especially His Illustriousness [Señor Levanto].

We set sail that day with great joy. When we had lost sight of Cadiz we saw a brightly colored small boat, which alarmed us since it was too far out to sea to be a fishing vessel. At nightfall we lost sight of it and gave thanks to the Lord for setting us on our path to this city of Lima.

Very early the next morning, even though we were seasick, we said our devotions—the Divine Office—and had Mass and communion. Then just at daybreak two large ships sailed into view, heading towards us under a very favorable wind. I cannot express the sorrow in my heart and the fear of death I felt thinking they were Moors.

Everyone on board took up arms; the drums sounded; and in a very short time the ships came so close to us that we could speak to them from the stern. They hoisted their flags to identify themselves, and they were thought to be English. Everyone breathed a sigh of relief thinking that the safe-conduct would save us, but this was not the case because they said that they were from the Dutch States, that our letter of safe conduct meant nothing to them, and that we were their prey.

They boarded our ship and carefully searched it to see if there were any Frenchmen aboard. Our Captain, Don Joaquín de Triviño, came into our cabin with the Dutch captain, which startled us greatly. The Dutch captain, upon seeing us, merely bowed and then left. Our captain explained as best he could who we were, and since he was then to be taken to the Dutch ships and could no longer take care of us, he asked the Dutch captain to look after us. At this very moment God saved us by a miracle; with all the fear and commotion no one was steering the ships, and they collided with a terrible crash. Thanks be to the Lord for saving us from a possible disaster.

After our captain asked the Dutch captain to take care of us, he put a sentry by the door of our cabin to watch over us. Something quite different happened to the wife of the presiding magistrate of Chile. This woman was staying in a middle cabin and the Dutch

crew broke into her cabin and looted it, taking away everything she and her maids possessed.

All this occurred on the twenty-sixth day of March in the year 1710. It was six in the morning when we were taken prisoners. The Dutch crew hauled down our king's flags and raised their own with great pride and celebration. This was very distressing to all the prisoners, whom they began to treat with unspeakable tyranny, for they beat some of them with staves; others, of higher status, although they were not treated like that, were taken to the enemy ships and given nothing better to eat than barley gruel. They took all the provisions from our ships with them.

It took all day to transfer all the captured passengers to their vessels. The Dutch crew did nothing but come and go in the launch, filling it with whomever they could get their hands on. It was pitiful to see how some of the passengers tried to hide. Eleven or twelve of the passengers (as many as could fit) sought refuge in our cabin. Our Lord saw to it that the food given to us nuns was enough for all of us. The food was brought to us by a lay brother who had come along to assist us and to whom the Dutch crew showed respect for being part of our order.

We experienced great favors from our God, for the roughest of men cared for us with such great courtesy that we never wanted for anything. The captain and the rest of his officers sent messages to us, saying that if we would allow it they would like to come and serve at our table. We appreciated their politeness, but we told them through the interpreter (who was a Jesuit priest) that our order did not allow men to see us. Also, the Dutch crew learned about our way of life and was very amazed to learn of our professed vows of poverty. When we went to pray the Divine Office from the balcony above our cabin they came to listen.

They showed great respect for our father confessor, offering him items that they use a lot of, such as beer and butter, with the intent that he would give them to us. We never accepted anything directly from the Dutch. We did not think any of these offers was appropriate, and our hearts pounded to see everyone controlled by the enemies of our faith with their evil dispositions. We knew that they loathed people devoted to God. We continuously beseeched our Divine Majesty to free us from their power and from such tribulation. We spent many a sleepless night listening to the gibberish of their language without knowing their plans. At times they said they

wanted to take us to Holland, and at other times to Cape Verde. It was all so very frightening. The Lord who governs all did not give them favorable winds for any of these options and they only had enough wind to go to Lisbon, as I shall later relate.

Our father confessor's sorrow was immeasurable with so many worries that just kept growing. He saw his first attempt to praise God with this new foundation as lost, along with all his fortune. Yet, since he was such a saint, he resigned himself to God's Will and encouraged us to do the same. We really needed his example and comfort in order to compensate for our distress. Even our health was compromised what with seasickness and grief. Our anguish was not only for ourselves but also for very important people who had lost their assets. All of them had brought jewels and precious gems for their wives and families, and at that point in time they did not own anything more than the clothes on their backs. However, if their clothes were of high quality, then even those were not safe from the Dutch who coveted everything.

The Dutch were evil in other ways. They would act very pleasant and then ask for the keys, saying that they would keep them safe. There were those who believed them; others, who saw that if they did not show them everything the Dutch would get even more upset, were forced to give them everything. They took all our possessions, in particular five vestments used to say Mass, and a very ornate lamé cape that our father confessor's brother,<sup>65</sup> the future judge [*oidor*] of the high court of Chile, intended for the statue of Our Lady of Loreto. He had given us the cape in the hope of seeing it spared, but there was no place safe from their hands. Even though the Dutch promised that all our belongings would be returned to us, not even their superficial kindness toward us seemed to make a difference. They did not keep their word, and we were in anguish a long time before we saw our robes and blankets again.

One day the Dutch, through an interpreter, told us that if we had saved any precious items for the foundation we should hand them

65. In my archival research I could not find any information on Joseph Fausto Gallegos, but I did learn more about his brother, Ignacio Gallegos—most likely because he was the *oidor* of Chile, although he only held this position from May 14 until November 13, 1713. According to the *Diccionario Biográfico Colonial de Chile*, he had problems with the *Corregidor* Pedro de Raso due to his trade with the French. He was transferred to a prison on the Island of Maule, escaped, and then sought refuge in a Dominican convent in 1723. See José Toribio Medina, *Diccionario Biográfico Colonial de Chile* (Santiago: Elzeviriana, 1906), 99–101.

over with the promise that they would return them to us. I told the father—who was one of the missionaries to Chile and since he was Flemish understood their language—that he should tell them the following: we were very poor and did not own anything more than a few raggedy bags of things, and for this reason we lived much happier than with all the treasures of the world. The interpreter repeated again that if we had hidden any items from other passengers among our things that we would certainly lose everything. I did not pay any attention to that, but he urgently called our father confessor and as I have already said, he asked for the keys, and the sainted man gave them to him. They also made him hand over the small chest that contained all the necessary items to say Mass, which, amid all our suffering, we had the pleasure of hearing every day. Later we were denied Mass, even on Easter Sunday. The ship's chaplain and the Jesuits also missed Mass, as they also lost everything they had brought for their mission.

One day the señor bishop of Buenos Aires came to our cabin with great secrecy and shared communion with us, shedding so many tears that it renewed our sorrow. Since he still hadn't been ordained<sup>66</sup> (what I mean to say is, he was still only wearing the frock of a Trinitarian friar), he requested that those of us who knew him not treat him as a bishop but as a poor friar. This served him well because otherwise the Dutch would have done the same to him that they did with the Señor Archbishop Levanto whom they took as a hostage to Holland until the king of Spain ransomed him by freeing some of their prisoners in Spain.

They subjected this saintly archbishop to a thousand wrongdoings and treated him with great tyranny, so that one day when he was so tired due to lack of food, he ate a piece of bread and cheese given to him by a cabin boy. They profaned religious images right in front of him, they smeared the image of the Señor Saint Joseph with bacon, and they used the holy oils he had brought as a dressing for their food. Many other similar types of things happened on the other ship that we did not see but that saddened us greatly. We were thankful that it was the holy season of Lent so that we could accompany our sweet Jesus in his sorrows, seeing ourselves prisoners for His love. All these events were reason to have His Divine Majesty present and to make us pray for everyone. The seas were very calm and there was no wind to take us where they wanted; the Dutch crew was heard saying

66. He was not yet wearing his bishop's robes since he was going to be ordained in Buenos Aires. See above, note 64.

that if there was enough wind for Lisbon then they would go that way. All the passengers rejoiced when the Dutch informed us of their plans [to head to Lisbon]; we gave thanks to God for His mercy.

As we were about to take communion and fervently praying to go to Lisbon, I took out a cross from a servant of God<sup>67</sup> and some authentic rosary beads from Saint Juana.<sup>68</sup> I tossed them into the sea, and just at that moment we began to have favorable weather to take us to Portugal so that everyone took this event as a miracle. This was the last day of March, six days after we had been captured by these barbarians. We continued in the comfort of knowing that we were heading towards a Catholic country; and even though Portugal was at war with Spain at that time, we were hopeful that they would treat us kindly.

I do not want to hesitate to tell about some incidents that occurred amid our suffering, causing us laughter, such as the times that the commander came to visit us, and even though he asked our permission to enter, he and his other men acted with great modesty and courtesy, never sitting or wearing a hat and always trying to please us. One of my sisters, Madre Bernarda, got such a fright from seeing them that she turned white as a ghost. She was so nervous that she could not find her veil to cover herself. She then hid among the others and did not get over her embarrassment for a long time. Very little happened to the gentlemen who took refuge in our father confessor's cabin that was right next to our cabin. Whenever they heard the Dutchmen coming to visit us, they would run and hide with great fear because they did not feel safe anywhere, and since this area was so small they had to hide under the bunks, one on top of the other. We felt great pity for them.

With these hardships we continued to sail until the second day of April. Since I am a great believer in Saint Francis of Paola,<sup>69</sup> I put [a statue] of him out on the gallery [*corredor*].<sup>70</sup> begging our holy God to bring us to the port of our salvation. We dropped anchor in the Port of Lisbon, but with great maliciousness the Dutch stationed the ships very far away from shore so as to torment us even more. That same day a British fleet entered the bay with an incredible pomp of

67. In Spanish she says *una sierva de Dios*. Since she is using the feminine version of servant it appears that she is also referring to Saint Juana.

68. There are several Saint Juanas so I am not sure of the one to whom she is referring.

69. Saint Francis of Paola (1416–1507), born in Italy, was founder of the Roman Catholic Order of the Minims.

70. A platform or balcony at the stern of a sailing ship.