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INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME 16 (SPRING 2015)

Our college is currently undergoing one of its periodical revisions of the core curriculum and, as part of the process, the value and importance of the study of World Languages has been the topic of some discussion. Calvin has long had a fourth semester language requirement, although students may fulfill the requirement with four years of high school study. If a student does need to take language at Calvin, there are several options to fulfill the requirement ranging from one to four language courses, including the possibility of completing the entire requirement with a study-abroad semester. Nevertheless, the World Language requirement is often seen as burdensome or excessive by students and sometimes also by non-World Language faculty.

We who teach languages are not unaware of the deep-seated fear of foreign languages in the general North American public and are, sadly, quite used to having to defend them. Perhaps in recognition of this, the American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages dedicates quite a bit of its website to advocacy (<http://www.actfl.org/advocacy/what-the-research-shows>). There are plenty of other defenders of languages: a quick Google search on “Why study foreign language” turns up lists of justifications for language learning, most of which emphasize the competitive edge a multilingual individual can realize in business or politics. At first it seems heartening that these lists always include the value of language study for achieving cultural competence, but then this outcome often is marketed once again as leading to a competitive edge!

Even our Christian institutions need to be reminded of the importance of foreign language learning. In 2010 NACFLA commissioned a team to research and write a position paper defending the teaching and learning of languages in Christian colleges and universities, one which

would ground its justification in something other than the pursuit of profit and power. The “White Paper” that resulted (JCFL volume 12) argues persuasively that the biblical call to love our neighbors as ourselves implies “some investment in learning others’ languages instead of assuming that they should adjust to my linguistic needs” (72) and offers specific recommendations for language programs. A significant element of these recommendations is that student should study languages more deeply, suggesting that “[t]hey should have done more than dabble with a second language” (76) and “encouraging students to understand the minimum requirement as a launching pad, not as an end point” (77).

Thus, many of the arguments in favor of learning languages point to the benefits that accrue to the person who is able to speak another language fluently, or at least passably well. With most colleges and universities requiring only four semesters or less, it is unlikely that most students will achieve that level of proficiency. What then, is the value of these introductory classes? How do we defend the necessity of including basic language classes in a general education curriculum? In the Forum section of this issue Audrey Johnson offers a unique Christian reflection on the value of even the most tentative language learning. We hope her musings spark further discussions and dialogue on our role in the Christian academic enterprise.

In this issue we are pleased to present three critical article on Spanish literature. First, Alisa Tigchelaar illustrates how a Carmelite nun used drama to link the simple, common life of characters in a Nativity play with the modest, devotional life of the nuns and thereby elevate the nuns’ status both as females and as Christ-followers. The emphasis in these female-authored plays is on Jesus’ humanity, particularly in his incarnation in the Virgin’s womb. The depiction of the bond between mother and child opens up a space for these religious women to envision themselves more fully in an intimate relationship with Christ.

While the first article in this volume examines the love between mother and child as symbolic of God’s love, the second investigates the love between a man and woman as metaphor of the love of God for his people. Drawing on a short story by Miguel de Unamuno, Jan Evans outlines Unamuno’s vision of love and compares it to the beliefs of Søren

Kierkegaard in that regard. She explores the extent to which the two men would agree with the premise that the love between a man and a woman is an imperfect reflection of God's love for us.

The third article in this issue invites readers to consider their own place in the divine story of redemption by examining how a contemporary Spanish author views the past and reorders it in the present. Tamara L. Townsend contrasts the way the novel fails to find meaning in the sweep of history with the hope that derives from a Christian perspective of God's work throughout history.

This volume marks my final year as editor of JCFL. The editorial and management duties for JCFL will be moving to Baylor University and the capable hands of Jan Evans and Jennifer Good. I would like to thank all those who have collaborated during these past three years by contributing articles, writing book reviews, and serving as reviewers. I would especially like to thank my co-editor, Dianne Zandstra, who worked tirelessly behind the scenes for more than ten years. Her concise and insightful comments and her excellent copy editor's eye have played an important role in maintaining the quality of this publication. Her efforts are greatly appreciated and gratefully acknowledged.

As always, we commend the work in this volume to you with the hope that it will provoke further thought and profitable discussions.

Cynthia Slagter and Dianne M. Zandstra

“CHRIST WITH US” IN THE SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY CARMELITE CONVENT: MARÍA DE SAN ALBERTO’S DRAMATIC RECASTING OF THE NATIVITY

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THIS ARTICLE presents how the reformed Carmelite nun María de San Alberto uses her literary gifts to show fellow nuns how they serve Christ in their lives. Brief comparisons with better known contemporaries Sor Juana Inés and Marcela de San Félix and with existing religious theatrical tradition serve to highlight María’s dramatic and didactic originality, and point to a central thesis: María used her talent first to serve her Lord and help other sisters understand a personal vital application of important Catholic doctrine.

If generally educated readers are familiar with any one Hispanic writing nun, it is the Golden-Age Mexican Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1651–1695). Indisputably brilliant, de la Cruz’s work participated in the scholastically doctrinal pursuit of her time period, even challenging the theological conclusions of equally gifted men. Her literary output—most notably her poetry and dramatic texts—also followed the norms of her time period artistically and philosophically speaking, and so some works that concern a connection with God through and beyond his creation are clearly neo-Platonic, “Primero sueño,” for example. Other early modern Hispanic nuns were equally

gifted in their own way, although perhaps less well recognized now as then. One example from Spain that may be familiar to some is Sor Marcela de San Félix (1605–1687), the daughter of Lope de Vega. Sor Marcela's work, until recently relatively unknown, is now considered canonical, which might in part be due to her paternal heritage. Be that as it may, Marcela, like Sor Juana, was in equal measures intelligent and literarily gifted, and used those talents to instruct other faithful Christians, as did the "Fénix de América."¹ While Sor Juana famously corrected Church leaders through scholastically oriented argumentation, however, Marcela was more intent on giving spiritual direction to the humble and often illiterate females who were her sister nuns. Her Teresian background² encouraged obedient instruction of fellows above exercising, and much less flaunting, personal giftedness and talents. She also ultimately promoted a spirituality focused not centrally on rationally imbued mystical *abandono*, but on service to God in the here and now.

Another spiritual daughter of Saint Teresa of Avila, Madre María de San Alberto (1568–1640), followed a similar pattern, engaging fully with her own immediate socio-spiritual milieu as she taught fundamental Christian truths through her writing. There were other commonalities; both Madre Marcela and Sor María wrote in all the literary genres, including drama. In fact, many convent scholars suggest that an important part of the better-known Marcela's appeal lies precisely in her dramatic gifts.³ In an early study of the more famous of the two nuns, Fernando Doménech even credits Marcela with creating a new dramatic entity, "un teatro escrito, dirigido e interpretado por mujeres (las monjas o no-

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1. The original *Fénix* is, of course, Lope, who, incidentally, admired the literary talent of his blood daughter as much as those who bestowed the same title on Sor Juana praised hers.
 2. Marcela was Trinitarian, but her order followed the reforms of the Discalced Carmelites.
 3. For example, Susan Smith mentions her "poetic skill, keen wit, . . . sense of dramatic tension . . ." ("Notes" 148) and ". . . the variety and arrangement of [her] poetic forms . . ." (161); Electa Arenal and Georgina Sabat de Rivers delight in Marcela's use of stylistic techniques common to secular Golden Age drama, for example, ". . . la frecuencia y la variedad de las referencias a sí misma y a su padre . . . , y su manejo del lenguaje cómico de plazas y ferias . . ." (59).

vicias), para un público de mujeres (el resto de la comunidad)” (I: 397).⁴ It is likely, however, that as Marcela’s older contemporary, María deserves this title, even as she also merits recognition for her use of the dramatic medium in particular to a very special end. This study aims to show how María uses her forerunning theater to write the story of Christ’s birth into daily convent life in order to instruct all nuns in humble and active service of the Savior. Additionally, we see how the dramatic medium uniquely lends itself to a recasting of the nativity that included nun players in key biblical roles, a recasting which in turn reminded participating nuns how exercising their vows meant imitatively following the Christ-on-earth himself, potentially against cultural norms.

María de San Alberto came to pair notable literary talent and rare spiritual fervor in a way similar to that of the nuns with whom we have compared her here and others. She grew up in a reformed Catholic world of social and intellectual privilege, having been born in 1568 to a Portuguese nobleman, Antonio Sobrino, and his wife, Cecilia Morillas. According to her son Diego’s account of the family, Cecilia had learned grammar, reading and writing from her father, a tradition that she continued with her own children, to whom she also taught languages, painting and music.⁵ What this mother, scholar and artist did not know for herself she learned from Diego’s tutors and passed along to her younger children, including María Sobrino Morillas. Cecilia’s intellectual legacy no doubt influenced María as it did the son who wrote about her so fondly and respectfully. María was also inspired by the spiritual fervor Cecilia’s biographer son highlighted; she entered the Discalced Car-

4. Doménech’s study, in which he discusses drama written by women from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries, is included in Juan Antonio Hormigón’s *Autoras en la historia del teatro español* (1500–1994). Among the nuns, he mentions several Trinitarians and a few examples of *dramaturgas* from other orders, including the Carmelite Sor Gregoria de Santa Teresa. He does not refer to the subject of this study, Madre María de San Alberto, nor is she included in the anthology.

5. As Arenal and Stacey Schlau note, Cecilia was well-known in larger circles for her talents: “many luminaries of the time . . . recognized Doña Cecilia as an intellectual, artist, inventor and illuminator. Her home was open to intellectuals and artists; the king’s cosmographer and mathematician was a regular visitor” (132).

melite Convento de la Concepción with her sister, named Cecilia after their mother, in 1588. Although the Sobrino Morillas sisters, well known for their many gifts, had been encouraged to join the Real Convento de Las Huelgas, both preferred the Discalced Carmelite order in spite of its stricter rules and regulations (Schlau 19). The Carmelite convent of seventeenth-century Spain, reformed in the mid-sixteenth century by Saint Teresa of Avila, was a cloistered order, allowing nuns little or no contact with the outside world. Teresa's "daughters" were expected to adhere to the basic Carmelite vows of poverty, obedience and chastity and to center their lives on mental prayer, silence, and religious thought and activity. However, Teresa also encouraged her followers to study and write;⁶ her correspondence and literary texts include direct challenges to talented nuns not to give up writing out of misguided modesty, but rather to view it as one of many gifts of God, to be used in his service within the convent community. As suggested earlier, María certainly followed her spiritual mother's advice. Following her profession, she became a prolific writer; her many surviving pieces include translations of biblical text, biographies, poetry in various styles, testimonies, convent archival work, narratives of her visionary life as a practitioner of mysticism and, of course, dramatic pieces.⁷ At the same time, María did not shirk the other duties required of servant leadership according to Saint Teresa, which may have contributed to her license to write: she was twice elected Mother Superior (1604–1607 and 1629–1632), and she also served terms as sacristan, mistress of novices and doorkeeper.

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6. Teresa's reform of the Carmelite order in Spain followed her conviction that nuns must have time for contemplation, prayer, reading, studying and writing. These tasks had been emphasized in the medieval Carmelite convent, but had since been relaxed in Spain and elsewhere, following national need and other pressures. Teresa wished to exempt herself and anyone who would follow her example from what she considered to be a dangerous externalizing trend: "Among the convents' recognized functions in Spain and its colonies in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were control and management of real estate and ministering to the poor and sick, and in times of national disaster, to the whole population" (Arenal and Schlau 3).
 7. Schlau informs us that the majority of the nun's prose work was likely burned at the behest of one of her confessors, Alonso de Jesús María, or lost to us in some other way (39).

Because of her allegiance to her foremother, María dedicated herself to serving God according to her own giftedness. This meant that some of her emphases were different than those of Teresa. The founding mother spent much of her time establishing convents and teaching her adherents to follow the traditional Carmelite emphases, including the occasionally suspect practice of mysticism.⁸ Therefore, Teresa's texts—such as *El camino de perfección*, *Las moradas del castillo interior* and portions of her *Libro de la vida*—focus on internal prayer, serving at the same time as teaching manuals and careful defenses of the exercise itself among a new group of nuns. Although we know that María herself practiced mysticism and that some of her poetry concerns mystical experiences, the majority of her writings are dedicated to the birth of the human Christ rather than on his position as the eternal and etherealized “Amado.”⁹ While her perspective was different, however, San Alberto still followed Teresa's model of guiding her fellow nuns toward a spiritually empowering and direct image of themselves in relationship with the divinity. Like Teresa's exemplification of mysticism, María's work, particularly her drama, invites an audience made up only of nuns to envision themselves in a special and perhaps controversial way in relationship to Christ, in this

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8. Many authorities of the Catholic Church were undeniably loath to accept the practice of mysticism, especially among nuns, since it enabled direct contact with God and thus evaded mediation on the part of confessors. In fact, Saint Teresa's mysticism was often confused with Illuminism (*alumbamiento*), which caused her many problems. As Roland Bainton explains, “[Teresa's] spirituality had much in common with that of the condemned Since [her] interiorization of religion resembled that of the Alumbados, investigation by the Inquisition was to be expected” (47, 58). See also Alison Weber's “Between ecstasy and exorcism: religious negotiation in sixteenth-century Spain,” which discusses the Catholic Church's fear of and reaction to mystical rapture in response to the Protestant Reformation, the practice of Illuminism and other social and historical factors (*Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 23 [1993]: 221–34).
 9. Also numerous are María's poems dedicated to Saint Teresa in defense of her canonization and beatification. This poetry, written in collaboration with Cecilia, is another example of María's dedication to the reformer, whom she describes as “propheta y doctora,” the “luz de toda España” (94). At the same time, this poetry emphasizes the ways in which Teresa's “esquadrones de vírgenes” (126) are to understand themselves in terms of her example.

case the Christ child. Likely taking its cue from the medieval mystery play tradition, all of María's dramatic material focuses on the birth of Christ and presents a fusion of her main interests: acknowledgment of the Savior as a human being as well as God and, concurrently, emphasis on his presence and involvement in the nuns' own physical world.

These accents, which we will centrally investigate through María's two major dramatic pieces, "Fiesta del nacimiento I" and "Fiesta del nacimiento II," are supported and clarified by the nun's non-dramatic writings. Indeed, much of María's poetry investigated a spirituality that maintained vibrant contact with Christ's earthly history and humanity. For example, these lines invite entry into Mary's body in order to witness the metaphoric formation *in utero* of the Christ child:

En el biente de María
 ques una nube gloriosa
 biene ya con luz copiosa
 este sol que alumbra el día . . . (216)¹⁰

10. This contrasts with, for example, the type of contact with the creative Deity centrally affirmed in Sor Juana's aforementioned "Primero sueño," where human understanding of God is pursued aside from the senses and physical-worldly experience:

no de las cinco solas adornada
 sensibles facultades,
 mas de las interiores
 que tres rectrices son, ennoblecida
 —que para ser señora
 de las demás, no en vano
 la adornó Sabia Poderosa Maño ... (196).

(Of course, is important to note that the juxtaposition between the two nuns on this point may be best understood as a matter of [literary] emphasis; as mentioned, María was also a mystic practitioner, and Juana's work here or elsewhere never disparages sensate experience or worldly duty. Esther M. Martínez highlights, "while we see in ... *Primero sueño* ... an impatience with the limitations of human reason in the attainment of knowledge, there is no desire to dispense with the body, nor to represent it as less than a necessary and desirable part of the human composite, to be respected and even loved" [183]. Indeed, for many mystics, the practice at its best enhanced and informed the day-to-day.)

Maintaining her emphasis on a God involved in the world, María also focused on his presence and activity in the everyday human experience of the Carmelite nun, as seen in these lines from a prose piece, “Favores recibidos de Nuestro Señor,” in which we see that contact with the Lord in Holy Communion provides the nun with the meaning of an abbreviated word in correspondence:

En otra ocasion de un negocio que se ofrecio al convento, quien procurava por nosotras diome un papel para que les trasladase La letra era algo oscura y tenia una abreviatura que nunca la pude açertar. Fuyme al santisimo sacramento . . . y dixi, --Señor, que quiere decir esta abreviatura? Respondiome, --quiere decir privativamente (277)

Similar in their earthly scope, María’s plays represent a union between biblical history—the birth scene—and present-day conventual activity: dramatic representation thereof. More specifically, through the plays featured here, María was inviting the Carmelite nuns of her cloister in Valladolid to participate in the historical-biblical setting of the birth of Christ in the roles of traditionally male figures: the shepherds and the wise men. So, when they formed part of this dramatic experience on the Carmelite stage, the nuns, whether actors or audience members, were certainly reaffirming their belief in the earthly ministry of their Savior and their own grateful position in that story. But they were also “rewriting” the sacred scriptures of the Catholic faith in order to personally identify themselves with and participate in the Nativity. Like Saint Teresa, then, Madre María may have taken some risks to help her fellow nuns expand their understanding of their special collective identity as Carmelite sisters.¹¹

11. I base the idea of identity formation through theatrical practice on Sue-Ellen Case’s *Feminism and Theatre*, particularly her discussion of “performance text” as it involves the mutual creation of meaning by author, actor and audience alike. As Case notes, when “co-production of the play’s meaning” (116) includes only women, it results in an understanding of the female identity that is at a remove from social conceptions imposed by (male) authority figures. Valerie Hegstrom considers

Understanding María's role as a playwright and director within her convent can help clarify what the nun wanted to achieve with her drama in terms of her fellow nuns' self-perception. To continue with previous parallels, like those of Sor Juana and Madre Marcela, María's dramatic texts present a blend of humor and seriousness, the allegorical and the real.¹² Using an irregular metrical style, these pieces, like Marcela's, function on several levels of personal and collective experience, even as they teach important biblical lessons. That is, they artistically reinforce belief systems while providing a reflecting image of the nuns' identity. Furthermore, as I suggested earlier, María, like and perhaps before Marcela, diverges from the majority of convent-related dramatic practice in Spain and elsewhere¹³ in that she wrote and directed plays that were to be performed entirely by nuns exclusively for an audience of nuns.

Golden-Age convent theater in similar terms:

An all-woman audience offers certain advantages, which allow the playwrights and actors to "get away with" meanings that they would have to veil in other circumstances, but it also permits the spectators a kind of freedom they could not experience in a mixed-gender audience. Women spectators and actors alike can participate in the theatrical ritual together without the threat of objectification that can result from the male gaze. (213)

12. The goals of these choices, of course, may differ. For example, we recall that Sor Juana's "Loa para el auto sacramental *El Divino Narciso*" presents allegorized figures that draw the contemporary world into a theology lesson though the figures of "América" and "Occidente." De la Cruz emphasizes "doctrinal" commonalities between indigenous faiths and Catholicism—as in "¿será esa Deidad que pintas, / tan amorosa, que quiera / ofrecérseme en comida, / como Aquésta que adoro?" (388)—but in order to teach the similarities between the doctrines: The physical world primarily leads us (like in "Primero sueño," perhaps?) to understand principles; the main emphasis is ultimately the ideological. In contrast, María de San Alberto's allegorization of the human world teaches doctrine also, *but* in a way that directly and inevitably encourages human praxis.
13. Of course, dramatic practice was common in other convent settings, both before and outside of the Teresian reform. It included, among other things, "comedias profanas . . . que . . . se habían estrenado en los teatros públicos" (Cotarelo y Mori 461) and attendance by non-initiates of both genders. The Teresian order, which prohibited contact with the outside world, thus provided a unique situation in which drama could be used to new ends.

What remains of María de San Alberto's dramatic texts includes two complete *fiestas* and two fragmentary ones. All four *fiestas* deal with the response of various parties—shepherdesses and shepherds, the Magi, four virtues and the Carmelite nuns themselves—to the birth of Christ. These pieces are joined by *romances*, *loas* and *seguidillas*, which also focus on the birth scene. As Schlau notes, these shorter works “served to entertain the audience at the beginning or end of the play, as well as during intermissions” (49). Their presence, in other words, indicates that María's drama was likely staged. Although we have no record of their staging, several features of the plays themselves reveal that the author wrote them with presentation in mind. Moreover, María's stage directions show that she was an able director, sure of both her own artistic ability and the merit of her drama. For example, in a note that accompanied a *loa* in one of the nun's manuscripts, she establishes authorship of her work as well as its thematic unity, suggesting the order in which a *lira* might be presented: “estas liras son tambien de la madre Maria de san Alberto. Y podran servir para loa antes que se comienze la fiestecica del nacimiento que va en el quadernico” (50 nr). On another occasion, in the stage directions of one of her *fiestas*, María implies her own artistic skill and authority—as well as her concern for the successful staging of her work—by confirming how a line is to be read: “Y hase de advertir que de proposito va el quarto pie mas largo que los otros para la gala y tonada” (61). Her stage directions also note who is to sing at a given moment and how dance steps and other physical movements must accompany the vocal gestures:

La gracia desta festeçica es que se hagan las cosas con gran sosiego y puntualidad, como se va cantando asi lo pongan en ejecucion los que dançan. (63)

Madre María also concerns herself with matters such as stage properties, stating at one point in the text's stage directions that if a necessary lily is not available it should be made out of paper (66). She even mentions how color should be used: “Aqui salen las cuatro virgenes adornadas como virtudes acomodando los colores de que van vestidas” (65). In

sum, San Alberto seems almost as concerned with the art of representing her work as she is with its spiritual lesson. As a director, she synchronizes dance, song, visual aspects and aural details—the meter of a line of poetry, for example—very carefully. In this way, she makes evident her desire not just to portray a religious message in drama, but to succeed in the dramatic medium specifically. María's need to be effective certainly had to do with artistic merit. She obviously took pride in her skill and authorship. (Writing *well* to instruct, we recall, had been encouraged by Teresa of Avila, who also championed artistic excellence itself as a means of serving God.) Perhaps her care also had to do with creating a *mise en scène* worthy of her central goal: again, to propose a unique position for her nuns as active participants in the birth and life of the human Christ. The two of María's *fiestas* on study here do this by replacing the shepherds and the Magi of the biblical accounts with lowly Carmelite nuns themselves or with female figures with whom they could easily identify,¹⁴ and thus are of particular interest.

While in her second fiesta María makes explicit reference to the sisters—“las monjas primitivas del Caramelo” (61)—the first uses the metaphor of the *pastora*, clearly if indirectly inviting the active participation of her fellow nuns in a journey to visit the newly-born Christ. Madre María alters the scriptural narrative by placing the shepherdesses in a position of leadership over the shepherds of the familiar Bible story.¹⁵

14. San Alberto's other extant dramatic texts also evoke the periphery of contemporary Spanish society by placing marginalized figures in place of or alongside the biblical nativity-scene figures of Mary, Joseph, the infant Jesus, the Magi, shepherds and angels. The supposed black King is centrally featured in one of the nun's unfinished pieces, “Fiesta de los Reyes.” Of all the Kings, this one plays a leading role, discussing Christ's gift of himself as God-turned-man, initiating the gift giving, and revealing the infant King's ultimate sacrifice of himself in speech reminiscent of his foreign heritage: “Yo ista mirra lo presento / en seña de home pasible / qui hacera como la sento / a la fin aunque invosibile / en lo sepulcro lo asento” (76). A gypsy woman, who appears in one of Madre María's *liras* reveals the same surprising prophetic capabilities as the black King, also in language that evokes her marginal status: “Dame un poquito de pan / azi yo te vea logrado / quando en el palo cuadrado / trunfarez de Leviatan” (73).

15. Luke 2: 8–18 tells the story of the unnamed shepherds and their visit to worship the

As the play opens, a shepherdess worries that the wind of the open field will turn her normally pale skin brown and render her undesirable.¹⁶ A second shepherdess encourages her not to worry, implying that internal characteristics are more important to an unexpressed potential love object—Christ—than the physical:

No tengas pena pastora
que la morena enamora
si gracia con ella mora
de que no estas ajena. (52)

The scene then shifts to several shepherds, who are planning on spending the night singing and dancing. Encountering the carefree shepherds, the shepherdesses encourage them to end their revelry and watch their sheep, which might otherwise be eaten by wolves. The women then ambiguously persuade the shepherds to anticipate another celebration:

Que alla en viniendo la fiesta
podemos muy bien baylar
vosotros zapatear
en reposando la siesta. (35, my emphasis)

To be sure, it seems as if the *pastoras* immediately comprehend on some level that they will soon have reason to participate in a special kind of commemorative dance; they seize the opportunity to celebrate some-

newly born Messiah. In this passage, the shepherds reveal both an intuitive understanding of the weight of what is happening—“the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified”—and the impetus to visit the King—“the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.’” As will soon become clear, María assigns these traits of instinctive comprehension and initiative to the shepherdesses.

16. We recall that the issue of skin color was one of great importance in Early Modern Spain. Noble families professed *limpieza de sangre*, and pale skin thus represented the integrity and lineage of the individual. Following Saint Teresa, Madre María here devalues this societal concern.

thing special that remains undefined, while the shepherds are intent only on their immediate pleasure. This juxtaposition sets up the rest of the brief piece, in which the *pastoras* facilitate a visit to the newborn Christ for the otherwise clueless shepherds, serving as both teachers and on-the-scene examples.

The play offers an initial reference to the birth of Jesus in the form of the announcing angel. While the biblical account references the shepherds' immediate response to the angels, María's play emphasizes that the shepherdesses are the first to recognize the import of the angelic message:

Que es esto que [hemos] oydo
de quien es voz tan divina
sin duda el angel ha sido
que dice Dios ha naçido
y haçia Belen nos inclina. (54)

Once the shepherdesses decode the angel's message for them, the shepherds are tellingly content to rejoice in the birth where they are, but a *pastora* chastises their limited joy, thus initiating the famous journey to visit the Christ that the shepherds undertake of their own initiative in Luke 2:

No se te pase en goçar
un tiempo tan limitado
sino dexando el ganado
pasamos le luego a buscar
que no te faltaran goços
dentro de aquel portatillo
Pascual, Anton, Carillo
vamos andad a caproços. (54–55)

The shepherdesses also prove to be the leaders of the journey on an emotional level, interpreting for the shepherds what they are likely feeling in response to seeing the Christ child. Acknowledging the confusion

of a shepherd who inquires into the strange thing that “en mi [h]e sentido,” one of the shepherdesses explains:

La gran fuerça y alegría
del goço que recibiste
quando el angel oyste
lo que anunciaba y decia

At the same time, the first shepherdess, who earlier had complained of her dark skin, recognizes divine love and presents it to the shepherd who had previously been loath to approach their Savior:

Tu pastor que no podias
sufrir en gran açidente
que oyendo la voz sentias
mira lo que ves presente. . . (55)

Continuing in their leadership roles, the shepherdesses are the first to approach and address the Christ child, while the shepherds hang back, unable to respond to their emotions and in need of a guide. They say:

Esta gran alegría
que aca dentro esta encerrada
que si no es miedo quitada
no [h]ay quien pueda hacer la guia. . . .

Hearing the shepherds' complaints, the shepherdesses again provide the example. One of them approaches the birth scene, comfortable enough with herself and the presentation of her simple gift to request that a borrowed jar be returned:

Yo os ofrezco esta jarilla
llena de manteca y miel
para haçeros papilla
hermosisimo donçel

Y vos virgin consagrada
 en hacienda la papilla
 bolvereisme la jarilla
 porque la traygo prestada . . . (56)

Upon witnessing the shepherdesses' easy exchange with the Savior and his virgin mother, the shepherds finally follow suit. Following the tradition of the contemporary *auto sacramental* in which allegory clarifies an aspect of Eucharistic doctrine, at this point in the play it becomes clear that the male shepherds, led by the females, have finally come to terms with and grasped what they could not understand before: that they have come to worship the Messiah as God-become-flesh. In following the shepherdess's precedent, the shepherds at last comprehend and acknowledge Christ's coexisting divinity and humanity. Their offerings highlight this understanding. One gives the baby Jesus a lamb, seeing this gift as a symbol of Christ himself: "el [cordero] verdadero" (57) who came to earth to become "nuestro hermano" as human being and, as God, to sacrifice himself for human redemption. Another comprehends Christ's dual nature by offering wine, perceiving this as a fitting gift for the "pan vivo" who has to place himself "aca en el suelo / en un pesebre encoxico" for our "eternal satisfaccion." Finally, a third shepherd offers the deity his heart, viewing this gift as flesh for flesh:

tanto amor habeis tenido
 a todo genero humano
 que estays de carne vestido. . . (58)

The fiesta ends with the recommencement of the delayed celebration, which the shepherdesses had intuitively deferred for this more timely moment.

It is clear that although this piece does not feature the nuns *per se*, it would have been easy for the nuns who saw it to relate to the female players especially. In the first place, the nuns would certainly have recognized the *pastoras* as Madre María's own edition of the story of the second chapter of Luke. By inviting the "shepherdesses" towards imita-

tion of Christ, the Shepherd, it would not have been difficult for the nuns to identify directly with these women characters. Beyond offering them just any position in the nativity scene, however, María makes a special statement, portraying the shepherdess-nuns as the initiators in every sense of the word: aural, verbal, physical, emotional and spiritual. Certainly, by identifying with the shepherdesses, the nuns must have felt at greater liberty to perceive themselves in positions of leadership and initiative in their own lives, even as they dealt with male authority figures, who offered them no such autonomy with any regularity. Moreover, the staging and viewing of “Fiesta del nacimiento I” would have offered the sisters permission to validate their special importance as nuns to the incarnate—as well as the ascendant—Christ. To this end, Madre María imagined a special place for them at his birth and brought this place into existence on the cloistered Carmelite stage in celebration of the Christmas holiday. This is a place where the material of common life—a jar, simple food—featured as gifts for Christ, underscore that since ordinary aspects of routine are to be used in his service and as such represent our position *vis a vis* Christ, they are vitally and even doctrinally, important. This concluding emphasis is picked up even more clearly in the second *fiesta*.

San Alberto’s following “Fiesta del nacimiento,” this one incomplete at fifty-two lines, has much in common with the first, including its brevity, style, metric irregularity and inclusion of detailed stage directions, which again reveal the nun’s general concern for aspects of presentation.¹⁷ More importantly, as does the former, this text invites the nuns (directly referenced as such this time) to usurp the positions of the biblical characters that figure in the scriptural account of Jesus’ birth, as María once again invents and affirms a vital connection between the Carmelite sisters and their Lord’s experience as a human being. This time, María’s dramatic text borrows the biblical version of the birth narrative as it is

17. Interestingly, in this piece María focuses especially on the correspondence of movement, song and voice. Her stage directions reveal this concern for artistic unity, for example: “Bajanla todas con gran concierto a la par con puntualidad a las palabras,” (62) and “entre copla y copla ha de durar el tañido de los dos que cantan porque se gusten major las diferencias y mudanças de las que dançan . . .” (64).

presented in the second chapter of Matthew, in which the Magi come to visit the baby Jesus bearing gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.¹⁸ The play opens with these lines:

Esta noche hay gran consuelo
de una fiesta singular
y quien la ha de celebrar
son las monjas primitivas¹⁹ de Caramelo
en reverencia del Rey
que ha nacido en el portal . . . (64–65)

Thus invited on the birth scene, three virgin-nuns make gifts of their original Carmelite vows: poverty, chastity and obedience. The first nun, representing poverty, offers the Christ a sack cloth: “La primera ques pobreza / del sayal que trae vestido / al niño recién nacido / ofrezca su presente / que es grande riqueza.” Chastity, in turn, volunteers a lily “para que imitar merezca / al Rey en su pureza y santidad” (62). A third nun, who exemplifies obedience, offers a wooden yoke: “el yugo le ofrezca / y en el se sujetara / con entera voluntad a su gran potencia.” The fourth virgin offers Christ a cross, the only gift that the nuns cannot directly imitate: “quel venir a ser humano es para que muriendo nos salve Jesus” (63). In this piece, brief and unfinished as it is, Madre María again points to

18. The resonances between these two plays and traditional medieval mystery plays are probably clear by now. Equally if not more interesting is a central divergence between María’s *fiestas* and a prominent example in Spanish, *Auto de los Reyes Magos*. Whereas in the medieval play the wise men present the traditional and symbolic three gifts with the goal of “proving” that the recipient is indeed the Christ, San Alberto’s plays invert this goal in that the dramatic tension (assessed by Bruce W. Whardropper to this moment) relates to the *receipt* of the gifts by the Christ, who thus acknowledges the service of his joint heirs, or verifies the truth of *their* identity. (Miguel Angel Pérez Priego’s analysis of the twelfth- or thirteenth century play interestingly focuses on this *auto* as a search for truth. See his introductory material in *Teatro medieval* [Madrid: Cátedra, 2009].)

19. We notice how the use of the word “*primitivas*” to describe the nuns and the present tense verb “*ha nacido*” bring the Carmelites and the event of the birth of Christ together temporally.

the importance of the Christ in his earthly frame. In parallel fashion, she shows that all day-to-day aspects of the sisters' lives, here demonstrated through the carrying out of their vows, are indeed spiritually meaningful, since as did "Fiesta del nacimiento I," this play reminds the nuns that the vows they took as novices are nothing less than an intimate reflection of what their Lord assumed in his human form. Here, the poverty that the nuns lived out—represented here by a *sayal*—both parallels Christ's own earthly poverty and intimates his death on a cross, also a "presente ques grande riqueza." Similarly, the lily evokes the nuns' chastity, which in turn imitates Christ's example of "pureça y sanctidad" (62) here on earth. Finally, the vow of obedience that the yoke implies harks back to the Son of Man's ultimate act of obedience to his Father: willingly emptying himself to die on a cross. As she did in her first nativity-scene *fiesta*, then, María utilizes biblical roles to give meaning to the Carmelite experience. Whereas in the first piece she predominantly grants the nuns the opportunity to envision themselves as guides even of men²⁰ as they share their understanding of Christ's earthly mission and their responsive role, here María centrally enables them to view their every daily activity, always guided by their vows, as a vital connection with the Savior whom they served.

In sum, by using drama to provide the Carmelite sisters a venue through which they could celebrate themselves and their vows as they celebrated Christ's life on earth in an artistically and theologically rich way, María was essentially re-envisioning the Carmelite life experience in a way that likely helped many nuns understand it, and perhaps take renewed delight in it. She dramatically represented the lives of the nuns in terms of a powerful parallel between Christ's earthly journey and the enactment of their vows. The very act of daily living, when seen through the perspective of these plays, thus became an opportunity for the sisters to affirm the unique identity in Christ that they had chosen for them-

20. San Alberto does not (otherwise) mention the spiritual role of women concerning men, although her spiritual mother, Teresa of Avila, does carefully suggest in places that men might be guided by female insight even in doctrinal matters, and certain of María's contemporary Carmelite sisters speak of affirming their authority in the convent in the face of male church figures who would interfere with it, for example.

selves, a vision that they were to a certain extent encouraged to assume aside from the mediation of church authorities, who had no access to the plays. Moreover, San Alberto's trademark emphasis on Christ as a human as well as heavenly Savior, combined with the active position that she vibrantly offered her fellow sisters therein through her drama, allowed for an expanded and more liberated identity for the cloistered Carmelite nun. This identity, however, was not primarily a precursor to early secular feminism, as some scholars have posited. Rather, it likely helped the sisters to grasp more viscerally and authentically the central doctrine of Christ's redemption, and see themselves as its unique inheritors. Finally, we also see how María's work was distinctive even among writing female religious. Unlike Sor Juana, whose efforts were for the literate and relied on a traditional or scholastic grasp of theology, María's work—equally doctrinally sound and artistically conscientious in its own way—provides a more personal, visceral and quotidian means of illuminating a relationship with the Christ that is no less holy.

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“UNAMUNO, KIERKEGAARD, UNHAPPY LOVERS AND FAITH”

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IN "Nada menos que todo un hombre," Unamuno uses Kierkegaard's understanding of unhappy lovers as those persons who fundamentally don't understand each other. After outlining the Kierkegaardian source in Philosophical Fragments this article shows how Unamuno's characters demonstrate two fundamental truths about love—that lovers must be equals who can communicate with one another and that real love is selfless. Since Kierkegaard uses the love between a man and a woman to be an imperfect picture of God's love for us, the essay further asks whether Unamuno would be in agreement with Kierkegaard in that regard.

The years 2013 and 2014 marked two very important anniversaries in the world of philosophical literature. 2013 was the 200th anniversary of Søren Kierkegaard's birth, and 2014 marked the 150th anniversary of Miguel de Unamuno's birth. Fifty years separate the two as well as language and culture, but when Unamuno stumbled upon Kierkegaard's writings through Ibsen's critic, Brandes, he was intrigued.¹ He bought all of the volumes of the first edition of the collected works of Kierkegaard, which were published between 1901 and 1906 (Valdes xx, n7). Unamuno found in the Danish author a philosopher "de carne y hueso," ("flesh and bone") and declared that Kierkegaard shared his "sentimien-

1. See Miguel de Unamuno, "Ibsen y Kierkegaard," 3:289. All references to Unamuno's works will be by volume number and page of the Escelicer edition

to trágico de la vida” (“tragic sense of life”) (7:119). While Unamuno claimed Kierkegaard as a brother, much work has been done to question and nuance that claim.² The following study continues that effort as it focuses on Unamuno’s possible use of a Kierkegaardian story about the true nature of love.

While Unamuno read almost all of Kierkegaard’s fourteen volumes, he marked passages along the way. We can suppose that Unamuno’s imagination was captured by such passages, or perhaps he wanted to return to them. Many of the marked passages are later quoted in Unamuno’s work, such as the ones from *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1846) that are found in *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida* (1913) (*The Tragic Sense of Life*). At least one critic believes that Unamuno plagiarized a lot of Kierkegaard, not attending to the task of documentation as we do today.³ In any case, when Unamuno underlined a passage, it is reasonable to think that the idea would stimulate the Spanish author and find its way into the Unamuno production.

Such is the case with a fascinating passage from *Philosophical Fragments* that is longer than some. It reads:

There has been much talk in the world about unhappy love, and everyone knows what the term means: that the lovers are unable to have each other. And the reasons—well, there can be a host of them. There is another kind of unhappy love, the love of which we speak, to which there is no perfect earthly analogy but which we nevertheless, by speaking loosely for a while, can imagine in

2. For those interested in a fuller understanding of the complex relationship of Unamuno and Kierkegaard, please see my *Unamuno and Kierkegaard: Paths to Selfhood in Fiction*, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2005. The first definitive study on the two philosophers was Jesús-Antonio Collado’s *Kierkegaard y Unamuno: La existencia religiosa*, Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1962, which was followed by Gemma Roberts’ *Unamuno: Afinidades y coincidencias kierkegaardianas*, Boulder: Society of Spanish and Spanish-American Studies, 1986. The bibliography of articles devoted to Unamuno and Kierkegaard has grown considerably in recent years.

3. See Sánchez Barbudo, Antonio, *Estudios sobre Unamuno y Machado*, Madrid: Ediciones Guardarrama, 1959, 65.

an earthly setting. The unhappiness is the result not of the lovers' being unable to have each other but of their being unable to understand each other. And this sorrow is indeed infinitely deeper than the sorrow of which people speak, for this unhappiness aims at the heart of love and wounds for eternity. (PF 25–26)⁴

Unamuno wrote many stories about unhappy lovers whose source of unhappiness was that they did not understand each other, but I will concentrate on one of those, “Nada menos que todo un hombre” (1916) (“Nothing Less than All Man”). The love of which Kierkegaard speaks, the lack of which “wounds for eternity,” is ultimately God’s love for us, but he uses erotic love, love between a man and a woman, to be an imperfect analogy of God’s love for us. Does Unamuno faithfully represent the true nature of love as Kierkegaard understands it? Is he in agreement with Kierkegaard about the fundamental impediment to love that wreaks havoc with human love commitments? Does he accept the analogy with regard to God’s love for us and ours for him? “Nada menos que todo un hombre,” will help us to unpack the answers to those questions, as we will see in the details of the narrative.

The quote in *Fragments* about the unhappy lovers as those who do not understand each other comes just before Kierkegaard’s pseudonym, Johannes Climacus, tells the story of the king who loved a maiden from a lowly station in life. This king could have anything or anyone he wanted. He was all powerful and was feared by local politicians and neighboring monarchs alike. How could he approach such a maiden and be loved as he loved her? His courtiers would tell him that the girl should feel fortunate to be chosen, but the king knew that the splendor of his office and his life would be huge barriers to real love. The only solution was to woo her in disguise. So it is with God, except that God actually became human, wanting us to know his love for us and for us to love him in return. He did not come in splendor with displays of power but humbling

4. I will refer to Kierkegaard’s works with the abbreviations that have been standardized in Kierkegaard studies: PF for *Philosophical Fragments* and WL for *Works of Love*.

himself as a servant to woo us to himself. Were he to have come any other way, the misunderstanding caused would abide for eternity. The analogy of the king and the maiden to God's love for us is imperfect, but it demonstrates first the importance of being understood for love to flourish and second that true love requires the emptying of the self. How well do Unamuno's stories convey these truths?

The lovers of "Nada menos que todo un hombre," Alejandro and Julia, do not get a promising start. Julia's father is in financial straits and so is anxious to get as much monetary benefit from Julia's beauty as he can. Julia wants to marry for love, not for money, though her father says marrying for love is the fantasy of the books she reads and not to be expected in real life. He is so overbearing in this desire to make Julia his ticket to financial security that she is ready to take any man just to get out of the house. The fact that she has read too many sentimental novels is somewhat confirmed when she demands of her first boyfriend that they flee together and be willing to kill themselves for love. He leaves her as quickly as possible while she chastises him for not *really* loving her.

So when a well to do "self-made man" puts her in his sights and determines that he will get whatever he wants, Julia's father is relieved of his financial pressures and Julia is sprung from the trap of her home. But immediately Julia wonders whether Alejandro loves her or wants her like a piece of expensive furniture, merely an object for others to admire. She feels an overwhelming sense of subjugation to a wealthy man who wields power and influence and is proud of her. Is that love? (2: 1015). Here, clearly, is the problem of unequals, both in power and in wealth, marrying and trying to find love together.

There is more at the center of the lack of understanding than the differences in wealth and power, however. What is at stake is the true nature of love and whether a person who is wholly consumed with self can love. Julia wants desperately for Alejandro to say that he loves her and even tells him of her need to hear the words, but Alejandro dismisses her, saying such is the stuff of the novels she reads. Julia so greatly wants to know whether he loves her that she feigns a relationship with a count to arouse jealousy in Alejandro. Alejandro is so sure of himself and the fact that *his* wife would never betray him that he has her committed to

an insane asylum for making such a claim. Julia is released only when she admits that her supposed affair with the count was a ruse to get a reaction from Alejandro. In the touching scene of reconciliation Julia urgently asks Alejandro again if he loves her, and this time Alejandro's carefully cultivated emotional guard is finally pierced: shedding two tears he says, "¡Pues no he de quererte, hija mía, pues no he de quererte! Con toda el alma, y con toda la sangre, y con todas las entrañas, más que a mí mismo! Al principio, cuando nos casamos, no, ¿Pero ahora? ¡Ahora, sí! Ciegamente, locamente. Soy tuyo más que tú mía" ("Do I love you, my child, do I love you! With all of my soul, with all of my blood, and with all that is within me, more than I love myself! At first when we married? No. But now? Yes, now! Blindly, crazily. I am more yours than you are mine") (2:1030). However, within seconds the old Alejandro "awakens," his eyes, now cold, "swallow" the previous tears, and he retracts everything, telling Julia to forget what he said (2:1031).

Alejandro continues his manipulating ways as he invites the count back to their dinner table, requiring a verbal apology from Julia to the disgraced count. Having humiliated the count and exacted penance from Julia and showing his supreme confidence in his wife, Alejandro leaves them alone. The count makes still more advances to Julia, which she rejects conclusively. Nevertheless, Julia is broken by being torn from one emotional extreme to the other and becomes gravely ill. It is only at the point when Alejandro is convinced that he might actually lose Julia that he shows her how much he loves her by doing everything he can to save her. His desperation is so great that he actually appeals to God and admits, "Nunca pensé en El" ("I never thought about Him") (2:1034). Before she takes her final breath, Julia asks Alejandro who he is. In a final moment of self revelation, the man who had considered himself "nada menos que todo un hombre" ("nothing less than all man"), the ultimate self-made man answers, "¿Yo? ¡Nada más que tu hombre. . . , el que tú me has hecho!" ("Me? Nothing less than your man. . . , the man that you have made me") (2:1035).

As Alejandro looks at his wife from whom all life has gone out, he sees his own life pass before his eyes. It is only then that the reader discovers details of the past of this man who held his own circumstances

hidden from everyone, even himself. He remembers his miserable childhood and the beatings that he took from whoever at the moment was acting as his father. He remembers cursing his father with a raised fist in front of a statue of Christ in the village church. Perhaps not wanting to repeat such errors with his own child, perhaps out of desperation for having lost Julia, Alejandro goes to the boy and asks forgiveness for what he's going to do. He then shuts himself up where his wife lies and enters into death with her.

Unamuno has given us a story of unhappy lovers whose tragic end is based on misunderstanding of each other and of the true nature of love. Julia's family life does not prepare her any better for real love than Alejandro's. The text records distasteful acrimony between Julia's father and her mother, and it intimates that Julia was also the victim of physical violence at the hand of her father. Julia's coping mechanism is to lose herself in the world of sentimental fiction. Such a world is roundly criticized and dismissed by Julia's father, her first boyfriend and Alejandro. However, the truth of the paucity of that unrealistic world is born out in her treating Alejandro as a prince charming who needs to slay dragons to prove his love to her. Alejandro is Julia's escape route out of her home, not a person who is loved. As such, he is just as much an object for her as she is for him.

Alejandro reacts to his childhood by overcoming the odds and gaining wealth by whatever means. No one knows anything about his "antecedentes." "Sabíase sólo que, siendo muy niño, había sido llevado por sus padres a Cuba, primero, y a Méjico, después, y que allí, ignorábase cómo, había fraguado una enorme fortuna, un fortuna fabulosa" ("The only thing that was known was that as a young child he had been taken by his parents first to Cuba and then after that to Mexico where, no one knew how, he had amassed an enormous fortune, a fabulous fortune") (2:1012). He most certainly is not part of the aristocracy and does not play by their rules. When accused of not being a "caballero" by people of wealth around him, he is not offended. He embraces the fact that he is a self-made man, playing by his own rules. He knows what he wants and he gets it. So Julia, with her famous beauty, is an object to be bought, just as she feared. Alejandro can do anything he wants with his money, even get his wife committed to an insane asylum by doctors who know that

she isn't insane. His sense of power and pride is limitless, until he realizes that he cannot have the one thing that he really and truly loves.

Unamuno makes an important point about the true nature of love in the last scene of final understanding between Alejandro and Julia: love cannot be summed up in a word and words are inadequate to describe what love is. Even as Julia is dying Alejandro cannot bring himself to say that he loves her because that word does not communicate what he feels toward her. He says that there is no word that encapsulates his love for her. Here Alejandro is not just reiterating simple criticism of sentimental novels where the word "love" is thrown about profligately. Alejandro knows that he feels deeply for Julia, but the nature of what he feels is ineffable. Here Unamuno reflects a Kierkegaardian view of love which he lays forth fully in *Works of Love*, where he says, "Something that in its total richness is *essentially* inexhaustible is also in its smallest work *essentially* indescribable just because *essentially* it is totally present everywhere and essentially cannot be described" (WL 3). Kierkegaard goes on to use the analogy of the tree bearing fruit to emphasize that works of love are the fruit that is visible, without which the invisible inner life of the plant would never be possible. He considers the biblical injunction from I John 3:18, "Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and truth," to make a further analogy that words are like the leaves on a tree: "To what can we better compare this love in words and platitudes than to the leaves of the tree; words and phrases and the inventions of language may be a mark of love, but that is uncertain" (WL 11). Words may be a true witness of something great and they may just be leaves, floating in the breeze. Nevertheless, Kierkegaard says that though words of love are imperfect, they should not be withheld from the beloved, "because this can be the unloving committing of a wrong, just like withholding from someone what you owe him. Your friend, your beloved, your child, or whoever is an object of your love has a claim upon an expression of it also in words if it actually moves you inwardly" (WL 12).

Love is mysterious, and yet there is finally a felt need on the part of Julia and Alejandro to communicate that feeling in ways that the other can understand. Before this final moment, Alejandro saw no need to express in words what he felt for his wife. For Julia the words were more impor-

tant than the evidence of acts of love she experienced. It seems there was real love between Alejandro and Julia, but they did not recognize it as they deeply misunderstood each other. They came from different worlds and each misconstrued the other. This is the first of the lessons to be learned from Kierkegaard's story of the king and the maiden: for love to flourish, mutual understanding must come to pass.

The second point about the true nature of love is the most important one, and that is the second of the lessons to be learned by Kierkegaard's story of the king and the maiden: true love requires the emptying of the self. When Alejandro is able to finally say, in answer to the question of who he is, that he is "¡Nada más que tu hombre. . . , el que tú me has hecho!" ("Nothing less than your man. . . , the man that you have made me") (2:1035), he has finally realized that he is not a self-made man. The emptying of the self is something that Alejandro has never been able to do. Why? Partly it is because he has never been shown that sort of love. Partly it is because of pride. The emptying of oneself includes the humble realization that we are dependent beings. Since Alejandro has been maltreated in human relationships, he resists any sense of dependence on anyone but himself. At the end Alejandro sees that what Julia has made of him, a person who can love, something he could not have achieved on his own. He is completely dependent on Julia for who he is. This is the metaphor that Kierkegaard was after in the story of the king and the maiden. That sort of love is a metaphor for understanding the love we can have for God when we realize our utter dependence on him for who we are. Does Unamuno share that vision?

In "Nada menos que todo un hombre" Unamuno beautifully demonstrates the Kierkegaardian view that true love must be communicated in meaningful ways and must be selfless. Unamuno also clearly shows that the human tendency toward pride thwarts Alejandro's ability to love and to express love to Julia. When Alejandro empties himself of his insistence on being a self-made man, when he realizes his dependence on Julia, he can love her fully and express that love. Might Unamuno also see this story of human love as a metaphor for our ability to love God? One must take as significant the fact that Alejandro both curses God in his pain and turns to him in his desperation. As a child he shakes his

fist at a crucifix reacting to abuse from his “father,” but at the end of the story, when he has realized his dependence on Julia for who he is, for his ability to love, he also realizes his dependence on God.⁵

These two contradictory impulses can be seen throughout Unamuno’s work. He rails against a god who does not make himself known in his poem “Oración del ateo,” (“Prayer of the atheist”) (7:181) but he fails to see God revealing himself in Jesus. Martín Gelabert says in “Dios, exigencia y pregunta del hombre según Unamuno” (“God, requirement and man’s question, according to Unamuno”), “No hay sitio para la revelación en Unamuno” (“There is no place for revelation in Unamuno”) (170). For Unamuno, God hides his face, just as he hid his face from Moses, and he is offended.⁶ At the same time, Unamuno speaks of the need for God to understand consciousness and the reality of love in *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida*.

Lo único de veras es lo que siente, sufre, compadece, ama y anhela, es la consciencia; lo único sustancial es la conciencia. Y necesitamos a Dios para salvar la conciencia; no para pensar la existencia, sino para vivirla; no para saber por qué y cómo es, sino para sentir para qué es. El amor es un contrasentido si no hay Dios. (7:201)

(The only thing real is what one feels, suffers, pities, loves and longs for, which is the conscience. The only thing substantial is the conscience. And we need God in order to save conscience; not to think existence but to live it; not to know why and how it is, but rather to feel what existence is for. Love is a contradiction if there is no God.)

Unamuno wants to believe in God to preserve consciousness and love, but he stops short of saying that there is a transcendent God who exists

5. I owe this insight to Wheaton College professors Christine Kepner and Phyllis Mitchell. It was at their suggestion that I developed this point.

6. See an extended discussion of the problem of the hiddenness of God in “Unamuno, Kierkegaard and Pascal on the Role of Doubt in Faith,” in my *Miguel de Unamuno’s Quest for Faith*, Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013, (65–82).

beyond our desire for him. For Unamuno the needs of the heart and the demands of reason must always be kept in tension. As critic Cerezo Galán puts it, “Mas en Unamuno la paradoja no puede trascender el límite de la razón en el salto a la fe, y se queda en la tensión agónica misma” (“But in Unamuno the paradox cannot transcend the limit of reason in the leap of faith, and he remains in the same agonistic tension”) (431).

Were Kierkegaard to confront Unamuno, he would affirm Unamuno’s sense that love is one of the strongest indications of God’s existence, but he would urge the Spanish philosopher to set aside the doubts, which can never be satisfied, and take the leap of faith. For Kierkegaard doubt and faith are “opposite passions.” He says in *Philosophical Fragments*, the same text with which we began, “Belief is the opposite of doubt. Belief and doubt are not two kinds of knowledge that can be defined in continuity with each other, for neither of them is a cognitive act, and they are opposite passions” (PF: 84).

Unamuno’s longing to know if God exists is never fulfilled, at least in his philosophical writings. Nevertheless, in this story we have “lived truth” of which Unamuno speaks in “¿Qué es verdad?” (“What is Truth?”) “Verdad es lo que se cree de todo corazón y con toda el alma. ¿Y qué es creer algo de todo corazón y con toda el alma? Obrar conforme a ello” (“Truth is what one believes with all of one’s heart and with all of one’s soul. And what does it mean to believe something with all of one’s heart and soul? To act in accordance with the belief”) (3:864). Unamuno’s characters experience true love when they are able to communicate their deeply felt emotions in ways each can understand and when they empty themselves of selfish pride, realizing their dependence on each other. In Alejandro’s reversal from cursing God to calling out to him, we have an indication from Unamuno that a life without any recognition of God is one that is totally self-absorbed and one in which love is difficult to find.

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NOSTALGIA AND RETROSPECTIVE TELEOLOGY IN SOLEDAD PUÉRTOLAS'S *QUEDA LA NOCHE*¹

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*THIS ARTICLE discusses nostalgia and personal memory in the context of contemporary Western society. Retrospective teleology refers to an approach to the past in which events are artificially selected and reconstructed as if causally related and leading to the present. Spanish author Soledad Puértolas's 1989 novel *Queda la noche* explores the protagonist's impulse toward nostalgia and retrospective teleology and reveals a view of reality in which events refuse to fit the pattern. Counter to this worldview that ultimately finds no meaning in the flow from past to present and future, this article proposes a biblical perspective of retrospective teleology, inviting believers to conceive of their life stories as part of the divine narrative of redemption.*

Memory is central to human experience, at least in contemporary Western culture, where individuals seek to develop their inner life and a sense of self. In the words of one researcher, “we are what we remember” (Rupp 10), implying both that our identity is made up of our memories, and that we remember that which best conforms to our self-perception. Rather than a static, objective archive of past experience, memory is a

1. Parts of this argument were previously explored in Tamara L. Townsend, *Memory and Identity in the Narratives of Soledad Puértolas: Constructing the Past and the Self* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014).

dynamic tool, enabling a cohesive life narrative that explains the past in terms of the present. What matters most about the past is not precisely what happened then but what it means now. Jens Brockmeier uses the term “retrospective teleology” to explain how life stories are shaped in the retelling (252). As memory becomes story, it assumes a dramatic shape: “In the process of being narrated the flux of life seems to be transformed into a flux of necessity” (Brockmeier 253). To create a meaningful narrative, one does not simply recall the past but must edit details so that the life story fits a recognizable pattern. If one takes for granted, as perhaps Brockmeier does, that “the flux of life” is random with no inherent direction, narrated memories would serve above all to assuage an individual’s anxious desire for a sense of purpose, a purpose that either does not exist or is only manufactured as a function of a subjective life narrative.

The attraction of retrospective teleology may indicate that Western individuals seek a secure feeling of continuity that inevitably eludes them. The inescapable discontinuity in life may have various causes, including major social changes, whether violent events like war or developments like advances in technology. Such changes disrupt communal and individual ability to integrate events into a unified narrative. The resulting instability, loss and lostness can trigger nostalgia, whereby disoriented people may find refuge from a chaotic present by turning back to a more stable past, inventing this past as necessary. Svetlana Boym in *The Future of Nostalgia* indicates that “nostalgia inevitably reappears as a defense mechanism in a time of accelerated rhythms of life and historical upheavals” (xiv). By Boym’s definition, “nostalgia (from *nostos*—return home, and *algia*—longing) is a longing for a home that no longer exists or that has never existed. Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one’s own fantasy. Nostalgic love can only survive in a long-distance relationship” (xiii). While once understood as a physiological ailment—literal homesickness—and treated with opium, leeches and vacations in the Alps, nostalgia is now “the incurable modern condition” (Boym xiv).

The anxious impulse among Western individuals to grab hold of the past, to validate their identity by narrating a cohesive life story, may co-

incide with the emergence of secular autobiography in the post-Enlightenment era. However, it may be observed that retelling the past coherently has always been important for believers, who read Scripture as a teleological narrative linking past, present and future. While one should acknowledge the danger of the hubristic claim to fully understand God's purposes in history, or of fatalistically overstating the role of providence in everyday events, nevertheless believers can affirm by faith that God is the author of the story. Even though we humans do not fully understand the "flux of necessity" (Brockmeier 253) of God's ultimate will and cannot prove the existence of his divine purposes, there may be, in fact, a right way to tell our stories. In the remaining pages of this article I will examine divergent approaches to memory, first in the 1989 novel *Queda la noche* (*Night Remains*) by Spanish author Soledad Puértolas (1947–), which portrays a quest for significance in the past while presuming the unknowability or nonexistence of such meaning. I will compare Puértolas's vision with a biblical perspective of divine teleology, a worldview that situates subjective memory within God's revealed redemption narrative and directs human longing to a faith and hope grounded in God's promises.

Spiritual Context of Soledad Puértolas's Writing

In Spain, the "accelerated rhythms" and "historical upheavals" as referenced by Boym (xiv) stand as the legacy of the turbulent twentieth century, including civil war, Francisco Franco's repressive dictatorship, and then a rather abrupt transition to democracy. Moreover, widespread disillusionment and distrust of the Catholic church characterizes Spain's spiritual climate, owing in part to the institutional church's privileged status in the Franco regime, following a centuries-old reputation for corruption and hypocrisy.

This context of disillusionment stands as the tacit backdrop for the narrative writings of Soledad Puértolas. Author of collected short stories, memoirs, essays, and a dozen novels published from 1979 to the present, Puértolas is a leader among contemporary writers in Spain. As she was inducted as a member of the Spanish Royal Academy (Real Academia Española) in 2010, fellow writer José María Merino, in his public

response to Puértolas's acceptance speech, identified her writing as taking a uniquely intimate approach to realism (49). Merino also praised her style, writing "en la opacidad y en la extrañeza de lo cotidiano" ("in the opaqueness and in the strangeness of the everyday," 49).

Queda la noche exemplifies these traits signaled by Merino, as this novel presents the inner life of the narrator-protagonist, Aurora, in verisimilar detail, typical of the realist tradition, and using language that is at once accessible and evasive. Aurora is a thirty-something professional who lives with her parents in Madrid, and she narrates experiences of a year of her life. As she omits certain details, such as everything related to her professional life, the memories she selects to retell all relate to her trip to New Delhi and back, a voyage that in retrospect seems increasingly significant as the year progresses. Estelle Irizarry has written that *Queda la noche* marks a definitive new phase in Spanish literature, which she calls "aventura y apertura" ("adventure and opening"), in her article by that title. At a time when Spain was entering the European Community, Aurora left her parents, symbols of outdated tradition, for adventures overseas (Irizarry 59, 62–64). At the same time, the meaning of Aurora's explorations is unclear and elusive, and the narrative concludes by leaving many loose ends, a deliberate strategy by Puértolas to reflect life's ambiguity.

Typical of all of Puértolas's introspective protagonists, the events that stand out in Aurora's memory are notably personal as opposed to collective. Almost none of Puértolas's characters reminisce explicitly about the political changes through which they have certainly lived, but one can assume that the social backdrop of the democratic transition nonetheless shapes their consciousness, perhaps creating a need for memory as a "defense mechanism" as noted by Boym (xiv). Along with Spaniards of her generation who were raised in a milieu of censorship and repression, Puértolas would have been socialized into silence about politics, which may account for this omission. Aurora also remains silent about faith and apparently does not anchor her life story to any kind of universal meaning or spiritual narrative.²

2. Silence on spiritual matters is typical of Puértolas's characters, with the notable exception of the protagonist of the 2008 novel *Cielo nocturno* (*Night Sky*). Em-

Even as Aurora examines her memories, she perceives the impossibility of restoring the lost things of the past, and this very impossibility enhances memory's attraction.³ Mary Warnock theorizes that the past is fascinating and enticing simply because it is past; time as unidirectional and irreversible may inspire an anxious sense of "paradise lost" (77). Memory is the only way to reverse course and approximate a return to the paradise of the past. Warnock writes, "Memory then comes as a saviour. Like a Messiah, it is to save us from the otherwise inevitable destruction brought by death and time" (141).

Warnock's metaphoric use of Christian terminology is appropriate here, as unfulfillable longings hearken back to humanity's exile from Eden. Indeed, Christianity affirms Jesus Christ as the ultimate answer to all longings, as we long for him to return and bring us to our true home, but in the post-Christian West, nostalgic fancy may be the only Messiah imaginable.⁴ Interest directed toward the past may signal an absence of eschatological grounding, futile longing for paradise lost standing in for pious hope for the paradise to be regained beyond the grave. Puértolas, as a nonreligious person, never names her protagonists' discontentment as a spiritual longing or a loss of Christian hope, but their nostalgia reveals their desire for fulfillment, even as they concede their inability to truly find wholeness through memory.

Nostalgic Longing in *Queda la noche*

Before discussing memory and nostalgia in *Queda la noche*, I will highlight a moment from Puértolas's memoirs that also illuminates this

blematic of Puértolas's generation, she rejects her childhood Catholic education as simplistic and irrelevant.

3. As Linda Hutcheon explains, "Nostalgia, in fact, may depend precisely on the *irrecoverable* nature of the past for its emotional impact and appeal. It is the very pastness of the past, its inaccessibility, that likely accounts for a large part of nostalgia's power" (195, original emphasis).
4. Malcolm Chase and Christopher Shaw point out that nostalgic anxiety most fully expresses itself in secular societies, where death is taken for granted as a biological finality (5).

novel's approach to the past. In "Casas a medio hacer" ("Half-Built Houses") from the collection *Recuerdos de otra persona* (*Someone Else's Memories*), Puértolas recalls her childhood fascination with a particular construction site, the same fascination behind memories of the past and of childhood: "Puede que lo que se está haciendo nos pertenezca más que lo hecho y terminado. Está más lleno de posibilidades y sueños. Lo terminado lleva en su seno la renuncia y la frustración." ("It may be that something still being made belongs to us more than what is finished and done. It is more full of possibilities and dreams. Something finished carries rejection and frustration within it," 64).⁵ The construction metaphor aptly illustrates the irreversible transformations caused by the passage of time. Only through memory can one unbuild what has been completed, reverse the frustrations and failures of life and return to a time before these disappointments, when the life one has since built was still a construction zone.

In a similar vein, *Queda la noche* presents Aurora as discontented with the present and nostalgic for a realm of indeterminate possibilities. The past is one possible object of this wistful longing, though Aurora also directs her desire toward the future, a foreign country, and the house next door. Boym agrees that nostalgia need not be limited to memory, but sometimes looks forwards toward the future or even "sideways," a vague yearning for "St. Elsewhere, another time, a better life" (xiv).⁶ No matter where Aurora's longings lead her, they persist unfulfilled.

Aurora's wanderings first lead her on an exotic tour of the Far East. As Aurora recounts her trip through Asia, she self-consciously imposes a narrative shape to its teleology. She describes arrangements leading up to the trip, as well as her first destinations, Kyoto and Hong Kong. However, she now states that the voyage really began in New Delhi, and the moments leading up to her first night in that city were just "el preámbulo de algo" ("the preamble to something," 23). That first night in her New

5. All English translations mine.

6. Linda Hutcheon agrees that the nostalgic and the utopian, her term for a longing for the future, are similar in that they "share a common rejection of the here and now" (204).

Delhi hotel, Aurora gets acquainted with several fellow travelers who have converged by chance, including the exotically attractive Ishwar. In the midst of a crowded holiday celebration in the city, that night Ishwar takes Aurora to a religious festival.

Here the preamble of Aurora's story yields to the next phase, initiated ceremonially as the couple receives a priestly blessing in a ritual, language and religion foreign to Aurora. Aurora's commentary on this episode might be taken as exemplary of her hermeneutic of memory. She notes: "Habíamos asistido juntos a un rito, todo lo desordenado y rápido que se quiera, pero un rito que debía tener un sentido del que nos podíamos apropiar a nuestra manera y eso era lo que habíamos hecho." ("We had attended a ritual together, as disorderly and fast as you can imagine, but a ritual that ought to have a meaning that we could appropriate however we wanted, and that is what we did," 38). The personal story of Aurora and Ishwar's nascent relationship precedes and precludes any other transcendental, spiritual meaning or communal significance of the religious act, and they interpret the priest's blessing how they will. Ishwar had explained to Aurora that anyone is welcome to these religious ceremonies at no charge, and he extends an invitation: "No viene mal ser purificado, ¿no crees?" ("It's not a bad thing to be purified, don't you think?," 36). Washed like a clean slate, Aurora's narrative remains silent on any spiritual perspective she brings to, or gains from, the encounter.⁷

Following this open-ended nocturnal initiation in this strange city of chance encounters, intoxicating substances and fleeting love, two subsequent images during an excursion to the Taj Mahal represent Aurora's perpetual search for the new and exciting. First, from the taxi window she sees a woman working on a road crew wearing, incongruously, a brightly colored sari and bracelets. This exotic woman and her construction work appeal to Aurora's fascination with the unknown and incomplete. Later, outside the Taj Mahal, she sees a muddy, stagnant river with

7. At the religious ceremony in New Delhi, Aurora maintains a detachment she had also shown earlier, in Kyoto, while her travel companion meditated in a Zen temple garden. Her passive stance on both occasions suggests a view of worship essentially as a quaint or amusing item for a travel itinerary.

expansive yellow fields on the other side, an image that resurfaces as a recurring memory throughout the rest of the novel. Like the river, Aurora's life feels dull and stagnant, and she fantasizes about the unexplored opposite shore; "... sentí una gran simpatía por él, casi identificación" ("I felt a great sympathy for it, almost identification"). Like a cliché, she observes that "lo mejor siempre está en la otra orilla" ("the best is always on the other shore"). (51). The vivid, emotionally significant recurring mental image of the muddy Indian river becomes a self-defining memory for Aurora, symbolic of her unresolved (and irresolvable) yearnings.⁸ Aurora mentally returns to this muddy river with nostalgia, not in the usual sense of clinging to the good days of her past, but as an emblem of her search for something better.

On Aurora's flight back home to Madrid, she feels strongly nostalgic for what she must leave behind. She does not wish to stay in India nor does she lament the end of her affair with Ishwar, because she realizes that the most interesting part, the moments of anticipation and seduction, cannot be recovered. Rather she vaguely wishes for something unattainable. This illustrates Boym's claim that "nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one's own fantasy" (xiii). Aurora does not exactly mourn a loss; more precisely, India has awakened her fantasies of another kind of life, beyond her reach.

Halfway through, the novel shifts abruptly back to Madrid, where India seems to Aurora as distant as a dream. However, as she returns to her life and routine in Spain, memories, photographs, conversations and people from her trip resurface and intertwine in unexpected ways. When Aurora learns that a fellow tourist has died under suspicious circumstances, she then finds herself in an improbable case of international espionage. Unable to shake the feeling that her mundane story is not just meandering at random, she observes, "Era el azar, pero parecía un complot" ("It was all chance, but it felt like a conspiracy," 111).

8. Jefferson A. Singer and Peter Salovey identify what they call *self-defining memories* by these five traits: "affective intensity," "vividness" (clarity of details), "repetitiveness," "linkage to other similar memories" and "focus on enduring concerns or unresolved conflicts" (12).

Aurora recounts her memories of the trip to India and her subsequent experiences, which she repeatedly calls “una cadena de casualidades” (“a chain of coincidences”) (89, 110, 146), in an unsuccessful attempt to fit them into a logical narrative. Aurora tries to assemble the disparate clues of the police investigation like puzzle pieces, and her boyfriend teasingly praises her detective abilities. Despite the presence of spies, interrogations and speculations about double agents, however, *Queda la noche* defies the genre conventions of the spy novel, as the death turns out to have been—probably—accidental. The puzzle refuses to come together, and the loose ends remain untied, implying that reality is too chaotic for an artificially imposed teleology. Aurora’s present is impossibly incongruous with last summer’s memories, like her souvenirs that look so meager when dumped out on her bedspread at home, or like “Nuestro retiro,” an Indian-styled mansion she visits, situated awkwardly in the middle of the Spanish countryside.

These inescapable reminders of her trip stir Aurora’s longing because Asia represents something other than what she knows in Spain—like the elusive opposite shore which, when compared to the dismal, muddy river, seems full of promise. Aurora again expresses her wish for a different life in the final chapter of the novel as she looks at the people in the windows across the street from her family’s apartment. Their lives, probably just as dull as her own, hold the attraction of unfamiliarity. This mirrors Puértolas’s stated fascination for the building under construction in “Casas a medio hacer”: what is unfinished and unknown seems more attractive, because “lo terminado lleva en su seno la renuncia y la frustración” (“something finished carries rejection and frustration within it,” 64).

The novel’s title *Queda la noche* echoes Aurora’s nostalgic desire for a new beginning, just as Aurora’s name also evokes dawn, travel, awakenings and new beginnings, as Estelle Irizarry has noted (66–67). Life is a dim, fading twilight, but at least night remains; nightfall promises something new (if not necessarily better). The other shore of the river, the Indian woman on the road crew, and the neighbors across the street are, like night, the realms of the new and unknown. Aurora’s Asia vacation was initially attractive in its offer of a new start, a respite from her

aging parents with their perpetual complaints and a clean break from a bad relationship, now that the interesting phase had played itself out. As Aurora later reflects on her affair with Ishwar in New Delhi, she decides that the most exciting moments in any encounter are “los preámbulos, la preparación, a distancia, todavía, de esa hipotética culminación o satisfacción” (“the preambles, the preparation, still at a distance, for that hypothetical culmination or satisfaction,” 70). These tenuous beginnings become poignant in hindsight, as “lo que hace que la aproximación quede en nuestro recuerdo como la mejor y más rica etapa de las relaciones es, precisamente, la llegada a la meta” (“what makes us remember the approach as the best and richest phase of relationships is, precisely, reaching the goal,” 70).

Because Aurora and Ishwar have arrived at the goal, so to speak, during their brief intrigue, she explains, “podíamos despedirnos con satisfacción, aunque con dolor, con pena, con nostalgia” (“we could part ways with satisfaction, even though with pain, with regret, with nostalgia,” 70). The nostalgic disappointment in their parting stems more from regret that the moments of initiation and anticipation are past than from a thwarted desire for deeper intimacy. This is again consistent with Puértolas’s observation from “Casas a medio hacer,” that something incomplete “está más lleno de posibilidades y sueños” (“is more full of possibilities and dreams,” *Recuerdos* 64). Aurora’s memory of Ishwar and the beginnings of love that they had shared is revived when Gudrun, a German tourist from the New Delhi hotel, stops in Madrid to bring her a bracelet from Ishwar. However, as proof that a promising beginning will not play out as one hopes, the bracelet is later revealed to be a stolen historical relic—evidence in the spy investigation—and not a gift from Ishwar but, to Aurora’s dismay, a token of homosexual admiration from Gudrun herself.

Aurora knows that she cannot sustain the novelty of her travel experiences, yet she tries to hold onto that feeling of newness by returning in her memory to exotic India with its muddy river. Despite the absence of explicit self-referential or metafictional elements, the fact that Aurora appears to be writing or retelling these memories must fuel this longing while perpetually keeping its fulfillment out of reach. The more Aurora

recalls the image of the stagnant river, for example, the more she is aware of its distance, her inability to conjure its existence or to cross over it. Susan Stewart in *On Longing* identifies language itself as a cause for what she terms “the social disease of nostalgia” (ix). For Stewart, nostalgia is essentially the desire for unmediated, authentic lived experience as in a prelapsarian paradise. In her view, the major obstacle to this is language, the gap between words and reality. “The inability of the sign to ‘capture’ its signified, of narrative to be one with its object, and of the genres of mechanical reproduction to approximate the time of face-to-face communication leads to a generalized desire for origin, for nature, and for unmediated experience that is at work in nostalgic longing” (Stewart 23–24). Even if Aurora does not explicitly name the shortcoming of words to meet the intended goal of the narrative, her story’s lack of resolution suggests the inadequacy of verbalized memories to ease her insatiable longing.

Because language perpetuates rather than satiates the desire for the lost experience, Stewart writes aptly that “...nostalgia is the desire for desire” (23). In Aurora’s case, the longing is compounded even further; perhaps we might call it *meta-nostalgia*, since the lost moments she yearns for and attempts to create through language are themselves moments of longing, whether for fleeting love or for another life altogether. This pervasive, though understated, dissatisfaction with life is a spiritual longing for which the novel suggests no means of fulfillment.

Memory in the Teleology of Scripture

What Aurora wants (but is resigned never to find) is a teleological frame to make her story meaningful: beginnings that truly culminate in an ending, an intriguing unknown that can be known, plenitude that is not only evoked inexactly through words but fully realized. A Christian response is to concur with Stewart that indeed some kind of “unmediated experience” is the end of longing, specifically relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Even though believers know that our longings are fulfilled in Christ, hope will not be fully realized until the end of time. Meanwhile, we say with the apostle Paul, “For now we see in a mirror

dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.” (1 Cor. 13:12).⁹ Paul expresses both a present longing and a confident expectation of a future fulfillment. In *Queda la noche* Aurora reflects on the memory of her journey presumably with the goal of discerning the shape of her life’s teleology and, ultimately, understanding herself more fully, a self-knowledge that evades her. In contrast, Paul affirms by faith that one day his knowledge will be complete, and that even now he is “fully known.”

Implicit in future-oriented biblical hope is a clear view of the past; to fully appreciate the end of the story requires right interpretation of the beginning and middle as well. Memory is at the heart of Scripture, and the Bible imparts spiritual significance to what and how believers remember. From the beginning, God’s people are shaped by God’s faithful deliverance, and not just the acts themselves as the community experiences them, but also their retelling and commemoration. Admittedly, memory sometimes behaves as an unconscious mental faculty, morally neutral, with no clear reason why one remembers something accurately, incompletely, or not at all, such as the muddy river that periodically resurfaces in Aurora’s conscious mind. Yet both Old and New Testaments are filled with commands to “remember,” which indicates that people do and ought to direct memory. God himself determines to remember his own promises and to forget his people’s transgressions, thereby demonstrating memory as an act of the will. For believers, faithful remembrance is a worshipful act. In addition, visible monuments or acts of commemoration stand as testimony to others, both to the surrounding unbelieving nations and to succeeding generations. Through memory, believers also bear witness to themselves. God’s past faithfulness means he is trustworthy in an uncertain present and future as well.

Most often, memory appears in Scripture in a collective or covenantal context, in contrast to the personal reminiscences and apparently spurious mental wanderings that Aurora recounts in *Queda la noche*. Nostalgia as a psychological defense or means to self-awareness is largely a modern-day phenomenon, as is the very concept of the *self*. However,

9. All biblical quotations taken from the English Standard Version (ESV).

Scripture does record examples of what might be considered nostalgia. Consider, for instance, the Israelites complaining about their manna, recorded in Numbers 11:4–6: “Now the rabble that was among them had a strong craving. And the people of Israel also wept again and said, ‘Oh that we had meat to eat! We remember the fish we ate in Egypt that cost nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. But now our strength is dried up, and there is nothing at all but this manna to look at.’” The context of this nostalgia corresponds with what Boym has observed, that it tends to emerge in times of instability (xiv). Certainly the Israelites feel uneasy wandering in the wilderness and express their longings aloud. However, nostalgia for their life in Egypt is condemned as a misuse of memory, a moral failure. Instead of choosing to remember God’s faithful provision and hoping in his promise to lead them to a new homeland, they complain, and God punishes them with a plague.

The Israelites’ talk of the “good old days” in Egypt (over something as trivial as food preferences) is not only an offense against God, but it also grotesquely misrepresents how things really were. As ridiculous as it seems to remember their captivity fondly, psychologists observe that people do commonly look back on a painful past with nostalgia. Linda Hutcheon theorizes thus: “Nostalgic distancing sanitizes as it selects, making the past feel complete, stable, coherent, safe from the unexpected and the untoward, from accident or betrayal—in other words, making it so very unlike the present” (195). Now that the Israelites are safe from their captors, they allow themselves to imagine that their current distress is greater than the perils of slavery. Instead of enduring their uncertain circumstances with assurance, they retreat to the apparent safety offered by memory. What the Israelites lose sight of, however, is that, as is always the case with nostalgia, they cannot go back. Were a physical return possible, they could not simply resume their previous life, just as in *Queda la noche* Aurora knows she must leave India in every sense.

It is notable as well that the Israelites’ complaint is incited by “the rabble that was among them,” outsiders or foreigners who are understandably tired of eating manna, but who lack the memory of the Exodus to inspire them to patiently hope rather than to grumble. The Numbers

passage indicates that responding to present trouble with futile nostalgia for an inaccessible past is a mark of those without faith. In contrast, the Israelites in the desert, and in all succeeding generations, should be inspired by their commemoration of the Exodus. In the flight from Egypt, God has spared the Hebrew firstborn and parted the Red Sea, and he commands Israel to retell those miracles in the Passover celebration.

A distinctive feature of the Exodus, when seen as a key historical moment which explains Israel's national origin, is that it highlights not Israel's prowess but God's sovereignty above all, his unmerited kindness and his people's dependence on him. Furthermore, the escape from Egypt only begins a journey that has yet to reach its glorious destination. Later Jesus includes himself in the Exodus commemoration; as the disciples celebrate the Passover meal, Jesus commands them to "do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). In the Lord's Supper, looking back enables believers to look forward with hope, trusting in a faithful God to bring the story to its proper end. In the Communion meal, indeed "we are what we remember" (Rupp 10), as this divinely revealed master narrative provides a context in which to integrate our own life stories, even if our vision is imperfect and our understanding incomplete (I Cor. 13:12).

Aurora may be emblematic both of the new democratic Spain as well as the universal human condition, with her figurative longing for nightfall as a sort of nostalgia for the future and no reason to suppose that anything will satisfy her yearnings. Perhaps human nature inevitably entails dissatisfaction, longing for something "other" than one's present experience, whether fondness for a remembered past or hope for a new beginning. Scripture exhorts believers to look at these inevitable longings with faith; that is, instead of mere wishful thinking, "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). The writer of Hebrews indicates that one of the marks of the men and women of faith he catalogues in chapter eleven is that they saw themselves as aliens in this life, "seeking a homeland... a better country, that is, a heavenly one" (Heb. 11:14, 16). Recalling nostalgia's etymological origin, *homesickness* is indeed an appropriate response to a present dissatisfaction. Aurora's impulse to travel and her desire for the metaphorical fields on the other side of the stagnant river perhaps give evidence of this

innate longing for a true heavenly country. However, Aurora knows no way to find her true home, and the best she can hope for is the start of another interesting night.

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FORUM

The Forum is intended to promote dialogue by providing space for shorter pieces of writing, including opinions and suggestions, brief responses to papers, reports of research in progress, meditations, and descriptions of pedagogical strategies.

LANGUAGE EDUCATION WHEN FLUENCY IS ELUSIVE: A METAPHOR OF SANCTIFICATION

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THIS ESSAY reflects on the benefits university students receive through studying a second language. Specifically, it focuses on the Christian virtues that grow even in students who do not reach the level of fluency. Furthermore, it examines the process of studying a foreign language without achieving fluency as a metaphor for Christian sanctification.

At times, I become discouraged as a lower-level language teacher. All the courses I have taught in my short career have been beginner or intermediate foreign language (or L2) classes that are required by lots of universities for undergraduate degrees. Thus, many of my students are in my classes more or less against their will. Each semester there has been a gratifying handful who enter my class on the first day with enthusiasm and a few more who pick up the passion as we go. However, the majority of my students would not study Spanish (or any L2) if they could

graduate without it. Many of them may pass the required classes, touch the threshold of interpersonal communication with fluency in sight, and forget almost everything they learn within six months. Many will never read a novel in Spanish under their own steam or strike up a conversation of their own volition. So are those students wasting their time and mine in my classroom? If I believed that, I might not keep teaching. Thank goodness I am convinced that L2 study is certainly worthwhile for all my students—both for that precious handful who will truly reach bilingualism and for the monolingual majority.

Most of my confidence in the value of language learning comes from my belief that L2 study is a way in which God shapes us. As Christians our L2 instruction needs to look very different in its goals and motivations from those of other teachers. There are many benefits to L2 study. Too often, however, the implicit goals of language text books and classrooms are centered on selfish or at least materialistic ends. When the focus of L2 study is to equip our students for arguing themselves into the best seat on the bus, bargaining more skillfully, or taking advantage of a business partner, L2 seems to support a consumerist culture. In such a setting, L2 study treats the target culture as little more than a commodity.

Coming to understand another culture as we study its language should lead us, as Christians, to love its members more and seek their good. Smith and Carvill put it well in their book *The Gift of the Stranger: Faith, Hospitality, and Foreign Language Learning*; the aim of our L2 study should be “to build hospitable and kind relationships and good human connections through which people enrich and bless each other, having the well-being and flourishing of each other at heart” (99). Thus, loving one another should be our utmost priority as we consider inter-lingual or intercultural interaction. We as Christians are called to approach language study as not just beneficial to the one who studies, but also to the one who is studied. As language teachers, we attempt to equip students with more than just a mastery of verb tenses and restaurant vocabulary, but also with the moral fortitude to embrace that which is foreign to them.

As I ponder all these lofty goals I am often discouraged by my own shortcomings as a Spanish speaker. I am an adult learner of Spanish—I

started studying in earnest as a freshman in college, and will never be a perfect Spanish speaker. My accent will always sound distinctly English, and I will always make errors. My Spanish will always only be *near* native. Nevertheless, I benefit from the many advantages of being a Spanish speaker. And I certainly embrace all of the benefits available even to my students who never become fluent. The fact that speaking Spanish imperfectly does not disbar us from its benefits reminds me of our journey as Christians toward holiness—that is, the process of sanctification.

According to Omanson in the *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible*, literally translated (along with English words like “holiness” and “consecration”) the word “sanctified” refers to something dedicated for a specific purpose or set aside for a distinct use. Furthermore, in the New Testament sanctification is not always discussed as a finished act. What is more, we do not sanctify ourselves, rather we are sanctified by God. We strive for sanctification, and mysteriously, God strives for it in us.

I take great delight in the small glimpses of the sanctification process that brighten my L2 classroom as my students grow in the Christian virtues of empathy, compassion, hospitality, and love. One of my favorite parts of teaching Spanish at a Christian university is the opportunity to make my faith-related goals explicit. In fact I think it is important enough that I devote precious class-time to discussing such goals. I present quotes from Smith and Carvill’s book to all my classes along with the syllabus, and we talk about the intertwining of faith and L2 study off and on throughout the semester. For example, when we discuss direct object pronouns in my beginner course, I also introduce the verb *perdonar* (to forgive) and ask my students to describe someone they have forgiven. They may choose how much personal information to share, but they gain the ability to say, “Te perdono,” and the opportunity to contemplate its use. I also seek to make compassion for one another part of our everyday classroom practices. During my students’ group and pair interactions I discourage expressions of derision and encourage cooperative efforts. As the semester progresses, and my beginner class transitions into a Spanish-only zone, I like to brainstorm together about strategies and vocabulary they need in the target language to respect and help their partner as they study.

In all my courses, we discuss Smith's and Carvill's idea that L2 study can be a metaphor for Christian hospitality, and occasionally a student responds in a way that heartens me. One described a step on her journey to empathy for L2 learners of English. At a gas station near campus, the attendant speaks very little English, and my student used to quickly grow impatient with him. After experiencing in our classroom the difficulty and frustration of language learning and reflecting on our goals of hospitality, her reaction to the attendant now is to pause and listen to him, have a short English conversation, and think as he speaks, "You take your time. You gather your thoughts." That student has become more empathetic, though when she shared this insight with me she was far from any definition of fluency.

The steps toward an explicit discussion of faith and L2 learning do not require much classroom time, but the goals we seek are essential. I feel the beginning of 1 Corinthians 13 is a call to language enthusiasts: "If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal" (*New International Version*, 1 Cor. 13:1). If our language study lacks love at its core, it is only noise. Learning a foreign language can and should directly motivate us to love others better. It should contribute to the many ways God is growing holiness in us.

But I am convinced that we will always be human and frail—that I will never reach my goal of being truly holy. So why strive for an impossible goal? Because, by grace, reaching the goal is unnecessary for receiving benefit. Because there is beauty and value in the journey. In the same way that my students, even the ones who will never be fluent, grow in compassion, humility, hospitality and love, I grow in godliness and love for God through sanctification even though I will never reach perfection. Because perhaps I was never meant to arrive, but only to strive and learn both the lessons I strive to learn and the lessons that striving itself teaches. The elusive aspect of perfect fluency teaches me humility and undercuts my self-reliance. It underscores the mystery of God working in me and overcomes my pride.

While L2 study as a mirror of Christian sanctification is not a perfect metaphor, as I meditate on holiness and my goals as a language teacher, I

cannot help seeing the ways that salvation is echoed in that aspect of my life. And recognizing the parallels between sanctification and language learning inspires me to teach with more enthusiasm and dedication because I see that I am practicing and implementing the idea of sanctification. So I can add that to the list of ways studying a foreign language benefits Christian learners. I will never reach perfection in my Spanish speaking, and many of my students may never become fluent, but studying fosters humility, compassion, and hospitality, and points us to God by illustrating the sanctification He is crafting in us.

REVIEW

Wong, Mary Shepard, Carolyn Kristjánsson, and Zoltán Dörnyei, eds. *Christian Faith and English Language Teaching and Learning: Research on the Interrelationship of Religion and ELT*. New York/London: Routledge, 2013, 279 pp. ISBN 978-0-415-89895-9

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In this recently published volume, editors Mary Shepard Wong, Carolyn Kristjánsson, and Zoltán Dörnyei have made an outstanding contribution to an ongoing debate in the field of TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) concerning the nature and appropriateness of the influence of Christian faith on English language teaching (ELT) and learning. The introduction by the editors offers a concise summary of recent polemics surrounding this issue, providing useful background information for understanding and interpreting the research studies informed by Christian faith included in subsequent chapters. The book's foreword by A. Suresh Canagarajah challenges the common misconception of many scholars that religious faith and academic research are mutually exclusive by invoking a post-positivist perspective, which allows for open examination of the role of values in molding (and indeed, often enhancing and illuminating) intellectual endeavors. The book has much to offer not only to TESOL practitioners (for whom its relevance is obvious), but also to anyone interested in the relationship between faith and language teaching in general (including foreign language instructors, teacher educators, and applied linguists, particularly those doing research on the factors that influence second language acquisition [SLA]).

Recent critiques by secular scholars of the involvement of (particularly evangelical) Christians in teaching English, while raising valid points such as the frequent link between Christian missionary work and imperialism and the need to be vigilant against inappropriate uses of power in the classroom, have not always relied on empirical evidence to substantiate their claims, nor have they necessarily recognized the often multifaceted and nuanced relationship between Christian faith and ELT. The empirical data provided by the current volume address this gap in the literature by shedding light on a number of specific ways that Christian faith can and does influence the teaching and learning of English. The ten mainly qualitative studies included, organized around three broad themes (specified below), were conducted by researchers from different continents and varied cultural backgrounds, and together constitute a convincing case for the validity and relevance of “faith and SLA” as a specific area of inquiry within the field of applied linguistics.

The first four studies in the book examine the often complex interrelationship between Christian faith and language teacher identity, and in so doing address the paucity of previous research on religious/spiritual aspects of teacher identity in ELT. Mary Shepard Wong’s longitudinal study of English language instructors from the U.S. residing in China demonstrates how their faith has influenced their professional identity and pedagogy in multiple ways that vary across individuals. Shu-Chuan Wang-McGrath’s examination of issues of power and faith in a team-teaching situation involving native and non-native English language instructors in Taiwan also finds variation, in this case in the types of team-teaching patterns identified and in the specific role of Christian faith in influencing those relationships. Michael Pasquale uses folk SLA, the “discovery of what non-linguists...believe about the second language acquisition process” (p. 48), to investigate how both pre-service and experienced evangelical Christian language teachers understand the interrelationship of faith with L2 teaching and learning and with their identity as L2 practitioners. Finally, Shuang Frances Wu and Mary Shepard Wong examine the role of study abroad in the professional identity formation of TESOL students (including their global competence development,

spiritual formation, and the interaction between the two), and report a variety of indicators of growth among participants.

The second group of studies deals with the relationship between Christian faith and the specific context(s) in which English language learning takes place, and the temporal, geographical, and cultural variety considered contributes to the comprehensive scope of the book. Chapters include Don Snow's historical investigation of the relationship between globalization and use of English in China's Christian colleges in the early 20th century, Michael Lessard-Clouston's comparative study of faith and learning integration in English language instruction at Christian universities in the United States and Indonesia, and Bradley Baurain's research on the practical expression of Christian beliefs in a church-run adult ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) ministry in the Midwestern U.S.

The third collection of articles deals with interactions among Christian faith, motivation, and the L2 learning process, and constitutes a fascinating read. Elfrieda Lepp-Kaethler and Zoltán Dörnyei report the results of a study of seven Christian adults who exhibit extraordinarily high motivation to learn a L2 that is connected in some way to their view(s) of the Bible. Peng Ding's chapter addresses the role of modernity and cosmopolitanism as motivating factors in conversion to Christianity among Chinese university students, and examines the relationship between their Christian faith and learning of English. Finally, the third chapter by Letty Chan investigates the degree to which Christian Language Professionals have achieved integration between their Christian and Language Professional selves.

A very useful aspect of this volume is the inclusion of a response chapter at the end of each section, written by a leading scholar in the specific area of inquiry represented by the studies in that section. These chapters provide thoughtful critiques of the research on Christian faith and ELT reported in the preceding chapters. They are helpful summaries that allow readers to make connections among the studies and notice weaknesses they may not perceive on their own, and the authors maintain an objective stance throughout without abandoning their own convictions. There is also a set of thoughtful discussion questions for each section

that refer back to the various studies as well as to the summary chapter, and which are intended to encourage deeper reflection on the topics addressed.

Perhaps the most noteworthy feature of the book is the thorough and well-organized working bibliography of resources related to faith and language teaching (and a number of other related areas) that appears right before the conclusion. It serves as a very helpful starting point for scholars, educators, and researchers interested in learning more about the topic. The bibliography includes introductory comments from its compilers, three scholars in the field who argue convincingly for the usefulness of considering relevant scholarly discussions not only within but also outside of one's specific research focus (in this case, the intersection of faith and ELT), and who offer the list of resources as a way of facilitating such a broader perspective. Although these scholars claim that it is representative rather than comprehensive, one could perhaps argue from the length (fourteen categories of resources spanning twenty-eight pages) that it at least approaches comprehensiveness.

In summary, this volume is a unique and worthwhile resource for both Christians and non-Christians in the fields of applied linguistics and second language pedagogy, as it can not only broaden the reader's understanding of the relationship between Christian faith and second language learning but also serve as a springboard for future research in this area.

GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

Published once yearly, the *Journal of Christianity and Foreign Languages* was founded to provide a forum for educators who wish to publish research undertaken from a Christian perspective. It welcomes high-quality articles and reviews dealing with scholarly and pedagogical issues in modern foreign languages, literatures, and cultures. While it is preferable that manuscripts be written in English so as to reach the broadest readership, some manuscripts in other languages may be accepted.

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