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Los Angeles

# Portraits of a Contested Mystic:
# Representing Sor María de Jesús de Ágreda in Print

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts

in Art History

by

Miranda Saylor

2016

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Portraits of a Contested Mystic:

Representing Sor María de Jesús de Ágreda in Print

by

Miranda Saylor

Master of Arts in Art History

University of California, Los Angeles, 2016

Professor Charlene Villaseñor Black, Chair

Born in 1602 and named abbess of her convent at just 24 years, Sor María de Jesús de Ágreda's high-profile was the subject of extreme controversy. Known as King Philip IV's spiritual adviser, as a prolific author, and as mystic abbess who experienced visions of miraculously bilocating to Mexico's northern frontier, the seventeenth-century nun's renown is remarkable considering she never physically left the confines of her small town of Ágreda, Spain. During her lifetime, Sor María was depicted in a few paintings, but her imagery proliferated after her death as devotional images and as frontispieces to her publications. This thesis investigates five printed portraits of Sor María de Ágreda that were produced in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. I argue that the printed images of this controversial abbess occupy a negotiated space between sacred art, which is designed to incite devotion, and secular portraiture, which advocates for her identity as a learned female scholar and writer.

The dissertation of Miranda Saylor is approved.

Bronwen Wilson

Steven D. Nelson

Charlene Villaseñor Black, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2016

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> Esta es toda mi pretensión y voluntad. Y por esto no escribiré como Maestra sino como Discípula, no para enseñar, sino para aprender, que ya se han de callar las mujeres por oficio en la Iglesia santa y oír a los Maestros. Pero como instrumento de la Reina del cielo, manifestaré lo que su Majestad se dignare enseñarme…[1]
>
> -Sor María de Jesus de Ágreda

## Introduction

In Sor María de Jesus de Ágreda's seventeenth-century biography of the Virgin Mary, the author portrays the Virgin as Christ and God's equal, queen of wisdom, co-redeemer of the world, and free of original sin -- radical claims that resonated widely and provoked debate in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe and the Americas. Known as King Philip IV's spiritual adviser, as a prolific author, and as mystic abbess who experienced visions of miraculously bilocating to Mexico's northern frontier, Sor María's renown is remarkable considering she never physically left the confines of her small town of Ágreda, Spain. Born in 1602 and named abbess of her convent at just 24 years, Sor María's high-profile was the subject of extreme controversy during and after her lifetime. As part of the Catholic Reformation's determination to curtail women's expanding roles within the Church, officials representing Spain's Inquisition interrogated Sor María's revelations and writings multiple times. The controversy escalated following her death over the veracity of her writing, arguing that the *espiritú humano* (human spirit) was the source of her work rather than the *espiritú divino* (divine spirit). Furthermore, the Church insisted Sor María's praise bestowed upon the Virgin was exaggerated, and ultimately condemned her biography of the Virgin, *Mystical City of God,* to the Inquisition's Index of Forbidden Books, where it remained until 1966.

[1] "This is all my aspiration and will. And so I will not write as a teacher but as a disciple, not teach but learn, knowing that women should be silent in the holy Church and listen to the Teachers. But as an instrument of the Queen of heaven I will declare what she deigns to teach me…" (My translation). María de Ágreda, *Mística Ciudad de Dios Primera Parte* (Spain: Geronymo Verdussen, 1705), 6.

During her lifetime, Sor María was the subject of a few paintings, but her imagery proliferated after her death as devotional images and as frontispieces to her publications. This thesis investigates five printed portraits of Sor María de Ágreda that were produced in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The prints were engraved by Pedro Villafranca in 1669, Juan Francisco Leonardo in 1688, Gaspar Bouttats in 1696, Jean Baptiste Berterham in the early eighteenth century, and Tomás Enguídanos in the late eighteenth century. I analyze the different pictorial devices and strategies that these artists employ in their depiction of her posthumous identity. As prints, these images thematize repetition, but are simultaneously unstable: Sor Maria's likeness remains remarkably consistent, while the details surrounding her are in flux. I argue that the printed images of this controversial abbess occupy a negotiated space between sacred art, which is designed to incite devotion, and secular portraiture, which advocates for her identity as a learned female scholar and writer. All five prints foreground Sor Maria's learnedness, while emphasizing her role as a visionary mystic to varying degrees.

Although Sor María de Ágreda is a relatively popular subject of inquiry, particularly among literature scholars and historians, this research consists of biographical approaches and close readings of her writing, including her copious correspondence with King Philip IV. Marilyn Fedewa's *Mystical Lady in Blue* (2009) is the most popular and recently published biography of Sor María. However, the biography, *Mary of Ágreda: The Life and the Legend of a Spanish Nun* (1967), by the late archaeologist, Sir Thomas Downing Kendrick, provides a more rigorous synthesis of research. Clark Colahan's *The Visions of Sor María de Ágreda: Writing, Knowledge, and Power* (1994) offers a brief overview of the nun's life, but more significantly, offers a close reading of the theme "Virgin as Role Model." Colahan's analysis critically elucidates how the literary portrait of the Virgin depicts a self-assured heroine who lives "an

active life of achievement" that is intended to be emulated by both Sor María and her readers.[2] Lastly, Antonio Artola Arbiza's intensive archival work in *La Venerable M. María de Jesus de Ágreda y la Inmaculada Concepcion* (2004) uncovers the *Mystical City of God*'s tumultuous reception following Sor María's death.

Only two art historical examinations of Sor María's visual representations exist, despite the fact that her images circulated throughout Europe and the New World as printed book illustrations as well as single devotional sheets. Her images currently exist in Spanish, Mexican, and U.S. archives. A brief essay by Patricia Andrés González, "Iconografía de la Venerable María de Jesus de Ágreda," took the initial step in studying Sor María's visual representations, applying a taxonomical method, and organizing her imagery into iconographic groups such as "Writer Inspired by the Virgin," "American Bilocation," and "Family Tree." While I agree with Andrés González's argument that these portraits do clearly communicate a formulated iconography that imparts the subject's identity, I take issue with her assertion that the bilocation scenes are the "most interesting."[3] This hierarchical ordering of Sor María's imagery is too cursory a reading of the portraits.

Ricardo Fernández Gracia's *Iconografía de Sor María de Ágreda* (2003) is the second, and most comprehensive, art historical study of the subject to date. His book aggregates numerous paintings, sculpture, and prints, elaborating on Andrés González's concise study of eight works. In his introduction, he argues that the proliferation of Sor María's imagery catalyzed in response to "the desire to physically meet this woman who had recounted one thousand and

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[2] Clark Colahan, *The Visions of Sor María de Ágreda: Writing, Knowledge, and Power* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1994), 163.
[3] Patricia Andrés González, "Iconografía de la Venerable María de Jesus de Ágreda," *Boletin del Seminario de Estudios de Arte y Arqueologia* 62 (1996), 456.

one wonders and whose work was read in a number of places and languages, from cloistered monasteries to the most prestigious universities."[4] Fernández Gracia identifies her body of images as transmitters of physical likeness and authenticity. He recounts how the nun's reputation disseminated verbally within seventeenth-century Europe, propelling the demand for an illustrated image to accompany Sor María's burgeoning celebrity.[5] While I am indebted to Fernández Gracia's research and synthesis of the Ágreda Convent archive, this paper takes a closer look at the abbess's portraiture.

While Fernández Gracia focuses on the production of her imagery as it plays a supporting role to her magnum opus, *Mystical City of God,* I am concerned with the appeal of her images as an autonomous series of prints, worthy of consideration beyond the scope of book illustration. In my study of Sor María, I analyze and conduct a close reading of five printed portraits, which were produced in the years following her death. Of the abundant printed portraits, I selected these five images as they are representative of the different variations of Sor Maria's printed portraits. These images are more intricate than solely portraying true likeness; I consider the artistic representations of this multifaceted and dynamic abbess who put the Virgin on par with Christ and, in the process, ran afoul of Church leadership. The essay addresses the following questions: How is Sor María de Ágreda's identity constructed through printed imagery; and how do these portraits function to inform the viewer/reader? In the first section I will consider how her portraits produce meaning in relation to other contemporaneous printed portraits; I will then

[4] "[…] deseo de conocer físicamente a aquella mujer de la que se contaban los mil y un prodigios y cuya obra se leía en numerosos lugares en otros tantos idiomas, desde los monasterios de clausura hasta la más prestigiosas universidades" (My translation). Ricardo Fernández Gracia, *Iconografía de Sor María de Ágreda* (Salamanca: Caja Duero, 2003), 61.
[5] Fernández Gracia, 105.

consider attributes that accompany her likeness. Finally I will conclude with an analysis of these prints as self-aware images that call attention to themselves as mobile and rhetorical works.

**Contemporaneous Portraits**

All five prints currently reside in the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid. They are classified under the title *Retrato de María de Jesús Coronel y Arana*. The first print [figure 1] by Pedro Villafranca was engraved in 1669 for the first edition of *Mystical City of God.* The second print by Juan Francisco Leonardo was commissioned for the 1688 Madrid edition of *Mystical City of God* [figure 2]. The third print, designed in Antwerp in 1696 by Gaspar Bouttats, was commissioned for the Conceptionists in Zamora Spain [figure 3]. Jean Baptiste Berterham engraved the fourth portrait in the early eighteenth century [figure 4], and Tomás Enguídanos produced the fifth and final portrait in the late eighteenth century [figure 5]. Although the aforementioned prints currently exist as single-sheets, the first three under review were originally frontispieces for various editions of Sor María's writing. The Berterham and Enguídanos prints' initial context is unknown. Fernández Gracia's research confirmed that the Sor María prints circulated as single-sheet devotional images as well as frontispieces, leaving both as potential conditions for the latter two images.[6]

Upon first glance, the compositions of all five prints are markedly uniform. Sor María dominates the scene, with the other elements of the portraits revolving around her likeness. She faces the viewer in three-quarter view, framed in a manner that only reveals her upper body. She is consistently dressed in a dark habit and veil, white sackcloth, scapular, rosary, and nun badge featuring the Immaculate Conception. Depicted with big solemn eyes, a long nose, and an oval-

[6] Fernandez Gracia, 61.

shaped face, she projects a self-assured aura. Four of the five portraits incorporate an artificial frame, calling our attention to the image as a contained and fabricated entity. The five images record the sitter's title, name, and year of death through text inscribed at the bottom of the composition.

Her portrait follows general conventions that are emblematic of portrait illustration of the time. As we see by comparison to one of the most significant collections of portraits done in early seventeenth-century Spain, Francisco Pacheco's *Libro de descripción de verdaderos retratos de ilustres y memorables varones* (1599-1644), the prints insert her pictorial image within this established discourse. Written and illustrated by Pacheco, *Libro* is comprised of fifty-six bust portraits of Spanish clerics, authors, poets, soldiers, and artists, the majority of whom are from Andalusia.[7] Each sitter is outlined by a frame, inscribed with the subject's name and an individualized eulogy. In addition to representing Pacheco's efforts to compose a book of contemporary illustrious figures meant for the cultural elite of Seville,[8] the work also underscores the precedent of portraiture as an established intellectual practice within Spain that involved a coded formula: learned figure seated at bust-length, framed and situated alongside an inscription alluding to the sitter's celebrated identity. Orienting the Sor María prints within the domain of illustrated portraits, her image as a subject territorialized by an ornamented frame, paraphernalia, and text clearly embraces these formal elements, and consequently produces meaning based on the established pictorial precedent. Visually placed within the realm of illustrious men, her prints function as testimony to her learned status.

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[7] Marta Cacho Casal, "The 'true likeness' in Francisco Pacheco's Libro de retratos," *Renaissance Studies* 24.3 (2010): 381.
[8] Cacho Casal, 386-387.

These prints also acquire meaning within a broader context of early modern Spanish printed portraiture. King Philip IV's royal engraver, Pedro Villafranca, is the first known artist to execute an engraved frontispiece of Sor María. The choice to commission the acclaimed artist Villafranca, the first native Spanish artist to be appointed Royal Engraver by the court, underscores Sor María's prominence as a subject worthy of visual representation. As royal engraver, Villafranca was primarily tasked with producing portraits of the royal family,[9] illustrated through the example of his 1657 portrait of King Philip IV [figure 6]. Villafranca transposed similar elements from the king's portrait to his depiction of Sor María: Villafranca discloses his sitters at bust-length, enshrined within a heavily ornamented frame decorated with flowers, fruit, and swirling architectural elements. Two putti flank the altar-like edifice upon which the subjects' frames rest, while a billowing curtain drapes across the backdrop, exuding a sense of lavishness radiating around the sitters. Comparing Villafranca's engraving of Sor María in the first edition of *Mystical City of God* with the portrait of King Philip IV sheds light on the formal similarities that were fashionable in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[10] Although Sor María's portraiture visually (and seemingly repetitively) aligns within an established tradition of printmaking, it is remarkable that the highest ranked engraver in Spain would conduct her posthumous portrait for the first edition of *Mystical City of God*'s publication, establishing an important precedent for her printed imagery.

[9] Mark P. McDonald, *Renaissance to Goya: Prints and Drawings From Spain* (London: The British Museum Press, 2012), 118.
[10] McDonald, 35.

**Attributes**

Through a close reading of these images that traces repeated attributes and ascribed properties, we can begin to grasp a developing standardization of Sor María's portraiture in prints. Of equal significance, however, is the tracing of attributes that are not consistently transposed. Considering uniformities and inconsistencies among the portraits invites the following question: how do attributes migrate from one print to the next? This section will begin the discussion of attributes, and will be followed by a consideration of how these standardized elements functioned to portray such a controversial sitter, both celebrated and repudiated for her hybrid identity as scholar and visionary.

The first central attribute running through all five prints is the quill. With the exception of Enguídanos's work (to be discussed shortly) the prints unvaryingly position Sor María holding her quill. In Villafranca's image, Sor María delicately grasps the quill between thumb and pointer finger, deliberately presenting the writing utensil to the viewer as she holds a book against her breast in the other hand. Leonardo, Bouttats, and Berterham situate the grasped quill just above the open pages of her book *Mystical City of God,* gesturing to the act of writing itself. In contrast, Enguídanos elected to situate two quills sitting idly in their inkwell, functioning as part of a still life. Yet, the insertion of multiple quills positioned at the edge of the picture plane nonetheless elicits the viewer's attention and awareness of her as a writer.

Both composition types – quill in hand or resting in inkwell - harken to established patterns of depicting Spanish male authors, as illustrated through numerous engravings including two examples roughly contemporaneous with Sor María's printed portraits: the late eighteenth-century posthumous print of Lope de Vega (1562-1635), famed Golden Age playwright, and the

portrait of Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616), author of *Don Quixote* [figures 7 and 8]. Lope de Vega, framed at three-quarter length, sits at his desk, holding his quill. At the bottom, text discloses the sitter's name and date of birth and death. The text also commemorates the author for his "maravillosa fecundidad," bolstering the imagery of writing with the textual description that argues for his prolific and successful career. The Miguel de Cervantes portrait typifies the second trope of depicting the quill as part of a still life of instruments that elaborate the subject's acclaimed occupation and career. These two archetypal examples along with the Sor María portraits pair an open book with the quill evoking an inextricable relationship with the published text, a formal and bold choice on the part of the artists to situate her visually within the literary space of the male author. As Darcy Donahue explains in her study on the tradition of literate women in the convent of Discalced Carmelites, writing as practiced by women was considered a transgressive act.[11] Therefore to represent Sor María as analogous to celebrated authors doubly challenges literacy parameters of the time.

This subversion of a predominately male-portrait type is rare, but one precedent exists in the representations of St. Teresa of Ávila (1515-1582), the Carmelite Spanish nun known as a visionary and author. Another study of the significance of the pen can be found in Charlene Villaseñor Black's article "Portraits of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and the Dangers of Intellectual Desire." Referencing Zurbarán's 1640 painted portrait of St. Teresa of Avila [figure 9], Villaseñor Black notes "Writers are almost always portrayed with pen in hand, showcasing the

[11] Darcy R. Donahue, "Wondrous Words: Miraculous Literacy and Real Literacy in the Convents of Early Modern Spain," in *Women's Literacy in Early Modern Spain and the New World,* ed. Anne J. Cruz and Rosilie Hernandez (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2011), 108.

act of writing and the instrument of their creativity and fame."[12] Both St. Teresa and Sor María are portrayed seated at their desks holding the pen over an open book. Considering these two posthumous portraits in tandem emphasizes these images as sites that evidence their identities as female writers. Thus, the visual representations generate a logical affiliation between the Spanish nuns who were both mystics and authors. But how are the writer and visionary identities negotiated through visual representation?

The chapter "How to Look Like a (Female) Saint: The Early Modern Iconography of St. Teresa of Avila" by Professor Margit Thøfner expands on the question of how to represent the female writer. Thøfner focuses on the prints of the life of St. Teresa produced in 1613, which she argues formed part of the campaign for Teresa's beatification and canonization [figure 10]. The twentieth image of the twenty-three-print series depicts Teresa in the act of writing. Stressing the fact that Teresa-depicted-as-scholar is not featured until the end of the series, Thøfner contends that this is a calculated, diplomatic move, presenting Teresa's usurpation of male privileges only after the prints that illustrate more traditional and established forms of visual hagiography.[13] Yet, she adds, "even this print is mitigated by a pictorial insistence on the fact that Teresa is writing under divine inspiration. For the engraving also follows the standard iconography of an evangelist at work, pen in hand but eye firmly fixed on the heavens."[14] While the theme of depicting nuns within the gendered space of the male scholar portrait could be read as subversive, the St. Teresa image maintains a level of conventionality: she writes, seated at her

[12] Charlene Villaseñor Black, "Portraits of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and the Dangers of Intellectual Desire," (forthcoming 2015), 12. *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz: The Collected Works,* trans. Edith Grossmann; ed. Anna More (forthcoming, Norton Critical Edition, 2016), 229-246.
[13] Margit Thøfner, "How to Look Like a (Female) Saint: The Early Iconography of St Teresa of Avila," in *Female Monasticism in Early Modern Europe,* ed. Cordula Van Wyhe (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2008), 76-77.

[14] Thøfner, 77.

desk, holding the quill in hand, looking to the upper-left hand corner, as she is inspired by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, St. Teresa does not write autonomously; the divine light bequeaths and vindicates her quill. Notably, Sor Maria's portraits do not follow this exact connection in that they do not depict the Holy Spirit, and yet she, like St. Teresa, claimed to have received divine inspiration. How, if at all, is this declaration represented in the prints of Sor Maria?

Shifting our attention from the quill mitigated by divine inspiration, we will now consider the representation of light in Sor María's prints. Similarly to the print of St. Teresa, Sor María de Ágreda's portraits dedicate considerable attention to light, suggesting a strategy of initiating Sor María into this portrait-type in order to promote her learned status and equate her with the visionary St. Teresa—an association that is not too farfetched considering Sor María's library included works by her visionary successor.[15]

Of the five prints, Gaspar Bouttats's work most closely aligns with the 1613 image of St. Teresa when considering the depiction of light. St. Teresa and Bouttats's Sor María analogously clutch their quills and books, gazing upward at the source of their divine inspiration, eyes firmly fixed on the heavens. In the St. Teresa print, the rays emanate from the Holy Dove situated in the upper-left corner. Forming a triangular-shaped composition, the ribbons of light stream toward St. Teresa's head, igniting the nun's halo. But, Sor María's divine inspiration is figured in a different way; rather than looking to the dove of the Holy Spirit, Sor María gazes upwards in the direction of blazing luminosity. Bouttats does, however, execute a similar method of depicting light: through white solid beams that sharpen into pointed edges as they approach the subject's face. Rather than illustrating light as immaterial, this depiction is awkwardly solid due to the

[15] Fernandez Gracia, 28.

complete absence of hatching lines. Instead of mimetically illuminating the space to enhance the drama of the scene, light inhabits the space within the roundel as an autonomous subject and co-player in partnership with Sor María, underscoring the scene's divinity.

What is the implication of this singularly stark and concrete rendering of divine light in Sor María's portrait? This image can be interpreted as a moderated rendering of an author writing not according to her own volition, but under divine inspiration, a theme that is repeatedly stressed throughout the body of *Mystical City of God.* In the opening chapter Sor María writes,

> Y conocí, que confirmando el Eterno Padre este beneficio, me elegía, para que manifestase los Sacramentos de su Hija; y el Espíritu Santo, para que con su influencia, y luz declaresse los ocultos dones de su Esposa; y el Hijo Santísimo me destinaba, para que abriesse los Mysterios de su Madre Purissima María. Y para disponerme en esta obra, conocí que la Beatissima Trinidad iluminaba, y bañaba mi espíritu con especial luz de la Divinidad, y que el poder Divino tocaba mis potencias, como con pincel, y las iluminaba con nuebos habitos, para las operaciones perfectas en esta materia.[16]

In recounting her instruction from God, Sor María's passage repeatedly touches on the theme of light as knowledge. She notes that light was the path through which the hidden gifts of the Virgin were conveyed, and describes divinity's holy light as bathing her soul. The printed image mirrors the text's message of revelation through light. The text and print present Sor María as the selected beneficiary of divine wisdom and enlightenment. The print's overt depiction of light elucidates Sor María's writing as the product of divine inspiration.

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[16] "Supported by the blessing of God, I was chosen to manifest the sacraments of his daughter; and the Holy Spirit, through his influence and light, declared the hidden gifts of his wife; and the holy Son appointed me to manifest the mysteries of his most pure Mother Mary. And to prepare me for this work, the Holy Trinity enlightened and bathed my soul in the special light of Divinity, and the divine power touched my capabilities like a brush, furnishing me with new habits for the perfect execution of this work" (My translation). María de Ágreda, *Mística Ciudad de Dios Segunda Parte* (Spain: Geronymo Verdussen, 1705), 8.

In sharp contrast to Bouttats's work, the Enguídanos print convincingly captures a naturalistic depiction of light. Shading blankets the image, placing the pictorial scene within the earthly realm. The light source clearly derives from the upper-left hand corner, illuminating the trompe-l'oeil representation of a frame encrusted in foliage set just behind a table dressed with still life. The shadow cast by the floral crown functions as the starkest marker of naturalistic light, and insists that this image is divorced from divinity. This print of Sor María situates her within the earthly realm that is subject to the same effects of time and light as the viewer. The autonomous white light embodying the presence of the divine is absent in this print, and thus Enguídanos vacates any reference to the heavens.

Leonardo and Berterham's employment of light falls between the two extremities of divine and material. Harkening back to the *Mystical City of God* text, both prints subtly bathe Sor María in holy light that originates from the Virgin. But despite the presumed divine inspiration connoted by the light linking the two figures, the revelation manifests itself naturalistically through a subtle spotlight effect. Leonardo shrouds the virgin in luminosity and Berterham naturalistically casts a diagonal spotlight descending from the Virgin to Sor María (this discrete lighting technique is most apparent in the column which immediately transitions from darkness to light). These two prints call for the recognition of the Virgin as the source of Sor María's enlightenment. Tracing the fluctuating representation of light as it casts its shadow on the portrait (or does not) seems to correlate with the image's varying accentuation of sacredness. The prints harness light as a technique to intersect Sor María's vocation as an author with differing levels of insistence on divine inspiration as the source for her writing. Perhaps the more muted method of casting light reveals an ambivalence or anxiety related to showcasing her divine knowledge.

Just as the Bouttats print most bluntly highlights the role of divine inspiration, so too does this work most dramatically interlace the role of visionary with Sor María's occupation as a writer. The Bouttats print achieves this feat by following the standardized code of visualizing the visionary experience in Golden Age Spanish art: Sor María's eyes are upturned, pupils are raised, and the eyebrows are lowered connoting the soul experiencing submission and respect for the divine.[17] The archetypal pose communicates to the viewer that the subject, Sor María, is captured at the moment of her soul in ecstasy. The artist replaces the inner, unrepresentable mystical experience with the external; the soul is replaced by the head in a state of communication with divinity. She is consequently understood as a visionary guide who facilitates the spectator's piety through meditation on the visual representation.

A second technique of communicating the vision is through the inclusion of clouds, as illustrated in the print by Leonardo. In the Bible, clouds are symbolic of revelation; their very nature as a constantly shifting, amorphous presence amplifies their uncertainty, evoking the act of contemplation: "They both reveal and conceal by accepting their restricted status in relation to the visible."[18] The cloud's dynamic nature as both of form and simultaneously formless alludes to the vision, a term that encompasses the optical and the spiritual experience. In Leonardo's portrait, the clouds occupy the top half of the composition, dynamically curling around the upper-right corner and ushering in the Virgin who hovers over Sor María. The clouds trace the Virgin's apparition and concretely veil the scene in its entirety as a holy revelation.

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[17] Victor I. Stoichita, *Visionary Experience in the Golden Age of Spanish Art* (London: Reatktion Books Ltd., 1995), 173.

[18] Stoichita, *Visionary Experience in the Golden Age of Spanish Art,* 85.

Notably, none of the prints assimilate themselves to adhere fully to the crystalized iconographic technique of depicting the visionary in early modern Spain. Bouttats and Leonardo selected individual elements from the established convention of making the vision visible. The Bouttats print posits Sor María's body in relation to the divine light in order to visually communicate the vision while Leonardo incorporates a trail of billowing clouds as an instrument in space to reveal the visionary scene. And yet all five prints subvert the pictorial principle of visualizing the mystical experience by negating a key compositional technique: to convincingly render the visionary, early modern Spanish artists vertically spatialized the canvas, bifurcating upper from the lower and consequently the celestial from the terrestrial.[19] Returning to the 1613 print of St. Teresa, this image exemplifies the verticalized bifurcation. The clouds function as a border to clearly split the levels of reality: St. Teresa's study occupies the bottom half while sun and holy dove represent the heavenly realm. None of the portraits execute this narrative split, but rather seamlessly embed Sor María in the space of a study, illustrated frame, or both registers simultaneously. Therefore, the prints underplay or wholly nullify the visionary experience from her pictorial representation.

Thus far we have traced the quill, light, and clouds as informers of Sor María's pictorial representation. The shifting representations of light and an absence of a vertically spatialized setting suggest the playing down of Sor María's role as visionary, a predictable decision considering the controversy surrounding her revelations. Meanwhile the consistency of the quill attests to visual testimony that celebrates the subject's authorial renown. But exclusively considering the portrait's rendering as it relates to these factors does not fully answer the question of how Sor María's identity was visually represented or posthumously constructed. This

[19] Stoichita, *Visionary Experience in the Golden Age of Spanish Art,* 28-30.

method of representing an inspired female author is, after all, employed to illustrate St. Teresa and other visionaries. How then, do Sor María's prints etch their subject, but simultaneously distinguish Sor María de Ágreda from her famous predecessor, St. Teresa de Ávila?

Firstly, the title of her magnum opus, *Mystical City of God,* is clearly spelled out on the open page. While the number of books represented fluctuates between prints, the five images all highlight a singular volume as the primary work. Villafranca's representation of the book stands apart from the rest in that it is closed and lacks a title. The latter four showcase the title clearly spelled out on the open page. Bouttats, Leonardo, Berterham, and Enguídanos opted to take the artistic license of exhibiting the work's title page on the left-hand side, instead of the right, for the sake of viewer-legibility. The lettering is large and the rendering of dark ink clearly stands out against the white page. What is more, the artists manage to maneuver writing the full title without sacrificing an accurate perspectival rendering of the book. Consequently, Berterham's text reads top to bottom rather than left to right: the first page reads MYS–TI-CA and the title continues in this manner onto the second page. I interpret this choice as a carefully designed decision that guarantees an unambiguous response from the reader: Sor María is not just identifiable as the learned writer, but as the author of *Mystical City of God*. As a loose-leaf devotional image, it is noteworthy that the print perseveringly insists on the linkage between this specific text and author. While this observation may seem simple, it is necessary to underscore that identifying Sor María de Ágreda with this specific work is not necessarily an inevitable or neutral decision. She did in fact write a number of other works including *Leyes de la Esposa,* "Jardín espiritual para recreo del alma," and an unfinished autobiography, to name a few. But by presenting Sor María with *Mystical City of God* the viewer extols her for this particular publication—her most important work, but also, her only text banned by the Inquisition.

A second attribute that distinguishes Sor María from St. Teresa in two of the five prints is the Virgin Mary in the upper left-hand corner of the composition. In place of St. Teresa's Holy Dove, Juan Francisco Leonardo and Jean Baptiste Berterham visually introduce the Immaculate Conception as the source of Sor María de Ágreda's inspiration. This artistic decision also diverges from Gaspar Bouttats's print, which excludes the Virgin. Transcending the lone role as bearer of light, the Virgin plays a fundamental role in the two prints. She stands at the top of the composition caringly watching over Sor María, whom she addresses as "mi hija" in *Mystical City of God*. Further textual analysis enriches our understanding of Sor María and the Virgin's close relationship, which consequently leads to a more complete interpretation of the central role the Virgin plays in the prints. In *Mystical City of God* the final section of each chapter concludes with "Doctrina que me dió la Reyna del Cielo" or "Instruction which the Queen of Heaven gave to me." The following quote extracted from one of these sections recounts the Virgin instructing Sor María de Ágreda, speaking directly to her: "Lo que de ti quiero aora a de ser, que atenta a lo que hize con esta ciencia, me imites segun tus fuerzas con la luz infusa, que para esta has recibido: aprovecha la ciencia de las criaturas, formando de ellas una escala, que se encamine a tu creador."[20] The Virgin stresses the importance of knowledge, which has been exclusively endowed to Sor María via divine light. The Virgin also encourages Sor María to imitate her and consequently, we, as readers, benefit from Sor María de Ágreda's intimate relationship with the Virgin. *Mystical City of God* is, in effect, the ladder through which the readers can ascend to heaven, and Sor María, the author, is the one that imparts access.

[20] "What I want of you today is to take notice how I used this knowledge and to imitate me according to your power with the infused light, which you have received. Profit by the knowledge of creatures by making them a ladder to ascend to your creator" (My translation). Ágreda, 12.

The following quotation highlights the relationship between God and the Virgin, and further exemplifies the pervasive theme of imitation in *Mystical City of God*: "Iba copiando la Divina Señora de los originales de la Divinidad nuevos retratos de sus atributos infinitos y virtudes."[21] The Virgin has been brushed with divine wisdom. Just as Sor María is encouraged to imitate her, the Virgin is described as imitating the attributes of God. Although Sor María does not explicitly mention herself, it appears that she has been accepted into the realm of divine wisdom through the path of emulation: God instructs the Virgin to imitate him, and the Virgin instructs Sor María to imitate her. Through her privileged contact with the Virgin, Sor María witnesses her heroic virtue, and is able to guide her life according to the Virgin's example. *Mystical City of God* is not just a Marian devotion that recounts the life of the Virgin, but one that promotes the author as the mediator between the celestial and terrestrial.

Returning to the prints, we can apply this textual analysis and with greater scrutiny examine the relationship between author and Virgin. The compositional formulation between the Virgin, quill, and book is unavoidable. The quill and the book are positioned directly underneath the Virgin, connoting Sor María's divinely inspired words. In the Leonardo print, the quill's tip brushes the edge of the cloud on which the Virgin stands. In the Berterham print, two quills flank the sculpture of the Virgin, seemingly funneling her knowledge and virtue to Sor María's writing desk and the *Mystical City of God*. Thus, the prints reflect the text's affirmation that Sor María acts as the privileged conduit, attesting to her visionary capabilities.

Significantly, both prints depict the Virgin in the guise of the Immaculate Conception—an icon signifying the doctrine that the Virgin was conceived without original sin. Following the

[21] "The queen was reflecting the original image of God and his infinite attributes and virtues" (My translation). Ágreda, 16.

standardized formula of depicting the Immaculate Conception, the Virgin holds her hands in prayer, with the moon at her feet, and a twelve-star crown. The Ágreda convent was part of the Conceptionist Order, and therefore devotion to the Virgin's virtue is to be expected. *Mystical City of God* propels the convent's devotion, and repeatedly stresses the point that the Virgin was born free of original sin: "En la Primera Parte de esta Divina Historia dixe, como el cuerpo purissimo de María Santissima fue concebido, y formado en toda perfeccion en espacio de siete días..."[22] But bearing in mind the nun's exceptional commitment to the subject in her writing, the symbol of the Immaculate Conception celebrates Sor María as an ardent defender of the cult.

Sor María de Ágreda was not alone in her devotion to the Immaculate Conception. The cult of the Immaculate Conception received enormous support in Spain during the reign of Philip IV, and its frequent appearance in Spanish art was primarily in service of propagandizing the devotion. In his 1649 treatise on painting, Francisco Pacheco wrote that all educated people should be knowledgeable that any painting of the Immaculate Conception should include the moon at her feet, a crown of starts, and yellow light signifying the sun."[23] Pacheco's passage highlights how artists and theologians conceived of creating an established iconography for the complex task of visualizing the concept of Virgin conceived immaculately. The representation of the Immaculate Conception was accepted in Spain as a correct visualization, and was one of the most successful visual representations of pure dogma in the history of the Roman Catholic Church.[24]

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[22] "In the first part of this divine history, I said that the most pure body of Mary was conceived and perfectly formed within the space of seven days [..]" (My translation). Ágreda, 13.
[23] Francisco Pacheco, *Arte de la Pintura*, ed. Bassegoda I Hugas (Madrid: Catédra, 1990), 575-577. Include original Spanish here
[24] Suzanne L. Stratton, *The Immaculate Conception in Spanish Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 145.

Outside of Spain, however, the veracity of the Immaculate Conception remained disputed and was not accepted as dogma until 1854. Sor María de Ágreda urged the king to pressure the pope to defend the Immaculate Conception. Philip IV wrote to Sor María, "With the election of the new pope, we have the opportunity to talk about the definition of the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady."[25] Sor María responded, "Your excellency, I hope they will settle on the definition of the mystery of the Queen of Heaven's conception…"[26] The epistolary exchange underscores Sor María's commitment to the doctrine; she not only focused her own writing on the subject, but also took advantage of her connections to the crown to try to sway the Church. These quotations make the viewer more cognizant of the inclusion of the Immaculate Conception in the prints. The Immaculate Conception is a defining attribute that distinguishes Sor María de Ágreda's identity. The Immaculate Conception aligns Sor María with the Virgin, portraying the nun as inspired, ardent backer of the cult.

How was this controversial stance received outside of Spain? Five years after her death, *Mystical City of God* was translated in Italian, and in 1681 the pope condemned the text. The Church justified the condemnation by questioning the author's credibility, suggesting that the "espiritú humano" was the source for her work rather than "espíritu divino." Furthermore, the Church rejected the notion that the Virgin was conceived without original sin. It concluded that leaving the work in the hands of the faithful would be dangerous.[27] In 1745 Benedict XIV designated a Congregación made up of four cardinals to re-examine *Mystical City of God*. Their analysis contested a number of Sor María's claims. Many of them predictably focused on the

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[25] P. Antonio M. Artola Arbiza and Benito Mendio, *Venerable M. María de Jesus de Ágreda y la Inmaculada Concepcion* (Spain: Monestario de la Concepción, 2004), 231.

[26] Artola Arbiza and Mendio, 231.
[27] Artola Arbiza, 68.

Virgin Mary, rejecting the Immaculate Conception, and insisting that the praise bestowed upon the Virgin Mary was exaggerated. Despite the Church's criticism, Sor María's work was translated into various languages including Italian, French, Portuguese, and Arabic, demonstrating the work's popularity and demand for international circulation.[28] The Sor María de Ágreda portraits that include Immaculate Conception imagery do not waver in their subject matter, but persist despite the criticism, and thus refute condemnation.

While both prints resolutely highlight the Immaculate Conception, they do so in different ways. Leonardo's print presents the Virgin as an apparition, miraculously appearing by way of a trail of clouds. "Clothed with the sun" – as the Book of Revelation describes, Leonardo's Virgin depicts an animated Virgin who carves out her own celestial space in the top half of the print, while the bottom half minimally depicts the earthly realm with Sor María at her desk presenting her transcription of the Virgin's life. Berterham's print, in contrast, depicts the Immaculate Conception as a sculpture within Sor María's study, connoted by the base at the foot of the statue which conclusively communicates the manmade form. Moreover, the Virgin sculpture is not bathed in light to the same degree as the previous rendering. Situated naturalistically amongst candlesticks, columns, desk, books, and chair, Berterham privileges portraying Sor María within an articulated space that defines her primarily as an author.

Once again referencing the Lope de Vega portrait alluded to earlier in this section, the compositional similarities highlight how the statue representing the mythological God Apollo echoes that of the Virgin. Engraved for an illustrated book commemorating the Sons of Madrid, Lope de Vega's figure shares the space of his study with the sculpture of Apollo, an allusion, I

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[28] Fernández Gracia, 62.

surmise, to his written work *El Laurel de Apolo* written in 1630. Both the sculptures of the Virgin and Apollo stand over the writer's desk in a niched space. Bringing Apollo and the Virgin out from the written pages and into the author's study, the prints reify their textual protagonists as dimensional forms. Depicting the Virgin as sculpture secularizes the scene, concentrating attention to Sor María as learned writer who dedicates her quill to the divine subject of the Virgin. Through the depiction of a fully articulated study where the Virgin is a sculpture rather than an apparition, Berterham's print designates more attention to Sor María's status as revered author than to a highlighting the sacredness of a scene meant to inspire devotion.

While Berterham and Leonardo conspicuously envelop the Virgin into the composition either as an apparition or a manmade form, all five prints in fact subtly reference the Immaculate Conception through Sor María's nun badge. As part of a nun's proper attire, these badges were worn around the neck and usually depicted the Virgin. They essentially functioned as allegorical portraits—the nuns strove to emulate Mary, and the badge linked the nuns physically with her grace and likeness.[29] By selecting the Immaculate Conception to decorate the badge, the prints align the Virgin's purity and worthy stature with Sor María. The perpetuity of the Immaculate Conception icon as a devotional badge and central piece of her liturgical attire physically tags the dictate onto Sor María's body. The nun badge's ever-present iconography suggests that the Virgin unequivocally lingers with Sor María.

The Immaculate Conception as represented as an apparition, sculpture, or nun badge argues for steadfast partnership between Virgin and Sor María. It is curious that of the five portraits, only one of the prints depict the Virgin as an apparition. The other four feature the

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[29] Kristen Hammer, "Monjas Coronadas: The Crowned Nuns of Viceregal Mexico," in *Retratos: 2000 Years of Latin American Portraits,* ed. Marion Oettinger Jr. (San Antonio: C&C Offset Printing Co), 97.

Virgin as representations, as a sculpture and/or in relief on the nun badge, which deliberate on the Immaculate Conception as a meta-pictorial theme. Considering the early modern context in which the debate over the Immaculate Conception took place, it was understood that artists played a central role in aiding the promotion of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception through imagery; in other words, the Immaculate Conception itself argues for the power of an image to annunciate the divine notion of purity and worthiness. Sor María aligns herself within this movement by textually representing the Virgin's virtues. Therefore, the Virgin-as-representation is depicted two times over, first through the presence of the biography and second as a visual representation. Reciprocally, the representations of the Virgin support Sor María's portraits: acknowledging the significance of the Immaculate Conception as image supports Sor María's potency. By aligning the two figures, the viewer is reminded of the two subjects' shared controversial histories, but the power of representation bolsters their virtue.

So far, this paper has discussed major elements including the quill, book, and the Virgin Mary in order to gauge the different ways Sor Maria is presented as a distinctive author and/or visionary. Are there other, more understated elements in these portraits that contribute to the reading of Sor María's posthumous identity? What about the angels featured in the Villafranca and Bouttats prints, where angelic putti flank Sor María? Villafranca's angels soberly sit on top of the plinth pressing their hands against Sor María's portrait. In comparison, Bouttats' print illustrates a more miraculous composition featuring flying putti dynamically supporting the hovering frame. The two putti in the top portion of the composition hold the flaming heart, a chalice, and a cross. The larger angel at the bottom presents an image of hands, heart, and feet representing the wounds of Christ while straddling an anchor. What is the significance of these figures' presence? Why have they been inserted into the composition? In recounting her visions

of bilocation, Sor María explained, “By the hand and aid of His angels I was carried wherever they took me, and I saw and did all that I have told the father, and other things, which, being numerous, it is not possible to narrate in order to enlighten all those nations in our holy Catholic faith.” [30] In recounting her bilocations, Sor María stresses the empowering role of divine intervention; she does not travel autonomously to the New World, but is a faithful interlocutor between the New World and God. Do the prints relate back to Sor María’s writing?

The Villafranca angels appear to function as a generic extension of the frame. The artist’s handling of curly locks and sash seamlessly continues the undulation of folding ribbons at the top of the composition, soliciting the viewer to read the angels as a part of the architectural framework rather than as figures occupying the peripheral space autonomously from the structure upon which they sit. In contrast, I would argue that the print by Bouttats does convincingly correlate with Sor María’s narrative of bilocation. The angels here relate to Sor María’s account as they carry her roundel. Furthermore, their hands extend beyond the limits of the square frame furthering the spontaneous sense of movement and mobility. The light and anchor allude to divine travel, while the presence of Christological symbols enhances the sense of sacredness. Notably, this print is the only one of the four that envelops Sor María with a collection of holy symbols.

Tomás López Enguídanos’s print marks a shift from sacred space as exhibited in Enguídanos, Berterham, and most dramatically in Bouttats, to a secular context. Enguídanos’s subjects abide by the rules of gravity. Sor María’s image hangs above an assemblage of props, signifying her attributes. The lilies, skull, books and scapular connote proper behavior of a life

[30] Colahan, 110.

dedicated to God.[31] But Enguídanos perceptively positions *Mystical City of God,* the inkwell, and quill closest to the viewer. Enguidanos's tactic of favoring the inkwell, quill, and book appears to follow an established code of author portraits. The Miguel de Cervantes portrait, typifies this trope: a rectangular fabricated space decorated with vegetal designs, an ovular frame crowned by a laurel wreath, with a still life of instruments that elaborate on the subject's acclaimed career. Typically associated with great poets, the laurel wreath above Cervantes decrees its subject as a celebrated writer. Although the wreath above Sor María is made of flowers instead of laurels, it follows in the tradition of celebrating the subject for writing his/her accomplishments.

Comparing Enguídanos's Sor María print to the Cervantes portrait confirms a shift in the nun's representation: a still life occupies the liminal space between viewer and subject. The skull, books, lilies, and censor, haphazardly lay on top of one another. While her costume and attributes reference her piety, they are depicted within the earthly realm; they are not celebrated for their individual virtuosity but rather are represented as functioning collectively to define Sor María. In contrast to Bouttats's print that underscores the scene's visionary tenor through its theatrical composition and religious iconography, Enguídanos's print soberly aggregates secular and religious symbols without any potential controversy prompted by pictorial allusions to Sor Maria's visions. Thus far the analysis of the printed portraits have identified the emblems in the margins as markers whose ultimate sum processes how these engraved representations inform the viewer of their subject. The quill, *Mystical City of God*, light, inclusion/exclusion of the Immaculate Conception, nun badge, Christological and secular attributes calculatedly construct and fashion the central sitter; they frame her subjectivity.

[31] Kelly Donahue-Wallace, "Prints in Early Modern New Spain," *The Americas* 64.3 (January 2008): 337.

**Frames**

A careful consideration of these literary and religious emblems draws our attention to the material underpinnings that function as a through line amid the five portraits. The attention to objects that surround Sor María, or in other words what is at the margin, directs our gaze to the literal edge of the work, the margin made visible through the ornamented frame. This section is indebted to Louis Marin's "The Frame of Representation and Some of Its Figures" as well as Victor Stoichita's book *The Self-Aware Image.* Marin writes that the frame is the necessary mechanism that operates not only as ornament, but as substructural support for display: "It autotomizes the work within the visible space; it puts the representation in a state of exclusive presence; it gives the appropriate definition of the conditions for the visual reception, and contemplation as such."[32] As applied to painting, Marin notes that the frame works as an architectural component that holds up the painting. Yet, the frames featured in Sor María's portraits are fashioned in the same material as an engraving, just as her emblems and her own body are handled. Thus, the frames do not physically prop up her representation, but illusionistically support her figure. The frame stakes the claim that Sor María's image is necessary and meaningful.

Of the five prints depicting Sor Maria, four make use of such a frame. While the prints of King Philip IV, Lope de Vega, and Cervantes apply this same pictorial device, neither the 1613 print of St. Teresa nor the prints depicting Sor Maria's other iconographic scenes (i.e. bilocation or family tree) make use of decorative frames. While this case study remains too small to declare an underlying principle dividing framed prints and non-framed prints, it is notable that the scenes

[32] Louis Marin, "The Frame of Representation and Some of its Figures," *On Representation,* trans. Catherine Porter (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 356.

imbued with an unequivocally religious charge do not call attention to themselves as representations. Thus, the engraved frames encasing Sor Maria, particularly the roundels, push Sor Maria's representation to correspond even more closely with her role as learned author.

We will initiate the analysis of the frame with Juan Francisco Leonardo's print, which disrupts is the single print that lacks an engraved border. One could argue that the desk at which Sor María operates in an analogous fashion as a frame. The print prevents the viewer from an unobstructed inquiry by inserting a table in the foreground, enforcing the boundary between viewer's space and represented space.[33] Meanwhile, the clouds at the upper reaches of the print mirror the table, enclosing Sor María within in a contained space by conditioning the central figure as available for visual reception. However, the question still remains, why exclude the frame? I consider two possible explanations. First, the image is the only print that was unequivocally modeled off of an extant painting completed during the nun's lifetime [figure 11]. Therefore, as a replication of a painted model, the print forsakes the frame. But rather than copying the painting, the engraver chose to insert the desk and apparition of the Immaculate Conception into the composition, shifting the viewer's attention from Sor Maria's physiognomy to a larger scene of divine revelation similar to the St. Teresa print. Perhaps the border would be seen as too intrusive to the revelatory scene that was intended to inspire devotion. Calling attention to its status as representation could potentially undermine the image's sacredness.

Jean Baptise Berterham's work is the only one that demarcates the image with a singular border. Consequently, it most closely resembles a framed painting. The border squarely encloses Sor María in a grand architectural space. The frame's ornamentation matches the inner scene's

[33] Victor I. Stoichita, *The Self-Aware Image: An Insight into Early Modern Meta-Painting* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 4.

grandeur through the representation of a curvaceous floral pattern in relief. The frame fragments the representation of the table and chair in the foreground as well as the columns and candlesticks in the background. Furthermore the illusion of the frame's three-dimensionality highlighted through shading effects flattens the scene within, confessing the fiction of the image. Rather than framing the scene as a window that extends the space of the viewer, the frame indicates its own representational nature by highlighting the flat scene that it encases.

The prints by Villafranca, Berterham, and Leonardo incorporate multiple frames, highlighting a negotiated space between the center of the work and periphery. The three overlap in their shared practice of positioning her body against a black backdrop enclosed in an ovular cartouche. The unwavering repetition of her costume, physiognomy, and starkly black setting suggests an effort to construct a controlled, sober image. And yet the playful frames stand in contrast to the central roundel. This juxtaposition of plain and decorative suggests an internal struggle to unleash and constrain the subject of representation. The frame, therefore, is the location of inventiveness for the engraver, where he can incorporate different strategies in order to highlight different aspects of Sor Maria's porous posthumous identity.

Returning to Pedro Villafranca's frontispiece, we are again reminded of the formal framing similarities between King Philip IV and Sor María. The visual overlap between the frames is not surprising considering the seventeenth-century trend to recycle the engraved frame designs and embed the individual portrait within the pre-conceived frame.[34] As an individual, Sor María modestly presents herself dressed in traditional attire. But the margins are stuffed with fruit, flowers, ribbon, drapery, and heraldry that embellish her figure. Arthur Marotti notes that

[34] McDonald, 35.

the frontispiece was an established device deployed in "elevating the socio-cultural status of authorship."[35] Villafranca's frame marks the image as one of status, mobilizing Sor María's still and somber representation by enclosing her within an engraved space associated with the elite and the learned.

Bouttats's print nests Sor María within a roundel frame embedded in a larger rectangular configuration. Angels occupy the periphery, supporting the hovering oval and reveal the roundel beneath the fringed floral curtain. Stoichita notes that the curtain is an object that has many implications within the history of representation, one of which was to protect the painting from dust and bright lights.[36] The implanted roundel housing the jets of white light and Sor María binds a space of divine inspiration. The dissonance between the non-mimetic presentation of light and the curtain and angels that coyly slip beyond the edge of the rectangular frame notify the viewer of the stratified realms of representation. Although the roundel depicts a celestial scene, the representation is still ephemeral connoted by the drapery, which protects the engraving from the effects of light and time. An additional implication of the drapery is its evocation of revelation. The angels actively engage with the frame and curtain, aiding the act of display; they gesture to the drapery as an emblem of revelation, framing a scene that is not present until rendered visible. Therefore, the drapery thematizes revelation, and mirrors the blazing divine light within the roundel, underscoring the sacred nature of the scene.

Finally, Enguidanos encircles Sor María's bust but positions the altar-like table dressed with an assemblage of objects outside of the border's encasement. The still life occupies the liminal space between viewer and subject. The still life underscores the ephemeral: the skull

[35] Arthur F. Marotti, *Manuscript, Print and the English Renaissance Lyric* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1995), 240.
[36] Stoichita, *The Self-Aware Image: An Insight into Early Modern Meta-Painting*, 60-61.

meditates on the vanity of life, and the smoke emanating from the censor evokes temporality through movement and change. This fleeting nature contrasts with the stable portrait of Sor María. The still life, as a framing device thus further stratifies the portrait's composition organizing the portrait according to eternal and sacred sitter, in opposition to ephemeral or perhaps even artificial cartouche, tabletop, still life, and frame.

These three frames follow a designated formula of printed frontispieces, and also mark the area of inventiveness. One final reference image I would like to bring consider is the celebrated baroque artist Bartolomé Murillo's painted self-portrait from 1670 [figure 12]. Appropriating the developed formula for portrait engravings used for frontispieces, Murillo presents himself as an artist, depicting himself as a portrait and foregrounding his palette and brushes. He dramatically positions his hand outside of the illusionistic frame, breaking down the regimented printed portrait formula of divided registers. As the only painting that incorporates this compositional trick within seventeenth-century Spain, the work underscores the cotemporary interest in frames as a significant, self-aware device that was used in the early modern period to solicit a response from the viewer. Just as Murillo acknowledges his own mastery, so too do these framed prints acknowledge their own agency to slow down the viewing experience and facilitate the way Sor Maria's image is approached.

The shifting degrees to which the five artists employ framing devices enable the viewer to move in and out of the realms of representation, making visible Sor Moria's process of becoming. It showcases a calculated decision to visually depict her between secular and religious responsibilities. All five structure their portraits according to formalistic parameters. The prints by Villafranca, Bouttats, and Enguídanos most explicitly insist on their existence as visual

representations through the multiplicity of frames. The decorative frame represents the unstable portion of the print, betraying the complexities and anxieties related to the decisions of how to appropriately present the figure. Bouttats's print stresses her role as visionary, infusing the peripheral space with Christological signs of revelation, while Enguídanos's print more reservedly presents her as pious author. The frames uniformly gesture to the Sor Maria's exclusive presence as a significant subject worthy of devotion, but their divergent framing accouterments guide the viewer in varying, and even inconsistent directions.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, her portraits make the posthumous subject visually present. These are not neutral images, but representations that are aware of their own intervention. The prints activate different realms: the naturalistic and earthly, the divine, and the pictorial/representational; they solicit the viewer to consider the different realms, slowing down the act of looking and deliberating on the engraved subject matter. Gesturing to the viewer's act of meditation, the frames invite the question: What is the most significant aspect of her representation?

Within this small case study, there exist differing focal points. To varying degrees, the five prints advocate and promote her image as an intercessor between the Virgin and laity, credible recipient of supernatural inspiration, as a credible witness of the Immaculate Conception, and most consistently as the learned writer of *Mystical City of God*.

Let us not forget the polemics that surrounded and threatened her learned and virtuous status. During and after her lifetime Sor María de Ágreda was a complex figure. Under pressure from the Inquisition she denied her visions, burned her manuscript of *Mystical City of God*, and subsequently re-wrote the book. A campaign to have her canonized ensued shortly after her

death but was never brought into fruition; and *Mystical City of God* was circulated globally, but simultaneously attacked as fraudulent. While this biographical struggle is not made visible in the prints, we de see mobility or unstable subjectivity through the shifting presentation of her figure.

In his essay "What is an Author?" Foucault writes "[t]ext, books, and discourses really began to have authors (other than mythical, sacralized, and sacralizing figures) to the extent that authors became subject to punishment, that is, to the extent that discourses could be transgressive."[37] While the greater objective of Foucault's essay is to problematize the classification of works under the monolithic category of author, I am more concerned with the link he draws between book and transgressive author. As a writer and visionary, these images embrace Sor María's role as the author of the controversial *Mystical City of God.* Her image comes into being under the purview of the transgressive discourse. As Roger Chartier writes, "it was printing that extended, hence that made more dangerous, the circulation of texts that defied authority, and printing created a market that presupposed the establishment of rules…"[38] As a frontispiece she is depicted as a framed representation, but her legible, malleable image also frames the text of her written work. Her portraits do not neutrally present Sor María, but actively construct her, they do not strictly mimetically present her likeness but surround her with attributes depicted in a framed space that metaphorically and self-awarely support her, often as visionary, but unwaveringly as author.

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[37] Michel Foucault, "What is an author?" in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. James D. Faubion (New York: New York Press, 1998), 211-212.
[38] Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books,* trans. Lydia G. Cochrene (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 51.

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Fig. 1. Pedro Villafranca. *Retrato de María Jesús Coronel y Arana.* 1669. Biblioteca Nacional.

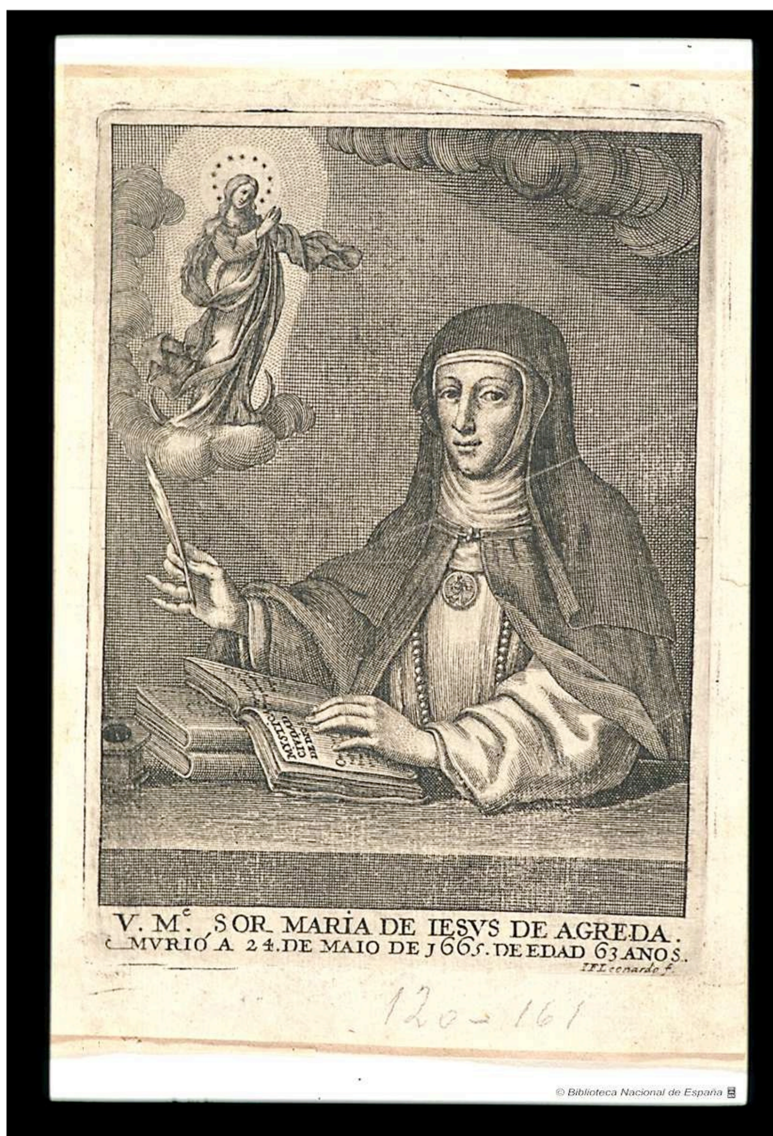


Fig. 2. Juan Francisco Leonardo. *Retrato de María Jesús Coronel y Arana.* 1688. Biblioteca Nacional.

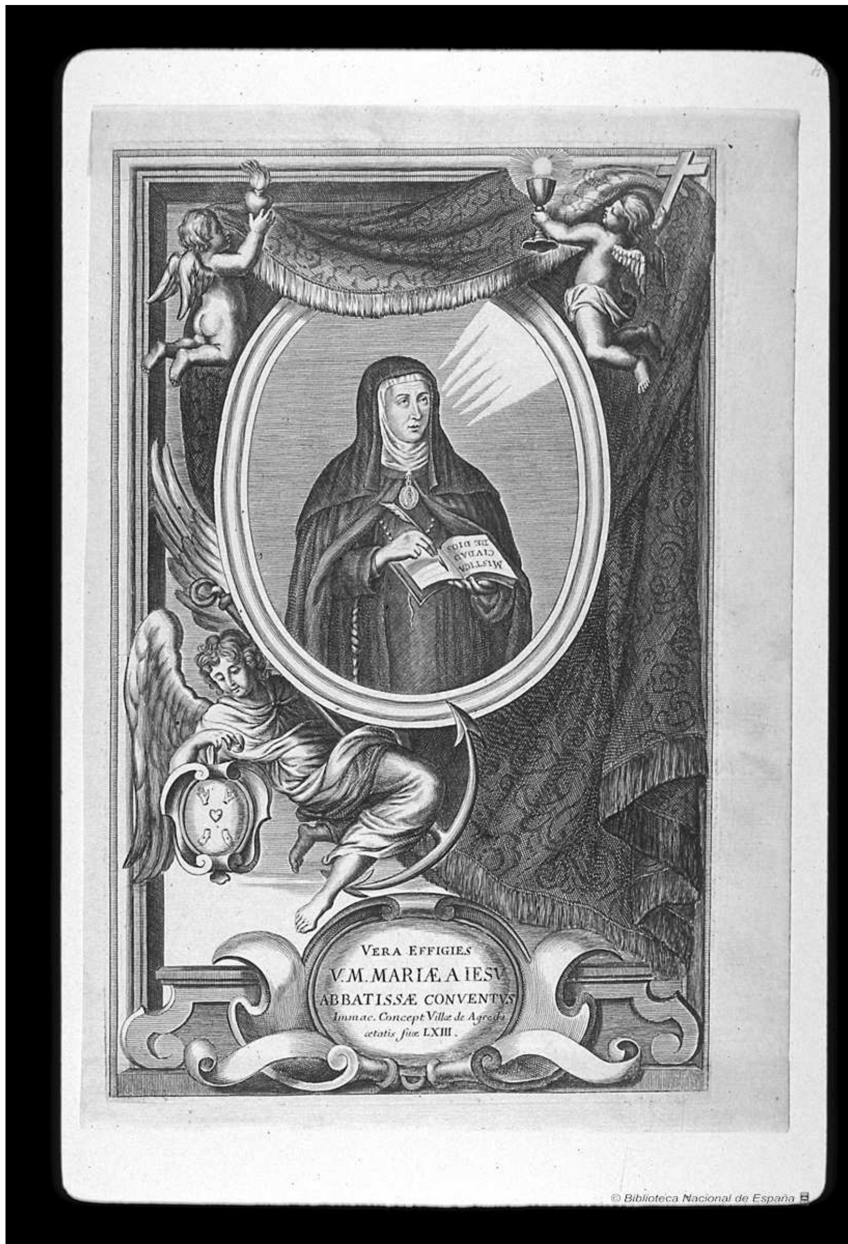


Fig. 3. Gaspar Bouttats. *Retrato de María Jesús Coronel y Arana.* 1696. Biblioteca Nacional.

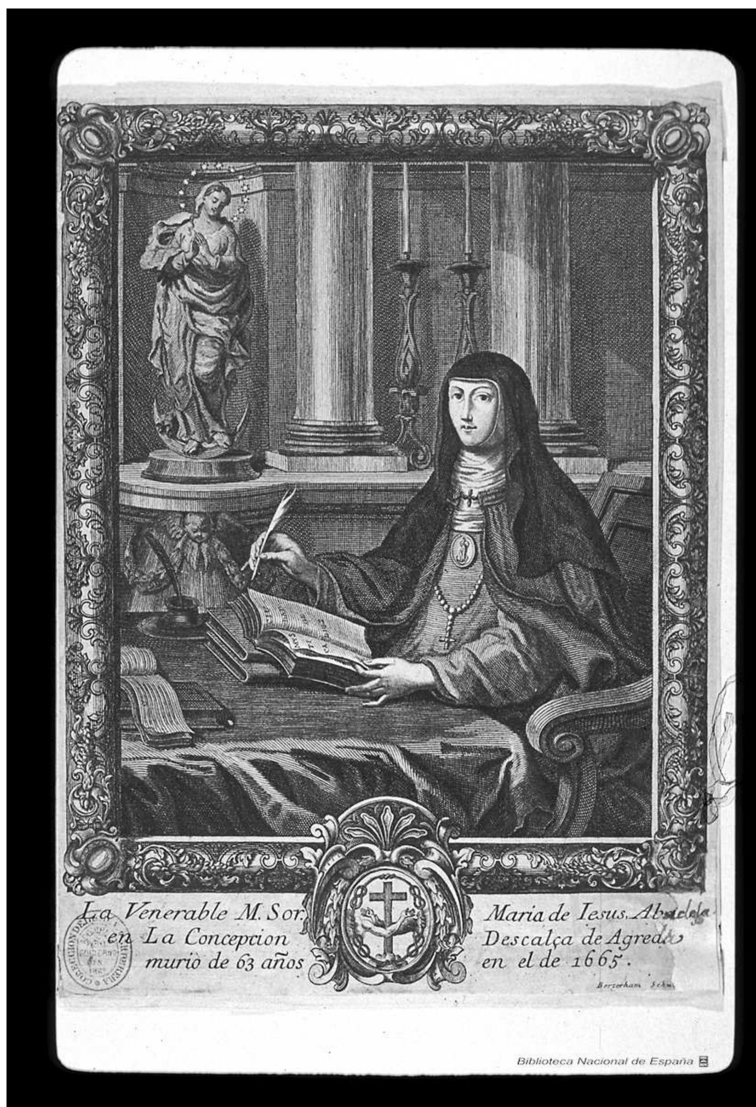


Fig. 4 Jean Baptiste Berterham. *Retrato de María Jesús Coronel y Arana.* Early eighteenth century. Biblioteca Nacional.

Fig. 5. Tomás López Enguídanos. *Retrato de María Jesús Coronel y Arana.* Late eighteenth century. Biblioteca Nacional.

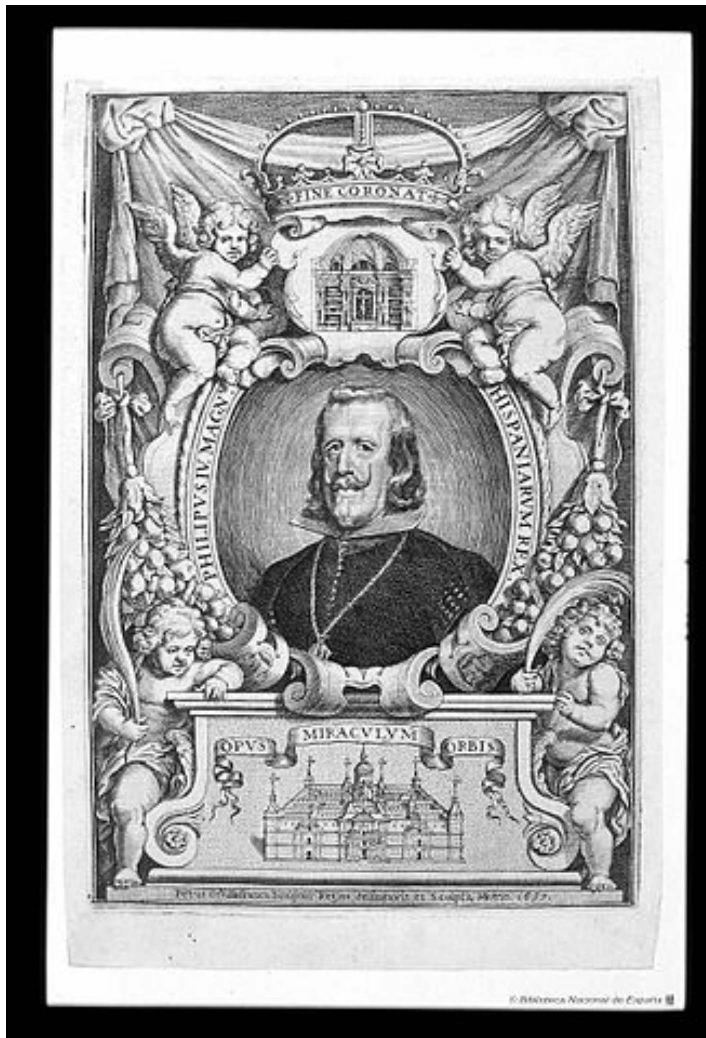


Figure 6. Pedro Villafranca. Frontispiece from *Brief Description of San Lorenzo el Real de El Escorial,* by Friar Francisco de los Santos. 1657. Biblioteca Nacional.

Fig. 7. Fernando Selma. *Retratos de los españoles ilustres.* 1791. Biblioteca Nacional.

Fig. 8. *Retrato de D. Miguel de Cervantes*. Late eighteenth century? Archivo de la Imagen Castilla La Mancha.

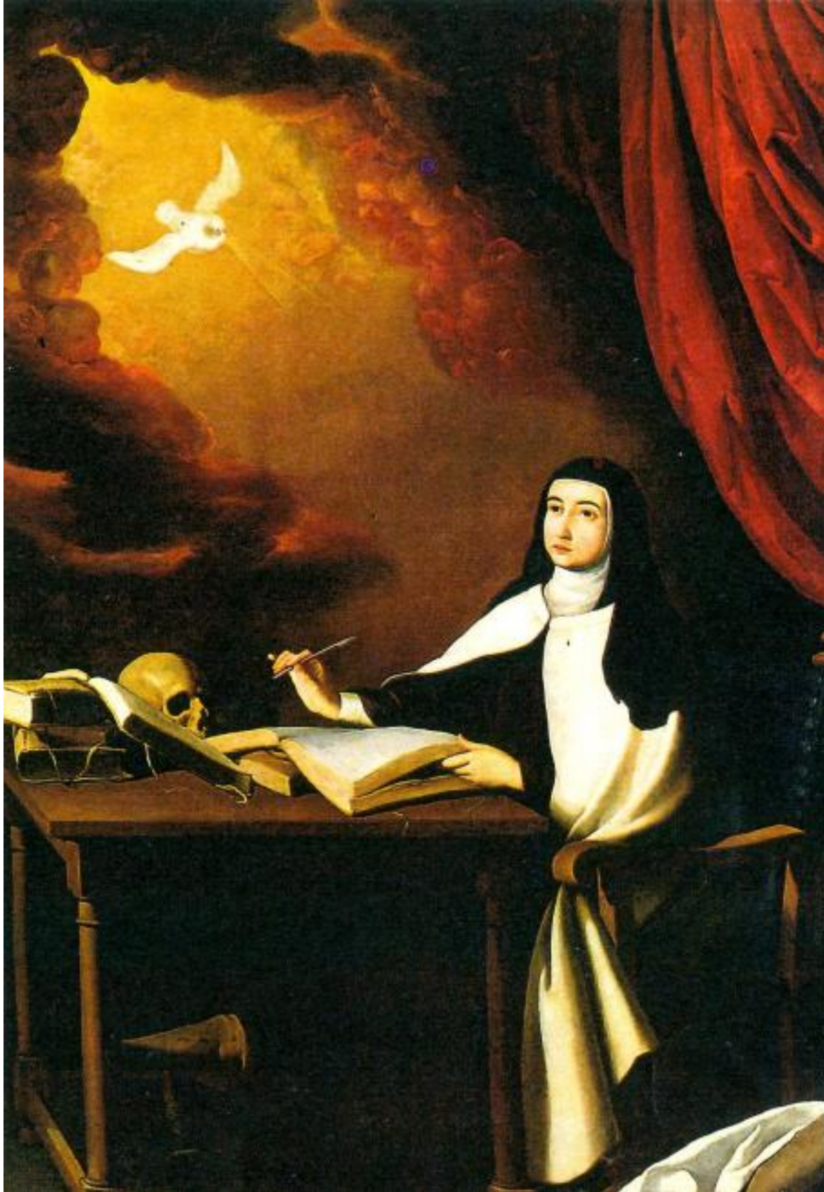

Fig. 9. Francisco de Zurbarán. *Santa Teresa de Jesús.* 1650. Sacristia mayor de la catedral de Sevilla.

Fig. 10. Adriaen Collaert and Theodor Galle, Plate 23, *Vita S. Virginis Teresiae.* 1613.

Fig. 11. *La Venerable María de Jesús de Ágreda de 36 años.* 1638.

Fig. 12. Bartolomé Esteban Murillo. *Self-portrait.* Probably 1668-70. The National Gallery in London.

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