THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

KITCHEN SELVES:
COOKS AND THE LITERARY CULTURE OF THE EARLY MODERN SPANISH ATLANTIC (1520-1750)

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE HUMANITIES

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF ROMANCE LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES

BY

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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

AUGUST 2022

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Acknowledgements

This project has been in the making longer than I imagined. On December 25th of 2008, my beloved cousin Elisa, with whom I shared some of my most cherished childhood memories, was found dead not far from the kitchen she worked at as a cook. She was 25 years old. At the time I was a first-year college student, but her death forever transformed my relationship with academia, and intellectual work in general. Elisa has since then served as a compass to pursue the ideas that really matter to me, and to remind myself of the role we have as scholars within our communities.

This dissertation is a humble homage to Elisa's memory. She lived and died in the kitchen, standing up for the rights of the immigrants who worked under her supervision, bravely denouncing gender violence, but also happily making new dishes and feeding the people she loved. She has been with me on every day of reading, writing, researching, and cooking, accompanying my efforts to understand kitchens, past and present. In a way, this project has been yet another attempt at making sense of her death.

So many people have enriched this project in ways large and small. My deepest gratitude goes to my advisor, Miguel Martínez. His genuine and contagious enthusiasm, down-to-earthness and democratic view of academia, intellectual creativity, and commitment to education in and beyond the classroom have all impacted not only this project, but how I conceive scholarly work. I thank him for his continued support of my sometimes unorthodox doings. I could not have asked for a better or kinder mentor. This project is a product of our long conversations and his immense generosity. Larissa, whose incisiveness, integrity and rigor I will take with me for all future intellectual endeavors. I thank her for always pointing in me the right directions. Fred and Carolyn, for their generous readings, suggestions and guidance.

Countless colleagues and friends have suggested readings, revised drafts, given me feedback, asked productive questions, translated passages in other languages, helped me understand impossible penmanship, proofread, encouraged me along the way, and prevented me from following unfruitful lines of inquiry. I thank the brilliant members of our writing group, the colleagues of the Early Modern Mediterranean Workshops, the Workshop of Latin American and the Caribbean, as well as those I have encountered at seminar and conventions of the Renaissance Society of America, The Folger Institute, the Newberry Library, the Modern Languages Association, and the academic *tuitósfera*. Norman, Ysé, Tina, Gaby, Maxim, Marta, Santiago, Anil, Mariel, Paulina, among many others.

Writing this disseration could not have been possible without the assistance of librarians and archivists—André Wenzel at the Regenstein Library, Melecio Tineo and Laura Gutiérrez at Archivo Arzobispal de Lima, and those at Madrid's Palacio Real and Biblioteca Nacional de España. Likewise, Diana Barreto and Fray Eugenio Martín Torres for helping me access Sor Marianita's diary, and for sharing their initial transcriptions and digitized versions of the document. I am incredibly fortunate to have been entrusted with this unique testimony of Mexican history and, for that, I am indebted to the sisters of Santa Rosa in Puebla. Generations of women, including Sor Domi, Sor Emma, and Sor María de Jesús, have guarded this piece of their history. I do not take their trust and generosity for granted.

My colleagues and friends in the Department—particularly Thomaz, Krizia, Bastien, Laura, Eduardo, Meriam, and, especially, Isabela. Sharing this path with all of them (in the library, in class or at Jimmy's, as friends and as colleagues) has been the most rewarding part of my graduate career. I have been lucky to be a part of such a stimulating, supportive and lively cohort. And above all, I thank Quique, whose sharp intelligence and socratic interrogations have

decisively shaped the way I think. His loving support and unwavering confidence in me have guided me over the years.

I owe my parents their tireless curiosity and love for knowledge. My brother Ariel, my sisters and Regi, for their loving support. I have my family to thank for my enthusiasm for food. Our late-night kitchen conversations, nights experimenting at the stove, and endless *sobremesas* have contributed to this project. I also thank everyone in my family who has nurtured the memory of Elisa—especially Tita, who has shown me the potential of cooking for making the past live among us.

Lastly, my sincere appreciation goes to all the cooks, servers, grocery shop workers, dishwashers, restaurant workers, and delivery drivers—all those whose work and food sustained me in the crafting of the pages that follow.

Kitchen Selves: Cooks and the Literary Culture of the Early Modern Spanish Atlantic (1520-1750)

Daniela Gutiérrez Flores

Abstract

This dissertation examines the figure of the cook and their role in the shaping of Spanish and Latin American discourses of food preparation. Drawing on Iberian and Latin American printed and archival sources from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, this dissertation argues that cooks fashioned their work as a socially useful, politically relevant and culturally meaningful activity. By analyzing how female and male cooks in the Spanish Atlantic shaped the meanings and discourses of their work, it demonstrates that the practice of cooking served as an avenue to challenge social constraints, engage with lettered culture, and shape new social identities and communities.

Chapter one discusses Mestre Robert's *Llibre del coch*, the first cookbook published in Spain. Through a comparative analysis of the 1520 Catalan edition and the 1525 Castilian edition, I argue that the textual changes in *Llibre del coch* are indicative of a reevaluation of culinary knowledge, and, more generally, of cookery as a virtuous occupation. Chapter two analyzes the figure of pícaros de cocina and lowly kitchen workers in picaresque narrative and archival sources. It focuses on Mateo Alemán's *Guzmán de Alfarache* and *La vida y hechos de Estebanillo González*, as well as cookbooks and Royal Palace records that detail the everyday life of royal kitchens. Through the juxtaposition of these sources, this chapter argues that pícaros are key figures to understand an increasingly sharp division of labor and the emergent

professionalization of cooking. Chapter three studies the spiritual diary of Úrsula de Jesús, a black religious servant at the Convent of Saint Clare in Lima, Perú. This chapter argues that, for Úrsula, cooking—a physically exhausting practice embedded in the racial and social division of the convent's labor—constitutes an embodied form of devotion. This chapter reveals the tensions between doctrine and the everyday reality of religious life for black women. The last chapter focuses on the life-writings of Sor Marianita de San Joseph, a low-born white-veiled Spanish nun who cooked at the convent of Saint Rose of Lima, in Puebla, New Spain. It examines Marianita's representations of daily cooking in light of Dominican female religious literature. This section argues that Mariana's cooking must be understood as a mode of engagement with religious written culture, and thus a practice that endowed those with little social leverage with reputation and authority. Through the analysis of these cooking subjects, this dissertation sheds light on a cultural figure who, though pervasive today, has remained largely invisible in the cultural imagination of the early modern Spanish world due to the focus on foodstuffs that has characterized the analysis of culinary cultures in the region.

Introduction

In the 1970s, a now-lost manuscript recipe-book attributed to Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz landed on the hands of Josefina Muriel, renowned scholar of Colonial Latin America.[1] The Mexican historian transcribed and studied the document, concluding that it was a later copy of an original supposedly authored by the celebrated Mexican poet.[2] The small book, which contains over thirty recipes for sweets and main dishes, was published in 1979 under the title *Libro de cocina del Convento de San Jerónimo. Selección y transcripción atribuidas a Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz*. It sold out almost immediately after.[3] The book has since then been reprinted and reedited numerous times. Recently, chefs across Mexico have offered their interpretations of its recipes in restaurants and private dinners, crystallizing the image of the Tenth Muse as a cook and poet.[4]

Whether or not this manuscript was actually authored by Sor Juana is a question for

[1] Muriel (1998, 47) recounts that the manuscript was shown to her by Jorge Gurría Lacroix, then director of the Investigaciones Históricas at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM). The recipe book was owned by Joaquín Cortina Goribar. Muriel was joined by Guadalupe Pérez San Vicente, who in her analysis of the penmanship concluded the manuscript was not autographed by Sor Juana.
[2] In the brief prologue to the book, Muriel connects the manuscript to what is perhaps Sor Juana's most iconic work, *Respuesta a sor Filotea de la Cruz* (1691). As is well-known, in this text she introduces the kitchen as a space for women to access profane knowledge: "Y yo suelo decir viendo estas cosillas: si Aristóteles hubiera guisado, mucho más hubiera escrito" [I often say, upon seeing these things: if Aristotle had cooked, he would have written a great deal more] (65). If Aristotle had cooked, she argues, he would have discovered even more "natural secrets;" how egg yolks react differently to fat than to sugar, how sugar dissolves in water, how whites and yolks are part of the same unity and yet behave in radically different ways. In a context where secular education was mostly reserved for men, Sor Juana poses cooking as an empirical experience through which women were able to engage in philosophy. For Muriel, this brief mention of cooking shows the poet "participaba en el arte de la cocina" (1996, 10).
[3] Since then, it has been reprinted and reedited numerous times, and is now popularly known simply as *el libro de cocina de Sor Juana.*
[4] Sor Juana's brief reflection on cooking in *La respuesta*, along with occasional references to food in her poetry, has led some to suggest that she enjoyed cooking, and even more, that she spent considerable time in the kitchen. Scholars, food enthusiasts, artists and fiction authors have been captivated by this aspect of sor Juana's life and work. See Galván, Lavin (2007), Lavin (2010), Ramírez Santacruz, Perelmuter, Pérez San Vicente, and the portrait "Sor Juana en la cocina" (1980) by Mexican neo-baroque painter Jorge Sánchez Hernández. For an analysis of the kitchen as a rhetorical space in *La respuesta* see Abarca (2006, 55).

another moment.[5] For now, I am more interested in the cultural and historical dimensions of cooking activated by this odd document. In the sonnet preceding the recipes, the poetic voice speaks to a fellow *hermana*:

> Lisonjeando, oh hermana, de mi amor propio
> me conceptúo formar esta escritura
> del Libro de cocina y ¡qué locura!
> concluirla y luego vi lo mal que copio.
>
> De nada sirve el cuidado propio
> para que salga llena de hermosura,
> pues por falta de ingenio y de cultura,
> un rasgo no he hecho que no salga impropio.
>
> Así ha sido, hermana, ¿pero qué senda
> podrá tomar el que con tal servicio
> su grande voluntad quiso se entienda?
>
> ¿Qué ha de hacer? Suplicaros que, propicia,
> apartando los ojos de la ofrenda,
> su deseo recibáis en sacrificio (1996, 328-329)

These verses present the notion of culinary knowledge as *ingenio*, which nods at Sor Juana's artistic and intellectual talent. As a similar product of individual genius, the cooking recipes would merit its documentation in the writing of a *libro de cocina*. The written word—the recipes and the sonnet alike—appear as a materialization of authorial pride ("amor propio"). But the feminine voice quickly acknowledges failure. The subject matter of cooking, historically a woman's occupation, is here framed within a rhetoric of belittlement, modesty and sorority that is reminiscent of female religious discourse.[6] By articulating the failure of writing the cookbook

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[5] Muriel notes in the prologue that the manuscript's paper dates from the eighteenth century, which makes it impossible to be an original autograph. In addition, the handwriting differs from Sor Juana's. Despite these material characteristics, which could be explained simply in terms of manuscript transmission, I believe the strongest evidence to doubt sor Juana's authorship is the style of the sonnet.

[6] The classic study on female religious rhetoric was penned by Alison Weber (1990), who examines Santa Teresa of Avila's work. Weber argues that modesty, irony, and belittlement, operating formally in the form of affective language, diminutives, digressions, etc., were conscious rhetorical choices that allowed

within these literary conventions, the verses overturn the idea of culinary knowledge as "masculine" *ingenio*, reinstating it into the lowly realm of the feminine.

As dramatized through the poetic voice of the author-cook, these common notions of the occupation were in constant tension in the early modern Spanish world. The high poetic form of the sonnet and the low domestic form of the recipe encapsulate this tension. On the one hand, cooking timidly began to emerge as a dignified occupation akin to other arts, entering the high circles of culture, and the world of the book. Yet, on the other, it was regarded as a menial and unskilled practice traditionally associated with the marginalized echelons of society—women, lower classes, and black and indigenous peoples. How did cooks and writers engage with such notions about their work? How did they shape, transform, and challenge them in different historical and cultural contexts? What can kitchens reveal about the gender, class, and racial dynamics of the early modern world? What was the role of cooks in mediating such dynamics? This dissertation explores these questions by focusing on the agents behind the making of food, the cooks.

In the pages that follow, I will demonstrate how female and male cooks in the Spanish Atlantic shaped the meanings and discourses of their work as much as they shaped the food cultures of their time. Through an analysis of fiction, poetry, archival sources, visual culture, and diaries, I show how the practice of cooking served as an avenue to challenge social constraints, engage with lettered culture, and shape new social identities and communities. In so doing, I argue that cooks fashioned their work as a socially useful, politically relevant, and culturally meaningful activity. Ultimately, the objective of this study is to reconstruct and shed light on a

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Teresa to authorize her discourse in a context dominated by men. For a study of this rhetoric in Latin America, see Ibsen (1999).

figure who, though pervasive today, has remained largely invisible in the cultural imaginary of the early modern Spanish world.

The cook's invisibility can be explained on several terms.[7] One important feature is that culinary knowledge has traditionally relied on oral transmission. Even with the publication of the first cookbooks in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and their later boom in the following centuries, to this day cooking knowledge remains a practice with close ties to memory, the body, and the spoken word.[8] For that reason, and given that cooks generally belonged to marginalized groups of society, the occurrence of cooks in the written archive is, at best, fragmentary. Conversely, their sporadic presence in the literary archive is often highly archetypical and conventionalized. In this depiction of cooks as stock characters, cooking commonly functions as a metaphorical device rather than as a social and cultural practice.[9]

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[7] Little work has been done about the figure of the cook in itself. Sean Takats's *The Expert Cook in Enlightenment France* (2011) is one of the few in-depth historical study of cooks in Early Modern Europe. Takats examines how cooks advanced their social status through the professionalization of cooking. Takats gives cooks a key role in the intellectual transformation of eighteenth-century France. Through the *cuisine moderne*, Takats argues, cooks engaged with the ideas of the Enlightenment to establish their profession. Although the history of cooks or their presence in literary culture has not been widely explored in the context of Hispanic Studies, there have been important developments on the social history of domestic workers and the representation of servants and working class literary characters. In Golden Age criticism, monographs such as *Los lacayos de la comedias de Tirso de Molina* (1946) have traced the representation of workers in the plays of Tirso de Molina as vehicles to express a variety of ideological positions, arguing that in general these positions push for an "acercamiento de clase" in the early modern era. In 2008, Luciano García Lorenzo edited the volume *La criada en el teatro español del Siglo de Oro* (2008), which includes essays about the archetypical character in Spanish classic theatre. Most of these focus on the characters and their dramatic functions, with few works dwelling on the historical extratextual specificities.

[8] In his discussion of culinary language, Michel de Certeau gives a succinct summary description of this process: "It constitutes the place of preservation and the means of circulation for an ancient technical vocabulary, because it is also a conservatory of earlier fabrication processes, like these anonymous recipes, expressed in the kitchen language and referring back to previous practical knowledge, that the eighteenth-century Encyclopedia collected to mark the movement in cuisine from a regional oral tradition to its written recording" (219). Later he adds that "the generalization of a written transmission in place of oral communication entails a profound reworking of culinary knowledge, a distancing of tradition" (1998, 221). For the transmission of cooking skills through memory, orality and the senses see Sutton (2001).

[9] John Wilkins has studied the character of the cook in Ancient Greek Comedy. More recently (2018), in her dissertation "Culinary Professions in Early Modern Italian Comedy," April Danielle Weintritt studied

If we are to understand their place in the cultural imaginary, cooks must be approached from a number of angles and with recourse to a multifaceted corpus. Through an interdisciplinary lens combining literary analysis with social and cultural history as well as food studies, I approach the figure of the cook in a diverse corpus of literary and archival sources spanning the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries in Spain and Spanish America. In exploring cooks as multifaceted workers—from chefs at the service of a king, and nuns cooking for bishops, to informal members of the kitchen staff, and formerly enslaved in religious communities—, this dissertation traces the cultural significance of kitchen labor by highlighting the contributions of ordinary laborers to early modern intellectual and cultural life.

Moreover, though food has awakened great interest both in and outside academia in recent decades, the place of the cook within food culture has not merited equal attention. Scholarship on the food cultures of the early modern Spanish Atlantic is highly indebted to Alfred Crosby's influential concept of "Columbian exchange." In *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (1972), Crosby examined the circulation of biological agents (plants, animals and diseases) between the Americas, Europe, and Asia after 1492, arguing that the political, economic, and social dimensions of the world were radically transformed by the global movement of these entities. Crosby's work strongly informed the emergence of the field of food studies in the context of Iberia and Latin America, as he was one of the first historians to recognize the importance of biological and environmental factors for the cultural history of the region: "The first step to understanding man is to consider him as a biological entity which has existed on this globe, affecting, and in turn affected by, his fellow

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cooks and deliverymen as typified characters derived from the Classical tradition. This dissertation adds to these important works of cooks in literary discourse, albeit from a different perspective.

organisms” (1972, xiii). His book combined the biological and the cultural, the medical and the nutritional with the demographic and the ideological. Crosby also recognized the need to adopt a transdisciplinary approach:

> I am the first to appreciate that historians, geologists, anthropologists, zoologists, botanists and demographers will see me as an amateur in their particular fields. I anticipate their criticism by agreeing with them in part and replying that, although the Renaissance is long past, there is great needs for Renaissance-style attempts at pulling together the discoveries of the specialists to learn what we know, in general about life on this planet. (1972, xiv-xv)

This multidisciplinary view, so cautiously stated by Crosby, and the recognition of methodological difficulties still dominate food studies today. The approaches informed by Crosby have commonly employed the lens of iconic foods—such as maize, tomato, chocolate, wheat, wine—to explore the transformation of food systems, commercial routes, and eating habits across the world. Along these lines, in 1992, a group of scholars—among them Crosby himself— gathered at the conference *1492: Encuentro de dos comidas* to analyze “el intercambio de productos alimenticios, su difusión y su aplicación a las prácticas culinarias de los diferentes países del mundo” (1996, 10). This formulation of the event’s objective is paradigmatic of the types of approaches inaugurated by Crosby’s concept. The discussions largely emphasized the agency of foodstuffs in the transformation of culinary cultures across the globe. In the presentation to the essays that were published after the conference, for example, Gisela von Woebser discussed how difficult it would be to imagine European cuisines without the contributions of American ingredients: ““¿[…] se podría concebir una cafetería vienesa sin chocolate?” (9).

Despite the importance of the works informed by Crosby, I believe they have tended to overemphasize the material agency of food. William Cronon, for example, has argued that Crosby’s approach was bound to remain incomplete without the understanding of biological

organisms as part of a complex system comprised of environmental and cultural relationships (Cronon 1983, 14). Crosby's contribution to decentering the human within historical thought is unquestionable. Indeed, his study was instrumental in approaching this historical period beyond the military and political actions of Europeans. The problem, however, arises when this perspective is adopted in the study of cooking culture.

As I will discuss throughout this dissertation, food-making has historically fallen onto the hands of marginalized peoples. In this sense, decentering the human implies decentering groups that occupy a liminal space within historical and cultural narratives. That is, considering culinary culture exclusively through edibles obliterates the labor that transforms organisms into food, privileging instead their status as readymade commodities within a global network (i.e. chocolate in a Viennese café). This, in turn, privileges the visibility of the end consumer (i.e. the patron at the Viennese café). Ironically, cooks have fallen outside the alimentary and culinary archive.

Bearing this in mind, I agree with Kyla Wyzana Tompkins's call to critically reframe our study of food. In *Racial Indigestion*, in which she explores the consolidation of North American national whiteness in the nineteenth century, Tompkins treats eating as a political act, shifting from food to eating practices and binding food studies to feminist, gender, and critical race studies. In this dissertation, I thus respond to Tompkins's call to interrogate certain assumptions embedded in the field, mainly the "unreflective collaboration in the object-based fetishism of the foodie world, a collaboration that has produced an unending stream of single-commodity histories and ideological worrisome localist politics" (2012, 2).

Food scholarship has recently moved away from the Columbian paradigm. Drawing from Marxist theory and postcolonial studies, Rebecca Earle's *The Body of the Conquistador: Food, Race and the Colonial Experience in Spanish America, 1492-1700* (2012) demonstrates the role

of food in destabilizing the dichotomy between colonizer and colonized, intervening in the discussion about the emergence of racial thought. Jodi Campbell's *At the First Table: Food and Social Identity in Early Modern Spain* (2017) also moves away from a strictly historical approach, demonstrating "the performative elements of food in early modern Spain and how these were intertwined with social and cultural change" (2017, 8). In the field of literary studies, Carolyn Nadeau's work, combining sociological and anthropological methodologies to analyze representations of food (Nadeau 2017), has explored food events and discourses, revealing the ways in which food shaped early modern Spanish literature.

Informed by this scholarship, this dissertation moves away from macronarratives of food culture and concentrates instead on the human labor that makes food, well, *food*. By shifting the focus from foodstuff to cooks, I bring the gendered, racial, and class dimensions of cooking practices to the forefront of cultural and historical narratives. This shift provides a new lens to investigate the food history and cultures of early modern Spain and Latin America. Bringing together materials belonging to both sides of the Atlantic, we can begin to think of a paradigm of culinary "exchange" that goes beyond the optics of circulating commodities.

What's Cooking?

Following the "material turn" in the humanities and social sciences, historians of early modernity have sought to underscore the role of materiality and the body in knowledge production. In *The Body of the Artisan*, Pamela H. Smith demonstrated the contribution of craftsmen to the development of the so-called Scientific Revolution, uncovering the ways in which they produced knowledge through embodied practice, manual work and imitation. Smith coins the term "artisanal literacy" (or "material literacy") in referring to a form of nonverbal

literacy, a "gaining of knowledge neither through reading nor writing but rather through a process of experience and labor", and "a formulation of knowledge and processes of cognition not in words but instead in works" (Smith 2004, 8).

The ideas posited by philosopher Lisa Heldke also inform my approach to cooking in this dissertation. Following John Dewey, Heldke argues that cooking is "a thoughtful practice" that blurs the lines between the manual/intellectual labor dichotomy. In her discussion of Plato's *Republic*, Heldke notes that, for Plato and much of Western philosophy, manual labor "can only be a lower, craft-like form of knowledge, subservient to the genuine knowledge of the rational soul" (1992, 211). Within this epistemological hierarchy, cooks are bound to occupy the margins of society as passive consumers of higher forms of knowledge: "They are the doers, not thinkers; users not discoverers" (211).

Arguing against this perception, Heldke sees cooking as revealing the inadequacy of the mental/manual dichotomy and the subject/object model of inquiry. She writes: "on the subject/object model of inquiry, not only are subjects separated from objects, but they also exercise autonomy and control over the objects of their inquiry. Objects, on the other hand, have comparatively little autonomy or control over subjects" (205). In her view, food-making challenges these sharp divisions because cooking implies a type of knowledge that is not only mental but also bodily. To give a simple example: to know if a yeasted dough has risen, you must poke it. Feel it sink under your fingertips. The theoretical knowledge of the fermentation process is not enough to make bread. In this respect, the cook is materially and bodily interconnected to the object of "inquiry." The cook's knowledge is indissoluble to her embodied relation to the material world.

In her formulation, however, Heldke overlooks an aspect that is central to understand

cooks as cultural agents: that of subjectivity. Drawing from Suzanne B. Butters's discussion on early modern artists and improvisation, I contend that in *making*, the cook not just gains and produces knowledge about the object/food, but also about herself as a subject. At this point, it is useful to refer to Butters's reflection on the relation between subjectivity and empirical knowledge:

> I want to call attention not only to the phenomenon of creating new things as a manifestation of empirical knowledge about to the world but also to the delight in creating new things as a form of empirical knowledge about oneself. In it we directly experience the triad of nature, skill, and inborn talent, and respond creatively to it. In the sense that wisdom is born of experience, that philosophy is a love of wisdom, and that philosophy begins in wonder and puzzlement […], the delight experienced by artisans when they produced new things, extending nature's range, exercising their skills and bringing into play their inborn talent, made them wise. […] The skilled experience that leads to making new things is grounded in self-knowledge, somatic, procedural, intellectual, imaginative, and even revealed (2014, 60-62)

Butters's exhortation to consider *making* as a practice that constructs subjectivity has generative repercussions when pondering the relations between culinary and literary cultures. While I do not necessarily think of kitchen *making* as a "delight" or "wonder," as that can dangerously romanticize a form of heavy labor that is historically structured by racial, class and gender hierarchies, I find that Butters's proposition illuminates how the somatic-material literacy of cooking intersects with the technology of writing.

In the texts I examine in this dissertation, cooks fashion themselves as subjects through the work they perform, as well as through the self-reflexive discourses that narrate, fictionalize and record the act of cooking. I do not mean to suggest that they conceive themselves as cooks *per se*, at least not in the sense that we understand professional identities nowadays. Rather, I argue that kitchen work—in all of its capacities to connect body, mind and materiality—activates an inner discourse and experience. Whether encoded in the form of a prologue, an

autobiographical narrative or a diary, these first-person voices give cooking a structuring role in their subjectivity. I understand cooking within this conceptual framework. As a type of material and embodied literacy, it is a thoughtful practice through which the intellect and the body make sense of the material world and the self.

With this in mind, one final point is in order. Philosopher Deane W. Curtin proposes that we look at our relationality to food in terms of a subject-defining relation. In Western thought, food has been mostly understood as an external substance that "leaves the mind untouched" (1999, 11). Curtin, in a similar line as Heldke, poses an alternative view. In his words, that an agent is "understood not in terms of essential, internal, and immutable qualities, but gradually *becomes a person* through relational openness to others. We are defined by our relations to the food we eat" (11). Here, he invokes the classic maxim "you are what you eat" to suggest that food defines the subject in its bodily, social, political, symbolic, and spiritual facets. I propose we dig beneath the surface of this worn-out adage. Surely, if the subject's relation to food is so defining, it merits the question: who cooks what we eat? Who cooks what we *are*? My interest in answering these questions is not only to reveal and understand the experiences of the people behind the pots and pans, but also to ponder the relations between them and those consuming the fruits of what Patricia Yaeger called "edible labor."[10]

Cooking in Early Modernity

Reserved for those in the lower positions of the social hierarchy, be it for their skin color, gender, lack of economic means or noble birth, or belonging to the urban underworld, cooking

[10] With this term, Yaeger (1992) referred to the effacement of black cooks and servers in the culinary culture of the American South.

has always been tied to marginalized groups. For Curtin, the marginalization of the individuals who perform food labor is part of a broader disregard by Western thought for all aspects of human life that are considered embodied, transitory and quotidian. In his words, "in marginalizing the lives of women, manual laborers, and persons of color (those who have been defined as responsible for food), dominant persons also marginalize the aspects of their own lives that are 'ordinary' and 'bodily'" (4).

The privileging of that which is 'abstract', 'universal,' or 'atemporal' over the experiences of the body and the material world can be traced back to Ancient Greek philosophy, which greatly informed early modern perceptions of cookery. For example, in Plato's *Gorgias*, Polus, disciple of Gorgias, asks Socrates to give him a definition of rhetoric. Socrates responds that, contrary to what Gorgias had argued, rhetoric is not an art but an "experience" that produces "grace and pleasure" (462c). To explain his point, he compares it with cookery, which he sees as analogous (462e). For Socrates, there are four true arts: law and justice, which pertain to the mind, and gymnastics and medicine, which pertain to the body. For each of these, Socrates offers a false counterpart: for law, sophistry; for justice, rhetoric; and for medicine, cookery. Though cookery seems to be an art, it can never aspire to be (463b): "And I assert that it is not art but experience, because it has no reasoned account" (464d-465a). For Socrates, cooking cannot be considered an art due to its empirical nature.

In a similar vein, in the *Republic*, Plato situates cooks within the producers, the third and basest class. In the social structure of the ideal state, producers—cooks, artisans, farmers—sustain the upper classes (philosopher-kings, military men) with their labor, but they cannot aspire to participate actively in political life (500bc). Not surprisingly, food preparation was mainly the task of women and slaves in Ancient Greece (Wilkins 2000, 30-34). As manual

workers, they had low social status, a position that turned them into remarkably productive figures in comedic theater (371-382).

Pivotal in understanding the place of cooks in cultural imagination is the hierarchy of the senses that dominated early modern thought. Both Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy influenced the ideations surrounding the five senses.[11] For both Plato and Aristotle, sight was the superior and most noble sense, making it the ideal medium to exercise reason. Next in the ranking was hearing, another sense of "distance" that did not imply direct bodily contact. Sight and hearing were considered to be the ideal senses for mindwork. In contrast, the senses most connected to the body—smell, taste and touch—occupied the lowest positions in the classification, and they were perceived to link humans to beasts.[12] A cook's labor, of course, is heavily reliant on them.

From a Christian point of view, the close connections of cookery with the basest senses meant cooks were associated with bodily appetites and sensuality. With their hands, taste buds, and noses, cooks produced textures, smells, and tastes to delight the bodies (not minds) of others. As such, they were imagined as facilitators of sin who held ties with the devil. In the words of Bridget Ann Henisch, in the Middle Ages, the cook "stood in danger of double jeopardy. Whether damned for his skill or damned for his incompetence, he was assumed, always and in either case, to be working hand in glove with the powers of darkness" (2009, 1). In a 1625 sermon, for example, vice is personified as a cook: "El vicio de la sensualidad es un cocinero diestro que guisa los manjares muy a gusto del demonio, o el instrumento en que el mismo

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[11] See Korsmeyer's first chapter (1999) for a thorough overview of the hierarchy of the senses. For a brief summary of Plato's view see Korsmeyer (13-18); for Aristotle's see (19-21).

[12] Recently, much scholarship has been devoted to studying these senses in the early modern world. For touch, see Maurette (2018) and the volume edited by Harvey (2003); for smell, see Dugan (2011) and Muchembled (2020); for taste, see von Hoffmann (2016), Wall (2016), and Swann (2020). See also the collection *Beyond Sight* edited by Wagschal and Giles (2018), and Sanger and Walker (2017).

demonio los guisa a la satisfacción de Luzifer" (229). Similarly, writing on the many forms adopted by the devil to fool souls, the Capuchin friar Félix de Alamín asked: "¿Y es honra servir y ser cocinero del vientre, vaso asqueroso y lleno de inmundicia?" (1714, 275). Female cooks were not the exception. The Franciscan Fray Diego de Mendoza referred to nuns as "esclavas de sus vanas aficiones y ministras de la gula" (1664, 398).

Cocineros de señores, cocineras del Señor

It is telling that the word *cocinero* appears in Sebastián de Covarrubias (1611) *Tesoro de la lengua castellana* without its feminine inflection. Covarrubias defines it as "oficial de cocina de un señor, porque la gente ordinaria no se sirve de cocineros" (218). Women cooking at home, at inns, or taverns are not even considered cooks in this definition. The status of the cook is determined by his employment at the service of a noble household, and not by the nature of his work. Within this definition, the cook's job is first to rule the kitchen as *oficial*, and, secondly, to cook.

Covarrubias presents us with two conceptualizations of the cook's work. On one side, the rational and masculine job of the male *oficial de cocina*; on the other, the feminine bodily job of actually cooking. This can be explained in terms of the gender implications inherent to the hierarchical understanding of the senses outlined above. As Carolyn Korsmeyer explains,

> Certain senses are regarded as functioning in the development of traits assigned a masculine character and others sometimes by default, are considered feminine. Not because it is assumed that the senses actually operate differently in males and females […], but because the virtues and achievements of the distance senses are considered masculine virtues on account of their contributions to the development of rational nature (Korsmeyer 1999, 33)

In this regard, as a bodily and non-rational activity, cookery fell into the realm of the feminine. The idea of cookery as an exclusively feminine kind of work is already present in Plato's

Republic. Socrates asks:"Can you think of any human activity in which the male sex is not superior to the females in all these ways? Or do we have to give a long account of weaving, cookery and baking cakes—things the female sex is thought to be pretty good at, and where it is particularly absurd for them to be second-best?" (Book 5, 455c-d) Though Socrates seems to point to the superior culinary talent of women, the ironic and dismissive tone of the question leaves us with another possibility. Saying women are *thought to be pretty good at* cooking suggests the possibility of men excelling at it—if they were to try. Either way, it is clear from this passage that manual and domestic work involving the lower senses is an object of scorn.

In the first printed cookbooks, as I demonstrate in the first chapter, the *cocineros* at the service of kings and nobles sought to dissociate their labor from that of women. Spanish cooks such as Francisco Martínez Montiño and Miguel de Baeza explicitly opposed their culinary knowledge to women's expertise—particularly to that of nuns. In his instructions for a type of sweet sponge, Baeza adds: "estos se hacen en Toledo muy buenos en papeles y en obleas, se hace mucha cantidad de ellos y en los monasterios, pero no son tan buenos como los de la confitería" (1592, folio 77).[13]

It goes without saying that women also shaped the meanings of their work in the kitchen. The first few pages of Francisco Delicado's *Lozana andaluza* (1528) give us a fictional yet illustrative example of a woman voicing how she conceives of her culinary talent. After describing the many dishes she makes, Aldonza says: "Estas y las otras ponía yo tanta hemencia en ellas, que sobrepujaba a Platina, *De voluptatibus*, y a Apicio Romano, *De re coquinaria* , y decía esta madre de mi madre: 'Hija Aldonza, la olla sin cebolla es boda sin tamborín'" (2007,

[13] In a similar recipe, Martínez Montiño recommends his method over the one used by nuns: "ningunos bizcochos has de batir con dos manos como las monjas, sino con una mano, como quien bate tortilla de huevos" (1614, 445).

16). The protagonist opposes her knowledge to male cookbook authors like Platina and Apicius. The former is the author of the first printed book of cookery, the latter the author of a Classic manuscript of Roman recipes.[14] Here, she asserts the superiority of her personal cooking knowlege, one that is transmitted orally through an intergenerational network of women.

Likewise, religious women, like those dismissed by Baeza and Martínez Montiño, conceived of cooking as a meaningful practice in the context of their faith. In the second half of this dissertation, I analyze two examples of religious women who transformed their kitchen labor into a mode of devotion, and a vehicle to carve a position for themselves in their communities. For now, it is useful to review some of the common interpretations that cooking had in religious literature.[15]

In the religious imagination of early modern Spain, cooking is rendered an ambivalent task. It posed the risk of distracting from prayer but also signaled humility and obedience. It was glorified as a dignified service to God but kindled social tensions in everyday life. Female religious cooks had Martha as a biblical model for their behavior. In Luke's Gospel (10:38-42 King James), Jesus is welcomed into the house of two sisters, Mary and Martha.[16] The latter is

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[14] Scholarship on Platina's cookbook is vast. See Milham (1998), Vehling (1941), and Laurioux (2008 and 2006). I partially discuss Platina's book on the first chapter.

[15] I will not go into the religious meanings of food *per se*, as they are too many for the space of this introduction. In general terms, in the Old Testament, food practices appear in the form of restrictions, fasting practices, codes for preparation, sacrificial laws, charity values and the importance of commensality. Many of these practices were retained, albeit modified, by early Christians. Though the adherence to kosher laws and Jewish food restrictions was not continued, and in fact were substituted by a freer attitude towards eating choices, food and all of its symbolic language retained its importance in Christian religiosity (Albala 11). So much so that food is a central element in one of the most important sacraments, the Eucharist. In addition, the food culture of early modern Spain was deeply impacted by Jewish, Muslim and Christian practices and beliefs. Adopting Christian food habits became an important signal for *judeoconversos* and *moriscos*, who began trading oil for lard or even hung a ham leg outside their door to demonstrate true conversion] (Williams 2017, 28). See also chapter 4 of Nadeau, Gómez-Bravo, Freidenreich, and the afore-mentioned Williams.

[16] For an overview of women in the Gospel of Luke that includes a discussion of this story, see Reid (1996). See also Wyant's book for a review on the Early Christian and premodern interpretations of this episode, as well as the most significant scholarship about it. Wyant focuses on challenging modern

busy in the kitchen preparing what appears to be a Lent meal for their visitor, while the first sits at his feet and listens to him. Martha approaches Jesus and complains about her sister's lack of involvement in the kitchen, to which Jesus replies: "Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things. But one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (42). Martha is ambivalent. She is hospitable and yearns to serve Jesus, providing him with the meal to continue his journey. At the same time, she is so absorbed in her work that she pays no attention to Jesus's words. She is more preoccupied with the material sustenance supplied by her food than with the spiritual aliment provided by her visitor's teachings.[17]

In the third treatise of *Abecedario espiritual* (1527), Francisco de Osuna mentions the story of Mary and Martha in a chapter about the distractions of the soul. He offers a peculiar interpretation of the story of Mary and Martha, in which the latter's work in conceived in a favorable way:

> si cuando el Señor dijo a Marta que María había escogido la muy buena parte, le dijera Marta que no cesaba de orar el que no cesaba de bien obrar, como ella, pudiérale replicar y responder el Señor que verdad era; empero que con más atención oraba el que no se ocupaba sino en un solo Dios que no el que se turbaba acerca de muchas cosas, como ella. Y así, aunque el siempre obrar bien fuese siempre orar, no era, empero, tan perfecto como si se ocupase el hombre solamente en un sumo bien, que es a todos necesario, pues de todos es fin, lo cual hacía su hermana María, que, asentada con gran reposo junto a los pies del Señor, oía su palabra con el oído del ánima. (Osuna CXXIXr)

Rather than being a mere diversion from spiritual practice, her work in the kitchen is a type of prayer, one carried out by *doing good*. However, compared to her sister's, Martha's is still an

gendered readings of the episode and instead focuses on the theological debates surrounding this story; namely, the division between active and contemplative life.

[17] This Biblical episode was extensively commented and reinterpreted throughout the early modern period. It was also represented by Diego Velázquez in a famous painting. For now, it will suffice to say that it was commonly read as embodying the tensions between two paradigms of Christian devotion: contemplation and action.

imperfect form of prayer. While Osuna acknowledges the spiritual value of the work of an "active life," he deems it incomplete without the engagement of the soul's ears and contemplation.

This idea of Christ's inhabiting even the humblest corners of daily life was succinctly expressed by Santa Teresa de Jesús. Together with Osuna, Teresa of Avila was one of the most influential figures for religious writers of the period, particularly women mystics.[18] In the famously cited passage of *Libro de las Fundaciones* (1610), in which she reflects upon obedience, Teresa writes: "Pues sea, hijas mías, no haya desconsuelo, más cuando la obediencia os trajere empleadas en cosas exteriores, entended que si es en la cocina, entre los pucheros anda el Señor, ayudandoos en lo interior y exterior" (Avila 259). Her view offers the possibility of being in God's presence within a mundane space like the kitchen. In *Castillo interior*, she acknowledges the need for both models. Contemplation and action complement each other and should go hand in hand, saying "Marta y María han de andar siempre juntas" (*Las moradas* 309-310).

In the context of the Spanish Catholic Reformation, the figure of Martha—virtually the only biblical model for female cooks—provided an example of how to be pious while performing mundane duties, opening the possibility of sanctity to all nuns and religious servants. The two conflicting sides of cooking are reconciled in Martha. And yet, cooking never fully abandons that ambiguous ground of antagonistic possibilities.

[18] Santa Teresa de Jesús's spiritual autobiography, *Libro de la vida* (a bestseller of her time), "paved the way for the production of hundreds—perhaps thousands—of documents that imitated and developed her themes" (Arenal 2010, 10). For many women across the Spanish Atlantic, Santa Teresa was both a spiritual and literary model. Her influence looms large on virtually all writings by religious women, including those by Úrsula de Jesús and Mariana de San Joseph, which I discuss in this dissertation.

Chapter Summary

The first chapter, "Cooking by the Book: Cookery and the Orders of Knowledge in Early Modern Spain," discusses the emergence of the cookbook as a genre authored by men. I examine Mestre Robert's *Llibre del coch*, the first cookbook published in Spain, situating it within the context of Italian Humanism, the Aragonese court of Naples, and the publication of the first cookbooks in late fifteenth-century Italy. Specifically, I consider Mestre Robert's text in light of the epistemological shifts of the Renaissance and the place of cookery within them. Through a comparative analysis of the 1520 Catalan edition and the 1525 Castilian edition, I argue that the textual changes in *Llibre del coch* are indicative of a reevaluation of culinary knowledge, and, more generally, of cookery as a virtuous occupation. By highlighting the figure of the cook-author, this chapter lays the ground for the exploration of lowly kitchen staff in the second chapter.

The second chapter, "The Labor of the Hungry: *Pícaros de cocina* and the Emergence of the Professional Kitchen in Early Modern Spain," analyzes the figure of *pícaros de cocina* and lowly kitchen workers in picaresque narrative and archival sources. It focuses on Mateo Alemán's *Guzmán de Alfarache* and *La vida y hechos de Estebanillo González*, as well as on cookbooks and Royal Palace records that detail the everyday life of royal kitchens. Through the juxtaposition of these sources, this chapter argues that *pícaros* are key figures to understand an increasingly sharp division of labor and the emergent professionalization of cooking inaugurated by publications such as *Llibre del coch*. This chapter places *pícaros* at the heart of the culinary culture of their time—not as perpetually hungry characters but as kitchen workers.

In the third and fourth chapters, I explore cooking in the context of female religious discourse. Chapter three, titled "Úrsula de Jesús's Hell's Kitchen: Embodied Labor and Devotion

in Seventeenth-Century Lima," studies the spiritual diary of Úrsula de Jesús, a black religious servant who worked in the kitchen at the Convent of Saint Clare in Lima, Perú. This chapter argues that, for Úrsula, cooking—a physically exhausting practice embedded in the racial and social division of the convent's labor—constitutes an embodied form of devotion. It examines the kitchen as a purgatorial and hell-like space where black women could perform devotion through bodily suffering. This chapter also reveals the tensions between doctrine and the everyday reality of religious life for black Peruvians such as Úrsula.

The final chapter, "The Culinary Devotion of Sor Mariana de San Joseph: Reading Mysticism in Eighteenth-Century Puebla", focuses on the life-writings of Sor Marianita de San Joseph, a low-born white-veiled Spanish nun who cooked at the convent of Saint Rose of Lima, in Puebla, New Spain. In particular, I examine Marianita's representations of daily cooking in light of Dominican female religious literature; namely, the lives of St. Catherine of Siena and St. Rose of Lima, as well as the theological works of the convent's prioress, sor Mariana Águeda de San Ignacio. I argue that Mariana's cooking must be understood as a mode of engagement with religious written culture, and thus a practice that endowed those with little social leverage with reputation and authority. This chapter reveals the relationship between manual and intellectual work within female networks of knowledge transmission, and the role of food preparation in the internal politics of the convent. Altogether, these four chapters recover the ideas and discourses of a traditionally low-brow and invisible occupation in the early modern Spanish world. By considering texts, food, and labor within the same network of cultural production, this study also aims at bridging the divide between embodied and intellectual labor, making and knowing.

Chapter 1. Cooking by the Book:

Cookery and the Orders of Knowledge in Early Modern Spain

A cook, who formerly had been the meanest of all slaves,
became the most necessary and esteemed servant in the family;
and what was before a contemptible office,
rose to be an art of great consequence
- Titus Livius, The History of Rome (8.4)

In the frontispiece of an undated edition of *Llibre de doctrina para ben servir, de taller y de l'art del coch* (Figure 1), Spain's first printed cookbook, a man is depicted before a cooking fire. He sits at a three-legged stool by himself, stirring a pot with a long spoon. He wears a simple livery, a hat, and a belted pouch around his waist. Much like himself, the space occupied is devoid of ornament. There are no cooking instruments or foods in sight. Neither are there any other members of the kitchen staff. A small window in the back suggests an unknown far exterior, perhaps where the food will finally be served. There are no sources of visual interest distracting from the main figure. The subject of the book, and its didactic intended use, is communicated by the unceremonious clear representation of the cook's craft. With the cook taking on the center stage, the woodcut visually suggests the book is aimed at those who share the author's trade, those represented by the cook on the stool.

Preserved today at the University of Barcelona, this undated copy is considered by scholars to be the earliest version of *Llibre del coch.* According to Dionisio Pérez and María Ángeles Pérez Samper, it would have been published in the last decades of the fifteenth century. Some decades later, in 1520, *Llibre del coch* is published again in Barcelona in the workshop of

Carles Amorós, one of Catalonia's most important printers.[1] This time, however, the frontispiece has undergone major changes (Figure 2).

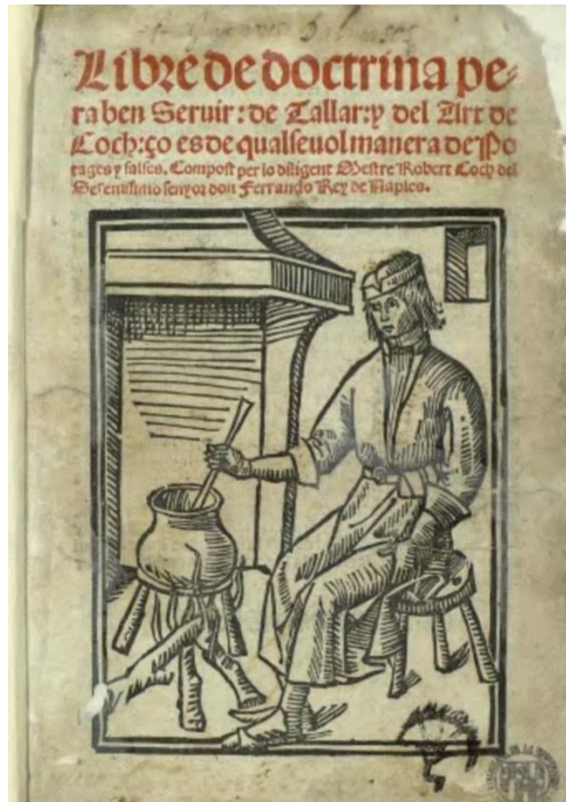

Figure 1. *Frontispiece. Mestre Robert, Llibre de doctrina para ben servir, de taller y de l'art del coch, S.d., University of Barcelona.*

To begin with, it features at least six different wood blocks, which would have made the process of printing it far more complicated than the previous one. There are highly ornamental details that give an architectonic feel to the scene, which almost resembles an aedicule. The side blocks function as columns supporting the top block decorated with cherubs, which in turn mimics an entablature complete with a geometric cornice.

[1] Like many other Catalan printers of the sixteenth century, Amorós was of French origin. Amorós's shop was active for a remarkably long period of time, from 1507 to 1555. Around 130 works, in Castilian, Latin and Catalan, printed by his workshop are stil preserved. See (Lamarca 2015, 33-45) for a historical overview of Amorós's workshop.

Crammed in the center grandiose frame are a cook, a servant and a king. The servant ceremoniously extends a goblet to a disproportionately large king, who receives it with one hand while holding a knife on the other. The cooking utensils are carefully displayed in the back, yet the cook is brought to the fore, away from his usual quarters. He stands before a fire with his hand pointing at the steaming cauldron, his finger drawing attention to the subject of the book: his craft. His gesture is reinforced by the catch-title split in half on the sides, which respectively read *Llibre* and *del coch*. In sum, in the 1520 edition, the world of cooking appears with a material and social complexity that is not in the frontispiece to the undated copy, presenting a far more complete scene that directly mirrors the title. Can these features be interpreted as more than just the stylistic choices of each printer? How may we account for this contrast?

When considered back to back, these two editions offer contrasting depictions of the same subject. The lonely cook is now accompanied; the humble fire is now a kitchen full with gadgets; the lengthy title is condensed into a catchy phrase; the image as a whole has gone from simplicity to ostentation.[2]

As I will explore in the course of this dissertation, these contradicting views of cooking are in constant and unresolved tension throughout the early modern period. It is a menial

[2] Both the undated and the 1520 editions are marked with ink stamps representing Saint Catherine of Alexandria's martyrdom. The mark is identical to those that identify the books in the library of Barcelona's Convent of Saint Catherine, which indicates both copies belonged to the Dominican archive. This possibility is further reinforced by a handwritten ex libris on the frontispiece of the undated edition, which reads *est Joannis Dalmases.* As Marina Ruiz Fragas has evidenced, a significant portion of the Dalmases Library, one of the best collections of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, was purchased by the convent (316). Both copies would have belonged to the collection of the Dalmases family, later falling to the hands of the Dominican nuns. According to Ruiz Fragas, it is very likely that a member of the Order, possibly a librarian, chose which books would be purchased from one of the library's catalogues (319). These marks indicate the books were used by religious women, or at the very least kept as valued possessions in the library, which in turns suggests cookbooks circulated within female religious communities, impacting their own experiences of cooking. Later in this dissertation, in Chapters 3 and 4, I will explore how religious women engaged with lettered culture through cooking labor.

occupation reserved for the lower social strata; yet, if performed according to certain codes, a potential path for virtue and dignity. It is a trade that heavily relies on oral transmission, embodiment and experience; yet, this knowledge decisively penetrates the world of the written word, with cookbooks becoming best-sellers. It is traditionally associated with domesticity and femininity; yet, evidenced by the two male figures in the frontispieces, this period also sees a process of masculinization of the trade. In this chapter, I propose we ponder Mestre Robert's *Llibre del coch* through the lens of shifting orders of knowledge in the Renaissance, and the place of cooking within them. That is, looking at the tensions embedded in this text as a product of a wider cultural current that re-signified cooking from a manual humble occupation into a craft that was worthy of the attraction of readers and kings.

Figure 2. *Frontispiece. Mestre Robert, Llibre de doctrina para ben servir, de taller y de l'art del coch, Barcelona, Carles Amorós, 1520. Library of Catalunya.*

The First Cookery Books: Between Humanism and Practical Knowledge

Published more than fifteen times in Spanish and Catalan in the space of a single century, *Llibre del coch* was an editorial success of its time.[3] This textual abundance is a rare documentary trail that sheds light on the shifting attitudes towards cooking, as well as the evolution of the cookbook genre in sixteenth-century Spain. In this chapter, I will explore the book's textual history by focusing primarily on the first two editions, the first Catalan edition printed in Barcelona in 1520, and the first Castilian edition printed in 1525 in Toledo. As it will become clear, the differences between them are more than just superficial, and, in fact, give account of the shifting value of culinary knowledge.

Little to nothing is known about Mestre Robert, the author of *Llibre del coch.* Mestre Robert, the frontispiece tells us, served the *sereníssimo senyor* Ferrante I, King of Naples. The cookbook contains more than 200 recipes, the vast majority of them of Catalan origin. They can be traced back to Medieval Catalan manuscript collections like the *Llibre de Sent Soví* and the *Llibre d'aparallear de menjar* (Santanach I Suñol 2018, 96). Like many other cookbooks and manuscript recipe-books of the early modern period, it is more a compilation of earlier widespread recipes than the original work of a single author.[4]

Llibre del coch was likely composed and written in manuscript form decades before its first publication. Though the 1520 edition states that Mestre Robert was a cook to King Ferrante, it is possible that he, an Aragonese or Catalan cook, first came to Italy as cook to King Alfonso the Magnanimous, and later stayed in the service of his son. This would situate the book's

[3] There are seven editions documented in Catalan, all printed in Barcelona (1520, 1535, 1539, 1560, 1568, 1578, n.d.). Eight editions have survived in Castilian (Toledo, 1525; Logroño 1529 ;?, 1538; ?, 1543; ?, 1544; Medina del Campo, 1549; Zaragoza, 1568; n.d., 1577).

[4] Though its recipes are predominantly of Catalan cuisine, there are recipes for some Genovese, Venetian and French dishes.

composition somewhere between 1442—the year of Alfonso's arrival to Naples—and 1494—the last year of Ferrante's reign. Regardless of its specific timeline, *Llibre del coch* emerges at a key point in the history of European culinary culture. It is around this time that Bartolomeo Sacchi, more commonly known as Platina, publishes *De honesta voluptate et valetudine* (On right pleasure and good health) in Rome. As the first cookery book ever printed, *De honesta voluptate* is a key antecedent to Mestre Robert's book. If at first glance they might seem rather dissimilar—one written in Latin by a humanist, the other in the vernacular by a cook, one citing Classical sources, the other exclusively giving didactic instructions—, *Llibre del coch* is part of a cultural current that is inaugurated by Platina's book.

Platina publishes this collection of recipes and dietary treatise in 1475.[5] Platina was not a cook, but a humanist. An Hellenist, member of the Roman Academy led by Pomponio Leto, writer of philosophical, political and historical works, he served as secretary to Cardinal Francesco Gonzaga, and, later, as librarian of the Vatican under Sixtus IV.[6] If one peruses the titles of Platina's works—among which are a dialogue on nobility, a dialogue on love, a treatise on the perfect prince, and a lengthy history of the Papacy—, *De honesta voluptate* quickly stands out as an oddity. As I have discussed in the introduction, since Antiquity, cookery was not among the topics that were deemed worthy of the attention of writers and thinkers. Cooks largely retained their ill-repute in the early modern period. Simultaneously, however, other more nuanced and positive views of cooking began to emerge. Platina's book is central in understanding this gradual shift.

De honesta voluptate almost entirely replicates an earlier cookery manuscript entitled

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[5] Mary Milham dates the first manuscript of Platina's book around 1465 (Milham 1998, 59).
[6] For information on Platina's life, see Milham (1998, 61-67)

Libro de arte coquinaria, written by Platina's friend Maestre Martino de Como.[7] Martino served as cook to the Patriarch of Aquileia, a close friend of Cardinal Gonzaga, who was in turn known for his patronage of humanists. Platina and Martino would have coincided at Gonzaga's villa in Castelli Romani, where they frequently dined together.[8] Though a humanist and a cook sharing a meal in the same social setting seems like an implausible scenario, it is not entirely so. As Claudio Benporat has suggested, Martino could have been, if not a permanent, then a sporadic member of the Roman Academy. The academy, Benporat notes, welcomed individuals from different social ranks, including servants of cardinals and prelates (1996, 741-745).

As suggested by its title, *De honesta voluptate* pretends to be more than a cooking manual. Part health treatise, part debate on the nature and morality of pleasure, the book's sources range from Pliny, to Martino, to the Roman cook Apicius. Recipes for sauces coexist with Classical commentary, meats with philosophical reflection. In this way, cookery is re-framed by Platina as a matter of humanistic interest. In a letter to Cardinal Piccolomini, whose patronage Platina was seeking, he recognizes the eccentricity of his subject:

> As you are aware, it deals with the business of all the food merchants, and creeps through the taverns, and is, therefore, a greasy and sordid subject. But he who is versed in cookery is not far removed from genius [*ingenio*], since the meals that are to be concocted are largely a matter of ingenious composition, and, therefore, he must be proficient in it; he who takes upon himself this work as a profession must inform himself. (quoted in Vehling 1941, 75)

It is striking that Platina does not attempt to justify his topic by referring to the moralizing

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[7] Of the 250 recipes contained in Platina's book, 240 come from Martino's. Martino served at the rectory of San Martino Viduale, and at the court of Francesco Sforza, before working for the Patriarch of Aquileia (McIver 2014, 3).

[8] Katherine McIver gives us an account of how this relationship unfolded: "In 1461, Platina went to Rome with his student, the newly appointed Cardinal Gonzaga, who in June 1463 introduced Platina to the legendary household of the famous and powerful Ludovico Trevisan, patriarch of Aquileia, a political prelate in 1450s and 1460s Rome. Trevisan, born in Venice and educated in Padua, was well known and admired for his love of entertaining in his house near san Lorenzo in Damaso. He was obsessed with obtaining the finest and most unusual foods and wines for his guests" (2014, 3).

discussion of pleasure nor to the health benefits of good food. In other words, by emphasizing its usefulness to the reader. Rather, Platina exalts and defends the cook's *ingenio.* The notion of *ingenium*—an individual's innate genius and inventiveness—is at the center of Renaissance debates on the nature of art. For Leonardo da Vinci, *ingenium* was a discursive and mental process through which artists acquired knowledge, role of ingenium in the development of technology (Farago 2019, 134). More than a century later after Platina, the Spanish Jesuit Baltasar Gracián would define *ingenio* as "la agudeza en arte, teóricmante" (2001, 45).

Needless to say, *ingenium* is a heavily gendered concept. Following misogynistic convention, Juan Huarte de San Juan, author of *Examen de los ingenios para las ciencias* (1575), identifies this trait of intelligence as being exclusive to males:

> Y que, según la diferencia de ingenio que cada uno tiene, se infunda una ciencia y no otra, o más o menos de cada cual de ellas, es cosa que se deja entender en el mesmo ejemplo de nuestros primeros padres; porque, llenándolos Dios a ambos de sabiduría, es conclusión averiguada que le cupo menos a Eva, por la cual razón dicen los teólogos que se atrevió el demonio a engañarla y no osó tentar al varón temiendo su mucha sabiduría. La razón de esto es, como adelante probaremos, que la compostura natural que la mujer tiene en el celebro no es capaz de mucho ingenio ni de mucha sabiduría (1946, 42).

Wit and creative novelty is here attributed only to men, and women are deemed naturally—anatomically, even—incapable of being ingenious. Curiously, Huarte notes, *ingenio* derives from the word *engendrar*, a verb that has a strong connotation of female corporeality. While men's minds can give birth to ideas and concepts, women can only give birth through their bodies. Transposed to the realm of the kitchen, the idea of *ingenio* serves to transform a "simple" feminine occupation into an intellectually sophisticated masculine one. In *Noticia general para la estimación de las artes* (1600), a defense of painting as a liberal art, Gaspar Gutiérrez de los Ríos discusses the difference between *oficio* and *arte* in these terms: "Oficio es (según Platón y Marciano Jurisconsulto) guisar de comer: lo cual entiendo yo, siendo en forma común y

ordinaria. Arte mecánica será, si se guisa con su orden, reglas, curiosidad e ingenio, según se hace en las cocinas de los Príncipes" (Cervelló 2006, 129). Though Gutiérrez de los Ríos does not explicitly make reference to the gender of the person cooking, it is clear that *common* and *ordinary* cooking traditionally fell into the hands of women. Those cooking in palatial kitchens were, as the written *testimonios* of cookbooks show, men. Indeed, the reference to princes (as opposed to princesses) already points to a masculinization of royal kitchens in which the *art* of cooking is performed. Men cooking would be ingenious in so far as they innovate a centuries-old occupation mostly performed by women. The role of introducing *ingenio* to the kitchen is not only to recuperate the lowly and elevate into a more dignified stance. It is also an attempt at de-feminizing it.

Not really interested in the potential material and bodily benefits of his book, Platina instead exalts the intellectual and creative dimension of cooking. In that sense, Bruno Laurioux's suspicions about the nature of the book ring particularly true: "Ne serait-il pas fondamentalement un livre de cuisine ensuite flanqué de passages médicaux guère originaux puis chapeauté d'un prologue moralisant?" (52). Laurioux's question points to a shifting sensibility that is palpable in Platina's book. Though carefully framed as a topic that is subordinated to moral and health debates, food—the cook's creations—actually takes the center stage of the book. The philosophical discussion and dietary advice that are emphatically announced in the title begin to pale in comparison to the abundance of recipes and descriptions of ingredients. This supplementary nature of the debates thus gives way to a notion of cookery that is (albeit partially) non-contingent upon its relation to health and morale.[9]

[9] Laurioux also advances this idea by referring to the original title of Platina's manuscript, *De obsoniis liber*, which made no reference to moral discussions and focused only on the dishes themselves.

As his letter to Piccolomini suggests, the value of Platina's book lies in the dissemination of what he sees as the cook's ingenuity. This idea is encapsulated in his recipe for *biancomangiare*, the creamy almond-based chicken sauce that was a favorite of early modern palates:

> I have always preferred this to Apician condiments, nor is there any reason why the tastes of our ancestors should be preferred to our own, for even if we surpassed by them in nearly all arts, nevertheless in taste alone we are not vanquished, for in the whole world there is no incentive to taste which has not been brought down, as it were, to the modern cooking school [*gymnasium popinarium*], where there is the keenest of discussion about the cooking of all foods. What a cook, oh immortal gods, you bestowed in my friend Martino of Como, from whom I have received, in great part, the things of which I am writing. You would say he is another Carneades if you were to hear him eloquently speaking ex tempore about the matters described above (Vehling 1941, 293)

Apicius's *De re coquinaria*, a collection of Roman recipes compiled around the fifth century, is a culinary "Classic" in the literal sense.[10] But instead of praising his forebears, Platina re-evaluates tradition and champions the superiority of modern Italian taste. He compares the lowly tavern to the *gymnasium*, a key institution of humanist education, the foods served with intellectual debates, and ideas with taste and seasoning. At stake here is a sense of culinary modernity, as well as cultural pride of Italian food practices. The cuisine of Martino is not contingent upon its relation to Apicius, but rather valuable in its own right**.** In praising Martino's genius, Platina also advances a positive and dignified image of the cook that is fairly innovative (Laurioux 2006, 269). These three notions (modernity, cultural pride, and cookery as a liberal art) are pivotal to understanding the emergence of cookbooks such as *Llibre del coch*.

Platina's recuperation of the "sordid" and "greasy" subject of cookery is part of a wider epistemological shift that originated in the late fifteenth century. Humanists revisited the

[10] For a discussion of Apicius in the context of humanism, see Laurioux (2008).

Classical division of liberal and mechanical arts, proposing new classifications that gradually elevated the value of certain disciplines into the status of art. In the Classical scheme, liberal arts were those that exercised the mind and engaged with theoretical knowledge, whereas mechanical arts entailed the skillful manipulation of machines, tools, and the body.[11] While the former were part of university curricula, required the mastery of texts, and were taught in Latin, knowledge of the latter was mostly transmitted orally and through hands-on practice (Long 2001, 104). Mechanical arts were passed on through apprenticeship in an entirely different social setting—the workshop—, which gave them the "certain unclean odor" of "the illiberal arts, for in antiquity they had been the work of slaves and the *vulgus*" (Smith 2016, 37).

This ordering of knowledge was challenged throughout the early modern period by artisans and artists in all corners of Europe. The printing press would prove a powerful tool in doing so. An avalanche of technical manuals on everything from how to paint and sculpt, to how to build walls or operate artillery, became highly popular across the continent.[12] Books became a way to access knowledge that was previously only available through practice.[13] Eventually, this proliferation of written practical knowledge translated into a re-evaluation of certain professions. As Pamela Long sums up, certain crafts, "having been transformed into written, discursive disciplines, came to be treated as forms of 'knowledge'" (2001, 104). With artisans and artists—agents of what Elizabeth Eisenstein (1980) has termed the "Commonwealth of Learning"—

[11] The divison between liberal and mechanical arts has an extensive history that is too rich for the scope of this chapter. For an excellent review of the discussion from Antiquity to the Middle Ages, see Crombie (1994), particularly pp. 23-56.
[12] Scholarship on the matter is vast across early modern studies, covering different regions and themes. For specific studies of books on domestic knowledge and recipes, see Wall (2015), Leong (2018), Shanahan (2015), and the collection *Reading and Writing Recipe Books, 1550–1800* (ed. Pennell, 2018).
[13] As pointed out by Donna Seger, these books of practical knowledge fulfilled the ideal of Renaissance self-fashioning, in as much as the reader could learn by herself through the book: "Self-fashioning was self-improvement, and 'useful books' became a key way to achieve both in the early modern era" (2022, 49).

pouring the secrets of their trade onto the page, scholars and writers also became interested in the intellectual debate over the so-called mechanical arts. The kitchen trade, traditionally considered a mechanical art, would not be the exception.

The Italian humanist Sperone Speroni, for example, wrote a *trattattello* playfully exaggerating the virtues of a cook.[14] For Speroni, a cook should be tempered in his eating habits, strong and fearless when carving animals, prudent when using fire, liberal with spices and condiments, and have spotless hygiene. All of these attributes refer to a cook's mechanical virtues when *doing* his craft. That is, to operating the tools (knives, fire) and materials (meats, spices) of his work, as well as on how to handle his own body. Speroni then adds virtues, or rather, skills, of another more unexpected nature:

Eloquente per difendersi, se fosse accusato di mangiare i boni bocconi, e di non cocer bene le vivande. Poeta per cantar versi e fuggire il fastidio e la fatica del cucinare. Geometra per eleggere li tondi e quadri più o men cupi secondo le vivande, e le torre, e altre gelatine e sapori. Aritmetico per numerare le sue pentole e olle. Dipintore per ben colorire gli arrosti e sale e sapori. Medico per conoscere la facile e difficile digestione […] Filosofo in conoscere la natura delle carni, de tempo, della legna […] Faceto con motti a'suoi sapori i conformi cioè salsi e pungenti, acciocché le parole si concordino con la sua professione ovvero arte. (Speroni 1740, 428)

Liberals arts of the trivium (rhetoric) and quadrivium (geometry, arithmetic) appear alongside mechanical arts (medicine, painting), poetry and philosophy. Allotting an unparalleled complexity to cooking, Speroni understands it as a multidimensional practice engaging the mind

[14] The date of the text is uncertain. It was first published in 1740 but probably circulated in manuscript form. See Katinis (2018, 149-160).

and the body alike; a profession that, through language, analysis and reflection, creates art. Such a conception of cuisine stands in direct contrast to the idea of food being a sordid greasy business.

To be sure, Speroni's highly intellectualized view of the cook is a masculinized one. He directly opposes the cooking of men to that of women, arguing for the superiority of male cooking: "Il coco sa tutto quello che sanno le donne di cucinare, il che è lor professione e di bellettarsi. Che egli belletta le minestre, le sale, i geli, i pasticci e l'acconciare; quelle s'acconciano agli occhi, e basta acconciarsi la superficie. Io acconcio al gusto […]; quelle la testa, io tutto'l corpo" (428). Male do not just possess all the know-how females do, they take cooking to the next level by aesthetizing it. While women superficially embellish themselves to please the eye, men instill a profound sense of beauty to the food they make. Their food looks and tastes beautifully, and thus pleases the whole body. In this view, Speroni prefigures the notion of taste as judgment, as well as the conception of cuisine as fine art, both of which will fully develop in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[15]

Llibre del coch thus emerges in an environment where cookery is introduced into the circles of learned knowledge and the arts, a cultural realm markedly dominated by men. Indeed, the kingdom of Naples was not peripheral to the cultural and intellectual renewal that characterized central Italy. As suggested above, its author possibly arrived in Italy with King Alfonso the Magnanimous, who became known for bringing humanism and Spanish literature to the Neapolitan court.[16] Alfonso's son Ferrante, whom Mestre Robert served, followed his

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[15] For the idea of cuisine as fine art in this period see von Hoffman (2016, 137-169).
[16] For the Italian humanists of the mid fifteenth century, Spain was considered a land of quasi-barbarians, mostly knights and bureaucrats, who were fundamentally uninterested in humanistic studies (Soler 2017, 69-70). Upon his arrival to the Neapolitan throne in 1442, King Alfonso worked to counter this negative view, fashioning himself as a cultured ruler, sponsor of humanists, and interested in the development of the arts. He destined considerable resources to publishing humanistic works, reactivating the University

father's steps by promoting humanism, supporting university studies, founding a printing press, and enlarging the archive of the Royal Library of Naples. Although unlike his father, who mostly championed the publication of literary and poetic works, Ferrante was more interested in practical literature—manuals on artillery, hunting and ironworking (Croce 1968, 67).

A key figure in Ferrante's court, and of great importance to our interests, was the humanist and chief secretary to the King, Giovanni Pontano. Pontano, who headed the first humanist academy of Naples, not only was Platina's contemporary, but a fellow pupil of Pomponio Leto at the Roman Academy.[17] Like Platina, Pontano wrote on the arts of dining and commensality. In the treatise *De conviventia*, Pontano recognizes banquets as a social and political tool that grants rulers "the gratitude of the public and the favor of citizens" (1965, 286). Above all, he notes, a good banquet must be abundant and diverse, even when conditions are challenging: "Anzi, se mancherà qualcosa perché il pasto sia lauto (e non è facile in tanta abbondanza conservare sempre questo livello), mi pare che si possa lasciar passare, purché come dicono gli spagnuoli, la mensa stessa sia carica" (286). *Gli spagnuoli*, of course, are the Aragonese. Pontano specifically praises the splendor of Alfonso's banquets, which were meant not only to please taste, but also to offer "visual pleasure" (290). He laments that such fine dining has fallen into oblivion in Naples: "Ricordo che da Alfonso questa usanza fu osservata con immenso splendore. È incredibile come questa iniziativa riuscisse a guadagnare l'animo della nobilita e anche quello del popolo, [...] questa consuetudine, come altre che sarebbe bene portare ad esempio, e stata per sempre interrotta" (287).

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of Naples, founding the Royal Library of Naples, among many other cultural endeavors. For a thorough study of Naples under Alfonso I and Ferrante, see Soler (2017).

[17] Pontano tutored several members of the royal family, notably Ferrante's son Alfonso, duke of Calabria, to whom he dedicated the treatise *De principe*. For the role of Pontano is the intellectual and cultural life of Naples, see the study by Shulamit Furstenberg-Levi (2016).

Throughout the treatise, Alfonso is presented as an exemplary host and ruler whose banquets displayed the wealth of his kingdom and the generosity of his character. In this way, *De conviventia* ventures to recuperate that past splendor of Aragonese hospitality. Indeed, Pontano recognizes the positive role that banquets had in Neapolitan intellectual life under Alfonso: "Una volta a quell'Alfonso di cui parliamo procurò gran lode il fatto di aver invitato a cena nei suoi giardini tutti i letterati che in quel tempo erano a Napoli, e offerta loro una lauta accoglienza" (292). In the banquet attended by the *letterati*, Alfonso's well-known enthusiasm for humanism is conflated with his enthusiasm for feasts.

Pontano's ideas, then, may have helped set the stage at court—the necessary intellectual conditions, as it were—for the emergence of Mestre Robert's book. What I wish to suggest is that we look at Mestre Robert's book through the same lens as Platina's *De honesta voluptate*. That is, not as an isolated editorial curiosity, but as part of an increased interest of humanists in cookery both as practical knowledge, *ingenio*, and expression of political magnificence. It is in this context of cultural blooming and appreciation for practical literature that *Llibre del coch* is born. Granted, *Llibre del coch* is written in the vernacular and not in Latin, does not include moral or philosophical reflections, nor does it allude to the Classical past. Regardless, it is fundamental that we consider this book outside the confines of Iberia, and through its connections with Italian humanism and the editorial explosion of instructive literature. Not only does the former view reproduce the logic of the modern Nation-state, in as much the cookbook completes a teleological narrative of national cuisine, but it also risks overlooking its place in the cultural disputes of early modernity.

Cooking like a Catalan in Naples

Scholarly interest on Mestre Robert's *Llibre del coch* has highlighted its role in the history of

Catalan and Spanish cuisine, and focused on its transitional character. In the words of Carolyn Nadeau, this cookbook “sheds the exclusive late medieval character of former cooking manuscripts and reveals a renaissance character” (2018, 26). Its connections to the political and cultural milieu of the Neapolitan court, and of late fifteenth century and early sixteenth century Italy in general, have been mostly overlooked. Though the earliest known edition was printed in Barcelona, there is no doubt that the cookbook was a product of wider cultural currents and exchanges between the Iberian and Italian peninsulas.

Platina’s *De honesta voluptate*, and Martino’s manuscript before it, evidence the standing of Catalan food culture in Italy. Both texts feature recipes from Catalonia: mirrauste, a dish for partridges, gourd, and blancmange. But the influence of Catalonia went beyond this small textual sample. In the words of Laurioux, “la cour d’Alphonse puis celle de Ferrand donnent ainsi naissance à une culture syncrétique où les éléments ibériques viennent enrichir le fonds italien” (1996, 80). In regards to culinary culture, Catalan influence was particular strong.[18] Dishes, methods, products, in addition to an extensive circulation of a culinary-textual repertoire, were transmitted and firmly established within Italian culture, giving way to “culinary syncretism” (78). In fact, as Laurioux notes, “le centre de gravité de la production culinaire italienne s’est donc déplacé vers le sud […]. c’est un sud dont les liens avec l’Aragon sont forts et qui est largement ouvert au reste du monde méditerranéen” (1996, 78). *Llibre del coch* was one of the first printed works that surfaced from this culinary center.[19]

The happy adoption by Italian palates of Catalan cuisine was seemingly at odds with

[18] On the mutual influence between Italian and Catalan cuisines, see Santich (1983, 67-79).
[19] On the place of Mestre Robert’s within this culinary centre, Laurioux writes: “Mais si le traité de Mestre Robert reprend du Sent Soví nombre de recettes qui ancrent sa catalanité, il est en même temps et tout autant influencé par la littérature culinaire italienne - composé dans un royaume de Naples à la fois italien et aragonais” (1996, 79).

contemporary politics. The presence in Italy of Catalans, and Spainards in general, had long been a source of political tension. Aragonese rule in the Italian south, old commercial and political rivalries between Catalans and the Geonese, along with the advancement of Spanish cardinals to the highest circles of the Vatican, aggravated long-established tensions. As James Amelang points out, rivalry between Spain and Italy was two-folded. While Spaniards had a sense of political superiority due to the hegemony of their Empire, this was “accompanied by an equally clear if attenuating sense of cultural inferiority” (2007, 446-447). Conversely, while Italians had a strong sense of their cultural hegemony, particularly with respect to high culture and art, they were acutely aware of Spain’s political supremacy.

Under this scenario, the enthusiastic adoption of Catalan food may seem exceptional. But as Amelang urges us to consider, “in terms of dress, foodways, and other items of broad cultural consumption, the exchanges between Italy and Spain evened themselves out more” (2007, 453). Platina’s recipe for *Catalan mirrauste*, for example, opens with a direct comparison between Catalans and Italians: “The Catalan race, which is indeed distinguished and considered not much different in talent and physical form from the Italian level of skill, prepares a dish which they call mirrauste in this way” (275). Platina then goes on to give the instructions to the reader, but he does so not in the customary second person of the imperative (i.e. to make X, do Y). Rather, he uses the third-person of the plural; *they* cook the capons, *they* grate almonds, then *they* add some bits of bread, then *they* let everything boil. The exceptional shift in pronouns produces a distance between author, reader and source that is not present in other recipes. The need to remark on the equivalence between Catalans and Italians, paired with the stylistic choices, inevitably point to cultural exchanges and the tensions that came with them.

Similarly, in a recipe for Catalan partridges, Platina finishes his cooking instructions with

an anecdotal remark: "My friend Gallus frequently eats this food, although he is a very bitter enemy of the Catalonians, for he hates the race of men, not their dishes" (289). In true humanist fashion, people and culinary culture are carefully separated in the name of individual taste. In the words of Brian Cowan, the gastronomic mind of Renaissance humanism was open to culinary influences from just about any culture" (199). Cities like Rome would have been "gastronomic Babels" where individuals encountered diverse culinary cultures, becoming at once creators and consumers of taste (Laurioux 2006, 402).

The interweaving of influences between Italian and Catalan recipes is such that it is almost futile to attempt a linear genealogy. Perhaps an earlier manuscript version of Mestre Robert's book served as a source for Martino's. Or perhaps it was the other way around. A book of italo-catalan cuisine, first composed in Naples and then published numerous times in Spain, actually gives account of the intense cultural and intellectual circulation of the Mediterranean. To place *Llibre del coch* within this network allows us to approach the emergence of culinary literature beyond the lens of foodstuffs, and consider the circulation of ideas and information.

The 1520 Barcelona Edition: Practice, Virtue and Taste

The first two editions of the book—the n.d. and the 1520—open with a paratext in which the objective and intended readership of the book is clearly defined: "Com sie cosa molt necessari als jouens de tendre eda apendre deles virtuts la carrera: e majorment aquells qui en delliberacio de seruir als homens de mayor grau o condicio se deliten: que aquells sapien ben seruir de moltes coses necessaries en aquells. E com yo haja delliberat fer alguna mencio de seruir enlo present libre" (2018, 162). The ideal readers are people of a "tender age", those that are in the service of noble men. The book has a clear didactic objective: to provide these young people with the

necessary and useful knowledge. That is, to guide them in their path (*carrera*) of service.

It is worth noting that the word used here is *virtut*, meaning both technical skill and moral virtue. Following Aristotle, writers like Giovanni Pontano and Platina discussed the relations between virtue, power and nobility. Pontano, for example, thought that virtue was acquired, learned and cultivated, rather than a God-given gift (Roick 2017, 123). Only virtue, and not lineage, could confer rulers with true nobility.[20] In that sense, virtue is an ethically charged concept that nonetheless requires political skill. In other words, rulers not only had to become virtuous, but appear it. Banquets, as Pontano's treatises on splendor and hospitality suggest, were a key way to display virtue.[21] In this sense, the knowledge condensed in this book was doubly virtuous. On one hand, it gave young apprentices the necessary practical skills of cooking, carving and serving, which—if performed correctly—, in turn conferred them respectability, moral virtue. On the other, a virtuous cook helped construct the moral virtue, and political legitimacy, of a given master.

This two-folded idea of virtuous cooking is suggested on the frontispiece of the 1520 Barcelona edition. The world of the kitchen is here inserted into a visual narrative of nobility. Though the red ink creates a sense of depth that visually distances the kitchen from the dining room, background and foreground are merged into a single space where king, servant and cook co-exist arranged in a triangular composition. No dishwashers, busyboys or other workers are in sight. Nor are there any females. They have all been effaced to highlight the protagonist of the

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[20] As put by James Hankins, the phrase *true nobility* "became a humanist term of art for a merit-based claim to belong to the ruling class" (2015, 38). See his book for an analysis of the concept of virtue in the context of humanist political thought.

[21] The figure of an hospitable, magnificent and liberal ruler was amply present in discussions of politics by humanists. For example, in another one of his treatises, *De splendore*, Pontano writes on how to display wealth in the private sphere, minutely describing tableware and glass ware. Evelyn Welch explains that, for Pontano, any person could demonstrate the virtue of splendour: "splendour could be achieved by careful selection of high-quality items appropriate to one's economic means" (2002, 218).

kitchen, who stands exceptionally close to the monarch. Between them stands a servant holding a comically large goblet. In comparison to the undated edition discussed in the beginning of this chapter, where the reader zooms in the interior space, here, the reader zooms out, coming out of the kitchen. With the doors wide open, its bright red secrets are on full display. Leaving his usual veil of anonymity behind, the cook has exited the kitchen to meet the reader. This visual disposition creates an image of the kitchen as a lively part of courtly life. Behind the king's display of virtue is a virtuous cook, and *Llibre del coch* contains the knowledge to become one.

Mestre Robert outlines three areas in which a cook must excel. As the title *Llibre de doctrina para ben servir, de taller y de l'art del coch* indicates, the book contains more than just cooking recipes. Descriptions on the correct way of carving meat and serving a table are featured alongside them. The first section, *On carving*, contains 15 instructions on the correct methods to cut game, birds, and sharpening knives.[22] The second section contains eleven instructions on the art of serving; how to pour beverages, how to set a table, what the duties of a butler, a butcher, a footman, and even a stable master, are. Finally, the third and most substantial section features 200 recipes of main dishes, sauces, and pastries.

Though the title *Llibre del coch* (and the simple frontispiece of the undated edition, for that matter) might lead us to believe it exclusively deals with matters of cooking, this structure clearly shows otherwise. Its tripartite composition takes in the knowledge of other workers under the umbrella of the cook's enunciation. In this sense, the book understands cooking as a collective endeavor that requires different types of skills and workers. Everyone from the butcher and the servants, to the horse-keepers and the loathed *pícaros de cocina* fall under the cook's

[22] It is possible that this section was inspired by Enrique de Villena *Arte cisoria* (1423). Carolyn Nadeau notes that a later cookbook, Diego Hernández de Macera's *Libro del arte de cocina* (1607) is also reminiscent of Villena's manual, and "almost identical" to the first chapter of *Llibre del coch* (2017, 40).

control and supervising gaze.

A cook is not just any worker but an *oficial de cocina*. In *Libro de la cámara real del príncipe don Juan* (1548), a treatise detailing the domestic and everyday organization of the court, Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo describes the palace kitchen as having big doors with heavy locks and high railing fences. The keys were only trusted onto the hands of the *cozinero mayor*, who was supposed to decide who could enter the kitchen (2006, 131). On a textual level, Mestre Robert's voice functions as a sort of gatekeeper, organizing, including and ranking the types of knowledge and skills within the book. In the next chapter, the ideal kitchen of courtly cookbooks very often excluded individuals whose work was not valued to the same degree. These workers, as I will discuss, might be banished from entering the cookbooks' ideal kitchens, but they will forcefully enter the kitchens of literary fiction.

From the beginning, the cook's voice acknowledges the challenges of writing about knowledge of a practical nature: "a doctrina del talar nos pot donar molt bé a entendre per escriptura sinó per discreció e pràtica: no dient que saber bé tallar o trinxar no sia bona cosa: empero què vall aquell saber si hom no sab los circunstancies que si pertanyen?" (2006, 174) Writing cannot sufficiently communicate the embodied knowledge of carving. The book ought to be *put in practice*, presumably in the context of a master-apprentice relation.

As Pamela Smith has discussed, one way to explain the boom of practical manuals in the early modern period is the emergence of an urban middle-class who "in their social mobility were more isolated from familial sources of technical knowledge and more desirous of new information" (2013, 173). As the apprentice-master model of learning began to change, books allowed individuals to acquire knowledge in a different way. Indeed, after recognizing the difficulty of translating carving into writing, Mestre Robert writes: "e per aquells volran apendre

puguen a profitar se algun bon exemple e si alguna cosa los parra no esser per aells necessaria yols pregue que no la metan en compte sino que la dexen fora de lur memoria" (2018, 162). Its unfixed meaning must be consumed, digested, or even discarded according to the reader's needs and tastes. In this sense, this passage also posits "a recipe for readership" (Goldstein 2005, 15), teaching the reader not only how to *do* the things it seeks to teach, but how to respond to the text itself.

Drawing on this open-ended nature of cookbooks, Kennan Ferguson conceives them as inherently political artifacts:

> Their very form, the way in which they are put together and used, breaks up the presumptions of what instructions do and what books are. In politics, we too often conflate instructions with obligatory demands. But recipes and cookbooks are not laws or jurisprudential codes. They suggest and direct without demanding or policing. They entice rather than enforce. They thus allow us to rethink how authority, commands, and directions operate (2020, 6)

Because they demand "a participatory and experimental engagement" (24), ideally a bodily and sensorial engagement, Ferguson thinks of cookbooks as a democratic genre. In this light, Mestre Robert's friendly invitation to forget his instructions is not a mere convention of modesty, but a constitutive trait of the discourse. The voice repeatedly abandons its prescriptive tone and explicitly allows room for the reader's individual choices, reassuring the reader it is acceptable to modify and urging them to adapt the content to their tastes.[23] Hence, the text provides a model of reading where authority is constructed in the intersection between the author's knowledge and the reader's individual practice, between the book and the body. Speaking directly to the youth, Mestre Robert's book, much like Platina's, situates itself within a temporality of the future,

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[23] For example in a recipe for the sick, the voice concludes by stating: "e com li donaras la escudella met hi un poch de sucre, e sino y vols metre lo amido no y fa res" (356). In another recipe for rice with meat, the voice emphasizes: "emperò tot stà en lo apetit dels hòmens quel menjen…E vet ací que està la primor que cascú fa segons çes lo seu gust" (256). The fact that these suggestions tend to appear at the closing of the recipe suggests their "open ending."

underscoring the modernity of both his literary and culinary enterprise. Rather than being prescriptive texts whose authority resides merely in tradition, the recipes emerge as lively mediating tools that allow future generations to dialogue with the past.[24]

Similarly to how cookbooks operate, the craft of the kitchen is conceived in the book as a collective enterprise that demands the participation of different individuals. Mestre Robert addresses this tension in the context of a courtly kitchen. Specifically, he writes, butchers, cooks and shoppers "nunca poden estar en pau" (2018, 176). In a later chapter, I will discuss how relations within the kitchen's division of labor were often conflictive, as it involved workers from diverse social standings, age and level of skills. Here, this tension is mainly due to a lack of shared skills and knowledge: "Diu lo trinxant al coch que ell no sab cuynar ni donar bon orde en la cuyna perquè aquella carn es massa cuyta e nos pot be tallar: e que el no fa per altre respecte sino per fer lo caure en alguna vergonya per que cayga en fastig del senyor" (176). To remedy this situation, all three must acquire the skills of their respective crafts: "és nécessari que lo comprador sia bon coch e bon trinxant, e lo coch que sia bon comprador e bon trinxant, e lo trinxant deu essér bon coch e bon comprador" (176). This reciprocal dynamic, where all elements have knowledge of each other, encapsulates the ultimate objective of the book: to provide the reader with a holistic scheme of the kitchen's essential *know hows.* To put it another way, by urging the reader to be acquainted with all the details of the craft, it puts a practical and

[24] Referring to the books authored by elite male cooks, Jodi Campbell writes that: "Despite their popularity, such recipe collections were not necessarily useful in guiding someone with little cooking experience. In keeping with their autors' roles as symbols of the wealth and taste fo the elite households they served, these books were intended more to showcase the art of cooking than to share expertise. Given the difficulties in calculating time and the absence of conventional measurement, one would still need a good deal of practice in the kitchen to know how to prepare any given dish, even with written instructions" (2017, 63). Unlike Campbell, I do not intend to elucidate the books "real" intention. Regardless, I disagree with her view, which I believe to be grounded on modern conventions of the cookbook genre.

culinary twist on the classic humanistic precept of self-knowledge. *Know thy kitchen.* If mastered, this knowledge of the self had the potential to put the reader in the path to virtue.

At this point, thinking of cooking in these seemingly grandiose terms might seem naively hyperbolic. But contemporary humanists were not strangers to thinking about the matters of the intellect in parallel to those of daily life. For instance, Pontano's take on the motto *know thyself* was, in the words of Mario Santoro, "realistic" (1988, 307). That is, the *man* at the center of his inquiry was "not an abstract and isolated man, but the 'social' man, the real man called to live in society" (Santoro 307). Pontano's particular view would earn him the admiration of his contemporaries, who saw him as "occupied in the affairs of kings" but never "a stranger to the rustic life" (Galateo quoted in Santoro 308). In knowing the kitchen's triad, the reader could bring peace and quiet to the noble household. In this way, the cook contributes to harmonizing his master's household. Ultimately, and in the case of Mestre Robert, the cook is an agent of domestic governance in the private sphere of the king.

It is within this framework that *Llibre del coch* conceives of itself as a repository of knowledge that is *social*, *realistic*, *rustic*, but that nonetheless has the potential of instilling virtue: "Donchs, puys que así és, parlarem algun poch de l'art de la cuyna, la qual encara que no sia cosa molt necessària, emperò es *útil* e *profitosa* per causa que en algun loch se poria hom trobar que és bon saber de aquestes coses perquè fan a hom gran honor sabent-hi dir lo seu vot. E és necessari que aquell que aquest art vol usar, vol veure provar y encara saber lo gust de son senyor" (176; emphasis mine).

This passage directly echoes contemporary ideas on the usefulness of "practical" arts. In *De tradendis disciplinis* (1531), Juan Luis Vives advises that men take an interest in learning "the arts and inventions of men: e.g. in those arts which pertain to eating, clothing, dwelling,"

focusing on "how they can be applied to our *use* and *profit*" (1913 209; emphasis mine).[25] For Mestre Robert, the usefulness and profit of cooking resides in bringing honor to oneself. Equipped with the necessary skills, the prospective cook can effectively "say his vows" (dir lo seu vot). In this formulation that evokes religious and chivalric language, the voice poses the knowledge of taste as a binding agent between master and servant.

Knowing taste is one of the four things Mestre Robert states every good cook should have. He must also be clean, have "good hands," and never lose his temper, no matter how thick the smoke may get ("molt gran fum que fassa" [2018, 177-178]). The first and last characteristics are part of a recurring motive of self-governance and moderation. Cleanliness and patience counter some of the most common negative connotations of the kitchen world; namely, filth, and excess. Traditionally associated with taste, the lowliest of senses, cooks must counter this view by displaying dignity through their clothes and bodily appearance. Similarly, the unruly passions associated with bodily appetites—here cleverly condensed in the image of a hellish column of smoke—are governed by patience. As for the meaning of having "good hands", the subsequent sections on *ben servir* might give us some clues to interpret this precept.

Hands hold an ambivalent position in the early modern imaginary of the body. On one side, they are the metonymical organ of touch and, hence, the gateway to the pleasures of sex.[26] In *Oration on the Dignity of Man* (1486), for example, Pico della Mirandola identified hands as the "irascible" part of the soul, that which "fights on behalf of Desire" (2012, 145). For the

[25] The arts that "conduce to the comforts of life" (1913, 209), says Vives, are not to be learned in school but, rather, by experience: "He should not be ashamed to enter into shops and factories, and to ask questions from craftsmen, and get to know about the details of their work. Formerly, learned men disdained to inquire into those things which it is of such great import to life to know and remember, and many matters were despised and so were left almost unknown to them" (209).
[26] For further discussion on the iconography of hands, see Sharon Assaf's "The Ambivalence of the Sense of Touch in Early Modern Prints" (2005).

Franciscan priest Francisco de Osuna, the pleasures of touch—the sense metonymically represented by hands—risked moral fall: "El tacto te derriba cuandoquiera que tocas tus miembros o los ajenos para torpe deleite, o besas o abrazas si no es tu mujer, o amas mucho blanduras y cosas muy delicadas" (2019, 241). If hands obeyed the forces of desire, rather than those of reason, they could lead to vice and endanger the soul.

On the other side, however, hands also held the potential for virtue. For Aristotle, the hand's versatility to perform many functions was a sign of human intelligence. Following this idea, Galen would later define hands as "the instrument of instruments" (Karim-Cooper 2016, x). In early modernity, hands stood as metonym of human agency. As Katherine Rowe suggests, "for early modern writers, following Aristotle by way of Galen, the location of agency in relation to the body is the chief intellectual tenor of representations of the hand" (285).[27]

Governed by reason, hands are—in addition to the organs of taste—the cook's tool of virtuous work and creation.[28] For Mestre Robert, "good hands" should be fearless in the face of fire, a suggestion that no doubt evokes a sense of masculinity. In other words, cooks, with their scarred hands, should strive to be impervious to the inherent dangers of the kitchen. They should aim to become a disembodied tool that is invulnerable to touch.

In the classical tradition, hands are also intricately connected to speech. Authors such as Cicero and Quintilian discussed how, when used expressively and in moderation, hands were a powerful tool of persuasion.[29] Not only were they effective in accompanying speech, but they spoke themselves. For Quintilian, for example, they were not a mere accompaniment of the

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[27] The hand as a bodily site for agency and action was also at the center of discussions on medicine and anatomy. See Maurette (2018).
[28] In the third chapter of this dissertation, the cook's hands will be of significance when looking at the experience of Úrsula de Jesús, a black religious servant in seventeenth century Lima. As I will point out, she conceives her handiwork through the pierced hands of Jesus in the cross.
[29] For a study of the hand gesture and oratory in Cicero and Quintilian, see Hall's article (2004).

voice, they were speakers themselves. Hands, he writes:

> […] are almost as expressive as words. For other portions of the body merely help the speaker, whereas the hands may almost be said to speak. Do we not use them to demand, promise, summon, dismiss, threaten, supplicate, express aversion or fear, question or deny? Do we not employ them to indicate joy, sorrow, hesitation, confession, penitence, measure, quantity and time? Have they not the power to excite and prohibit, to express approval, wonder or shame? Do they not take the place of adverbs and pronouns? (1920, 291)

To have good hands, then, is also to speak and express oneself in a non-verbal way. This idea of the cook's manual eloquence is directly opposed to speech. On the instructions for carving, for instance, the cookbook's voice instructs: " E les sues mans e ques guart de untar sen tant com puga: e no deu parlar mentre que talla encara que sia enterrogat de algu si donchs no es cosa molt necessaria" (2018, 180). The hands (clean hands, that is) must do all the talking.[30] Even more, on a textual level, here, the cook's hand literally conducts the writing of the book. In this way, writing appears as an alternative silent eloquence through which the cook communicates the virtues of his work.

A later chapter on the correct method of serving beverages offers another illustrative example:

> e ab la mà dreta aportaràs la taça ho copa ab tant gentil manera como poràs. E la mà aportaràs més alta que lo nas. E açò dich perque per ventura pories esternudar, e esternudant podria caure alguna cosa dins la tassa ho copa. E per lo senblant parlant. Ab tot que a qualsevol servidor qui dóna a beure a son senyor li sia cosa vedada que dóna a deure que no parle encara sie interrogat (2018, 180).

Here, the server must keep silent, for speaking poses the danger of something coming out of his mouth and into the diner's cup. He must move the hands high up, away from the mouth and past the nose, holding the cup on the right, and the jug on the left. This ceremonious corporeal

[30] In *Estilo de servir a príncipes* (1614), dedicated to the duke of Uceda, Miguel Yelgo de Vázques also presents the cook's silence as a desirable virtue: "en la casa no hablan sino en su cocina y no se meten en otras pretensiones" (141).

language—in which there is a clear distance between the hand and the cup, and the rest of the body—is perfectly captured in the frontispiece, where the servant reaches his whole arm above him. In the following sentences, the instructions get even more complicated and detailed: "E com hauràs donada la taça, o la copa al teu senyor tu muda l'aygua en la dreta mà e ab aquella dóna-li la aygua. E donada laygua tu tornaràs lo veixell en la mà sinistra e espera que lo dit senyor haja begut. E acabat que aja, ab una gran reverència de peu pren-li la tassa de la mà" (180). This carefully designed hand choreography constitutes a channel of unspoken communication. For servants or cooks, those socially removed from masters and royalty, having "good hands" conferred the dignity and honor of *speaking* to their superiors.

The 1525 Toledo Edition: Authority and the Cook

Published in Toledo only five years after the Barcelona edition, the first Castilian version of *Llibre del coch*, now a "muy corregido y enmendado" *Libro de cocina*, opens with a brand new prologue. As the title suggests (Figure 3), it was composed by the same maestre Robert, except now we are given a last name, *de Nola*. The figurative frontispieces of the Catalan editions have been replaced here by the heraldic coat of Charles V. More than thirty new recipes have been added. Already, these textual novelties pose intriguing questions when compared to the previous two editions in Catalan. What do they tell us about the book's possible reception, and, in a broader sense yet, about the standing of cooking within Spain's book culture?

Before exploring the answers to these questions, it is worth noting that very few scholars have approached at *Llibre del coch* comparatively. The book has either been discussed and edited as an object that remained fixed throughout the sixteenth century—a reading that is often based on a single edition—, or, if the differences are acknowledged, they are not discussed

critically. I suspect this can be explained by the field's emphasis on the recipes themselves when studying cookbooks, which has overshadowed other rich aspects of them. As Ferguson notes, scholars of food studies have tended to use them as evidence to study food trajectories. Cookbooks, he points out, often act "in a supporting role, a piece of evidence showing the presence, absence, or change of the actual food" (2020, 13). Highlighting the relation between Mestre Robert's book and the literary and intellectual history of cooking offers a more complete perspective on the cultural impact it had both on the tables and bookshelves of Spain.

The Toledo edition was printed in November of 1525 by Ramón de Petras. Its frontispiece features Charles V's coat of arms, with its emblematic bicephalous eagle and the blazon of Castile. Written on two side ribbons are the words that designated the emperor's sovereignty over the freshly conquered territories that lied beyond the Herculean Pillar.[31] Two column-like woodcuts frame the imperial plate. This is the first striking difference the reader is confronted with. The self-referential scenes of the kitchen and dining room have been displaced by grand regal iconography.

If the undated edition suggested an identification between the male figure and the reader, and the 1520 frontispiece suggested what we may call an aspirational scene for the potential reader, here we are confronted with something radically different. Given that the king granted printing privileges, it was not at all uncommon for printers to use coats of arms in frontispieces. As Roger Chartier has written, "the first person whom the reader encountered in the preliminar matter was his own king" (2014, 141).

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[31] A similar woodcut is featured as the frontispiece of Bartolomé de las Casas's *Brevísima relación de la destruición de las Indias* (1522) printed in Seville. See chapter II of Chartier (2022) for his analysis of the imperial blazon.

Libro de cozina cõpuesto por maestre Ruberto de Nola cozinero q̃ fue dl serenissimo señor rey dõ Hernãdo de Napoles: de muchos potajes y salsas y guisados para el tiẽpo dl carnal y dela q̃resma: y mãjares y salsas y caldos para dolientes de muy grã sustãcia. y frutas de sarten: y marçapanes: y otras cosas muy puechosas. y del seruicio y officios delas casas delos reyes y grãdes señores y caualleros: cada vno como a de seruir su cargo. y el trinchãte como a de cortar todas maneras de carnes. y de aues. y otras muchas cosas enel añadidas muy prouechosas. Muy bien corregido y emendado.

Cõ preuilegio real de diez años que niguno lo pueda imprimir en todos los reynos y señorios de sus magestades: so las penas contenidas enel dicho preuilegio.

Figure 3. *Frontispiece. Ruperto de Nola, Libro de cocina compuesto por maestre Ruperto de Nola, Toledo, Ramón de Petras, 1525. National Library Spain.*

Nonetheless, I want to take this paratextual trait as more than just a convention. When carefully examined through other textual marks, the change from the figurative kitchen to the symbolism of the empire may point to an increased interest in the cookbook as a genre.

The book was printed at an eventful moment for the Spanish empire. The Comunero rebellions had recently been suppressed. News from the conquered territories in the Americas arrived with promises of natural riches, and the continued expansion of an already vast empire. Francis I of France, whose army had attempted to seize control over Italian territories (notably among them Naples), was taken prisoner after the Battle of Pavía. When the court of Charles

stationed in Toledo in 1525, it was no doubt a triumphant entrance that evoked all the recent victories.[32]

At the end of the brand new prologue, the printer writes: "Fue sacado este tratado de lengua catalana en nuestra lengua materna, vulgar castellano, en la ciudad de Toledo, estando en ella el emperador don Carlos nuestro señor, donde se acabó a ocho días del mes de julio, año de 1525" (1525, folio ij). The direct invocation of the king on both of the paratexts puts the book against a uniquely grandiose backdrop. The king is not only the first person the reader encounters, as Chartier has it, but a continued presence over the text. With this note, the book is directly, even personally, linked to the figure of the monarch.

When we examine Petras's other publications, we find that the same imperial woodcut was used in the frontispiece of Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo's *De la historia natural de las Indias*, published less than a year after, in 1526 (Figure 4). As we know, Oviedo's *Historia* was commissioned by Charles V, who appointed him as royal chronicler of the Indies. In *The Author's Hand and The Printer's Mind*, Chartier describes the preliminary materials in old books as articulators of power relations between monarch, author, editors, printers, censors, and authorities (2014, 138). Under this light, this frontispiece—symbolically and materially—states the circumstances of the text's production, and articulates the power dynamic between the king and Oviedo. I suggest that we examine the 1525 *Libro de cozina* under the same logic. In comparison to Oviedo's book, the information on the circumstances of its publication, its author and its editor are scarce. Nonetheless, I will attempt to reconstruct the circumstances of this

[32] This is evoked by Lázaro de Tormes, the paradigmatic pícaro, at the very end of his narrative: "Esto fue el mismo ano que nuestro victorioso emperador en esta insigne ciudad de Toledo entró y tuvo en ella cortes, y se hicieron grandes regocijos y fiestas, como vuestra merced habra oído" (1976, 57). Those grandes regocijos y fiestas surely implied abundance and excess that stood in contrast to the impoverished pícaro. In the next chapter, I explore the place of pícaros in the kitchen in the face of crisis and reform.

book's production to better understand the power relations it articulates.

The book was sponsored by don Diego Pérez Dávila, *alcaide* of Logroño, of whom we have little more than historical speculation. Dionisio Pérez, who did the first modernized edition of *Llibre del coch* in the collection *Clásicos olvidados* in 1929, identifies him as a member of the noble House of Dávila (xxv). According to Pérez, Charles V would have lodged at the house of the Marquis Casa-Dávila while passing through Logroño in 1520. Presumably, don Diego would have had a copy of the Catalan edition, which he presented to the king. Five years later, with the Comunero uprising put down, he would have traveled to Toledo, translation in hand, and petitioned the king for printing privileges.

Oviedo dela natural hy
storia delas Indias.
Con preuilegio dela
S.C.C.M.

Figure 4. *Frontispiece. Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, Historia natural de las Indias, Toledo, Ramón de Petra, 1526.*

Pérez ventures yet another theory: that the king himself, just like he did with Oviedo's *Historia*, commissioned its publication. At this point, it is worth remembering that Charles V was famously fond of the arts of dining.[33] So much so that his own buffoon Francesillo de Zúñiga, gave him the epithet of "rey de los glotonifas" in his *Crónica burlesca* (1986, 100). As we know, Charles introduced the style of the French House of Bourgogne to the Spanish court, which featured a sophisticated code of behaviors.[34] Among those were highly ritualistic precepts on eating, entertaining and hosting banquets.[35] The sumptuous meals hosted by the Spanish court, and his struggle with gout at the end of his life, would make Charles go down in history as a notorious glutton.[36] As I will discuss in the next chapter, his son Philip reformed his court to counter this culture of excesses, impacting the culture and operation of the kitchens.[37]

Given all of this, the idea of the king taking an interest in this book should not surprise

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[33] In historiography and popular imagination, Charles was depicted as a glotton who often broke bread in taverns with his subjects: "La tradición transmitió la imagen de un emperador al que le gustaba brindar con la gente común. Así le presenta la leyenda del cacharro tanto de Olen en Flandes como de Walcourt en Valonia, aunque sea bastante posterior y date del siglo XVIII. Las enseñas de posadas llevan su nombre y mostraban, como en Temse, al emperador coronado en el medio de cántaros de cerveza, huevos y un jamón empezado. En sus perpetuos viajes y campañas de guerra se le decía muy preocupado de compartir su comida con los soldados" (Stols 1999). Charles also introduced beer to Spain, importing it from his natal town of Mechelen in Flanders (Sevilla 2019, 113). To this day, one of the most popular beers in Belgium bears his name—as does a candy bar in Mexico.

[34] For the introduction of Burgundian etiquette to the court of Charles V and its later adoption by Philip II, see Ridder (1893), Noel (2005), Martínez Millán (2014 and 2000) and the volume edited by Hortal Muñoz (2017). On the specific topic of banquets of Burgundian style, see Caron (2010).

[35] In 1530, Luis Lobera de Ávila, doctor of Charles V, published a treatise entitled *Banquete de nobles caballeros*, in which he describes many of the foods and drinks frequently consumed at the Spanish court, as well as recommendations on sleep, hygiene and remedies. The text was composed in Germany when Lobera was traveling with the king; "en la ciudad de Augusta donde su Majestad está de presente" (186), as stated in a final note. Interestingly, the frontispiece of the publication is almost identical to that of the Toledo edition.

[36] After his abdication, Charles V retires to a villa-monastery in Yuste, where he faced health complications and died. On his everyday life and diet while in Yuste, see Serradilla (1997).

[37] See Stols (1999) for a comparison between the negative representation of Charles and Philip, as a glotton and an ascetic respectively. Stols considers both representations in the context of the Black Legend: "La famosa antítesis en los grabados de Pieter Breughel, de 1563, entre la cocina de los gordos y la de los magros parecía premonitoria y aplicarse muy bien a la oposición tanto entre Carlos V y Felipe II como entre flamencos y españoles, entre un país de jauja y una tierra árida y hambrienta" (1).

us. It would be the first to be published within the limits of his territories, now written in the official language of the empire. Its translation from Catalan guaranteed a wider readership across Spain, and even across the Atlantic, giving cooks the knowledge to replicate Spanish meals in all corners of the empire. In the wake of Francis's attempt to seize Naples, the translation into Castilian might articulate the politics of imperial expansion. Indeed, in the same year of the book's publication, French ambassadors arrived in Toledo attempting to negotiate Francis's freedom. In a letter addressed to the king, Francis pledged, among other things, to renounce his claims over Naples (Sandoval 578). In this context, the translation of the book—precisely a material testimony of Iberian rule in Naples—symbolically asserts the continued presence of Spain in the Italian peninsula.

The ambiguous addressee of the prologue seems to mirror this idea. If read hastily and with no consideration for the history of the book, one might think the obvious. That is, that it was written by the author, Mestre Robert. But that theory presents various problems. As established earlier, the book was published in the late fifteenth century. By the time it was printed in Toledo, King Ferrante had been dead for almost three decades. The prologue, despite being dedicated to a dead king, is enunciated in the present tense. And though we do not know Mestre Robert's age, it is fair to suppose he would have been old by then.

A far more likely scenario is that the prologue was added by the printer or editor. Or as Dionisio Pérez had it, a case of "superchería editorial" (1929, XIX). This was not at all uncommon. It was widely known that preliminary matters on old books were not necessarily a product of the author (Chartier 2014, 64). The prologue would have been a later addendum that either don Diego or Petras deemed necessary or desirable for the Castilian edition. With Ferrante being the fictional, not the "real" addressee of the prologue as editorial convention would dictate,

the text conflates the Aragonese monarch and Charles V. In so doing, it incorporates the culinary traditions of Naples and Catalunya into the cultural narrative of Charles's empire.

In and of itself, the prologue is an interesting instance of metafictional writing. Not unlike Cervantes's prologue to *Don Quixote*, Mestre Robert, the author, is here fictionalized, turned into a character. The narration imagines his relation to the king, and speculates about his motivations to write, framing it all within a conventional discourse of modesty and obedience. No new information that was not present in earlier editions is given to the reader. Furthermore, the figure of Mestre Robert is even more delineated by the addition (or rather invention) of a last name. [38]

The narration starts off with an usual hesitant tone that situates the prologue in the realm of speculative fiction. It begins with details about the origin of the book: "Muchas veces, serenísimo rey y muy poderoso señor fue mandado por vuestra majestad a mí, Ruberto, vuestro muy leal siervo y criado y cocinero de vuestra casa real que hiciese un tratado desta arte de mi oficio" (1525, 3). A few lines later, putting into question his own discourse, the narrator continues: "O quizá vuestra majestad me lo mandó a fin de que muriendo yo quedase en vuestra casa real algunos de mis criados que sucediese en mi lugar" (3). Finally, he leaves his motives open to interpretation by saying: "Mas como quiera que sea […]" (4). In the previous Catalan editions the cook's voice was somewhat lost in between recipes and recommendations. Here, it has been recovered and put forth as the opening act of the text. With the incorporation of this paratext, the text fictionalized a discourse that was heavily practical.

All in all, the Toledo edition re-frames the recipes in *Llibre del coch* by inserting them into a narrative. To put it another way, the recipes are now explicitly re-imagined as the creative

[38] The problem of the last name puzzled Dionisio Pérez, who considered it was a reference to the city of Nola, in the province of Caserta, kingdom on Naples. Pérez sets forth another bolder theory: "parece enigma o acertijo o traza, a los que tan aficionados fueron los ingenios en el siglo XVI: 'No-la'; 'No-lai'; 'No-lo-hay'" (1929, xxvi).

and individual products of the *ingenio* of its author-character, Ruperto de Nola. In a statement that reads as a self-referential note, the prologue poses inventiveness as a central trait of the book and its usage: “Aunque esto que yo aquí escribo sea experimentado y bueno, el artífice discreto teniendo buen juicio puede inventar muchas maneras de manjares y guisados de su fantasía” (1525, 4). As I discussed above, that notion of individual creativity is ingrained in the act of reading recipes. But here, that culinary ethos advanced by the voice of the cook—urging the reader to discard, modify or add onto his recipes—reaches outside the limits of the kitchen. Here, it is transformed into a recipe for authorship. Like the reader who adds sugar according to his own judgment, the prologue, too, adds to the previous editions. In that sense, it erodes the authority of a single textual source, foregrounding instead the innovative transformation of the text in the hands of its reader, its editor, and even its printer.

This idea is also suggested by other paratexts. The original title, for example, has undergone several changes. At the top of the frontispiece, the title in Castilian reads *Libro de cocina compuesto por maestre Ruberto de Nola, cocinero que fue del serenísimo señor rey don Fernando de Nápoles*. The book is no longer a *Llibre del coch*, a “cook’s book”, but a “book of cookery.” Following Gérard Genette, Nathalie Peyrebonne cleverly notes that the title is foremost a result of the public’s consumption, and not the editor or the author. That is to say, if the title changed from *Llibre de doctrina* to *Libro de cozina* is because it was received and conceived as such by the public (Peyrebonne 2009, 490): “El título español, ya desde la primera edición, invierte las proposiciones: gracias a esa inversión, el libro se convierte ante todo en un ‘libro de cocina’” (488). Moreover, the tripartite structure (of carving, cooking, and serving) that was quite obvious in the Catalan edition is still present in the title, albeit diluted under the category of *otras cosas muy provechosas*. This textual change emphasizes cooking over the other

categories, and serves to amplify the audience of the text. It is no longer just a book *for* cooks, as the undated frontispiece would suggest, but rather a book *by* a cook. The Toledo edition grants that cook a full name, giving him a clear voice that discursively frames his culinary repertoire, all gloriously legitimized by two monarchs.

An equally salient novelty of the Toledo edition is the subsequent section to the prologue, that under the header *Introducción*. The contents of this text depart greatly from the previous Catalan versions. Towards the end of this section, which outlines in general terms the chapters on carving and serving, the reader encounters a digression of moral undertones, absent in earlier publications:

> Si los prudentes y discretos miran la vanidad que está debajo de la honra, y el trabajo que se les ofrece por sostener aquella, por cierto y por verdad antes procurarían trabajos corporales, que se acaban y descansan algunos ratos, de la gran fatiga del pensamiento que jamás descansa, desvelándose noches y días por sostener el estado en que se ven puestos y en crecer riquezas y subir siempre en dignidades y favor, y todo para dar mayor caída (8)

The notion of work as generative of virtue was at the core of discourses defending mechanical arts, particularly painting.[39] Juxtaposed to the ethos of honorable and meritocratic work are idleness, vanity, luxury and empty titles. In his treatise *Noticia general*, for example, Gutiérrez de los Ríos, son of a textile worker, formulates the political and moral benefits of work: "Si por otros caminos con ardides y estratagemas perniciosas se hacen el día de hoy estimar los hombres con más certeza, que por la virtud y el trabajo, ¿cómo nos cegamos estos caminos, y abrimos, y avivamos aquéllos? ¿No es cosa cierta que no puede durar esta Monarquía, si esto pasa?" (1600, 205-6). In this formulation, the moral health of the monarchy is endangered by politics and

[39] See Mary Crawford Volk's articlce (1978), where she reviews the efforts of Spanish painters to be recognized professionally and academically.

intrigue, whereas work opens the way towards a strong state. Gutiérrez's exhortation also echoes Christian views on the benefits of manual labor.[40] As will be shown in the second half of this dissertation, this moral dimension is very present in female religious discourse, where cooking will be understood as a kind of active work (in opposition to contemplative work) through which women could achieve virtue and serve God.[41]

In the passage quoted above, the introduction to *Libro de cozina* juxtaposes bodily work and thought. Thinking is deemed a more tiresome experience than embodied labor, because at the end of the day the body will, at least, get some rest. In contrast, the mind—forever plotting its path up the social ladder—never rests, for no riches or power will ever be enough. Even if in passing, the Toledo edition contrives a more explicit defense of cooking as virtuous work that contributes to the well-being of the state. In view of this, it is hardly surprising that Petras, no more than a year after the publication of *Libro de cozina,* printed *Las medidas del romano,* the first Spanish treatise on architecture, in which the priest Diego Sagredo defended the nobility and *ingenio* of painting and architecture.

Of course, this view of cooking raises the question of who is allowed to rest after work,

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[40] In *Diálogos familiares de la agricultura cristiana* (1589), for example, Juan de Pineda directly opposes work to sin. Bodily work, even if exhausting, ultimately brings humans closer to God: "Si por las muchas y varias labores de la viña nos enseñó nuestro Redentor el continuo trabajo en que nos debemos criar para llegar a Dios, también se entenderá lo que dice Job, que el ave nasció para volar y el hombre para trabajar que vale tanto como decir que nasció para gozar de Dios, pues que aquel trabajo es el medio para llegar a este fin" (65).

[41] Santa Teresa's writing blends spiritual contemplation with her bureaucratic work as a reformer,—such as dealing with ecclesiastical authorities and looking for sponsors. Her mystical experiences occur hand-in-hand with her travels across Spain founding new convents, eventually resulting in an immense expansion of the Carmelites[1]. These two sides of her religious life are reflected in the frequently cited passage of *Libro de las Fundaciones* (1610), in which she reflects upon obedience: "Pues sea, hijas mías, no haya desconsuelo, más cuando la obediencia os trajere empleadas en cosas exteriores, entended que si es en la cocina, entre los pucheros anda el Señor, ayudandoos en lo interior y exterior" [Well, then, my children, be not discouraged, for if obedience employs you in outward things, know that even if you are in the kitchen our Lord moves amidst the pots and the pans, helping us both within and without] (Avila 259; Lewis 33). Teresa's view offers the possibility of being in God's presence within a mundane space like the kitchen.

and hence, to whom virtue becomes available. Individuals working at subordinate levels, such as *pícaros de cocina* in palace kitchens (Chapter 2), or servants like Úrsula de Jesús in convent kitchens (Chapter 3), will resignify their practices of cooking to challenge the social constraints attached to their positionality.

Llibre del coch had a long trajectory after it first saw the light at the end of the fifteenth century. With its more than fifteen printings in the following century, it decisively influenced future cookery books in Spain. In 1599, Diego Granado Maldonado's *Libro del arte de cozina* reproduced the contents of the first Castilian edition almost in its entirety, presenting them as a new publication. Some years later, in 1611, Francisco Martínez Montiño's *Arte de cozina, pasteleria, vizcocheria, y conserueria* was published in Madrid. The latter eventually became, like *Llibre del coch* in its time, the best-selling cookbook of seventeenth and eighteenth-century Spain. Without a doubt, *Llibre del coch* paved the way for future publications, shaping the discourse surrounding a cook's work and legitimating a historically inferior trade. All the way across the Atlantic, in eighteenth-century Mexico, in their efforts to establish a guild, a group of *figoneros* (predecessors of modern restaurateurs) would invoke cookbooks as evidence of cookery's status as a respectable art.[42]

As evidenced by this document, culinary literature would authorize a cook's individual abilities and talent. Books, like pots or knives, became another instrument of the cook's toolbox. Miguel Yelgo de Vázquez in his *Estilo de servir a príncipes* (1614) addressed the matter of

[42] Marcos Luzero, one of the *figoneros*, argued that his occupation was a liberal art and should be regulated, "pues cualquiera abría su figón sin el conocimiento de cocina y otras muchas obras y distintas masas, siendo esto en contra del público y por la impericia, aun de hombres como mujeres tenían, se originaban graves enfermedades" (quoted in Fernández Flores 2018, 312). In her article analyzing this case, Ligia Fernández Flores notes: "No sabemos cuál fue la difusión de estos autores en el ámbito virreinal, aunque por las afirmaciones de Marcos Luzero no dudamos de que debieron circular en diversos sectores de la sociedad novohispana" (313). The circulation of cookbooks in Spanish America is a topic that merits more attention in future research.

cookbook literacy directly. If they ignored the preparation of a certain dish, the cook should always be honest. He urged them to be unlike the deceitful and picaresque *escribanos.* Instead, he commended them to take up books and study:

> los que pretenden ser escribanos […] estudian cuatro o cinco escrituras, las que les parecen que se usan más o las que él sospecha que le pedirán los señores del Consejo, cuando se van a examinar, y es su desdicha que luego le piden que diga un escritura que no lo ha estudiado ni se ha acordado della y como no dice la que le piden échenlo porla puerta afuera, diciéndole un portero *Salid hermano, salid hermano, estudiad en Monterroso o en Ribera*. Eso mismo digo yo al cocinero, que procure decir: *no sé*, porque no le echen por puerta afuera, si no estudiar en Granado en Bartolomeo Caspi [sic], que son dos libros muy curiosos, Granado en español y Caspi [sic] en italiano. Ahí está cómo le ha de guisar todo lo sobredicho arriba, dando entera razón a cada diferencia de guisado o conservas (1614, 152-153.)

Yelgo de Vázquez opposes the lazy literacy of *escribanos* with the literacy of cooks. *Escribanos* were famous for falsifying documents, charging elevated prices and boasting false erudition.[43] They read only performatively, calling it a day after reading *cuatro o cinco escrituras.* In *Sueño del juicio final*, Francisco de Quevedo offers an illustrative image: ”un escribano comiendo solo letras que no había querido solo leer en esta vida” (1999, 132). He has been condemned to a hellish cave for eating instead of reading. Yelgo de Vázquez urges cooks to *really* read. In his view, books like Granado’s or Bartolomeo Scappi’s—whose ideas about the ideal kitchen I approach in the next chapter—allow a cook to serve virtuously, and to distance himself from deceitful and “gluttonous” practices like the *escribano*. Culinary knowledge is now legitimated by the printed word, integrated into a written archive and within arm’s reach. With books in hand, cook can aspire to brush off some of the stench of the kitchen trade. In this respect, a breach between the cook and his staff is created. As the one with access to (and perhaps even

[43] The figure has been thoroughly studied as a literary and historical character. For a thorough review of *escribanos* and their work, see Marchant Rivera (2019).

ability to read) books, the cook acquires a new status that differentiates him from other members of the kitchen. In the upcoming chapter, I examine this tense relation through picaresque narrative and archival sources, tracing the flip side of this coin—lowly kitchen workers.

From a humble manual likely destined to specialized readers, to a multi-edited book sanctioned by the palate of the king, Mestre Robert's *Llibre del coch* is a key piece in the intellectual history of cooking in Spain. Yet, the intellectual and social attempts at elevating culinary knowledge to the dignified stature of art did not quite materialize as Mestre Robert or his predecessors would have hoped. Cooking never fully abandoned the underworld. Nor did these cookbooks succeed at disciplining the conflictive social dynamics among its workers. Neither did they resolve the moral tensions already present within them—between the need of displaying power on the dinner table, and moderation, especially in times of economic crisis. And their discourse most certainly did not displace the overwhelming presence of women inside kitchens, who resignified cooking on their own terms. In the chapters that follow, I examine the reverberations of these ideas among individuals who, so to speak, did not *cook by the book*. That is, those whose kitchen experiences were not accounted for by the humanistic-inspired discourse of the first cookbooks. On both sides of the Atlantic, the meanings of cooking continued to be transformed by cooks who held divergent positions within the social, racial and gender power structures of the early modern Spanish world.

Chapter 2. The Labor of the Hungry: *Pícaros de cocina* and the Emergence of the Professional Kitchen in Early Modern Spain

On ne fait pas d'omelette sans casser des œufs
French Proverb

Food has long been understood as one of the narrative motors of picaresque literature. Wandering through an impoverished Spain, pícaros steal and deceive in order to meet the basic needs[1] for survival. And even when their stomach is finally full, the imminent threat of future scarcity pushes them to have one more bite or steal one more loaf of bread[2]. In this regard, critics have generally posed the relationship between food and the *pícaro* in terms of hunger and food consumption, advancing a parallel between his desire for food and his longing for *medro*, or upward social mobility[3]. Moving from one master to another, they crave for a life of bountiful meals at respectable tables.

Naturally so, pícaros are not hard to find in the quintessential space of nourishment, the kitchen. Guzmán de Alfarache, Estebanillo González, and even Alonso de Contreras all passed through kitchens when young, stealing the food they were meant to prepare for others and rejoicing at the abundance they only fleetingly possessed. While their yearning for food

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[1] Picaresque characters embody a demographic group that had been relegated to the lower strata of society and that now "se levantaban con una nueva conciencia de individuos, suficientemente desarrollada para poner a aprueba sus posibilidades y procuraban trazar todo un modo de vida para conseguir mejorar (Maravall 1986, 408). On hunger and poverty in seventeenth century Spain, see Maravall (75-85); on alimentary excess see (561-575); on the concept of *medro* see. (350-396).
[2] Maravall points out that the pícaro's hunger is of a specific nature: "es el achaque que, a poco que se descuide, va a caer sobre él durante todos los días de su vida" (1985, 79).
[3] Benedetto Croce emphatically wrote about *Lazarillo*: "unicamente vi vedo regnare l'assillante e tormentosa rappresentazione e ossessione della farne" (1943, 92). Alberto del Monte saw hunger as one of the themes of *Lazarillo de Tormes*, particularly important in the first chapter but subordinated to the broader theme of "el itinerario desde la miseria y la infelicidad hasta la riqueza y la felicidad venciendo la hostilidad de la fortuna" (1971, 44). As for Maravall, he agreed with Bataillon, who had originally saw hunger as a central theme of the picaresque. Nonetheless, like del Monte, he sees it as one of many aspects that define the genre. For a study on the theme of hunger in picaresque novels, see Wallace.

unquestionably leads them to wander through pantries and dining rooms, the emphasis on hunger as a central trait of the picaresque has eclipsed the kitchen as a meaningful space of work and production. Indeed, while eating—sparingly or gluttonously— is accepted as a definite trait of the picaresque, the flip side of consumption—the labor that transforms goods into food—is yet to be explored in depth. By changing the focus from rumbling stomachs to working hands, from foodstuffs and delicacies to ladles and knives, this chapter puts pícaros at the heart of the culinary culture of their time. Kitchens might be one of the pícaro's many stops on the road to social advancement. But even when in passing, pícaros illuminate them as emerging sites of social and cultural disputes.

Courtly and noble kitchens were hot sites of social friction, given that they occupied a liminal position between pompous and abundant tables and the messy streets of urban Spain. *Despenseros* went out the back door and into the markets to stock the pantry while fancy butlers came out the front door and into the dining rooms bearing elaborate dishes on the finest platters. Members of the staff were steps away from the highest most dignified figures of the Spanish nobility, yet remained inevitably removed by their proximity to the urban underworld. Any change in the social temperature risked disturbing this balance and threatened to bring together the opposing worlds of the court and the street.

Inside kitchens, workers were hired informally to perform the most ill-regarded manual tasks behind cooking: chopping never-ending piles of vegetables, scraping grease out of pots, scrubbing floors covered in dirt and food. They were paid poorly, and the foulness of their job drenched them with bad reputation; they were seen as deceiving thieves who roamed like dogs. These base workers inhabited the kitchen's *underbelly*; that is, that liminal and loathed space symbolically located underneath the happy bellies of their masters. In this sense, lowly kitchen

workers fall into the the broad category of pícaro, the mythical cultural figure that embodies the disputes of the poor in a convulsed time of crisis, food shortage and social reform in Spain.

In the pages that follow, I understand pícaro as any worker belonging, in one way or another, to the kitchen underbelly. Pícaros are generally workers of a young age who are hired informally to perform menial tasks in the kitchen.[4] In this respect, I follow Anne Cruz's approach to the picaresque as a cultural discourse. Cruz writes that the homology of real and fictional pícaro "signifies an exchange function based on historical factors; while it exceeds mere literary analogy, it cannot and does denote exactitude" (1999, xii). Cruz sees pícaros as the symbolic embodiment of a sociocultural discourse grounded both on historical discourse and literary texts (xi-xiv). Similarly, I use the term pícaro in a broad sense to designate an entire pool of kitchen workers that belong to a poor urban population.

Lowly kitchen workers dramatize the tensions raised by an increasingly sharp division of labor and, more specifically, the emergent professionalization of cooking. Once considered a degrading activity reserved only for the lowest social strata, by the late sixteenth-century cooking timidly emerged, as I demonstrate in the first chapter, as an honorable and prestigious occupation. Technical manuals and cookbooks began to fill Spain's bookshelves, and the first famous "chefs", celebrated and imitated internationally, were born.

Pícaros were caught in this tide of change; between the struggles of cooks for the

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[4] I do not discuss here the relation between cooking and pícaras, which would require an exploration of its own. Cooking is, of course, present in narratives of female picaresque characters. Francisco Delicado's Lozana, for example, boasts of being a better cook than the Pope's, and López de Úbeda Justina, works as a cook in a convent. However, their relationship takes on very different meanings. Just like male pícaros can be seen as "inverted" models of masculinity (Schuhen 2018, 37), pícaras also embody the reversal of certain ideals of femininity. In particular to our interests, the notion of the female body as nurturer. In picaresque narratives, the vast majority of protagonists is characterized as sexual workers. For a study of gender and pícaras, see Zafra (2009) and Cruz (2010). Thus, the relation of pícaras to food is closely related to their 'deviant' sexuality. In that sense, the occurence of cooking labor in the female-centered picaresque requires a framework that considers the economy of sex labor.

acknowledgment of their trade and the centuries-old conception of cooking as a debasing bodily job. In this scenario, they constitute the laboring surplus of an increasingly exclusionary working space. The codes and etiquettes of the cooking occupation negated them a steady position within it, turning them into do-it-all workers without a fixed professional identity. Despite this, cooking labor provided the underbelly with a myriad of possibilities. The kitchen, I argue, opened the door to different modes of urban sociability and economic activity; alternative conceptions of work ethos; new notions of culinary creativity and taste; channels for social critique, and even an opportunity for political organization. In this scenario, the presence of pícaros transform kitchens into symbolic spaces where the famished collide with abundance and excess, the unskilled with hyper-specialization, and deceit with the orderly codes of rightful behavior. In analyzing their prevalence in the kitchen imagination, pícaros illuminate the power disputes and generative possibilites that cooking labor holds for the lower strata of early modern Spanish society.

The Names of Mischief: Defining Kitchen Labor

Philological scholarship has insistently explored the etymology of *pícaro*[5]. One colorful theory stated that it can be traced to the work they performed in the kitchen, specifically to the tedious task of *picar* (to chop). Though this hypothesis has been widely contested, it is nonetheless significant for its association with the material world of food. Even if its origin lies elsewhere, it is not impossible that early modern individuals saw the phonetic and semantic parallel just as us modern readers do[6].

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[5] The etymological disputes of the word are too many to include here. Salillas, Chandler, Sanvisenti and Maldonado de Guevara were among those who defended the connection between pícaro and picar. For the classical theories see Nykl, Spitzer and de Haan. See del Monte (1971, 11-12) for a brief review of different theories and Rutherford for the occurrence of the word prior to the publication of *Lazarillo*.

[6] Coromines writes that the first written account of *pícaro de cocina* is to be found in a cookbook: "el pícaro de cocina es el documentado más antiguamente entre todos los pícaros, puesto que ya figura en el

Beyond *pícaros*, the kitchen underbelly was comprised of workers whose name was also deeply connected to food. To expand our understanding of the inhabitants of the early modern kitchen we might revisit some of their neglected relatives: *galopines*, *marmitones* and *ganapanes*[7]. Far from designating definite categories of labor, such names overlap, intersect and muddle. They are some of the many onomastic masks taken up by picaresque kitchen workers.

It is no coincidence that we find an abundance of names for lowly kitchen staff. Referring to Lázaro de Tormes, Marcel Bataillon defined the father of all pícaros as an "artisan" of his own destiny[8]. Bataillon's definition takes up a new meaning inside the kitchen. With every task they face, the pícaro's working hands shape and re-shape their identity. In this sense, onomastic abundance is a linguistic mirror of the non-specific multi-tasking work they do. Any attempt at defining them via the authority of dictionaries quickly results in a circular dance where one term is always defined by another.

Galopín is first documented in a Spanish dictionary in 1734. *Autoridades* defines it as "cualquier muchacho mal vestido, roto o desharrapado." In 1620, Lorenzo Franciosini's bilingual dictionary gives the following Italian equivalents: "guattero o mozzo di cucina" (375). In French, the earliest occurrence of *hapelopin* seems to be in Gilles Ménage's *Dictionnaire étymologique* (1694), which defines it as a "parasite." Ménage traces its origins to the words *happer* (to snatch)

Libro de Guisados de Roberto Nola" (770). However, he based this assumption on a Dionisio Pérez's edition and not the original Catalan or Castilian. In a 1967 article, F.S. Escribano pointed out this error, evidencing that *pícaro* is nowhere to be found in the original 1525 cookbook but was rather collected from the 1929 translation to Castilian.

[7] Galopín and marmitón are both gallicisms, which hardly comes as a surprise given the strong cultural influence of French, particularly in the lexicon of domesticity and professions. In this regard, the influx of French words is connected to the increased circulation, translation and publication in Spain of works on the Burgundian etiquette. See Varela Merino's (2009) chapter "La etiqueta cortesana."

[8] The chameleonic nature of the pícaro has been highlighted time and again by scholars. Stuart Miller referred to pícaros as proteic characters who are "radically undefined" (1967, 70). By extension, the picaresque novel has also been understood as a genre that resists classification.

and *lopin* (piece) (1694, 389). Published on the same year, the *Dictionnaire de la Académie Francaise* curiously documents the word with two different spellings and meanings.

> Hapelopin. S.m. Qui attrappe ce qu' il peut dans les cuisines. Il est bas.
> Happelopin. S.m. Il se disoit autrefois des chiens aspres a la curée. A present il ne se dit plus que fig. pour signifier, un gourmand, un frippon qui guette les morceaux pour les avaler. Il est bas. (664)

As for marmitón, the *Dictionnaire de la Académie* tells us it is "Le plus bas valet de la cuisine. C'est un marmiton. Il est crasseux & sale comme un marmiton" (1694, 27). Again, it does not make its way into Spanish dictionaries until the publication of *Autoridades*: "galopín o pícaro de cocina. Es voz francesa" (1734, 502). The word is a derivation of *marmite*, a large three-legged copper pot with handle and lid commonly used to transport food (502). In that way, a marmitón is that who is defined by the material object of his work.

Marmitones would have been closely related to *ganapanes*, a misleadingly generic term that specifically designated those who worked transporting things on their back and shoulders[9]. At least on occasion, ganapanes would have carried pots (*marmitas).*[10] For a member of the kitchen staff, heavy metal loads must have been a common occupational hazard that gave way to yet another epithet. Consider, for example, one of the engravings in Bartolomeo Scappi's *Arte dell Cucinare* (1570). Meant to illustrate the ideal kitchen, these plates are an invaluable visual testimony of the material and human reality of early modern cooking culture. Here, the

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[9] Sebastián de Covarrubias offers the following definition: "este nombre tienen los que ganan su vida y el pan que comen (que vale sustento) a llevar a cuestas y sobre sus hombros las cargas, hechos unos atlantes; son ordinariamente hombres de muchas fuerzas, gente pobre y de ninguna presunción, viven libremente y va comida por servido" (1611, 854).

[10] For example, during military campaigns, mobile kitchens were set up at each post. Prior to a battle, the protagonist of Vida y hechos de Estebanillo González, the picaresque cook-soldier, describes the objects in his cargo:
"una carabina con braguero, por habérselo roto caja y cañón, y un frasco lleno de pimienta y sal, para despolvorear los haberes; y por armas tocantes a la cocina, un cuchillo grande, cuchillo mediano y cuchillo pequeño" (1990 II, 20).

engraving shows two servants carrying equipment (Figure 5). The caption reads: “travel basket for transporting utensils.”These figures carry a heavy load of pots, ladles, knives and pots that they will later use. They could very well be called ganapanes when they transport them, galopines when stirring the pots, marmitones when washing them, and even pícaros when using the knives. Their identity is in constant transformation, adapting itself to each job and its objects. To be sure, ganapán did not designate those who only carried kitchen utensils. In an chapter discussing the relation between pícaro and ganapán, Dutch Hispanist Folger de Haan questioned why a word that is apparently so general in meaning (everybody works for bread) was reserved for a very particular manual job. Covarrubias himself remarked on this in his definition of the word: “aunque todos lo que trabajan para comer podrían tener este nombre” (1611, 854). Here, the philological maze complicates even more.

In the 1930s, Joseph Gillet revisited this discussion. He offered an almost counterintuitive hypothesis that places ganapanes in the kitchen universe: “acceptable and clear as it may be to modern linguistic consciousness, ganapán may have different antecedents. Indeed, certain

Figure 5. *Detail. Bartolomeo Scappi, The Opera of Bartolomeo Scappi: L’Arte et Prudenza d'un Maestro Cuoco, Venice, Alessandro Vecchi, 1610. University of Chicago Special Collections Research Center.*

forms should be considered which suggest that it might be a transformation, by popular etymology of a possibly earlier *galopín*" (1930, 496). Galopín would have changed into *galapán*, *galapian*, *ganápia*, among others. The odd evolution from *galopin* to ganapán is explained by "a strong tendency to rationalize a word of unknown origin into a form which appears to explain its meaning" (498). In that sense, ganapán would have originated in the kitchen and expanded into a more generic meaning. Gillet concludes that "the intermediate forms adduced here may point only to a temporary crossing in the popular imagination of two types having many traits in common" (498). Gillet's logic would partially suggest the thick and circular repertoire of epithets of the kitchen underworld. In popular imagination, they are interchangable because of the traits and functions they share. These names are, if not etymologically, symbolically rooted in the universe of kitchen work; in the crumbs left on the floor, in the heavy pots they carry, in the meat they mince and in the bread they receive as pay. Be they pícaros, galopines, ganapanes or marmitones, base kitchen staff undergo as many transformations as the foods they work to prepare.

In the kitchen structure, these workers fail to occupy a position of their own. Unlike workers with particular skills, they lacked a fixed responsibility and thus, a professional identity. Ironically, this reassures them a degree of mutability within the very society that marginalizes them. In that way, they do not define themselves by their lineage nor the work they do. Rather, they assume identities as they suit them, which in turn gives them the possibility of moving within society.

The Dream Kitchen: Economic Reform and the Professionalization of Cooking

The hazy category of picaresque kitchen workers contravened the rigid machinery of the Spanish court. Their lack of official title and position made the court vulnerable to the irruption of outsiders that came and went as they pleased. Since the reign of Philip II, the Habsburgs had tried, with little success, to keep informal workers in check by modifying the structure of the kitchen's labor pool. In 1611, Francisco Martínez Montiño, Head cook to Philip III and Philip IV, acknowledged the late King's failed attempts in his prologue to *Arte de cozina, pasteleria, vizcocheria y conserveria*, the most important cookbook and a true best-seller of seventeenth-century Spain: "que el Rey Don Felipe II (que Dios tiene), con todo su poder no pudo echar esta gente de sus cocinas, aunque mandó añadir mozos de cocina y otra suerte de mozos de cocina que se llaman galopines, todo porque no hubiese pícaros" (1611, 6).

The newly created position of *mozo* was officially introduced in an effort to keep outside workers of questionable origins at bay. *Mozos* were assigned a fixed salary of 20 to 29,000 maravedís per year (Simón Palmer 1982, 51).[11] Underneath them were the galopines, the informal version of mozos, whose pay was not regulated and most likely only comprised of food rationings. But even with the introduction of mozos, the kitchen seemed to have residual workers always underneath the lowest categories. For that reason, Montiño advises readers-cooks to watch out for the inconvenient presence of pícaros in the kitchen: "Si fuere posible no tengas pícaros sin partido; y si los tuvieres, procura con el Señor que les dé algo, o con el limosnero, porque puedan tener camisas limpias que se mudar; porque no hay cosa más asquerosa que pícaros rotos y sucios" (1611, 4).

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[11] Without going into detail about inflation and fluctuating prices, some food prices give us an idea of the wages of *mozos*. Fewer than ten maravedís could purchase a meal in the street (Campbell 2017, 212). At the University of Salamanca the daily cost of meals went from 85 to 95 maravedís (92).

His advice makes clear that poor individuals were widely employed as kitchen assistants under informal conditions and without a salary ("sin partido"). Their social background, in addition to their precarious payments, made for an unwanted sight for any honorable cook. Yet, as despised as they were, they remained unavoidable evils that resisted steadfast organization.

Montiño's book should be understood within the wider wave of reform of the royal household. Since the reign of Charles V, the Spanish court had followed the style of the French House of Bourgogne, which featured a highly specialized division of labor and a rigid code of ritualistic behaviors. But it was not until the reign of Philip III that the court fully consolidated under a singular and strong identity that merged the House of Bourgogne with the House of Castile (Rivero Rodríguez 2008, 31). To that effect, *ordenanzas* and etiquettes were proclaimed, and a particular style of service emerged. Close to two thousand servants worked for the Royal family, each of them in charge of very specific tasks that were performed according to a minute etiquette. In the words of John Elliott, this multi-tiered "well-disciplined army" of servants had the symbolic function "to protect and isolate the sacred person of the King" (1977, 175).[12] Below the saintly figure of the monarch laid a convoluted structure that kept every worker within their rank and safeguarded the King's revered image[13].

As soon as Philip IV came to power in 1621, his primary minister, the Count-Duke of Olivares, put into motion a series of reforms to shrink the cost of maintaining the Crown's

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[12] For example, several *ordenanzas* were issued to regulate the king's meals. Waiting and kitchen staff should remain off sight at all times when the king was at the table: "Los oficiales de boca permanecerán todos cubiertos sin que ninguno de ellos pueda avanzarse más allá de la puerta en la que yo estaré comiendo, sin situarse allá donde yo les pudiera ver" (qtd. in Hugon 2015, 35).

[13] Manuel Rivero Rodríguez describes the important role that this structure had in the power relations of the court: "La hegemonía de la aristocracia en oficios de la Casa Real tales como los de mayordomos y los gentileshombres de cámara, así como el control de las tres jefaturas de los departamentos domésticos constituyeron una plataforma crucial que permitió a la nobleza monopolizar el poder, es decir, la dirección del gobierno político, del contacto con la real persona, fuente de toda autoridad y el valimiento fue la expresión formal de esta nueva realidad" (2008, 33).

domestic structure[14]. Salaries were lowered, positions were eliminated, budgets were cut and servants were laid off. Ultimately, the goal was to return to Spain's economic, military, and moral grandeur[15].

The newly implemented measures particularly impacted *oficios de boca*[16]; that is, those that were in any way connected to food. Since the Middle Ages, food—in the form of public banquets and extravagant festivities— had been a costly though effective way of showcasing the Monarchy's power to foreign visitors and the general population. The frugal hand of Olivares tightened over these luxurious expenses[17]. Exotic ingredients were limited, the pantry budget was lowered, old table linen was reused, and, much to the dismay of the King, even lunch menus shrunk in size[18].

It is hardly surprising that such impulse for administrative reform—and the consequent

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[14] See chapter XI of Elliott's *Spain and Its World* for a discussion of Spain's economic decline. For a specific review of the administrative structure of the royal household, its expenses and reforms under Philip IV see Enciso Recio (2005, 97-102) and Jurado Sánchez (1998).

[15] The new king was fully committed to economic and moral reforms, even if that entailed changes to his traditional lifestyle. In 1623, Olivares announced that 67,000 ducats would be saved on the king's domestic expenses, and 80,000 on the queen's (Elliott 1986, 150). Maintenance of the royal household cost one million ducats out of the ten millions comprised by the yearly budget (Elliott 1989, 179). In reality, the potential savings were not enough to make a substantial difference in the court's bloated finances. Nonetheless, an austere court served to ease the opinion of the general public, who morally reprobated the excesses and luxuries of the Crown in time of economic crisis and food shortages. Even if the government's monetary conscience could have tamed public opinion, it decidedly stirred trouble among the domestic population of the palace.

[16] See Simón Palmer's "Los oficios de boca" (2014, 355-363).

[17] In a letter expressing his frustration over managing the royal finances in times of such scarcity, the Count-Duke of Olivares significantly wrote that he was "incapable of making bread from stones" (Elliott 1986, 438). Olivares's metaphor speaks to a general preoccupation surrounding the supply of food.

[18] As food historian María de los Ángeles Pérez Samper has noted, the Palace's domestic economy mirrored that of the rest of the Kingdom (1982, 27). Food suppliers refused to sell and staff refused to work, at times leaving the Queen without her favorite sweets or forcing the King to fast (26-27). The King complained about the amount of food he was served at lunchtime. He demanded 12 dishes, rather than the 10 he was being served. (AGP, *Admón Gral*., Leg. 878, 1622). In 1647, he complained that his usual *manjar blanco* was not as good as before. Due to budget cuts in the kitchen, the dish was now made with two chicken breasts and not four (ibid). Similar changes in the food habits of the royal family are widely documented; for other examples see Elliott (1997, 189) and Simón Palmer (1982, 25-28). For Olivares's reform policies, see chapter V of Elliott's *Count-Duke of Olivares*.

challenges of making a meal out of stones— can be found in the kitchen. In the prologue to his cookbook, Martínez Montiño notes that one of his goals in writing it is to help his noble readers manage their *hacienda* more effectively. Banquets, he states, are costly events that risk ruining even the richest households. His recipes aim at making the most out of the pantry's stock, a small-scaled reform that parallels the ambitious economic plans of Olivares. To be sure, both Montiño and Olivares intended to manage the economy in its etymological sense of *oikos (*household*).*

Quite predictably, lowly workers were more affected by the spirits of reform than their more respectable colleagues. In the bureaucratic structure of the kitchen formation, their loose position made them the inevitable casualties of reform. The Palace archives are rife with conflicts that stemmed from internal changes. For example, in 1638, Cristóbal Alonso, Juan Prieto and Juan Fernández, who had been at the service of the Royal Kitchen for more than eighteen years, filed a complaint for lack of payment. The galopines argued that they had received only one real a day for their work and no food rationing. They explicitly blamed their situation on the failure to follow a recent measure: "Que por la reformación hay número de los que han de ser, y ahora, sin reparar en ella se trata de recibir mozos de cocina de fuera, haciéndoles notable agravio" (AGP, *PER*, 49.23, 3v). Cristóbal and his workmates lacked a steady position in the kitchen despite having worked there for almost two decades. In fact, they had worked in the kitchen since such a young age that all three declared "they were raised there." Mozos, though outsiders, had preference over them. In order to guard their employment and plea for proper pay, the unofficial galopines resort to the official nature of decrees, signaling their superiors' failure to follow them.

The measures were so unsystematically enforced that they often generated inequities

between servants. Compared to other servants *de boca* who were paid promptly, they were often left unpaid for more than a month (AGP, *PER*, 11744.79). And not all galopines were made alike: the Queen's galopines received less than those at the service of the King, which might also point to a gender gap. Galopines urged officials to apply the reforms equitably among the staff. At stake in their complaints is an attempt of abandoning the marginalized underbelly by standardizing their labor conditions.

In the testimonies preserved at the archives of the Royal Palace, the galopines not only resorted to the language of reform to make their case. Their objections must be seen through the lens of a changing relationship between master and servant. In most cases, galopines end with an appeal to the King as their fundamental protector. In his classic essay about the artisans' cat massacre in eighteenth century France, Robert Darnton explains the workers' discontent as being partially rooted in the increasing recruitment of *alloués* (workers for hire) (1984, 80). The apprentices' path towards becoming a master was threatened by the increasing hiring of cheaply-paid externals. In Darnton's words, *alloués*—like the mozos that take away Cristóbal's long-deserved payment—"personified the tendency of labor to become a commodity instead of a partnership" (80). The galopines' appeal to the King's sense of justice is more than a conventional rhetorical move. It adds an emotional dimension that echoes a former system of labor relations. By evoking their long personal history in the kitchen, they echo the principle of *crianza*; that is, of the servant as supported and brought up by the paternal figure of the master. In this case, the picaresque urge to better their lives takes on the form of reprobation. For once, it is not them, but the palace officials, who deviate from the established order.

Martínez Montiño must have experienced conflicts such as these in his time as a cook. In 1656, for example, a group of royal galopines complained that, because they had not been paid

for more than eight months, they did not have proper work clothes (AGP, *AG*, 878). In Diego de Hermosilla's *Diálogo de los pajes* (1543), Medrano confesses that servants like him often stay in bed pretending to be ill, but in reality, their feet hurt because they have outgrown their shoes (1901, 7). The text suggests that the pícaro's raggedness goes beyond aesthetics and indeed hinders their productivity.

These shaggy pícaros remind us of Montiño's advice of paying pícaros to prevent their 'disgusting' appearance in the kitchen. His notion of the ideal kitchen appears in clear tension with the frugal consciousness of reform. A respectable kitchen ought to manage its estate responsibly but it must also look like one. Such a conundrum suggests that the ill-repute of *pícaros* were, at least to a degree, a byproduct of greediness or, in any case, of the regime's financial austerity.

Base kitchen staff did not have a place inside the neatly organized kitchen Montiño imagined. In contrast to the positions above them, they lacked official functions and a fixed code of behavior. *Etiquetas de Palacio,* a 1651 document detailing the work of every servant, devotes no more than three sentences to galopines, while others have entire folios dedicated to them. Similarly, in his 1562 memoirs of his time as *maître d'hotel* to Mary of Bourgogne, Olivier de la Marche carefully described the nuts and bolts of the court's daily operation. After punctiliously drawing the kitchen's scaffold, he is left with very little to say about the lowest-ranked: "Les happeloppins et les enfans nourris sans gage en la cuisine, doivent tourner les rosts et faire tous les autres services menus qui appartiennent en la dicte cuisine" (1645, 688). La Marche's rough strokes point to a multitasking unskilled job that hardly qualifies as an *oficio.* After all, anyone can turn a rotisserie wheel.

The organization scheme of the court, as Norbert Elias has argued, reassured every one of

its members of their “graded social existence” (1978, 250). Similarly, occupational ranks also reassured membership to a sector and its corresponding social prestige; it recognized them as having a set of specific skills or knowledge that distinguished them from others. But if noble ranks were somewhat immovable, work positions were not. A humble mozo could aspire to ascend if he was obedient and diligent[19]. Martínez Montiño himself worked for years in the kitchen before becoming Head cook. He writes in the prologue to *Arte de cozina*: “Si ellos dan en ser virtuosos y se aficionan a aprender, en muy poco tiempo toman principio, y estos se hacen oficiales; mas los que son pícaros vellacos nunca son cocineros” (1611, 7).

Martínez Montiño recognizes that good work—not only working hard but committing to patiently learning from and obeying superiors—gives staff the possibility to advance. The first step is an overall attitude of service. The palace’s instructions make clear this clear, defining service as the primary task of mozos and galopines: “ […] han de obedecer al cocinero de la servilleta en lo que les ordenare y fuere del servicio de su majestad, teniendo el respeto que se debe a su jefe” (Gutiérrez de Párraga 1651, 39v). After years of dedicated service, Montiño proudly boasts his transformation into that who he previously obeyed: Head cook, the ultimate overseer of the perfect kitchen.

At stake in Montiño’s statement is an emerging notion of professional cooking based on empirical knowledge. As I have noted, cooking was historically considered a vile activity with no intellectual value[20]. Rooted in the body, and in particular, in taste and touch—the lowest in the hierarchy of the senses—, cooking was seen as a mindless task that only served to meet

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[19] As Jennifer Davis notes in the French case, “training required young cooks to perform the more menial kitchen tasks of preparing broth or washing fishes, enabling them to watch and learn before they approached the stovetops” (2013,43).
[20] See Curtin and Heldke’s essays published in *Cookin, eating, thinking* on the disdain of manual work, and in particular of food-making, in Western philosophical tradition.

physical needs. That is, the cook transforms what ought to be a means for survival into sensorial pleasures. In a Spanish sermon, for example, sensuality takes on the role of cook and mother of all vices: "El vicio de la sensualidad es un cocinero diestro que guisa los manjares muy a gusto del demonio, o el instrumento en que el mismo demonio los guisa a la satisfacción de Luzifer" (1625, 229).

The negative perception of cooking slowly began to change in the late sixteenth century. In his 1570 *Opera*, Bartolomeo Scappi understood cooking as any honorable trade:

> It is necessary, therefore, insofar as many long years of experience have taught me, that a skilled and competent Master Cook […] always derives honor from his work, should do as a wise Architect, who, following his careful design, lays out a firm foundation and on it presents to the world useful and marvelous buildings (Scappi 1570, 1v; Scully 2008, 98-9).

The evocation of architecture, a long respected discipline, served Scappi to pose cooks as skilled and educated, with as much intellectual assets as technical knowledge. In this sense, as noted by Debora Krohn, with "the increasing professionalization of many skills and trades and the self-conscious articulation of these emerging categories in the sixteenth century, Scappi and his handlers pioneered a new way of looking not just at the kitchen as workshop or laboratory" (2015, 5).

Scappi's views had a strong influence throughout Europe[21]. In Spain, his innovative recipes and methods were introduced by Diego Granado in his 1599 *Libro de cozina*[22]. Montiño's *Arte de cozina*, though it does not replicate his recipes, carefully follows Scappi's recommendations on the correct management of the kitchen and its staff. Martínez Montiño's book, like *Llibre del coch* before it, contributed to legitimizing the value of cooking labor in

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[21] See chapter V of Mennell (69-83) and Willan (79-126) for an overview of Scappi's influence across European cuisines.
[22] See Nadeau (29-34) for a discussion of Granado's cookbook and his relation to Scappi.

Spain.

The emergence of the professional cook necessarily entailed a deeper stratification of kitchen labor. For the Master Cook to exist, there had to be organized subordinates that conferred him the power to oversee them. As Norbert Elias explains in *The Civilizing Process*:

> As the interdependence of people increases with the increasing division of labour, everyone becomes increasingly dependent on everyone else, even those of high social rank on those people who are socially inferior and weaker. The latter become so much the equals of the former that they, the socially superior people, can experience shame feelings even in the presence of their social inferior. It is only in this connection that the armor of restraints is fastened to the degrees which is gradually taken for granted by people in democratic industrial societies (1978, 117)

In the kitchen, what Elias calls "shame feelings" can be translated into the obsession with cleanliness and order, both under the constant threat of pícaros. Following Scappi, Montiño insists on the need to be methodical and thorough, and to properly "govern" every inch of the kitchen[23]. He describes the correct disposition of every knife and spoon, the appropriate wood for the chopping table, or the first thing a cook should do upon walking through the door. Ironically, those who embody dirtiness are in charge of keeping the kitchen pristine. *Etiquetas de Palacio* provides an idea of what their cleaning responsibilities entailed: "Los mozos de las cocinas han de enjuagar las herramientas dellas después de haberlas fregado los galopines, […] los galopines han de desplumar la volatería, hacer y fregar la herramienta y tener limpias las cocinas" (Gutiérrez de Párraga 1651, 39v).

They did the dirty work: everything that came before cooking and after eating. They set the stage for someone with a particular skill or simply with a higher rank, leaving the floor clean for the next day or the chicken ready to be gutted. In that sense, their tasks were always partial

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[23] For Carolyn Nadeau, Montiño's book stands out for its emphasis on hygiene: "while writers of culinary manuscripts and books consistently comment on the importance of cleanliness, Martínez Montiño differs in his almost obsessive attitude" (35).

and never resulted in a final product of their own; even the cleanliness of utensils was someone else's final responsibility.

The tasks assigned to the underbelly are below the dignity of everybody else. They prepare raw goods—dirty vegetables, freshly killed animals—before they are transformed into food and they manage waste once the bodies of others have been nourished. Pícaros do not have titles, codes nor subordinates to discipline. They are what Richard Tawney termed Spain's "residual population", the surplus of a changing economic system that excluded them from the possibility of betterment (Maravall 1986, 192). It is only fitting then, that, as residues of the society of their time, their job was to manage the material leftovers of those above them. Forever deviating from their responsibilities, the kitchen underbelly rejects a system in which their members are constrained to operate at the ground-floor level.

A Picaresque Labor Code

If the historical presence of lowly staff has been eclipsed by eccentric royal banquets and recipes that surprise modern palates, the kitchen underbelly and its army of workers takes the center stage in the pages of picaresque narrative. In particular, two novels stand out from the canon for their protagonists' embroilment in kitchen matters: Mateo Alemán's *Guzmán de Alfarache* (1599 and 1604) and the anonymous *Vida y hechos de Estebanillo González* (1646).

A successor of the much shorter *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554), *Guzmán de Alfarache* is a retrospective autobiographical narration in the first person. In the first few chapters, the reader discovers his complicated family history. His mother was involved in a love triangle with a Genoese merchant with aspirations of nobility, and a "caballero viejo de hábito militar" (I, 144). Though he is the son of the former, Guzmán recognizes both men as his fathers (I, 157). Brought

up comfortably ("vicioso y regalado" I, 163) until the age of twelve, he leaves his native Seville due to his desire to see the world and track down his noble Italian parentage. After a life of mischief and crime, he is convicted to the royal galleys, from which he narrates.

The character's origins set him apart from other picaresque figures, namely his predecessor Lázaro. Even more, Guzmán's double paternity, by a tradesman and an aristocrat, is a crucial trait that, as Michel Cavillac has argued, condenses the motive behind his retrospective narration (434). The men, per Cavillac's argument, represent two forces behind Spain's decadence: the speculative capitalism of an unscrupulous merchant class, and the aristocracy's libertine indolence (1994, 434-438). In an attempt to remove himself from his fathers, Guzmán "desde la atalaya de su conversión, abogaría así por la utilidad del trabajo y la dignificación del estado de mercader" (437).[24]

It is in this sense that cooking emerges as a potential source of honorable work for Guzmán. In part I, not long after he has left Seville, the protagonist works for a cook who in turn serves a noble family. He arrives at the position of pícaro at around thirteen years of age, after the recommendation of a certain *despensero*. If he learns to master the cooking craft, he promises him, the doors of the palace will open and eventually he will retire a rich happy man. Lured by this enticing future, the young Guzmán begins working for a cook who serves a noble house.

From the beginning, Guzmán understands that his job is essentially of service —"lo que mandaren y supiere hacer o pudiere trabajar" (I, 301)— and not a position that requires a set of skills. He sweeps, mops, keeps an eye on the pots, cooks, makes beds. He takes orders from *pajes*, *mayordomos*, *maestresalas*, *mozos de caballos* and, of course, the main cook. Everybody

[24] For Cruz, Guzmán has "the possibility of bettering his social position precisely through his Genoese merchant origins" , but ultimately "remains a picaro by following his father's amoral career and the abandonment of his land" (1999, 104-5).

and nobody are his masters. At first, he does his job most meticulously:

> Siempre hacía lo que más podía y mejor sabía, guardando el decoro al oficio. Aún el ave no estaba bien acabada de pelar, cuando tomaba el aire y molía misturas para salsas o para guisados. Traía el herraje como espadas acicaladas, las sartenes que se pudieran limpiar con la capa, los cazos como espejos; guardados en sus cajas, colgados en sus clavos, donde debía estar cada cosa, para darlos en la mano cuando fuera menester, sin andarlo a buscar, acordándome dónde lo puse; todo tenía su lugar dispuesto con mucha curiosidad y concierto (I, 310-311).

His rigorous working ethos is not unlike the ideals of Scappi, Montiño, or the writer of *Etiquetas de Palacio*. The list-like accumulative style replicates their attempt at breaking down work into its finest details in order to systemize it and police it. At this point of the narration, he seemingly embodies an alternative social order where dignity and social mobility are brought about by honorable work. To quote Mercedes Blanco, "una república de oficiales y profesionales competentes, entregado cada uno a su especialidad, una república laboriosa donde se organizaran con perfecta eficacia la producción y la gestión de los bienes" (2007, 136). Here, there is no need of the reprimand's of the head cook because Guzmán works under his own command. With the decorum he shows in his responsibilities, he grants his base work with a degree of respectability that is unacknowledged by others. Hence, he grants that respect to himself. Guzmán condenses this personal working ethos earlier in the novel: "haz de manera que tu oficio […] se vea después de ti, conociendo al oficio por ti y no a ti por el oficio" (I, 286). In crafting his own labor code, Guzmán crafts himself, a notion that is beautifully expressed in the shiny saucepan-mirror on which he sees his reflection ("los cazos como espejos").

After a while, Guzmán goes back to his old ways of stealing and deceiving. As the narrator makes clear, his wrongdoings are not only rooted in previous habits. Physical exhaustion and the frustration of witnessing the constant abuses of his superiors divert him from the path of honorable work: "Yo estaba cansado de pelar aves, limpiar almendras y piñones, calentar aguas y

otras cosas. Andaba con una camisilla vieja y un juboncillo roto" (I, 325). Ultimately, not unlike the galopines of the archive, Guzmán attributes his situation to the unfair distribution of work and pay:

> Gran culpa desto suelen tener los amos, dando corto salario y mal pagado, porque se sirven de necesitados y dellos hay pocos que sean fieles. Póneste a jugar en un resto lo que tienes de renta en un año. Paga y haz merced a tus criados y serás bien y fielmente servido: que el galardón y premio de las cosas hace al señor ser tenido y respetado como tal y pone ánimo al pobre criado para mejor servir. Hay señor que no dará un real al sirviente más importante, pareciéndole que le basta el sueldo seco y que, en dárselo y su ración, está pagado. No, señor, no es buena razón, que aqueso ya se lo debes, no tiene qué agradecerte (I, 314).

Like Montiño in his prologue, Guzmán directly addresses the reader with the authority of first-hand experience. But unlike the cook's literary persona—modest, didactic and cautious— , Alemán's narration shifts to a prescriptive imperative that is reminiscent of the legal language of an official decree. In an 1984 article, Henri Guerreiro argued that, in the chapters that narrate his time in the kitchen, Guzmán voices a plan of "sanitation of domestic economy" (1984, 173) that is both social and economic, moral and monetary. Indeed, this passage also echoes the prescriptive manuals of courtesy that were so popular in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Instead of concerning itself with etiquette and social image, it seeks to regulate social relations between master and servant. Guzmán imagines a kinder relation based on mutuality and justice, values that constitute the moral wealth that will in turn promote economic wealth.[25] Like the galopines who turned to the newly implemented measures, Guzmán resorts to the legal and moral discourses of reform to propose a more equitable workspace.[26]

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[25] In his preliminary study to the novel, Luis Gómez Canseco points out that, in the urban context, nobility is displaced by the value of money (2012, 828), which makes Guzmán's *afán de medro* economic first and social second. For an interpretation of the novel from the standpoint of economics and commerce, see Michel Cavillac's influential book (1994).

[26] Guzmán's suggestions in this passage reflects a greater attitude in the novel towards political and social reform. For the theme of reformism in the novel, see Cruz (1999, 75-96) and Cavillac (1986 and 1994).

In a similar way, the novel *La vida y hechos de Estebanillo González* (1646) presents an instance of professionalization of the kitchen picaresque, albeit in the context of the army. Set against the backdrop of the Thirty Years' War[27], the text presents itself as the autobiography of a real character: Esteban González, a low-born Galician mercenary who travels across Europe fighting to survive, only to end up as a court buffoon.[28] Throughout the novel, Estebanillo works as kitchen boy, regiment cook, supplier of groceries, and even baker, before eventually becoming buffoon in the household of General Ottavio Piccolomini, Duke of Amalfi, to whom the novel is dedicated. Like other pícaros, the novel follows the protagonist's many struggles to survive, though for Estebanillo these "extend […] in the chaotic expanses of the broader Habsburg Empire" (Cruz 1999, 164). Switching shamelessly from one army to another in his quest to survive, Estebanillo spends a considerable amount of his time in kitchens, the one place that provides shelter from the perils of battle: "Yo que jamás me metí en ruidos ni fui nada ambicioso, me estaba tieso que tieso en mi cocina, a la cual llamaba el cuarto de la salud" (I, 75).

When his business selling food and other supplies among soldiers becomes successful, Estebanillo describes his working day by borrowing from the official language of military bureaucracy: "visitador general de las cocinas ajenas, sobrestante de las ollas, reconocedor de las

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[27] The conflict was one of the longest and bloodiest of the Western world. While it is commonly acknowledges as a religious war between Protestant and Catholic, historian Peter Wilson has argued it was one of many factors involved in the conflict: "religion certainly provided a powerful focus for identity, but it had to compete with political, social, linguistic, gender and other distinctions" (2009, 9). The war involved all major European states, except for Russia. For a summary of Spain's participation in the war, see Wilson (2009, 116-161) and (362-370). For a history of everyday life during the war, see Haude (2021).

[28] The question of the novel's authorship, and its historical authenticity has thoroughly occupied critics. The existence of a real historical character by the name of Esteban González has been documented in the archive of Piccolomini. However, up to this point there has been no evidence that indicate a correspondence between the character and the author, even when the facts narrated are historically accurate. José Antonio Cid and Antonio Carreira (1990, lx), who align with this hypothesis, think the author is an unknown professional writer, author of epic poetry, by the name of Gabriel de la Vega. For his part, Marcel Bataillon thought the author was Gerónimo de Bran, an Italian captain close to Piccolomini who composed the text for the amusement of the court (1973).

cazuelas, superintendente de los asadores y pesquisador de los vinos" (II, 20). Unlike Guzmán, Estebanillo does not open a space for himself in the hierarchal system by crafting his own code. Rather, to borrow Michel Foucault's words, he infiltrates the "disciplinary network" of the military code. Estebanillo assumes the role of judge and minister (*visitador*), guard and vigilant (*reconocedor*), overseer (*sobrestante*), supervisor (*superintendente*) and investigator (*pesquisador*); all of which can be understood as the army's "instruments of hierarchal observation" for disciplinary enforcement (Foucault 1995, 170). As Foucault notes in his analysis of the modern prison, the 'machinery of power' yielded a professional network of discipline-enforcers with specific roles. The professional titles are so semantically close, so incredibly specific, they become indistinguishable for the reader, exposing the over-stratification of the military. Here, Estebanillo takes on the roles as one wears a mask. As an unruly pícaro, it is him who needs to be disciplined and surveilled. Instead, he makes the kitchen the object of surveillance, stretching the limits of military stratification even further.

Later in the chapter, Estebanillo will fight a young marmitón who claims to be better at washing dishes. Despite him being more experienced, Estebanillo loses the duel "por haber él dado mejor razón de su oficio" (II, 20). Fighting over the right manner of dish-washing takes the idea of professionalization to a ridiculous extreme. Though it does not go as far as legitimizing the respectability of marmitones, the text once again mocks the very idea of labor stratification. After all, anyone can wash a pot.

Very tellingly for a military cook, Estebanillo reacts to his defeat by hitting his rival on the head with the pot. In repurposing the main tool of his work as a weapon, he preserves *some* of his tainted honor not by way of demonstrating his skills but by rejecting the pot's original utility. This image of the pot turned weapon is a typical motif of folk carnivalesque humor. For

Bakhtin, the intersection between war and kitchen in Rabelais relies on the notion of the dismembered body (1984, 193). Long enumerations of arms, legs, and organs transform human bodies into cut-up flesh on the chopping block of war. For Estebanillo, the arsenal of kitchen utensils mocks the dignified fights of his fellow soldiers: "Yo iba a esta guerra tan neutral que no me metía en debujos ni trataba de otra cosa sino de henchir mi barriga, siendo mi ballestera el fogón, mi cuchara mi pica, y mi cañón de crujía mi reverenda olla" (I, 70-71). Here, the material culture of war and the kitchen provide the means for the pícaro's survival. Estebanillo's ultimate enemy is hunger, his only possible victory a happily bloated stomach. But beyond these objects as conventional symbols of the fight against hunger, they are the tools of the pícaro's work—both as a deceiving cook and coward soldier.

As cookbooks of the era make clear, professionalization of the trade entailed the expert management of an ample group of utensils. Take for example Montiño's *Arte de cozina,* where all recipes and practical advice is preceded by a curious warning about the correct measurement of ladles to make spongecakes. Or Scappi's book, full of beautiful images of spoons, knives, pots, pans, among many other objects a cook ought to have in their kitchen. Like the experienced soldier who ought to nimbly handle weapons, the expert use of utensils is a sign of a serious and honorable cook. An earlier document vividly illustrates the parallel between culinary and military work. Enrique de Villena's 1423 *Arte cisoria* doubles as a manual on meat-carving and courtly manners. The correct use of the knife transforms the bloody act of killing an animal into a sophisticated and desirable skill for noble men. In that sense, battle and preparing food both entail the killing and domination of other bodies[29]. To quote Sol Miguel-Prendes, carving tools

[29] As Sol Miguel-Prendes has noted, Villena evokes warfare instruments as another example of human's ability to use "artificial members" to meet their needs (310).

are objects that "mark and delimit the knightly body as a member of a civilized community" (2003, 312).

In contrast to these sources that aim at perfecting the manual work of food-making, Estebanillo's burlesque use of kitchen utensils delimits his picaresque body as an outcast of the professional community. In the end of part I, Estebanillo sums it well: "aunque es verdad que soy soldado y cocinero, el oficio de soldado ejercito en la cocina y el de cocinero en la ocasión. El soldado no ha de tener, para ser bueno, otro oficio más que ser soldado (I, 318). Estebanillo neither fights nor cooks like a professional. On the contrary, he hides from battle and contravenes "good" cooking by stealing food for himself and using cheap ingredients in lieu of quality ones. In the words of Alán Francis, his experiences as cook, "parecen reflejar la misma resistencia a participar en cualquier profesión, a dejarse someter al molde establecido" (1978, 199). His refusal to comply with the mold is also a refusal of having a professional identity.[30]

Estebanillo is more preoccupied with his own surviving than with his work. For instance, during an intense thunderstorm, while some soldiers ardently try to navigate the rough waters and others ask God to tame its force, Estebanillo is hardly worried about death. Instead, he happily fills his belly with wine, fresh bread, figs and raisins, saying to himself "Muera Marta y muera harta" (I, 3). With that playful saying, Estebanillo mocks Martha, a biblical model for virtuous cooks. In Luke's Gospel (10:38-42 King James), Martha and Mary welcome Jesus into their home. While her sister sits by Jesus feet and listens to him, Martha is busy in the kitchen preparing a meal for their visitor. As I will discuss in my analysis of cooking in female convents in the following chapters, this passage was extensively commented by early modern authors,

[30] This is true also when Estebanillo settles as buffoon. For Nicolas Spadaccini, Estebanillo will turn into a "melancholy clown" after he abandons the free life of the *pícaro* to accept his new position of buffoon ("Estebanillo*,"* 218). In comparison to his previous errant life, being a buffoon poses the risk of becoming subjugated and dependent of his master (217-219).

some of whom saw Martha as representative of the Christian values of obedience, service, sacrifice and active contemplation. In that sense, she made for a virtuous and spiritual model for anyone who cooked or performed manual work. A dead yet satiated Martha encapsulates Estebanillo's attitude towards his own work, and perhaps more significantly, towards war. He rejects his work's virtuous performance—in the professional and Christian sense—and instead embraces death by food.[31] In so doing, the proverb is an affirmation of his own death against the backdrop of death by warfare. All the more, in the context of religious conflict between Lutheran and Catholic territories, the figure of a stuffed Martha mirrors Estebanillo himself. Instead of serving the Empire and its defense of Catholicism—just like Martha served Christ— our protagonist chooses to symbolically eat to death.

Guzmán and Estebanillo embody the residual labor pool of respectable kitchens. Guzmán strives to translate the ethos of professional work to the underbelly, showcasing what Francisco J. Sánchez has termed a "bourgeois sensibility" of individual merit. Ultimately, he will fail to maintain his code of action due to the poor conditions of his work. Conversely, Estebanillo repeatedly derides any trace of solemnity in his kitchen. His cooking work will never be ornamented with the rigid methods of professional cooks nor with the values of austerity and economy, because in the end, he mainly cooks for himself. In both cases, these pícaros actively challenge the notion of honorable work behind the emerging professional kitchen. In reimagining their place in the kitchen, Guzmán and Estebanillo destabilize its pretended order and bring to light the inequities embedded in the cycle that exists behind each spoonful of food.

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[31] In the second part of Don Quijote, Sancho Panza glosses this popular proverb along the same lines, telling Don Quijote: ""yo tiraré mi vida comiendo hasta que llegue al fin que le tiene determinado el cielo" (II, 997).

The Door Ajar: The Open Kitchen of Estebanillo González

Early modern kitchens were supposed to be located out of sight, distanced from the presence of diners. In the words of Bartolomeo Scappi, the kitchen "should preferably be located in a remote place rather than in a more public area" as to "avoid the distractions that accompany the concourse of people, along with the dangers, and to avoid annoying those dwelling nearby in the palace with the noise which is normal in a kitchen"(Scully 2008, 100). Preferably, he notes, kitchen quarters should be on lower floors, yet well-aired and lit with plenty of windows—a set of recommendations that was hardly attainable when located on a sublevel.

In Scappi's book, the woodcut illustrating the main kitchen shows only one person (presumably the main cook) at the very center of the image (Figure 8). He turns a hog on the the spit roaster and seemingly waves to the reader. Surrounding him are different working stations carefully labeled with the different tasks they are destined for: a table for pasta-making, a stovetop for broths and stews, a station for plating dishes. Though there is steam coming out of the pots, and freshly-rolled pastry on the table, kitchen workers are erased from the scene. This choice of representing a space devoid of characters mirrors Scappi's recommendation of keeping kitchen workers further removed from sight: "It is not for outsiders to come into the private kitchen, nor are cooks there allowed the number of scullery boys that are usually found in similar places, both for the sake of cleanliness and because of accidents that can happen with them" (Scully 2008, 667). Even when the instruments and products of their labor remain in plain sight, the main kitchen is wiped out of troublesome workers.

Scappi's imagined kitchen is helpful in exploring the position of workers in noble households. Though they are effaced from the scene, a door on the right side hints at their actual centrality. A passageway labeled *camerino per garzoni* indicates they commonly lived at the

very heart of the working space. They lurk outside the frame and through a dark threshold in a tantalizingly inaccesible space to the reader. In a way, the main kitchen resembles a solitary theatre stage with right and left wings leading backstage. The *garzoni* and fellow kitchen workers are *obscene* in the etymological sense—they are literally relegated off scene.

In contrast to the main kitchen, the other two plates that illustrate secondary kitchen spaces—the *camera propinqua* and *loggia*—are filled with people performing different tasks: kneading dough, straining sauces, washing dishes, and so on. Of particular interest is the open-air space that is the "scullery" or *loggia* (Figure 7), "where the mundane labors of sharpening knives, washing dishes and cleaning fish can be done" (Scully 2008, III). The scullery is contained within high walls with only one fenced window at street-level. The other windows, too high up on the walls, would have made it impossible to see the outside from within, and viceversa. The high walls and openness of the room would have served to dispel the strong smells of dirty dishes or fresh animal blood while also keeping workers far from the main kitchen. Airy and open yet enclosed and impenetrable like a fortress, the scullery reflects an attempt at controlling the outside, with all of its threats and nuisances, by bringing it into the private sphere.

Of course, Scappi's kitchen is an imagined ideal, his illustrations a prescriptive blueprint rather than an actual representation. In the words of Sara Pennell, "dream kitchens are not only hard to achieve in the confines of existing space, limited budgets and the needs of the households they serve, but even harder to live and work in: clean surfaces always need cleaning, lovely fruit displays decay. The flow of people, things and social relations coming together —indeed colliding, breaking, falling apart— in this particular space continually challenged and dismantled the ideal, pushing its achievement ever further into realms of the oft-exhorted but ever

unrealizable" (2017, 34-35). One such unrealizable trait, for example, is illustrated by Leon Battista Alberti in his influential architectural treatise, *Diez libros de arquitectura*, who noted that the kitchen must be afar from diners yet close enough to prevent meals from getting cold on their way to the table (1582, 155).

Figure 6. *Detail. Bartolomeo Scappi, The Opera of Bartolomeo Scappi: L'Arte et Prudenza d'un Maestro Cuoco, Venice, Alessandro Vecchi, 1610. University of Chicago Special Collections Research Center.*

Scappi's kitchen, as that of Alberti, Montiño and the one outlined by *Etiquetas de Palacio*, can be seen as being part of a new sensorial regime that emerged in the Renaissance, which "fostered a sensorial break in the idea of class" (Atkisnon 2014, 27). That is, the disciplining of sensorial relations through spatial segregation, table manners and other social codes aimed at establishing status and difference across social classes. When contrasted to the kitchen spaces of literary

fiction, these “dream kitchens” appear dramatically abstracted from the circumstances of their usage and the social relations they fostered. Through the pícaro’s narrative voice, picaresque novels present kitchens as populous and lively spaces, intrinsically open to the irruption of outsiders like themselves. In contrast to the pristine picture painted by instructional and normative texts, literary kitchens are imagined in terms of their intense dynamism.

Figure 7. *Detail. Bartolomeo Scappi, The Opera of Bartolomeo Scappi: L’Arte et Prudenza d'un Maestro Cuoco, Venice, Alessandro Vecchi, 1610. University of Chicago Special Collections Research Center.*

To fully function, kitchens ought to keep its doors open to the streets. In Estebanillo’s *Vida*, it is precisely its openness to the urban world which allows him to enter Cardinal Oria’s

noble kitchen as a *pícaro de cocina*: “Hallé a la entrada de la del palacio al cocinero mayor o de servilleta o manteles de su Eminencia, que se llamaba maestre Diego. Y viéndome entrar tan presuroso y alborotado me preguntó que qué era lo que traía” (I, 107). Having just been in a bloody fistfight, Estebanillo catches Diego’s attention, who after inquiring whether he has a master, offers him the not so honorable position of pícaro. One can imagine this is the kind of threat Scappi had in mind when crafting the perfect kitchen: letting a rogue like Estebanillo through the door of a noble palace.

For Katja Kanzler, the kitchen “marks the home’s periphery, its boundary to the public sphere” (2016, 12). This chance encounter between cook and pícaro, located in the outskirts of private space after a violent brawl, presents the kitchen as a type of “contact zone” where “characters marked as different meet and interact with each other” (11). Though the narrator does not say much about Diego, his title of *maestre* indicates a higher and more socially respected position than that of Estebanillo. In this sense, the kitchen can be seen as a frontier, a permeable zone where outsiders like him can either trespass and disrupt order, or, be assimilated and potentially move up the social pyramid. In fact, after only five weeks in the job, Estebanillo is promoted, proving that good service can pay off: “de esa suerte avanza quien sabe tan bien servir y con tanta satisfación de sus oficiales” (I, 109). In typical picaresque fashion, however, he escalates from pícaro to “barrendero menor de la escalera abajo” (I, 107), a tongue in-cheek title that ironically mocks the complicated hierarchies of domestic labor. Even more, the almost insignificant leap in the structure mocks Estebanillo’s aspiration to advance socially.

Elsewhere in the text, Estebanillo will describe a makeshift military kitchen that is straight out of Scappi’s Martínez Montiño’s nightmares. After being recruited for Don Felipe de Cardona’s batallion in Catalonia, he once again takes on the role of army cook, a trade he knows

well and which keeps him at a comfortable distance from the perils of the battlefield. He thus improvises an itinerant kitchen to feed his fellow soldiers, a *rancho*, "ni bien era bodegón ni bien casa de posadas" (I, 282): "Estaba hecho a dos aguas y no tenía defensa para ninguna. Era todo él ventanaje, y necesitaba de ventanas, y con tener mil entradas y salidas, usos y costumbres, veredas y servidumbres, y libre de censo y tributo, no tenía puerta ni cerradura ninguna" (I, 283).

This kitchen is so remarkably open that it even appears exposed and vulnerable to the exterior. Like the carnivalesque body understood by Bakhtin, it is a materially unfinished space that is pervious to the world. So much so that all material barriers guarding the inside are absent: there is no glass in the window openings, no locks, no doors. Rather, just like its roof stands defenseless from the threat of pouring rain, the kitchen's insides almost leak out its many openings. Here, the narrator hyperbolically describes it as having "thousands" of entries and exits, an image of permeability that is further emphasized through the polysyndenton. The repetition of *y* in the succession of spatial features builds up a swift rhythm that evokes the hectic kitchen activity, while also creating an image of a honeycombed and overcrowded structure mirrored by the sentence structure: "eran sus mesas retazos viejos de tajones de cortar carne, sus asientos de grandes y torneadas losas que habían servido de tapaderos de caños, sus ollas y cazuelas de cocido y no vidriado barro, y su vajilla de pasta del primer hombre" (I, 283). The kitchen is so bustling and open that it resembles an exterior public space. Understandably, the narrator tells us, the kitchen is nicknamed "Plaza de Armas", "por su poco abrigo y menos limpieza" (I, 283). The military Plaza de Armas, where regiments recovered and convened before resuming their campaigns, is here scaled down to a temporary kitchen[32].

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[32] Plaza de Armas is defined as: "Lugar distante del frente, elegido como centro de concentración y base de aprovisionamiento de las operaciones de guerra" (López Vallejo 2008,1047).

The image of visual congestion is additionally highlighted on a material level. Made of repurposed materials and scraps, its tables and seats reveal their make-up their past history and, hence, their changeability and dynamism. The cutting-board-table and drain-chair merge opposing sides of the kitchen: the rawness of meat with the readymade nature of dishes, and flushed waste with communal consumption. Whereas the ideal kitchen aspires to keep filth at bay, ever separating the space of production from that of consumption, Estebanillo's chaotic kitchen makes no such distinction. His kitchen adapts, spatially and materially, to the needs and flows of time, people, and objects that are inherent to the cooking trade.

Alongside architectonic (entry, door, window, roof) and material features (furniture, kitchenware, china), the narration includes other characteristics, such as the terms of "censo y tributo" or the expression "usos y costumbres". These terms point to an institutionalization of social relations—taxation, idiosyncrasies— through the law. Put alongside scrappy tables and leaky roofs as part of the same ecosystem, the lack of taxes and the diverse array of social customs are conceived as yet another thread of its chaotic lawless fabric.

The lively kitchen presided by Estebanillo is multi-layered, permeable, crowded, with no single focal point upon which to fix our gaze as readers. It is a baroque space where nothing is quite what it is supposed to be, and where the boundaries that separate the interior from the exterior are bleared. Its enumerative representation inevitably reminds of the style of *bodegones*, in which kitchen and market scenes depict an abundance of fruits, vegetables, game and other animals. This is hardly surprising when we consider the pictorial genre borrowed the name precisely from establishments like Estebanillo's. In 1611, Covarrubias defined the word as:

> Bodegón. el sótano, o portal bajo, dentro del cual está bodega adonde el que no tiene quién le guise la comida, la halla allí aderezada, y juntamente la bebida, de manera que se dijo de bodega. Algunos quieres se diga bodegón, quasi budellon, que en italiano vale asaduras y tripas, o coraznadas por lo que mas allí se vende es

deste género de vianda (1611, 286).

More than a century later, *Autoridades* would add that these typically sold "despojos para los pobres" (1734, 634). For the first time, a new entry also features its artistic acceptation: "en la pintura se llaman los lienzos en que están pintados trozos de carnes y de pescados, y comida de gente baja" (634). Ironically, the impoverished and precarious *bodegón* became, on the canvas, synonymous with overflowing abundance.

Julio Ortega has posed the *bodegón* as a pictorial genre that emerged as a response to the crisis of the early seventeenth century. The visual focus on foods and the language of the natural world, he argues, "recupera os frutos comuns e modestos como uma alegoria, tipicamente barroca, segundo a qual a imagem se reapropria de seu objeto para ocupar o espaço vazio ou carente com novas versões, terrestres e materiais" (Ortega 2013, 105). In that way, the natural abundance that is characteristic of *crónicas de Indias*, and that populated the dreams of poor hunger-stricken Spainards, makes a ghostly and tantalizing appearance in the works of Spanish painters like Sánchez Cotán or Zurbarán: "o que vemos é o que não temos e só podemos ter na arte da natureza e no artifício da pintura" (107).

From this perspective, Estebanillo's *bodegón* can be seen as representing the palpitating reality behind this desire. This literary *bodegón* lacks the lyrical polychromatic descriptions of cornucopia that are characteristic of the genre.[33] Even the stew Estebanillo makes everyday is without a name: "Hacía cada día un potaje, que aun yo mismo ignoraba cómo lo podía llamar" (I, 283). Made out of bits and scraps from any given animal, "no matter how filthy and disgusting", the stew borders the inedible: "sólo le faltó jabón y lana para ser olla de romance, aunque lo fue

[33] The *bodegón* has been studied in relation to material culture and as a literary motif. See Osuna (1968), Portús (2009) and Sánchez Jiménez (2009).

de latín, pues ninguno llegó a entenderla, ni yo a explicarla con haber sido estudiante" (I, 283-284). The dearth is such that Estebanillo even entertains the idea of adding wool and soap to make the meal heartier. Here, the mix of bits and pieces is likened to language; to latin for its inscrutability, and to Romance languages for its "corruption" of the original.

Instead of the drool-inducing fantasies of the land of Jauja, the reader is here confronted with a drily material and mundane depiction that emphasizes precariousness—of space, conditions and food supplies. Set up to provision and feed the soldiers on their way to fight at one of many wars that sunk Spain deeper into crisis, this *bodegonesque* kitchen symbolizes the struggle of an increasingly impoverished "residual" population. In particular, it highlights the decline of the once-glorious Spanish army, both locally and broad. Not only were soldiers confronted with the perils of battle, but also with an inefficient military administration that failed to meet their most basic needs when confronted with enemy lines.[34] In this instance, food is barely present, unnamed and bordering on the non-edible. Popular sayings summarized it well: "Soldado perdido, por mala paga, por mal pagado" (Correas 1906, 264). "Quien va a la guerra, come mal y duerme en la tierra" (343).

The Renaissance saw an increasing "spatial stratification" of society (Atkinson 2014, 29). The spaces for sociability, domesticity and work became more clearly demarcated, with architecture taking on the function of spatially mediating social relations. In this context, early modern kitchens aspired to be micro-universes where the threats of sensorial excess, cross-class relations, and even violence could be contained and disciplined in the name of professionalization. Estebanillo's kitchen is the failed dream of such professional spatiality. It is

[34] While in Flanders, commander Carlos Coloma described the state of his men in a 1629 letter: "Hase llegado a lo sumo de miseria, pobreza y desnudez, particularmente los españoles" (Altamira 1911, 296). He blamed the situation of the army on three factors: "desorden en su administración, falta de regularidad en las pagas y envío de dinero para municiones" (296).

a space that resists the construction of walls, the delineation of functions, and the careful assignment of tasks. Rather, in its openness, the picaresque presents a more democratizing view of cooking work—one that, despite its limitations and precariousness, leaves the door open for even the lowliest subjects.

The Working Cat

In the first part of *Guzmán de Alfarache*, an emblematic scene takes place when Guzmán works as a cook assistant. In this episode, Guzmanillo makes preparations for an important banquet in honor of a foreigner who recently arrived to Court. The cook orders him to go home, make necessary preparations and come back first thing the next morning: “Guzmanillo, vete a casa, pon cobro en lo que llevaste, abre los ojos y mira por todo. Di a tu señora que acá me quedo. Ten cuenta con la casa y en amaneciendo ven aquí volando” (I, 320). As instructed, before heading to bed Guzmán carefully hangs the bountiful selection of meats and poultry from a set of *garabatos* installed in the patio:

> la varia plumería del capón, de la perdiz, de la tórtola, de la gallina, del pavo, zorzales, pichones, codornices, pollos, palomas, gansos, que sacando por entre todo las cabezas de los conejos, parecían salir de los viveros. Colgué a otra parte perniles de tocino, piezas de ternera, venado, jabalí, carnero, lechones y cabritos (I, 320).

In this literary *bodegón*, Alemán makes use of heavy enumeration to convey the hyperbolic abundance of the store room. Dead animals hang dashingly like a hunter’s “trofeos de la victoria”, forming a “tapestry” of raw meat against the dark background of the patio. Satisfied after having completed the task, Guzmán goes to bed, as does the cook’s wife after a wine-infused dinner. In the early hours of the morning, Guzmán is woken by a loud “escaramuza de gatos” who fight over a piece of salted cod.

Fearful that the felines might steal the banquet's delicacies, leaving him in bad standing with his master, Guzmán rushes out of bed naked ("como nací del vientre de mi madre" [I, 321]) due to the unbearable heat of the night. Meanwhile, the cook's wife has done the same. Lured by the loud shrieks of cats and worried about the fate of the banquet, Guzmán and the woman meet nude in the dark patio, unaware of each other's presence: "Su pensamiento y el mío fueron uno, el alboroto igual, y la diligencia en causa propria, el ruido de ambos poco, por venir descalzos" (I, 323). In the confusion, a cat sinks its claws in Guzmán's leg, who spectacularly trips over a ladder while the cook's wife, deeply upset by the altercation, accidentally defecates. Guzmán is left to clean the mess.

In itself, the entire episode is a confusing sequence of events reminiscent of the *comedia de enredos*. Before the cats had made an appearance, Guzmán was an exemplary worker to the cook. Following the cat incident, however, things change for him. The cook's wife resents him for the humiliation he witnessed, and suspects him of having a sexual interest in her. She begins to give him a hard time while at his job. Slowly, Guzmán will become more of a pícaro and abandon the good behavior he tried so hard to maintain. Ironically, his gradual degradation is brought about by having honored his work ethics. In other words, what eventually leads him back to the pícaro's life is having stayed loyal to his master, both by not saying a word about the incident and by dealing with the wife's embarrassing waste.

The motif of the prowling cat illustrates a two-sided threat. On one side, it directly poses the danger of a spoiled banquet. Had they succeeded at taking down the food from the *garabatos*, not only had Guzmán gotten into serious trouble with his master, but the cook too with his superiors. All the more significant if we consider the cats threatened to run off with fowl between their teeth, a food whose taste was most suitable for higher classes because "the higher

the animal lived, the more refined its taste" (Atkinson 2014, 31). Ultimately, the cat's theft would have ruined the diplomatic gathering. Their dire presence thus cuts across the entire social ladder, unleashing consequences as far-reaching as affecting the court.

On the other side, though Guzmán prevents this from happening, the cats trigger other dangers. Namely, by pulling him and the wife out of bed, they expose their most vulnerable, primitive side. The encounter, equally erotic and eschatological, produces an irreconcilable breach between Guzmán and the woman. While semi-nude in the dark, the power dynamics of their difference in social rank is suspended. That is, at least until Guzmán cleans her excrement: "me la dejó en portales y patio, todo lleno de huesezuelos de guindas, que debía de comérselas enteras. Tuve que trabajar por un buen rato en barrerlo y lavarlo, por estar a mi cargo la limpieza" (I, 324).

Her waste is a crude reminder of the food Guzmán wants but cannot possess. In recognizing the signs of the edible in it, he suggests that, whereas the pícaro scrapes the kitchen floor looking for the last crumb, the woman's gluttony is such that she even eats the pits. This passage grotesquely contrasts the wasteful lifestyle of the cook and his wife with the precarious conditions of Guzmán and his fellow workers: "¡Cuál andaba todo, qué sin orden, cuenta, ni concierto! ¡Qué sin duelo se pedía, qué sin dolor se daba, con qué gloria se recebía, qué poco se gastaba, cuánto se rehundía! Pedían azúcar para tortas y para tortas azúcar, dos y tres veces para cada cosa" (I, 325). In the face of such unjust abundance, Guzmán goes back to his picaresque ways, literally adopting the ways of the cat when he says he feels like doing a "gatada" (I, 327), that is, "el hurto que se hace con engaño, astucia y simulación" (Covarrubias 1611, 32).

At this moment of the narrative, Guzmán is still a boy in his early teenage years. For Julio Rodríguez Luis, this scene marks a shift in his demeanor, turning the timid boy into the

arrogant young pícaro who deems himself superior (1970, 320-321). When he first arrives to serve the cook, Guzmán is diligent and well-behaved, even docile. He does not complain or respond to reprimands, and shows respect to his superiors (Figure 8). But the cats —long-standing symbols of sexuality (Darnton 1984, 95)—triggers the disorderly energy that is more characteristic of boys his age. In early modernity and even today, children are often regarded as akin to animals for their incapacity to control their passions, as well as for their supposed dependence of human adults.[35] Henceforth, the young Guzmán will fully enter adolescence, giving in to his appetite and resisting the superiors he serves.

Ever scouring for food to survive and causing chaos in the process, it is not surprising that cats and pícaros appear in close relation to each other. As I have outlined before, pícaros operate literally and figuratively at floor-level. Cats do so as well. Covarrubias's *Tesoro* defines cat as "animal doméstico que limpia la casa de ratones" and "un animal sucio que suele engendrarse de la corrupción" (1611, 861). Like cats, picaresque workers keep the kitchen space clean, albeit in different ways. They too boast a negative reputation of being filthy stealthy creatures who will snatch food away when given the slightest opportunity.

Consider in contrast Covarrubias's definition of dog: "animal conocido y familiar, símbolo de fidelidad y de reconocimiento a los mendrugos de pan que le echa su amo" (1170). Where as the dog is defined in terms of its intimate relation with humans, the cat is defined first in terms of its domestic functionality. In that sense, we can begin to flesh out the cat's relation not with its human "master," but rather with a very specific kind of person: the domestic worker.

[35] Animals and children, as well as other subjects like people with disabilities or members of certain races and ethnic groups, have been marginalized and excluded in anthropocentric and adult-focused society, as pointed by scholars of Animal Studies and Childhood Studies. They can be seen as parallel subjects in as much as they embody notions of primitiveness and the need to for discipline and education. In early modernity specifically, they both were also regarded as property; see Behrend-Martínez. See Donaldson and Kymlicka, and the collection edited by Feuerstein and Nolte-Odhiambo.

When Guzmán cleans the woman's waste, he is debased to a primordial level that borders dehumanization. Stripped from his dignity (and his clothes), Guzmán is unable to further sustain the proper ethos of the professional kitchen. By making him fully appropriate the ways of the cat, Alemán presents Guzmán as a worker who purposefully and strategically blends with the very category assigned to depreciate him.

Figure 8. *Detail of frontispiece. Mateo Alemán, Vida y hechos del pícaro Guzmán de Alfarache, Jerónimo Verdussen, Antwerp, 1681. Biblioteca Nacional de España.*

It is important to consider the link between cats and pícaros as being rooted in the material and social universe of the kitchen.[36] Doing so allows for a mutually informative reading

[36] In the essay "Does 'The Animal' exist?", Susan J. Pearson and Mary Weismantel call for an interdisciplinary study of animals that incorporates the symbolic, material and social aspect of animal-human relations, and urge scholars to "recover animals' physical presence in social life" (2010, 22). In this sense, I also follow Ortega's approximation to the genre of *bodegones*, which steers away from a purely symbolic reading of the object: "esta leitura simbólica acaba deixando de lado a presença sensível da natureza e transformando o quadro em uma mecânica analógica excessivamente próxima da pintura didática, segundo a qual as frutas já não são suficientes por si mesmas e se tornam mediações de outro discurso, unívoco" (2013, 111).

of the cats' presence in art and literature, while also expanding our understanding of the kitchen-scape by considering the interaction between humans and non-humans. By considering the role of the cat in the social life of the kitchen, we can trace the historical and symbolic transformations of this space and those who inhabited it.

In the 1607 treatise *De los oficios más comunes*, for example, Trinitary reformist *s*an Juan Bautista de la Concepción recommended that convent cooks deposited all scraps of food in a large pot to prevent the smallest bit from being wasted, be it by falling on the floor or into the mouths of cats (1999, 481). On a similar note, he urged against feeding cats, no matter how much (or how charmingly) they begged with their little paws ("aunque se le ponga al lado y le den con la manecilla" [504]). He instead advised readers to let them hunt for mice, "que en ratones les puso Dios su ración." This brief note suggests cats frequently visited kitchens foraging for food, often with successful results and human collaboration. All the more, the learned begging behavior suggests a closeness between cats and kitchen workers.[37] As Covarrubias notes in the definiton for *engatar*, cats are known for deceiving their owners through "cuddles" in order to steal from their plate (1611, 865).

This relation between the cat and kitchen is apparent in market and kitchen scenes by Flemish artists. Painters such as Frans Snyders and Paul de Vos, apprentices at Rubens' workshop in Antwerp, specialized in representations of food and nature, where cats often appear menacingly eyeing bountiful tables. Their works, which were immensely popular and influential

[37] The link between cats, lowly domestic work, and the traits we identify as picaresque has left numerous traces in Hispanic cultural imagination. As early as 1611, Covarrubias registered gato as "los ladrones rateros." Autoridades later registered the verb "gatear", meaning "hurtar, por la analogía a los gatos que se llevan cuanto deja el descuido en materia comestible". From this we also got gatada and gatazo, both synonyms of deceitful robbery. Many cat-derived derogatory terms and proverbs have made their way to contemporary Spanish. Today, the modern *Diccionario de americanismos* accounts for different meanings in Guatemala, Mexico, Spain, Honduras and Chile, all of which appertain to lower social strata, domestic and lowly work, and robbery of food.

across Spain, hung on the walls at the court and the homes of the Spanish aristocracy.[38] Their characteristic feasts of animals and produce—specially suited to adorn recreational hunting states of the nobility—are commonly haunted or disrupted by the presence of domestic felines.

Let us take, for instance, Paul de Vos's *Cat fight in a Larder* (Figure 9). De Vos's, one of Frans Snyders's disciples, chose to make the lurking cats the central subjects of his painting. A group of cats have entered through a window, wreaking havoc in what looks like a typical still-life table. De Vos has captured the exact moment of ruckus, the result of an outside threat coming in. In so far as the painting clearly breaks the divide between the orderly inside and the menacing outside, this scene holds a parallel with the kitchens of the picaresque. Both cats and pícaros embody the potential of disrupting order.

In contrast to other works where cats appear lurking underneath the kitchen table, here they have abandoned the periphery of the floor and taken the very center of the frame. No longer an accessory to the scene, the cats are subjectified with distinctive expressions. Another painting entitled *The cook* (Figure 10), by an anonymous disciple of Bartolomé Esteban de Murillo, features the anthropomorphized figures of a cat and a dog. A female cook and cherub-like child queasily stare them. Interestingly, the animals do not project their usual demeanor. Rather than trying to steal the food before them, they appear to be at work, turning the meat over the cooking fire. They bear vicious facial expressions and are almost in conversation, as if plotting. Their strange position as makeshift kitchen workers, alongside the distrustful looks of the woman and cherub-like child, inevitably mirror the suspicion with which the presence of lower-class individuals was met inside kitchens.

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[38] Commercial and artistic exchanges between Netherlands and Spain remained even after the Eighty Years' War (1568-1648). See Diéguez-Rodríguez for a study of art trade between the two regions. See also Newman's chapter, which examines how Dutch painters capitalized on Spanish taste for Flemish art to sell their work. For a discussion of Spanish patronage of Flemish painters, see Pérez Preciado.

José Juan Pérez Preciado, curator of Flemish art at Madrid's Museo del Prado, has interpreted the cat's appearance in kitchen scenes as having political underpinnings. In the context of the Crown's lack of control and proper government over the population, the cat would have symbolized the constant threat of social rebellion (2003, 258). Such a reading is made more relevant if we consider the cat as representing informal poorly-paid workers. In Francisco de Quevedo's Romance LXXII, "Consultación de los gatos", a group of stray cats gathered on a rooftop to complain about their miserable hunger-stricken lives and poorly remunerated work. Collapsing the job of cleaning with the need for eating, one of the cats says: "A puro barrer sartenes / He perdido los mostachos" (Quevedo 1996, 750; vv.93-94) Through the voices of different cats, the poem narrates their trajectories from master to master in classic picaresque convention. Their masters fail to recognize their work—that is, to keep mice astray, the reader is led to assume—, and in fact starve them and physically punish them for no apparent reason. The cats thus assemble in a guild-like conference to discuss their living and working conditions. By replacing the pícaro with a cat, the poem traces a parallel between animal cruelty—of which cats were all too common targets—and worker mistreatment.

The presence of the cat dramatizes the many impending dangers contained within the kitchen universe—whether it is the table, the cooking fire, the *despensa* or *bodegón*. The cat, who is supposed to assist humans in keeping a mice-free space, is more of a trouble-maker than a solution. If, as animal studies scholars have suggested, animals are either forced into labor or into affective domestic relationships, kitchen cats reject both modalities of relating to humans.[39] They

[39] By looking at animals such as cows, chickens, pigs, historian Jason Hribal (2003) has argued that animals, whose uncompensated and forced labor has been instrumental to the development of capitalist and industrial societies, must be understood as being a part of the working class. On these modalities of human and non-human relations, Pearson and Weismantel note that "the class structure pertaining to animals today—like that of humans—has reached a dichotomization previously unimaginable. The contemporary global economy produces social extremes, condemning some animals to the naked coercion

resist the efforts of humans to banish them from the ecosystem of the kitchen. With every bite they snatch, they challenge the notion of private property, and of different foods as being more suitable for different species. With every window they trespass, they challenge the divide between human and non-human dwelling spaces. Cats remind humans of the artificiality of such divisions, and of the primordial force of appetite common to both species.

Figure 9. *Paul de Vos, Cat Fight in a Larder, Museo del Prado, Madrid*

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and social isolation imposed by modern factory farming, while consigning others to the affective discipline and inescapable intimacy of the bourgeois home (2010, 29).

Figure 10. *Anonymous, The Cook, Museo del Prado, Madrid.*

Rather than standing as a mere symbol of something else, the cats coexist with pícaros within a system that equally excludes animals and lower-classes. As formulated by Karen Raber, "like servants and other marginal members of the early modern household, they are the mirrors of shame, reminders of private abuses and secret evil" (2009, 98). Together, they embody the threats of the outside and the unattainable ideal of an orderly self-contained kitchen. This connection is materially condensed by Montiño in a recipe for *migas de gato:*

> Las migas de gato se hacen de cortezas de pan, cortadas con cuchillo muy delgadas. Henchirás el plato deste pan y tendrás un poco de agua cociendo sazonada de sal y pimienta y un poquito de ajo, y azafrán y remojarlas las migas con ello y cuando estén bien estofadas, calentarás un poco de aceite bien caliente o un poco de manteca de vacas, y echárselo has por encima. Sobre estas migas se suelen poner huevos frescos escalfados o estrellados blandos y se les suele echar unas veces una poca de alcaravea. Y no te espantes porque pongo algunas cosas extraordinarias; esto bien sé que lo saben hacer los oficiales, mas porque sé que

> aunque sean muy ordinarias, hay mozos y mozas que no lo saben, ni sus amos les han de dar recaudo para los platos regalados, y querría que se aprovechasen todos (1611, 107).

In this recipe, Montiño excuses himself for including such an ordinary dish that surely any unskilled cook can make. He does so with the kitchen's *mozos* and *mozas* in mind, who likely did not receive the necessary resources for more elaborate dishes, and thus had to exercise more creativity when cooking. The recipe equals *mozos* and cats by means of their poor crumb-based alimentation (though *migas* are re-labeled as frugal and resourceful). Montiño's apologetic tone suggests the uncomfortable move of including the humble dish in a noble cookbook. Ironically, the unwelcome cat-pícaro dyad infiltrated the pages of Spain's most popular cookbook in the form of a desirable food, making its way from underneath to the top of the table.

In the passage that opens this section, Guzmán falls from commendable assistant to deceiving pícaro after he crosses paths with the felines. It is the confusion stirred by the cats that will force him into the degrading task of cleaning after the cook's wife. Indeed, after having been in touch with her smelly feces, the woman's shame is transformed into disgust for Guzmán. He is no longer worthy enough of being looked at or spoken to: "nunca más le conocí el rostro a derechas ni atravesó palabra conmigo." Guzmán's mistress deprives him of language and face-to-face communication, denying him the defining traits of humanity and selfhood. Ultimately, his cleaning job reduces the young boy into a nonhuman in the eyes of his masters.

Beyond the negative traits that unite them—deceit, trickery, gluttony— and that make them both undesirable presences in the noble kitchen, they share another. In his lengthy definition of the animal, Covarrubias notes that the cat "con ser tan casero, jamás se domestica, porque no se deja llevar de un lugar a otro." Neither does the itinerant pícaro. Equally excluded from the codified world of the noble hygiene-focused kitchen, their non-belonging provides them with the possibility

of mutating and living with liberty.[40] A dialogue between Lorza and Medrano *Diálogo de los pajes*, sums it up all too well:

> Lorza —Pero, decidme, ¿con qué salsa coméis la vida que habéis contado?
> Medrano — La principal y más gustosa es la libertad con que nos dejan vivir (Hermosilla 1901, 11).

Though hungry, they never fully obey those above them. They deceive who they ought to serve and serve only themselves, mocking the codes that attempt to govern the rowdy domestic space.

Los que son pícaros bellacos nunca son cocineros

I have thus far suggested that we ought to look at the pícaro's presence in the kitchen in so far as a member of its working force. And while I understand cooking as any kind of manual work behind food-processing, the picaresque archive presents instances of cooking that go beyond the repetitive tasks of preparation such as cleaning, scraping or chopping. That is, though the epitet *pícaro de cocina* might suggest their necessary sub-ordinance to a cook, numerous moments in the literature feature pícaros engaging in more "creative" labor; namely, planning, seasoning, conceiving and even selling a dish. Such episodes put forward a notion of cooking outside the space of professional or elite kitchens. Rather, they offer a view of cooking in the context of poverty and an urban street culture wherein scant resources are cleverly transformed by the pícaro's art of *ingenio*. As the following pages will show, their deceitful cooking often destabilizes the categories of what is edible, marketable and appetizing.

In *La vida y hechos…*, Estebanillo Gónzalez takes on cooking jobs in numerous occasions throughout the autobiography, eventually making a name for himself as a talented and sought-after cook in the army. As early as chapter two, Estebanillo begins working as a cook

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[40] Maravall sees liberty as one of the defining attitudes of pícaros. He writes that pícaros reject the norms imposed by society and replace them with behaviors founded on individual will and free choice. See pages (1986, 327-349).

while at the service of Felipe Navarro del Viamonte's ship. Though at first disappointed for having fallen from the rank of *alférez* to cook, Estebanillo settles for his new job and feels content at his "aplaudido y celebrado fogón" (I, 88). That is, until misfortune strikes. With a dirty pot on one hand and a bucket with meat on the other, Estebanillo stretches his arm to reach for seawater, only to have a wave snatch both of them. With no meat to cook for Don Felipe, he is left with a pot of cod stew. As cod was no meal fit for a master of don Felipe's rank, Estebanillo resorts to stealing a pot of meat from another soldier who played the dice. Estebanillo seizes the opportunity and swaps his cod with the soldier's meat.

> Yo, por no dejar a mi amo sin comer, ni hallar por mis dineros con que encubrir el robo marítimo, arrimé al fogón la piñata llena de tajadas de bacallao, pensando que en virtud del ajaso y pimentón supliera la falta del sucedido fracaso; y habiendo espiado una olla de un capitán (pienso que podrida, pues tan hedionda fue para mí), y visto que el guardián della se entretenía en la crujía en el juego de dados, le di [a] él gatazo, y a su olla asalto, pues yendo a mi rancho, y trayendo un pequeño caldero vacío, traspasé el bacalao a él y la olla del capitán a la mía (I, 90).

Estebanillo turns to the art of *sazón* to deceive the soldier and his master. In masking the cod's taste, his garlicky-peppery seasoning transforms into something akin to the *olla podrida* in the men's palates. While Estebanillo's plan might simply strike us as a text-book move for a pícaro, it can be understood within the culinary culture of his time. Here, the lines that divide picaresque deceit from cooking are tenuous.

As historian of early modern French cooks Jennifer Davis has noted, a cook's talent was measured by their ability to masquerade one food as another. Intricate decorations, edible sculptures and food illusions adorned the tables of the rich to provide guests with visual entertainment.[41] In her study, she suggests this idea was encapsulated in the French verbs *guiser*

[41] For example, in a recipe for stuffed chicken in *Arte de cozina*, Martínez Montiño specifies one such illusion: "en cada cabeza del pollo pondrás los pies de manera que parezcan cuernos de venados" (1611, 18).

and *déguiser,* derived from the phrase *en guise*—"to prepare in the manner of." In its more specific culinary connotations, the verbs signaled the central element of a specific aesthetic of cooking; namely, the notion of artificial substitution (Davis 2013, 20). The ability to mask one food as another evidenced "a cook's skill, taste, and economy, as well as his role in insulating consumers from the base origins of their meals" (22). This practice took on increasingly negative connotations as "artifice provoked profound concern among diners, who periodically feared they might mistakenly ingest inedible or taboo materials"(23).

In the hands of cooks with little resources, artifice was all the more suspicious. Cooking like Estebanillo's represents the flip-side of the sensorial allure of *guisar.* Covarrubias' definition of *guisado* condenses the idea succinctly: "lo aderezado, sazonado, lo que está en razón y en su punto. Desaguisado vale lo contrario" (1611, 915).[42] In turn, the meaning of *desaguisado* expanded to signify any wrongdoing (611), the accustomed modus operandi for any pícaro.[43] *Guisar* is here a way to commit offence; cooking as a means for deceit. The seasonings mentioned by Estebanillo make his deceitful *guisado* all the more treacherous, as both garlic and chillies were closely associated with a more humble diet.[44] For cooks like Estebanillo, illusions are crafted not for the sake of guest enjoyment, but for individual benefit. Ultimately, it is his culinary talent that, albeit fleetingly, allows him to deceive the palates of others and keep the good pot for his master.

In another moment of the novel, Estebanillo strategically utilizes his expertise of highly

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[42] The trilingual dictionary by Girolamo Vittori (1609) gives the following Italian and French equivalents for *desaguisar:* "defaisonner, deffaçoner, transformare, cangiare" (205).
[43] The binomial *guisar-desaguisar* is used in this sense by Quevedo in a satirical poem precisely to refer to the culinary reputation of bodegoneros: "Como me había de hacer bodegonero / para guisar, y hacer desaguisados" (1996, vv.289-291, 625).
[44] As culinary historian María Ángeles Pérez Samper notes, peppers spread widely across all social groups, but particularly among members of popular classes (2014, 99).

sophisticated cookery for personal gain. While at the service of don Pedro de Ulloa in Bavaria, he is assigned a German official to provide the regiment with supplies. Unable to understand a word of Castilian or Italian, he communicates with Estebanillo through a servant. Quickly realizing the broken communication as a golden opportunity, Estebanillo asks for a large and confusing list of groceries to cook "relleno imperial aovado", a meal that will allow him to fool and steal from his superiors. After the astonished official fulfills his absurd requests, Estebanillo proceeds to explain the comically complicated method of preparation[45]:

> Repare vuesa merced en este relleno, porque es lo mismo que el juego del gato al rato: este huevo está dentro deste pichón, el pichón ha de estar dentro de una perdiz, la perdiz dentro de una polla, la polla dentro de un capón, el capón dentro de un faisán, el faisán dentro de un pavo, el pavo dentro de un cabrito, el cabrito dentro de un carnero, el carnero dentro de una ternera y la ternera dentro de una vaca. Todo esto ha de ir lavado, pelado, desollado y lardeado, fuera de la vaca, que ha de quedar con su pellejo. Y cuando se vayan metiendo unos en otros, como cajas de Inglaterra, por que ninguno se salga de su asiento, los ha de ir el zapatero cosiendo a dos cabos, y, en estando zurcidos en el pellejo y panza de la vaca, ha de hacer el sepolturero una profunda fosa, y echar en el suelo della un carro de carbón, y luego la dicha vaca, y ponerle encima el otro carro, y darle fuego cuatro horas, poco más o menos. Y después, sacándola, queda todo hecho una sustancia y un manjar tan sabroso y regalado, que antiguamente lo comían los emperadores el día de su coronación. Por cuya causa, y por ser el huevo la piedra fundamental de aquel guisado, le daban por nombre relleno imperial aovado (I, 301).

Estebanillo's dish follows yet strains culinary conventions of the time. On a formal level, the concatenation is reminiscent of the early modern cooking recipe. In contrast to modern recipes, which generally provide a list of ingredients and clear steps, early modern ones do not include such information. Rather, they tend to mirror oral discourse more closely. Here, stylistic features

[45] "El juego del gato al rato" refers to a traditional comical song and short story that uses concatenation and accumulation. Margit Frenk records one variant in her *Nuevo Corpus* ["Este es el gato, / que mató al rato" (1435)]. It also appears in Don Quixote (I, 16): "Y así como suele decirse «el gato al rato, el rato a la cuerda, la cuerda al palo», daba el arriero a Sancho, Sancho a la moza, la moza a él, el ventero a la moza." For a discussion of accumulative constructions such as this, see Hatzfeld (1996, 318).

such as the polysyndeton and the anaphora create a rhythmic pattern that mimics the frenzy of the cooking act. This "copia" or redundancy—residues of oral culture, as Walter Ong would have it—is characteristic of early written recipes.[46] Consider Montiño's instructions to make *pichones encapados*, a similar dish of stuffed meat:

> Echarás en la sartén la carne picada, y lo freirás; luego echa ocho huevos crudos, y revuélvelo todo con la paleta, hasta que esté bien seco el relleno. Luego tórnalo al tablero, y pícalo muy bien, y métele otros cuatro, o seis huevos crudos, y sazona con todas especias, y agrio de limón, y pondrás yemas de huevo duras en el pellejo, y cañas de vaca en trozos […] (64)

Moreover, the accumulation of ingredients emphasized by the polysyndeton—in particular, of meat— evokes the wasteful abundance of regal banquets, while the involvement of a shoemaker and a gravedigger (in addition to the cook and official) signal the unnecessary large human force of elite kitchen labor. Any modern reader of premodern cookbooks will be perplexed at the intense laboriousness of its recipes. In the aforementioned recipe, for example, *pichones* are stuffed with eggs, veal or goat, bacon, beef, and herbs, served with almonds and an optional topping of marzipan and egg yolks. In addition to the skinning, chopping, frying, stirring and seasoning, Montiño adds, the bird's skin must be carefully sewn with a single thread to keep the stuffing from oozing out.

In light of this, the passage in the novel suggests that our perplexity before its elaboration can be explained not solely in terms of the distance that separates us from early modern culture. Indeed, the author's caricature of a recipe, and the astonishment it provokes, indicate dishes of the sort were met with perplexity, at least by the common people.[47] With a dish that was more

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[46] Ong writes: "Early written texts, throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance are often bloated with 'amplification', annoyingly redundant by modern standards. Concern with copia remains intense in western cultura so long as the culture sustains massive oral residue—which is roughly until the age of Romanticism or even beyond" (2002, 40).
[47] Sancho Panza sees with perplexity the splendor of Camacho's wedding banquet in *Don Quijote*: "Todo

than enough to feed an entire village, Estebanillo's trick appears almost justifiable before the reader's eyes.

The convoluted construction of the dish also echoes the structure of a chain. An egg is encased in animals that get gradually larger, the complicated filling ending up inside a cow. Once cooked, it will stuff the emperor, the ultimate predator. Except here, the dish is not served to diners at an imperial table, but to a common mercenary. In this way, Estebanillo symbolically takes the place of the crowned ruler, a move that takes the pícaro's desire for *medro* to the limit. "Viendo los criados que me abundaba el vino en la cocina y que me sobraban los regalos que el patrón me enviaba, dieron cuenta a mi amo, recelosos de la cautela" (I, 302). This reversal, more than just a self-aggrandizing gesture, criticizes the grandeur and excess of the display of Imperial power. It suggests that the King, too, is prone to deceit and fool those who he is supposed to serve.

The *relleno imperial* acquires even more significance later during the battle of Nördlingen, once the ruse has been revealed. Scared of the strident bangs of battle, Estebanillo takes refuge inside a pit underneath the decomposed body of a horse: "habiéndome tendido en tierra (aunque vuéltole la cara por el mal olor), que parecíamos los dos águilas imperiales sin pluma" (I, 308). The eagle—symbol of the Habsurg Empire—and the horse—companion *par excellence* of military men—are here stripped of their dignified stature.[48] In a poignant interpretation of this image, Nicolas Spadaccini notes that "more than just a playful, burlesque, allusion to a fool's cowardly conduct in war, it is the demythification of Imperial power" (1978,

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lo miraba Sancho Panza, y todo lo contemplaba y de todo se aficionaba" (II, 700).

[48] Horses, as noted by Kathryn Renton, "marked access to the prized status of a knight, and more generally, symbolized political power, military powress and social staus" (2020, 112). Even with new developments in military technology, the horse maintained its importance as a tool for the militia. In the Iberian peninsula in particular, the relation between horses and arms was particularly strong, where "the urban patriciate […]remained stubbornly military in nature" (Edwards et al. 2012, 100).

60). That demythification is further unfolded by Estebanillo once out of his hiding place, when he yells: "¡Viva la casa de Austria! ¡Imperio, Imperio! ¡Avanza, avanza!" (I, 310) His solemn war cry falls on deaf ears when his comrades, unmoved by the prospect of defending the dignity of the Spanish Empire, begin to backtrack in fear. The captain prompts Estebanillo to pick up a weapon and fight, "porque quería ver si sabía tan bien pelear como engañar villanos con rellenos imperiales" (I, 311). But much like the others, Estebanillo flees.

From the grotesquely excessive dish, to the moribund symbols of martial power and the futile call to arms, this rich passage signals the disillusionment of Spainards, in particular to the men of arms charged with defending Spain's honor abroad, by reducing Imperial symbols to its most material consumable foundation. In abandoning his comrades and ignoring his captain, Estebanillo—self-proclaimed "rey de los marmitones" (I, 308)—shows he is more fit for cooking (and eating) *rellenos imperiales* than fighting in the name of *águilas imperiales*. The only place worthy of ruling or defending is the kitchen of which he is king.

For obvious reasons, one of the salient characteristics of the pícaro's cooking is its creative resourcefulness. Estebanillo's long list of ingredients for the *relleno* is so because he seldom has access to such abundance. Pícaros generally make do with what they have at hand, squeezing the most out of very little. For example, after having lost his good standing with his master, Guzmán is left to his own devices to earn money. He transforms his master's leftovers into food to sell on the street:

> Un día de fiesta, como era de costumbre, se hicieron unas empanadas y pasteles, de que sobró un poco de masa, y otro día lunes habían de correrse toros en la plaza. Estaba en la basura una cañilla de vaca casi entera. Yo tenía necesidad, para holgarme, de unas blanquillas, y en un pensamiento empané mi zancarrón, que como lo puse no diferenciaba por defuera de un muy hermoso conejo (I, 327).

Guzmán manages to make *empanadas* with the little meat on the cow's hoof. Disguising it as

rabbit's meat, he sells them on the square to a clueless *escudero*, which ultimately gets him fired.[49] In Michel de Certeau's terms, the pícaros "make do" by using the materials available to them (the cook's leftovers) while remaining within established syntaxes (the culinary syntagm of the meat *empanada*), but make them function in another register (a beautiful rabbit *empanada*), clandestinely transforming them to their advantage.[50]

Guzmán's street food, while a classic picaresque ruse, can also be understood within urban culinary culture. As Sara Pennell has explored in the case of early modern England, selling food made from leftovers was a well-extended practice, as "the recycling of foodstuffs and meals was a natural by-product of the city's perceived collective stomach" (2000, 242). Workers like Guzmán hardly survived solely on poor pay, which forced them to recycle food for public consumption. In early modern London, this was seen by the elite as a sign of the decadence of domestic economy (242). More broadly, the purchase of ready-made food also highlighted the "difficulties of sustaining domestic sufficiency" (242).

In this sense, the cook's outrage points to a tension in the labor dynamics of elite households. Guzmán monetization of waste questions the category of what is edible and marketable to the public, something usually in the hands of the master cook. Such an attempt at having an additional source of income is interpreted by the cook as a betrayal of their relationship: "¿A vos daba mi pan y regalaba?" (I, 328) Guzmán's *empanadas* signal a change in the master-worker relation in the context of urban space. No longer sustainable as it stands, Guzmán turns to the streets looking for financial independence, as well as other modes of sociability.

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[49] Guzmán's patron inevitably reminds of the hungry escudero in Lazarillo's third chapter, who also recognizes the streets as a source of desirable food. When some extra money comes his way, the escudero urges Lázaro to go out and buy food, so that they can finally eat "como condes".
[50] See "Making Do: Use and Tactics" of *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984, 29-42).

His food selling is not just a source of income, but a way of occupying the baroque city—the pícaro's true ecosystem. As noted by Maravall in his study of the genre, pícaros reject the nostalgia of the homeland and the confines of the domestic in favor of the anonymity and liberty provided by the confusion of urban space.[51] In this case, the space of an elite kitchen in favor of the democratizing possibilities of the street. Food-selling practices like this would have developed due to high immigration to urban centres (Maravall 1986, 566). More specifically, Guzmán's cooking illustrates two opposing styles of culinary practice. On one side, the elite dining of lavish banquets presided by the cook, and, on the other, the more practical, convenient and affordable food made by Guzmán.[52]

Like Guzmán, Estebanillo also sells food as a side hustle, albeit in completely different circumstances. Whereas Guzmán sells in the streets of the city, he does so in the context of the devastation brought about by the Thirty Years' War.[53] Bad harvests, inflation, destruction of crops, and the exorbitant feeding needs of troops led to widespread hunger and poverty.

After the battle of Nördlingen referenced above, Estebanillo's master leaves for Austria, leaving him "huérfano de amo, viudo de cocina y temeroso de gastar la hacienda" (II, 8). Left to his own devices, he starts making *empanadas alemanas* to sell. Were he in England, the narrator says, he would have instead made English pasties. With this small side note, the narrator cheekily suggests a multicultural knowledge provided by his many travels. [54]As Carolyn Nadeau

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[51] See pages 698-744 of Maravall's (1986) *La literatura picaresca.*

[52] Interestingly, in contrast to his reaction, the poor squire fooled by Guzmán observes but does not participate in the indignation. The narrator's silence on the victim's perspective might suggest to us a degree of familiarity with a scene like this.

[53] Bad harvests, inflation, destruction of crops, and the exorbitant feeding needs of troops led to widespread hunger and poverty. Sigrun Haude (2021) notes that the crisis impacted civilans and soldiers alike. In particular, food shortages worsened with the passing of large troops. See pages 52-56.

[54] In stark contrast to other picaresque novels, *La vida y hechos* takes place in many different geographies across the continent. According to Carreira and Cid, Estebanillo's "internationalism", his many voyages, "le proporciona una capacidad de reconocimiento de la alteridad de otros pueblos, y de la relativización

has argued, early modern cooks showed a growing interest in foreign foods, and a developing consciousness of national gastronomic identities (2022, 45-69). The pícaro's intrinsic wanderlust allows him to experience the foods of different regions, and hence to adapt the products he sells to the clientele in question. Such itinerancy makes him a proto-cosmopolitan cook whose knowledge of foreign food cultures provides him with a competitive advantage. More importantly, Estebanillo's flexible taste, open to a variety of foods, points to a modern sensibility of taste (51).

Just like Alemán's protagonist, the soldier resorts to leftovers: "buscaba la harina en los villajes donde sus moradores se habían huído, y la carne en la campaña adonde sus dueños della se habían desmontado" (II, 8). Except they are not the crumbs of the nobility but the food left behind by those who, willingly or due to war, migrated from rural areas. Fearing the sustained violence of war, many civilians fled their homes, leaving behind abandoned cultivated lands and depopulated villages across Bavaria (Wilson 2009, 802). This image of a ghostly landscape devastated by war—"como si la campaña fuese tumba de caballos muertos" (II, 9)—is here highlighted by the filling Estebanillo uses for his *empanadas.* "Hacía cada noche media docena, las dos de vaca y cuatro de carne de caballo" (II, 8). Once again, horses appear stripped from their associations to chivalry and masculinity. Before, the dead horse had served as a shield and not as an extension of the soldier's power. Here, its meat is turned into food for soldiers who happily but unknowingly eat the ultimate symbol of military force.[55] In narratives of war and conquest, eating horse meat often appears as a final heroic action to survive a siege.[56] For

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de la 'identidad' propia" (1990, xxvii).

[55] Peter Wilson notes German ecosystems were severely affected by the Thirty Years' War. Along with an increase in rodents, wolves and wild pigs that affected food production, other animals (like cats and dogs) disappeared as they began to be consumed as food (Wilson 784-785). Livestock, he details, was particularly affected "because it could be rounded up and driven away by soldiers" (785).

[56] In *Segunda carta de relación*, for example, Cortés describes how, desperate for food during battle, he

Estebanillo, horse is devoid of such symbolism and is instead commoditized. With his culinary talent, he turns a taboo food into a desirable treat to the point that he is not able to meet the growing demand. His clients' hunger for the *empanadas caballunas* puts forth a quasi cannibalistic metaphor where, through the ingestion of their emblematic animal companion, military men consume a part of themselves. This image, wherein the men pay to consume themselves, highlights the destructiveness and absurdity of war, which is emphasized by the fact Estebanillo sells the food by raffle.

Eventually, the success of Estebanillo's *empanadas* turns into a thriving business that includes the selling of cheese, liquor, tobacco and playing cards. His good cooking provides him with the monetary means to survive, something serving the army fails to do time and again. With the *empanadas*, Estebanillo turns the symbolic—of no use in the precarious battlefield—into material and bodily sustenance, and even a source of social prestige: "Cada día iba creciendo el caudal y aumentándose el crédito y la opinión" (II,30). Ultimately, cooking (and not riding) a horse yields greater benefits and a higher possibility for advancement.

"Los que son pícaros bellacos nunca son cocineros" (1611, 4), wrote Montiño in the opening pages of his *Arte de cozina.* That undoubtedly depends on our definition of what a cook does. As we have seen, the literary archive expands the kitchen of cookbooks by imagining cooking on its margins. In the passages analyzed, pícaros temporarily cease to work at ground level and take "el cetro de la cuchara" (I, 292), as put by Estebanillo, to reign over their own cooking. With the use of unexpected ingredients and often taking the streets as their table,

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and his men eat a fallen horse: ""nos mataron un caballo uqe, aunque Dios sabe cuánta falta nos hizo y cuánta pena recibimos con habérnosle muerto, porque no teníamos, después de Dios, otra seguridad sino la de los caballos, nos consoló su carne, porque la comimos, sin dejar cuero ni otra cosa" (1866, 138). They are forced to eat the animals that produce fear in the indigenous people and that, albeit partially, sustains and constructs their power over them.

Guzmán de Alfarache and Estebanillo González put forth a notion of the trade for which *ingenio* and good *sazón* is as important (if not more) as it is for the cook hosting a banquet. "También los pobres y humildes saben hacer cosas de ingenio" (II, 155), we read at the end of *Estebanillo*. Though the narrator is here referencing his talent as a poet, the idea of pícaros as artists can also be understood in the realm of cuisine—perhaps the humblest of arts. Their ingenious dishes reflect a popular and urban culinary culture that, in addition to providing a different mode of participating in economic activity, emerges as a countercurrent to the exclusionary politics of aristocratic cooking. Even more, long after he has replaced the ladles and knives for the buffoon's attire, his days as a cook still permeate his writing. At the very end of the novel, when narrating the death of his beloved master Piccolomini, the now old Estebanillo adds a final elegiac *romance* to cleanse the reader's saddened palate, "por que sea postre agridulce como granada" (II, 375). In reconfiguring the poem as dessert, the narrator retrospectively conceives his life writing as a meal he has cooked for the reader. In a way, then, Estebanillo never fully abandons the creative craft of cooking.

¡Viva la grasa!: Resistance and Collective Action in the Kitchen

On December 29 1657, a heated brawl broke out at the palace of El Pardo, the royal hunting residence located in the outskirts of Madrid. Six people lost their lives, more than twenty were injured and many others were taken away to the court's prison cells. Engaged in the pitched battle were two rather unexpected factions: the palace guards and the *galopines de cocina*, or kitchen bus boys. As narrated by the chronicler Jerónimo de Barrionuevo, the kitchen staff ardently chanted in unison "¡Viva el Rey y la grasa, y muera el mal gobierno! ¡Viva el Rey y la grasa, y muera el mal gobierno!" (Barrionuevo 1968, 136). With what we know about the

constitution of early modern Spanish kitchens, the reasons behind their galopines' discontent are not hard to imagine. With their burlesque military cry, they were literally demanding to *bring home the bacon*[57]. That is, they simultaneously celebrated and demanded the food rations they were owed.

The paradigmatic pícaro has been understood as an individualistic outcast essentially disconnected from real social relations and incapable of creating a community of his own. Following Durkheim, Maravall sees this—anomie—as one of the pícaro's fundamental traits. Pícaros reject the norms and values of social structures because they can never attain their goals of *medro* within them. In a society that will never fully integrate them, they asume an amoral and "deviated" conduct that denies social solidarity[58].

This riotous cry might suggest otherwise. These galopines rise against the injustices brought about by reform. Their amusing slogan could have very well been among the pages of the *Estebanillo*, whose protagonist always takes the dignity of war with a grain of salt. Fat becomes King and, like him, it is the only one that could save the kitchen underbelly from starving.[59] These galopines turned day-dreaming of better days into a united front that, albeit for one day, made their working conditions and demands unmistakably visible.

The presence of pícaros in the kitchen challenges our understanding of cooking. Their

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[57] See Jodi Campbell's *At the First Table,* which provides ample documentation of the ways in which food was used to perform social status and identity. On the matter of rations, see pp.52-53. See AGP, leg. 878, 1654 for a case of servants who demanded their corresponding pay of "media libra de manteca fresca". The quality of such foods was directly related to the status of the servant. The 1651 *Etiquetas de Palacio*, which details the functions of every member of the palace staff, states these were generally entitled to bread, wine, fish or meat, provided that their quality was suitable for their social status (39v). or a description of food rations and general payments to kitchen servants see Gutiérrez de Párraga's *Etiquetas de Palacio* (1651), 38r-40v.

[58] See chapter IX "Anomia y Desviación Social" for Maravall's (1986) interpretation of the criminal conduct of pícaros.

[59] Such an image might also remind us of the meaty dreams of Lope de Rueda's criados in *La tierra de Jauja*, who phantasize of bacon-trunked trees and bridges built with butter (Rueda 2011, 162-163).

work, despised as it was, was pivotal to everyday operation. In any kitchen, the task of providing food often entails the joined coordinated efforts of many individuals. Cooking is governed by a cycle of *buy - cook - serve - clean up - put away* (Heldke 1992, 208) that is made possible by the cooperation of the most respected with those in the back burners of the kitchen structure. The bodily and 'unskilled' labor of chopping onions, cleaning potatoes and putting plates back into the cabinets is an essential piece of the cycle that makes way for the creative mind of the cook who adds the last pinch of salt before serving. In such a way, they invite us to think of cooking outside the hands of artistic chefs like Montiño or Scappi. What these accounts of the kitchen underbelly suggest is that cooking does not begin when food is no longer raw nor does it end when the fire has died. Rather, it is a cooperative form of labor in constant flux. Even if reluctantly, it welcomes all social strata with their own repertoire of skill levels in the never-ending task of feeding others. Not unlike eating, cooking is a collective experience that requires organized participation.

Without pícaros, early modern kitchens would not have been functional enough to operate. Pots would have been unusable and ingredients unsuited to go inside them. In a historical sense, without them, the concept of a professional and respectable kitchen is also inconceivable. Without their mischievous presence, cooks could not exercise the power bestowed upon them by their professional identity, nor could cleanliness be valued as an ideal, as it was always measured against their filthy selves. For the perfect kitchen to be even imagined, it had to be under the constant threat of ravaging dirty pícaros. As the opening epigraph to this chapter says: you cannot make an omelette without cracking a few eggs.

The poor cannot solely occupy the place of the hungry in the history of culinary culture. Indeed, erasing the role of pícaros as active agents presents a biased view of early modern

Spanish kitchens, one that is heavily influenced by contemporary notions of the figure of the cook. Though today virtually anyone would contest the prestige of chefs nor the value in studying food cultures, lowly kitchen workers remain largely in the dark within the cultural discourses of food. Excluding them narrows our comprehension of the nature of the profession, as well as the historical processes behind our current understanding. In this way, placing pícaros elbow-to-elbow with royal chefs and cookbook authors expands the human landscape of those who helped shape modern culinary culture. Without these kitchen mischiefs, both past and present, our culinary narratives are bound to remain incomplete.

Chapter 3. Úrsula de Jesús's Hell Kitchen:

Embodied Labor and Devotion in Seventeenth-Century Lima

Santa era santa Marta [...]. Pues ¿qué más queréis que poder llegar a ser como esta bienaventurada, que mereció tener a Cristo nuestro Señor tantas veces en su casa y darle de comer y servirle y comer a su mesa?
—Santa Teresa de Jesús, *Camino de perfección*, 63

On a January afternoon, the kitchen floor of Lima's Convent of Santa Clara cracked open before the astonished eyes of Úrsula de Jesús, a Black religious servant or *donada*. Out of the crevice emerged the walking souls of late Clarise nuns, who addressed her and recounted their lives of suffering in purgatory. This was one of many visions Úrsula would experience in the midst of performing kitchen chores throughout her life in the convent. Since she arrived to Santa Clara at twelve years old, Úrsula was enslaved to the novice Inés del Pulgar—she cooked, cleaned and carried out other manual tasks. After more than three decades at her service, a life-threatening incident while hanging laundry over a deep well prompted her to lead a more pious life. In 1642, after a nun purchased her freedom, Úrsula finally decided to formally pursue her religious calling and take on vows as a donada (*Espejo* n.d, 586r).

Úrsula de Jesús was born in 1604 in Lima, Perú. According to one of her posthumous hagiographies, she was the daughter of Juan de Castilla and Isabel de los Ríos, an enslaved woman who was owned by Jerónima de los Ríos. At the age of eight, after having spent her early years in Jerónima's house with her mother, Úrsula went to work for Luisa Melgarejo, a well-known limeña *beata* who had been the spiritual disciple and close friend of no other than Isabel Flores de Oliva, who would later be known as Santa Rosa de Lima, the first saint born in the Americas. While in the Melgarejo household, Úrsula must have experienced situations that

influenced her later life. It is very likely that she witnessed Luisa's mystical raptures and that she listened to spiritual literature being read out loud. We can also imagine that it was here that she had her first experiences working in the kitchen.[1]

Donadas were servants who entered the novitiate, took simple religious vows and wore a habit. In the internal hierarchy of the convent, they were above secular servants and slaves, but below black-veiled and white-veiled nuns. The first, who ranked at the top of the hierarchy, usually came from elite families who paid a large dowry to enter the community. They mostly carried out the administrative duties of the convent, served as spiritual compasses and taught young novices (Lavrin 2008, 122). The latter also paid a dowry and were often white *criollas* of more modest origins who performed the mundane tasks of the convent. Both black and white-veiled nuns took "solemn vows" and enjoyed the respective social prestige of their positions.[2]

As for *donadas*, most were free women of African or indigenous descent. The term *donada* literally means that they were *donated* to the monastery to serve the community in exchange for food and lodging. They paid a much lower dowry to take their vows, but, just like nuns, were expected to study religious literature, practice prayer and closely obey their Order's rules and constitutions (Van Deusen 2004, 101). Alongside servants and slaves, they dedicated their lives to domestic service, and frequently assisted white-veiled nuns in their duties.[3] To become *donadas*, enslaved women needed either an owner who would allow it or, of course,

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[1] The few facts we know about Úrsula's life are discussed in more detail by Van Deusen (2004) in the introduction to *Souls of Purgatory*. In the edition of the diary, Van Deusen chose to maintain the original spelling and punctuation of the document. I have also chosen not to adapt to modern spelling standards. English translations of the diary are Van Deusen's unless otherwise noted.

[2] In the words of Luis Martín, nuns of the white veil comprised an "auxiliary body" to their communities (1983, 18). They were Spanish or *criollas*, but were of modest economic means and were rarely educated.

[3] For Martín, donadas "formed a buffer" between nuns, and servants and slaves, as they were "nothing but exalted maids who were allowed to live as 'imitators of nuns'" (1983, 184). Van Deusen notes that, in Lima, where there was a large African-descent population, around five hundred free or freed Black women took their vows as donates (2018, 96).

freedom. In Úrsula's case, she had acquired a reputation of leading a particularly pious and mortified lifestyle, and some of the nuns feared they would lose such an exemplary servant to another convent. In 1645, a nun of Santa Clara bought her freedom, allowing her to stay in the convent as a *donada*.

As is evident, *donadas* stood on unstable ground within the convent's social architecture.[4] They were neither slaves nor professed nuns, yet their lives were equally labor-intensive and devoted to God. Their labor was glorified as a sacrifice, but by no means lessened their workload. Despite being considered "laborers first and spiritual beings second" (98), taking vows as a *donada* was a serious affair. It allowed for a respectable life of service to God for women who, because of their social status and the color of their skin, had few life alternatives in and outside the convent's walls.

It took Úrsula two years to finally become a *donada*. She undoubtedly knew it would not bring about a radical change to her life. She continued to lead a pious lifestyle, practicing *recogimiento*, fasting frequently, praying entire nights and flagellating her body. She had visions of souls in purgatory who asked for her intercession, and had mystical experiences where she heard divine voices—among them, God's.[5] Like many women who claimed to be mystics,

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[4] Kathryn McKnight notes that the term *donada* is used inconsistently in some archival sources of Nueva Granada. It appears both as a synonym of *lega* (white-veiled nun) and as its own separate category (233). Kathryn Burns translates the term as "lay sister" (1999, 258). In the same line, Jessica Delgado (2018, 243) discusses *donadas* as part of the group of laywomen that lived in the convent but were not "part of it". The term *monja donada* appears scatteredly in convent records in Peru (see Van Deusen) and dictionaries (see Franciosini et al. 1620, 286); Imelda Cano Roldán writes of a "lega donada" in eighteenth century Chile (1981, 630). Jessica Delgado notes that in colonial sources *donadas* sometimes appear as dowryless nuns while sometimes they appear as servants (2018, 9). All in all, sources reflect an interchangeable and flexible use of the term. The ambiguity of the term points to their complex position within the conventual system. For a discussion of the category of *donada* in seventeenth-century Lima see chapter 4 of Van Deusen (2018).

[5] I understand mysticism as defined by McGinn (2006): "more than a matter of unusual sensations, […] essentially comprises new ways of knowing and loving based on states of awareness in which God becomes present in our inner acts, not as an object to be grasped, but as the direct and transforming center of life" (xvi). McGinn prefers the notion of mystical *presence* than that of mystical *union*, arguing that the

Úrsula was asked by her confessor, the Jesuit Miguel Salazar, to record her experiences in writing. Salazar's command was not uncommon. In both sides of the Spanish Atlantic, writings such as Úrsula's diary allowed confessor and ecclesiastical authorities to monitor the orthodoxy, veracity and nature of the alleged experiences. They could also serve as drafts for biographies and hagiographies, commonly composed to exalt a person's virtues in processes of sanctification or beatification[6].

Because Úrsula could not write, she dictated her visions and encounters with different nuns. The changes in calligraphy and narrative style throughout the manuscript attest to the participation of at least two sisters who wrote down Úrsula's mystical experiences and everyday work over a decade, between 1650 and 1661. The surviving manuscript is a series of narrations heavily marked by orality, mostly in the first person by Úrsula, featuring direct quotations of her dialogues with the collective divine voices. Occasionally, Úrsula's general narration switches to the third person and the divine voices shift to God's first-person. The diary is a hybrid text, written though with traces of its oral production, constructed by several individuals and mediated by the relations between Úrsula and her superiors.

Even though it was produced in a complex power and racial triangle (Black *donada*, white nun scribe and confessor), the diary offers a unique testimony of the everyday life of Black religious women in Colonial Lima. The narrative emphasis on cooking experiences discloses a

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transformative contact with God can take many forms (such as contemplation, vision, ecstasy, etcetera). In this view, mysticism is not a specific moment of union with the divine, but rather a process, "an itinerary or journey to God" (xiv). Indeed, Úrsula never speaks of union or rapture. Her constant conversations with divine voices and direct communication with God can be understood as mystical presence, even if the ultimate ecstatic union that is typical of mystic literature is not achieved.

[6] Two hagiographies of Úrsula survive. The anonymous *Vida breve de Úrsula de Jesús* (1666) and *Vida de Úrsula de Jesús,* written by her confessor after her death (1686). Larissa Brewer-García has suggested that the Franciscans could have considered Úrsula "their own black Limeñan candidate for beatification", shortly after the inquests for the Dominican black tertiary, Martín de Porres (2020, 235).

unique view of the religious meaning of manual labor, it hints at the internal conflicts of the convent, exposes racial prejudices within the community and documents the difficulties of balancing mundane and spiritual duties. Like all *donadas*, Úrsula performed the most humble tasks of the convent in exchange for food and lodging: cleaning, washing clothes, caring for the sick and cooking. She likely carried out many of these chores, as servants rotated between different responsibilities on a weekly or monthly basis.[7] And yet, practically no other chores figure in the diary. It is cooking which occupies a central position in the narration. [8]

***Trabajo*, Exhaustion, and the Hunger for God**

Úrsula's description of her daily life highlights the negative effects that working in the kitchen has on both her body and soul. *Donadas* endured long working hours, as well as abuse and mistreatment from fellow sisters. Many of them were free Black poor women—*pardas, mulatas* and *morenas*—or indigenous, the sectors that could not aspire to become white or black-veiled nuns.[9] They were, however, part of the religious community. As such, they were expected to

[7] María Leticia Sánchez Hernández (2009) explains that post-Tridentine reforms of female Orders recommended the weekly rotation of chores in the tabla de oficios, as to guarantee an even distribution of work. However, she notes, this was hardly executed to the norm: "esta idea de igualdad, que es recurrente en todas las reformas monásticas, pronto se acomoda a las costumbres sociales y terminan imponiéndose las/os legos para los llamados oficios más viles (cocina, huerta, limpieza)" [this idea of equality, frequent in monastic reform, is soon adapted to social customs and ultimately, the most vile jobs (cooking, gardening, cleaning) are performed by the lego/as] (210).

[8] In the introduction to the seminal anthology of *Afro-Latino voices*, the editors discuss at length the issues of recovering voices in heavily mediated texts, concluding that: "By giving attention to what constitutes voices and narrative perspective, and with a knowledge of the social relationships and circumstances in which each narrative was spoken, we argue that these highly mediated documents allow modern readers to approach the voices of these distant speakers and glimpse the ways in which Afro-Latinos saw, understood, and presented themselves and their world views in the early modern Ibero-Atlatic world" (2009, xviii). The editors argue that voice and agency can be recovered by focusing on the order of the narration, the emphasis given to certain things and the "excesses"" of information. I consider the diary's overwhelming presence of cooking labor along these lines.

[9] For an in-depth description of the hierarchical structures of convents in the New Spain, see chapter 5 of Lavrin (2008).

follow the same spiritual practices as their sisters, though they had lighter religious obligations. Prayer, attending mass, penitence, contemplation exercises and *recogimiento* were as important as serving their community. The 1639 *Constituciones generales* for Clare nuns prescribes how *donadas* should balance their obligations: “Asistirán en el coro estando desocupadas de sus oficios, y estarán obligadas a rezar el oficio divino, no por el breviario, sino por cuentas, de tal manera que por maitines digan veinte y cuatro paternostes, por laudes, prima, tercia, sexta, non y completas, por cada una hora destas siete, por vísperas doce, y orará por los difuntos” [They will attend the choir when unoccupied, and they will be obliged to pray the divine office, not in the breviary, but by beads, so that they pray 24 paternosters, all first, third, sixth and ninth, they will pray for the dead] (100).

Donadas shared their time working with secular women, namely servants and slaves, most of whom were of African or indigenous descent. As Asunción Lavrin put it, there was a clear color line that divided this group from the rest of the women in the convent. In conjunction with this “color line,” there operated a division of the type of labor that was assigned to each group. For Lavrin, the lives of *donadas* did not differ much from that of slaves, insofar as they could never leave the convent (2008, 161). They could not vote in the convent’s elections and under any circumstance could they refuse any obligation. Clare nuns, like all Franciscans, made three vows: poverty, obedience and chastity. Because *donadas* occupied the lowest ranks in the hierarchy, they could receive orders and requests from any nun. They divided their time between communal responsibilities and the service to individual nuns, a balancing act which often resulted in anger and frustration (Van Deusen 2018, 143).

Úrsula’s diary records such conflicts. By intertwining spiritual reflections and mundane anecdotes about conventual life, particularly those that involve her work as a cook, the narration

unveils how material obligations hindered adherence to religious values and, thus, the path towards spiritual exemplarity. Kitchen anecdotes expose the inequalities —both material and spiritual—of the convent's internal operations more than any other task because cooking provides the basic bodily sustenance of the convent through the bodily exhaustion of cooks. For Úrsula, rather than proving humility and obedience, cooking chores are a direct imitation of Christ's sacrifice and hence, a path to salvation. For those like her who had little time to strictly follow the spiritual obligations outlined by *Reglas*, enduring the earthly cooking fires provided the possibility of saving their souls. Úrsula's understanding of work as leading to spiritual salvation is informed by mystic Teresian convention. Take, for instance, Úrsula's prayer of the rosary. She describes the experience in the same terms she does her kitchen obligations: "yo rese continuamente el rosario entero—*con mucho trabaxo*—por el que ay en la cocina" [I made a great effort to pray the entire rosary, for him, the one in the kitchen] (190; 16v; emphasis mine).[10] *Trabajo*, as defined in Covarrubias's *Tesoro* is, anything that brings with it difficulty, necessity or affliction of the body or soul (1611, 1303). It is often used by mystic writers to refer to the physical and spiritual pain of mystical experiences, as well as more mundane convent obligations. In Santa Teresa de Ávila's *Libro de las fundaciones* (1880), for example, *trabajo* is simultaneously the burden of communicating with God, and the bodily effects this has on her, as well as her continued efforts and travels to found convents across Spain. Though not systematically, Santa Teresa makes distinctions between internal and external *trabajo*.[11]

In contrast, in the recitation of the rosary, spiritual and manual work are conflated in the peculiar structure of the sentence. There are two levels of *work* in this fragment, as reflected in

[10] All translations of the diary are by Nancy Van Deusen (2004), unless otherwise noted.
[11] Teresa refers to "trabajo y trabajos" (1880, 253-54), "trabajo de sus manos" (209), "trabajos interiores y trabajos exteriores" (62).

their grammatical function: the difficulty of praying an entire rosary and the incessant chores of the kitchen. The first appears as an adverbial clause—*con mucho*—while the second —*el que*— as a noun clause. The narrator traces an equivalence between the two through a zeugma, creating a circular relation where work can only be carried out with *more* work. Unlike for many mystics, difficulty and fatigue in Úrsula is derived not from spiritual ecstasy, but from workload in the kitchen.

By equating prayer with manual labor, the narration also evokes the tactile dimension of reciting the rosary. Nancy Van Deusen has recently argued that material engagements were integral to women's experience of the sacred. She cites the example of Santa Rosa de Lima, whose "outward and inward senses" were always engaged. She was able to communicate with God, pray and embroider at the same time. For her, "doing and being with God were therefore not mutually exclusive" (Van Deusen 2018, 34). The rosary is a particularly embodied form of prayer, where both internal and external senses are active. Rather than just a mnemonic device, the rosary entailed greater difficulty than reading a prayer book. It required more concentration and active engagement of both internal and external senses. Indeed, *rezar por cuentas* posed the risk of venial sin. If attention was diverted, one could easily mistake a Pater Noster for an Ave Maria, disrupting the prayer's order and meaning. Venial sins, of course, could lead to mortal sins if they were not taken seriously.[12]

Reciting the rosary and cooking are both manual work in the literal sense. Hands are

[12] In the life of the Patriarch Noah, contained in the popular anthology of hagiographies *Flos Sanctorum*, the author refers to the rosary in order to stress the seriousness of venial sins: "Y no deja de ser peligroso este modo de vivir, pues fácilmente puede descuidarse el que no hace caso de pecados veniales, y cometer algún mortal, como sucede en el que va rezando por cuentas, que si se divierte un poco, la cuenta gruesa que ha de ser Pater noster, se le pasa por Ave María, que es cuenta menor. Así a las veces el pecado mortal se entra en docena con los veniales al que tiene descuidos en cometerlos y hace de ellos poco caso" (1589, 99v).

Úrsula's essential tools for both material and spiritual work. With the intensity of the labor she describes throughout the diary, we can easily imagine the cracked skin on the back of her hands or even burn marks left by splattering oil. "Reading" the beads with her hands brings an awareness of the physical effects of work on the body. Later passages offer clues that further a reading on this line. In the presence of a crucified Christ, for example, Úrsula contemplates her hands: "yo suelo algunas beses mirandome las manos pensar en lo que sentiria mi señor cuando le entraron aquellos clavos" [When I look at my hands, I often wonder what my Lord must have felt when they drove those nails through His hands] (202; 20v). When news about the Mapuche rebellion reached Lima, the first-person narration changes to God's voice, who laments the foolishness and ungratefulness of humans.[13] Namely, he laments all the manual work he has put into his creation: "desde el de su creacion me an costado trabajo con mis propias manos *almase* el baro y lo forme todo con mucho trabajo" [from the moment of the creation, they have cost me a lot of work. I kneaded the clay with great effort and formed it all with my own hands][14] (239; 93).

In *Primer abecedario espiritual*, Osuna dedicates a full chapter to Jesus's hands, describing them as "de oro, hechas de torno, llenas de jacintos" [golden, made of lathe, full of hyacinths] (2004, CXVJv). Their perfection and beauty depend on three factors: they are precious, hard-working and fruit-bearing. Osuna cleverly condenses the nature of Christ's hands in the adjective *tornatiles* [lathing]. He expresses their physical beauty in terms of the labor they

[13] Accounts of the Mapuche uprisings against the Spanish circulated extensively across colonial cities and reached religious congregations like Santa Clara. Miguel Martínez notes that, in the case of Lima, the preoccupation and fear instilled by the war was reflected in print culture: "Lima's popular print in the seventeenth century provides countless examples of uncertainty about the ultimate fate of the Arauco War, alarming colonial society with "lastimosas relaciones," or pitiful accounts, coming from the south" (2016, 150).

[14] I have slightly altered Van Deusen's translation of this passage. Her translation ("I formed the clay"), misses the baking echo that I consider here.

perform and what they can create. Jesus's hands blend with the clay he shapes on the potter's wheel. It is the *torno* itself that *makes* his hands; they are *by* and *of* the lathe.[15] In other words, their mere existence is made possible only by their ability to work and create. Christ's divine work is here compared to the work of humble artisans who get their hands dirty. Indeed, later in the chapter, Osuna links his manual work with that of slaves, stating that "aun en Egipto *como un esclavillo* no dejaba de trabajar con ellas" [even in Egypt, he never stopped working with them, like *a little slave*] (CXVJv; emphasis mine).

Not surprisingly, Úrsula's narration resorts to a food-evoking verb in the description of Christ's handiwork, saying that he *kneaded* [almase] the clay to create humanity. Between the diligent doughy hands of bakers and the crusty clay-covered hands of Jesus, the divine artisan, lays only a difference of craft. Though Úrsula never mentions baking herself, we know bread-making was a task commonly performed by slaves in colonial Lima.[16] That Úrsula worked as a baker, even if sporadically, is not at all improbable. In any case, her narration poses a subtle yet significant connection between the hands of Jesus and the hands of laborious servants and slaves. Whether it is the potter's wheel, the cook's ladle or the baker's table that shape and make the hands of the subject, the perfection and physical beauty of the hands that hold these instruments is derived from the diligent and obedient labor they perform. This view of manual work—which posits corporeal beauty as originating in virtuous work—suggests Black laborious bodies are as beautiful as Christ's white hands. As Larissa Brewer-García has argued, Úrsula's portrayal of

[15] Osuna describes them as "hechas de torno" and "hechas al torno, que es arte muy ligera y que presto y pulidamente obra" (2004, CXVJr).
[16] In the diary, Úrsula speaks of bakers twice. A Black cook and baker who died without confession after falling ill; and a baker who is too busy making bread to attend mass (32v). On the relation between bakeries as prisons for runaway slaves, see Aguirre (1998) and McKinley (2016). Documentation about the work of slaves in bakeries abound in colonial archives; see for example AAL, leg. 7 exp, 32 (1638); AAL, leg. 29, ex 69 (1692); AAL, leg. 39, ex 71 (1759); AGN, leg. 82, ex 1139 (1773); AAL, leg. 103, ex 1643 (1783); AGN, leg. 105, ex 1694 (1784); AGN, leg. 4, ex 13 (1720).

Black beauty "presents an appreciation of blackness such that physical whiteness is neither a requirement for nor an impediment to being considered beautiful and blessed" (2020, 227). In this instance of *imitatio Christi*, Úrsula's tired but beautiful hands recall her shared humanity with Christ, their work and endurance of suffering.

Tired from both working and praying the rosary, Úrsula tells God she will instead offer a shorter prayer, a "corona, que era menos, para aserlo mejor" [the crown, which was not as difficult, in order to do it better] (190; 16v). But Úrsula's less-is-more approach is not well received by the divine voices that speak to her: "que pase el rosario siento y sincuenta beces levantando el corazon a nuestra señora" [they told me to say the rosary 150 times and to lift the heart up to our Lady] (190). There is no escape from work—neither spiritual nor manual—because work is what assures redemption and heavenly reward. "Quanto mas se abajaren acá, tanto mas subiran allá" [The more you lower your head, the higher you can ascend] (255; 40v), the voices tell her in another example. The greater the work is, the greater the reward will be.

But Úrsula does not always behave so compliantly. Indeed, cooking rarely appears in an entirely positive light. It is an ambivalent duty that, while conducting her to redemption, produces frustration, exhaustion and even anger. The thought of the future reward does not keep her from voicing her present suffering:

> Biernes, estube mui apurada de muchas cosas juntas. Estube sufriendo toda la mañana. Despues al medio dia cargó tanta jente alrrededor de mi para cobrar la comida, que con rabia dije: "¡Apartaos de mi!" Luego cay en lo que habia echo y dije a mi señor que me perdonase. Y al punto diseme: "Bien podias desir que se apartasen sin aquel enojo, mas cuando aconstesiere [que] no aya segunda yntension [y] no quede nada en el corason. [Hay que] dejar que pase" (264; 44r)
>
> [Friday, I was in a hurry with many things to do, and I agonized all morning long. At midday, so many people were thronged around me to collect the food that in a rage I said, 'Get away from me'. Then I realized what I had said and asked the Lord to forgive me. Instantly, He said, 'You could very well have told them to go away without getting angry. When it happens that way, there is no ulterior

motive, and no bad feelings remain in the heart. Let it go]

She is likely handing meals to the poor through the convent's gates or *torno*, who approach her desperately. Overwhelmed by the multitude, she cries angrily in a reversal of the biblical formula "Let them come to me," rejecting the hungry mouths that await her. Úrsula is incapable of responding compassionately because she has suffered all day. Her physical exhaustion keeps her from acting as a Christian—and as a *donada*—ought to. She then turns to God for forgiveness:

> Dije: "Señor, cada dia estoy peor. La otra bes que estube en la cosina mestaba desasiendo por ir al coro y cuando enpesaba a caminar me yba desasiendo en lagrimas. Y aora estoy tan tibia, tan miserable y inpasiente, y tan sin memoria [que] con cualquier cuidadito me ocupo y me olbido de Dios." Dise: "Esa es buestra ynconstancia, que nunca estays de un ser." Dijele: "Señor, quitame esta mala condision que tengo." Dise: "¿Que me as de ofreser si te la quito?" Yo abia dicho por la mañana que en pudiendo, urtaria unos ratitos por la puertesita del coro, que cae serca de la cosina. A la noche fui al coro un ratito antes de yrme a recojer Y diseme: "¿Cómo no beniste por la puertesita?" (265; 44r)
>
> [I said: 'Lord, every day I get worse.' Another time, I was in the kitchen and very anxious to go to the choir. When I began walking there I broke down in tears. Now I feel so indifferent, miserable, impatient, and cannot remember anything. Any little task causes me to forget about God. He said, 'This is your inconstancy, You are never of one mind.' I said, 'Lord, get me out of the bad state I am in.' He said, 'What do you offer in return if I take it away?' I had said that morning that whenever possible, I would steal away for a short time to the small door near the kitchen that leads to the choir. Before I went to bed that night, I went to the choir, and He said, 'Why Did you not come through the small door?']

Like those who come to her for food, Úrsula, too, is in need of aliment, albeit spiritual. Before, she had a strong urge to leave the kitchen to go pray in the choir. That urge has since gotten cold, diluted in the haste of her exhausting routine. She promises God that she will find the time to go, escaping the kitchen through a little door. The accumulation of diminutives in the passage creates a childlike image of Úrsula. She must hide from her superiors to be with God. Alison

Weber's classic study of Teresian rhetoric highlights the use of diminutives as a rhetorical strategy to mark her discourse as "feminine" and unauthorized. Weber demonstrates that Teresa's diminutives are wide in semantic range, connoting "disdain, belittlement, condescension, disgust, irony, sarcasm, euphemism, modesty, as well as affection and small size" (1990, 94). The diminutives represent Úrsula as a child who needs to be controlled and potentially scolded. This infantile scenario—almost reminiscent of a hide-and-seek game—ironizes the convent's surveillance by presenting solitary prayer as a forbidden yet desirable experience for low-ranked women.

But Úrsula is never able to escape from the grip of the kitchen. She goes to the choir only at the end of the day, once she has finished her work. Though "the Lord walked among pots and pans" inside the convent, it is clear that, for *donadas* like Úrsula, the time for work and the time for prayer are differentiated and opposed to each other. Cooking and other humble tasks were a "luxury" for some nuns, who saw it as a way of performing spiritual exemplarity, humility and obedience (Van Deusen 2013, 138). But for religious women like Úrsula, work is not an opportunity for performance, but rather the everyday unavoidable norm that often leads to non-exemplary behavior: anger, rejection and breaking promises to God himself.

In numerous passages, Úrsula describes her work in the kitchen as an activity that physically impedes her from complying with other responsibilities, describing it as *fatiga*, *cansansio* and *aogo*. Sometimes she cooks all through the night and sleeps during the day, which leaves her little time for anything else. Being a *donada*, she is obliged to obey any nun above her, which results in nonstop work:

> Martes, fueron tantos lo aogos que me binieron, de que me enbiaron unas y otras a que les guisara, que les ysiera esto y aquello, y luego del convento que basta para ocuparlo todo. Y como yo ando con ansias de yr donde esta el Señor, y con estas cosas me quitan el poco tienpo que me queda, fue un dia trabajosisimo para mi, de

> suerte que asi como di de comer al refitorio, sin comer yo me fui a postrar al señor (193-194; 17v)
>
> [Tuesday, there was so much distress. Some came, asking me to run errands, others, to cook this or that for them; and then, the request from the convent, which, in itself is enough to stay busy all the time. I am always eager to go where the Lord is, and with these things they take away the little time I do have. [17]It was a day of excessive work, but as it happened, after I served the food in the refectory, and without eating myself, I found a little time to prostrate myself before the Lord]

The repetition of undefined tasks and anonymous nuns—*unas y otras*, *esto y aquello*—creates a void list of subjects and chores that can be infinitely replaced, producing an image of incessant and mindless work. By effacing most of the tasks she performs, the narrator denies the possibility of spiritual reward through them; she does not care for the sick or feed the poor, but does *this and that* automatically and with no inner reflection. Similarly, by omitting the names of the nuns, the passage suggests anybody can order her around. Discussing food preparation from a philosophical perspective, Lisa M. Heldke argues that the repetitive tasks of food preparation "are virtually invisible to those who benefit from them, or are regarded by beneficiaries as beneath attention or comment" (1992, 208). In this case, the narration offers not the beneficiary's perspective but the worker's. Úrsula's narration strategically manipulates this position of invisibility. It erases the specificities of her labor, grouping them under a chain of undetermined pronouns. Like the nuns she serves, Úrsula rhetorically overlooks her own work, a tongue-in-cheek move that emphasizes her labor's mindless nature, while also unmasking the derogative attitude of nuns towards *donadas*. The blurry lines of her work and the clear outlines of its daily and bodily effects—her tiredness, lack of food and time—delineate a strong first person that

[17] Here, too, I offer my own translation. Van Deusen's is as follows: "these things take away the little time I do have". In the Spanish original, it is not the *things* that take away the time, but an implicit *they* that imposes those *things*.

stands in opposition to those that control her workload. It is *they* who take away her time and physical strength.

As evidenced in this passage, cooking is an activity that heavily depends on time management. To be able to serve a hot meal at the right moment, the cook ought to take into account the particular temporality of the foodstuffs involved; how long they will take to ripen, prep, cook and be ready to be served on the table, not to mention the time allotted to cleaning. Along with food's material temporality, cooking usually fits into an order constructed by broader power relations.[18] In Úrsula's case, her work must align with conventual temporality. That is, its daily schedule as well as broader religious temporality (i.e., periods of abstinence and fasting). In this sense, cooks can be seen not only as managers of food but also of time. A meal served late could have thrown off the rigid system that balanced spiritual and mundane tasks in the community. By feeding the nuns the right food at the right time they ensure the smooth flux of spiritual life. Under this light, cooks emerge as invisible figures who operate silently but surely to keep things on the clock. For Úrsula, this means losing her personal experience of time and surrendering it to the community. Her bodily and spiritual temporalities—when she feels the sudden need to pause and pray or when her stomach rumbles after skipping supper—are consumed by the collective organization of time, an apparatus that depends on the power structures of the convent. Without time, spiritual work is made even more difficult.

[18] Heldke explains that "it is not only the temporality of food alone that dictates the structure of workers' lives. Rather, […] those with power to dictate the actions of workers—may determine the *ways* in which the temporality of food will dictate workers' lives" (1992, 208). She offers two illustrative examples to think of these temporalities: the farmers whose work is ruled by the time of ripeness of fruits and vegetables, and the wife who must plan her husband's meal accordingly to fit his schedule while maintaining the quality of her food.

The Purifying Fires of the Kitchen

To better imagine the kind of work done by Úrsula, let us consider the population of Lima's convent of Santa Clara in the seventeenth century. In 1631, fray Antonio de la Calancha's convent census registers 161 black-veiled nuns, 16 white-veiled nuns, 19 novices, 30 *donadas* and 9 *seglares* (Canturias Vargas 2002, 69). A little over 30 years later, in 1665, Santa Clara's population had grown 68%, housing a total of 381 cloistered women: 160 black-veiled nuns, 37 white-veiled nuns, 36 novices and 18 *donadas* (71).[19] Ten years later, approximately 616 women lived in Santa Clara (Dargent 2009, 20). What these numbers show is an unbalanced proportion of high and medium-rank nuns in relation to the *donadas* and a growing gap between ranks. Judging from these numbers, we can imagine the amount of work *donadas* had on their hands. Unlike secular servants, they were also expected to follow the Order's rules and had spiritual obligations.

Úrsula describes the burden of her work as *ahogo*, representing the kitchen environment as a fiery inferno where she is unable to breathe. Kitchen metaphors of purgatory and hell abound in religious writings.[20] In *Libro de la vida*, for example, Santa Teresa describes hell as "un callejón muy largo y estrecho, a manera de horno muy bajo y escuro y angosto", with a "concavidad metida en una pared, a manera de una alacena" [a very long and narrow alleyway,

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[19] The overpopulation, expenses and disorder inside female convents begins to worry ecclesiastical authorities by the end of the 17th century. In the 18th century, changes are implemented as a result of the Bourbonic reforms, resulting in the expulsion of 400 secular women from Santa Clara (Canturias Vargas 2002, 73).

[20] Kitchen imagery in representations of purgatory and hell stem from the ancient symbolism of fire in popular culture and folklore, which was later adopted by the Christian tradition: "Fire was associated with oven, forge, and stake, and it is alongside these elements of popular culture that we must set the fire of Purgatory, upon which folklore also seized" (LeGoff 1986, 8). Cooking is also central in the iconography of demonic sorcery and witchcraft in early modern Europe: "L'une des images les plus insistantes de la sorcellerie, et qui a d'ailleurs survécu à la chasse aux sorcières, est peut-être celle du chaudron" (Jacques-Chaquin 1992, 4).

like an oven, low and dark and confined; at the end of the alleyway a hole that looked like a small cupboard] (393; 32,1).[21] Inside this enclosed oven, Santa Teresa is not able to sit or lay down: "estas paredes, que son espantosas a la vista, aprietan ellas mismas, y todo ahoga" [those walls, a terrifying sight, closed in on themselves and suffocated everything] (393; 32,2). Her agonizing soul feels crushed and suffocated ("apretamiento, un ahogamiento") by internal fires.

In Úrsula's diary, metaphors materialize in the mundane reality of the convent. She inhabits Teresa's metaphorical oven; her suffering not caused by internal flames, but by those of the stove before her. Like Teresa, Úrsula cannot sit or lay down, her inability is quite literal: she is always standing in front of the stove or rushing to serve food in the *refitorio*. Ironically, she spends her day cooking and feeding her sisters but has no time, energy or desire to eat herself. Once she is finished with her duties in the kitchen and the *refitorio*, she kneels before God with an empty stomach, longing not for food but spiritual nurturing. Indeed, eating would probably mean to continue working, because she would have to cook herself. She asks God, "Señor, tu gastas destos aogos. Si yo se que no es tu boluntad no e de añadir mas de lo que [me] mandan" [Lord, you make the most out of these sufferings. If I knew it were not your will, I will not do more than what they order me to] (194;18r).[22] Úrsula seeks Jesus's comprehension because God understands physical suffering like no other. She prays in an effort to lessen the intense workload given to her by nuns of higher ranks. She will obey them only if that is indeed his will and not a capricious demand of the nuns.

The holy voice, however, responds ambiguously: "En treynta y tres años que estube en

[21] Translation by Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodríguez (2019, 201).
[22] In this context, *gastar* can be defined as "emplear alguna cosa, o usar de ella para algún fin; como la vida la salud, el tiempo" (1734, 31), as noted in *Autoridades*. Translation of the quote mine. Van Deusen's original is: "Lord, did you cause this to happen? If I knew it were not your will, I would not do more than what they order me to".

este mundo, todos los pase con grandisimos trabajos y aogos, y al salir del me pusieron en un palo como si fuera un bil esclabo y ladron" [In the thirty-three years I spent in this world, I endured a tremendous amount of work and oppression. When I left this world they placed me on a piece of wood, as though I were a vile slave and thief] (194; 18r). The voice urges her to endure suffering and follow his example, though never confirms if her work is indeed his will. Upon hearing this, Úrsula's suffocation and fatigue suddenly vanish, a response that signals her exemplarity. The holy voice does not urge her to obey blindly, but rather to abide the suffering by imitating him.

In contrast to hardworking nuns such as Úrsula are those who give orders but do not work. In a salient passage, Úrsula describes how she challenged a nun's order:

> juebes enbiame una monja un poco de carne para que se la asara, y considerando que si esta bes lo asia sienpre abia de querer lo mismo, y no lo yse despues estube con pesadumbre y le enbie una escudilla de caldo […] luego disenme, que por que abia dejado de asar aquella carne que me pedia aquella monja que si no era projimidad que yo digo bengan cruses cargad, señor estos hombros y cuando biene un poquito los desecho que el no bolbio el rostro al trabajo que que era amar sino se pasaban trabajos por el abia sobrado arto carbon ensendido cuando acabaron de comer y bi que andaba fulana por alli y dijeles a las cosineras que lo apagaran y como no lo ysieron tan presto tome agua y lo apague(194-195; 18r)
>
> [Thursday, a nun sent some meat for me to roast for her. I refused because I knew that if I did it for her this one time, she would always want me to do it. Afterwards, I felt remorse and sent her a little porringer of broth (…) He asked, Why had I not roasted that meat the nun requested? Was that not about being nice to your neighbor? Do you not say, 'Oh Lord, bring crosses, place heavy crosses on these shoulders, and then when it starts to get heavy, I take them off. He did not turn away from hard work. What did it mean to love, if not to endure hardship for Him? There were a lot of cinders burning when they had finished eating, and I noticed that so-and-so was hanging around there. I told the cooks to put the fire out, but they did not do it quickly enough, so I took water and put it out myself]

The refusal is significant not only because she challenges a higher authority, but because of what it reveals about the attitude towards the food habits of nuns in colonial Peru. In this regard, it is important to consider the ideas that surrounded meat in the early modern diet and, in

particular, within religious communities. According to the Galenic model, meat was a hot food that excited sensual passions. Women, who were more "naturally inclined" to the appetite of the flesh, should put special care in eating it (Bynum 1987, 191). In many orders, such as the Franciscan, it was generally advised to avoid the consumption of meat as much as possible. Fasting and meat abstinence days were also carefully regulated. In addition to its association with the sin of the flesh—both meanings conflate in the Spanish word *carne*—, meat was not a universally attainable foodstuff. In Early Modern Spain, for instance, access to meat came to differentiate social groups (Campbell 2017, 30-31).

The Clares' *Constituciones generales* state that they should abstain "en todo tiempo [...] de comer carne, salvo las enfermas en el tiempo de enfermedad" [of eating meat all the time, except for the sick during their sickness] (1642, 25). This suggests that meat was considered somewhat a luxury that was reserved for those who truly needed it. Though practice differed greatly from the ideal norm, nuns were well aware of their order's rules, which were "the practical road map for observance, which was understood as practicing the lifestyle prescribed for the Order" (Lavrin 2008, 96). The most salient values of the Franciscan lifestyle were poverty and an ascetic way of life. Indeed, as Carolyn Bynum has noted, Clare of Assisi's hagiographies highlight her food asceticism as proof of her sanctity. In addition to fasting and extreme food austerity, her *vida* also emphasizes how she served others (1987, 100).

The nuns of Santa Clara doubtlessly knew the life of their spiritual mother, as hagiographies and devotional texts were read and transmitted orally in conventual culture.[23] In light of this, the nun of this passage diverges from the Order's values. Úrsula's allusion to her as a *fulana* can be read as revealing contempt towards her behavior. She alludes to her as *fulana*, a

[23] For a discussion of reading practices in seventeenth-century Lima, see Van Deusen (2018, 52-58).

word that is commonly used to refer disdainfully to an unknown subject.[24] Whether or not Úrsula or her scribe knew the nun's name is impossible for us to know. Indeed, omissions of personal nouns are not at all uncommon in the diary. However, in this passage, the narrator switches to the more common indefinite *una monja* to *fulana*, a generic noun that ironically singles her out from the others. If Úrsula singles her out verbally it is only because *fulana* has done so herself through her behavior. As Luis Martín explains, often convent dining rooms were half empty because noble nuns had their meals delivered in their private cells by servants or slaves (1983, 207). In this sense, her demand places her outside the communal meal in the *refitorio,* and sets her apart from the usual meatless diet.

Despite the reprimands she receives from the voices, who accuse her of being lazy and not caring for a fellow sister, Úrsula puts out the burning coals to prevent other cooks from roasting the meat. Cooking the meat would signify obeying her while contravening the rules and values that govern the Clares' life. Úrsula disobeys the nun, but adheres to her Order's rules; she responds not by denying her food, but by replacing the meat with a much more frugal, Franciscan-like bowl of broth. The voices scold her for this, attributing her actions to the devil's influence:

> Disenme, ¿que asi abia sido buena yntension aquella? ¿Que si quisiera yo que ysieran aquello conmigo si quisiera cosinar? Que aquello me abia ynsistido el demonio, y es berdad que lo habia echo con regaño, y no abia caydo en ello asta que me lo dijeron. Lo que oy ubo de reprension yo no lo se decir, mas destos pedasitos (195; 18r)
>
> [The voices asked me, Were my intentions good? Would I like it if someone did that to me when I wanted to cook? The devil made me do it. It is true that I did it in a complaining manner, which I did not realize until they pointed it out during the reprimands they made that day. I don't know how to explain this, except in these bits]

[24] The word *fulano* appears in several early modern dictionaries. In *Autoridades* it is defined as "voz con que se suple el nombre de alguna persona, cuando se ignora cuál es o de propósito no se quiere expresar." Only in the entry *fulanito* does the author add a derogative connotation: "persona poco apreciable." While it can be used in the first "neutral" sense, the omission is usually significant.

Úrsula has neither answers to the voice's questions nor memories of any consequences of her actions. By erasing the probable reprimands of the nun, the narration focuses on her, emphasizing the actions through which—albeit for a moment—she suspends her labor and that of the other cooks.

The black-veiled sisters accuse her of acting upon the devil's command. Without question, Úrsula's work involves playing with fire. Her cooking places her in dangerous proximity to the ultimate demonical motif[25]. Immediately after this passage, where she is accused after having extinguished the burning coals, the narrator presents an instance where fire is the cause of physical pain:

> Habia, un dia destos pasados, quemadose un pie una conpañera quitando una olla yrbiendo de la candela, y dejose caer con el dolor quejandose mucho. Yo le tube gran lastima y tome un poco de agua. Echesela en nombre del Padre y del Hyjo y del Espiritu Santo y no se quejo mas, y a estado trabajando sin faltar aunque tiene una mancha parda donde se quemo no lebanto enpollas (195; 18r)
>
> [One of these past days, a compañera burned her foot while taking a boiling pot off the fire. She fell to the ground complaining a lot about the pain. I felt very sorry for her and took a little bit of water, then placed it on her in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and she stopped complaining. She is now working regularly, although she has a dark spot where the skin burned. Still, it did not blister]

As I mentioned before, purgatory and hell are often imagined through culinary metaphors in religious writing. Boiling cauldrons, blazing ovens and sizzling barbecues can be found everywhere in early modern representations, both visual and textual. Jacques LeGoff notes that, despite the important theological differences between purgatorial and infernal fire, purgatory is often "hellified" in popular religious imagination. The meaning of fire within Christian tradition is manifold, symbolizing punishment, probe or purification (1986, 10). For example, in one of

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[25] See Jacques-Chaquin (1992) for a survey of the manifold meanings of fire in relation to the Christian figure of the devil.

her visions, Úrsula describes a lazy woman who is punished for making others do her work: "Tendida de espaldas en una como barbacoa y alrrededor muchisimos demonios, y todos atormentandola" [lying flat on her back on something like a barbecue, surrounded by many demons who tormented her] (10v; 84). Another woman who succumbed to her appetites is awaited in by "terribles calderones" [terrible cauldrons] (172). Even Queen Isabel of Bourbon sits in purgatory on top of a fire fed by a pair of hands holding iron ladles.

For Úrsula and her *donada* sisters, cooking is not only a symbolic way to represent suffering. As Bynum explains, "eating and not eating became more than metaphors of grace and desire. They became actual modes of experiencing. […] Women's way of serving their fellow Christians and of uniting with God were closely tied to food, both symbolically and in fact" (1987, 114). While Úrsula's diary makes few mentions of eating, references to feeding and cooking are numerous. Cooking—a metaphor for the pains of purgatory and hell—is a mode of experiencing union with Christ not through the grace of eating his body in the Eucharist or charitably feeding the hungry, but rather through shared suffering. Mirroring Jesus, Úrsula kneels to ease the cook's burned foot with water and a prayer. Purgatorial flames, as opposed to infernal fire, are understood as a passage of purification that souls withstand to attain a place in Heaven. In the kitchen of Santa Clara, purification happens almost routinely among the mundane heat of burners and coals. In this passage, the torched skin of the cook becomes a mark of the earthly fire that will conduce to salvation.

Whereas the relation between Úrsula and her superiors is expressed through frustration and anger, in this scene, the two *donadas* share the experience of bodily pain and compassion. One could even argue that Úrsula's choice of words to talk about her sister's scar—*mancha parda*—is a subtle nod to her racial identity. Much like Úrsula herself, it is likely that other

cooks like the one in this passage were also Black. Elsewhere in the diary, for example, Úrsula mentions visions of a Black woman who was a cook and baker in the convent.[26] In this passage, the nun continues cooking despite her injury, her body permanently marked by the physical pain of her work.

The cook's marked skin symbolically reverses the terms used to describe black skin in the seventeenth century. Blackness was closely related to the idea of a "stain," *mancha* or *tizne* . In the Bible, Ham mocks the naked body of his drunk father Noah, for which he curses him with eternal servitude (Gen 9: 20-27). Though the story never references a physical mark, the story was used as an explanation for Blackness and thus provided a scriptural lineage for enslaved Black Africans. In his 1627 treatise on slavery, Jesuit priest Alonso de Sandoval, for example, wrote that "los etíopes que traen su origen de Cam, que fue el primer siervo y esclavo que hubo en el mundo, como veremos, en quien estaba este calor intrínseco para con él tiznar a sus hijos y descendientes" (1956, 26). The idea of Black people being *marked* and directly opposed to whiteness prevailed in many different cultures and eras, including the early modern Iberian Atlantic. Here, the cook's black skin is stained not by sin, but by her endless servitude and obedience. Her stain is the stain of suffering.[27]

Other moments of compassion between Úrsula and fellow cooks further advance the notion of the kitchen as a space of solidarity that stands somewhat apart from the rest of the convent. Perhaps because black-veiled nuns did not frequent the kitchen too often, *donadas* and cooks were able to voice their afflictions and complaints. Úrsula narrates how one day "entro una

[26] "[…] una negra que había muerto sin confesión […] murio, como he dicho, y a aquella ora me dijo que estaba con tan grandes trabajos porque cuando era cosinera y panadera sacaba mucho que la señora abadesa solia remediar aquello" (182; 13v).

[27] See David Goldenberg (2003) for a study of the views on blackness in Early Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Carmen Fracchia (2019) provides an analysis of the representations of slaves in early modern Spanish visual culture.

mulata en la cosina mui afiljida, disiendo que todas las beses que benia la madre de su ama la malquistaban con ella disiendole muchas mentiras, asiendo ella cuanto podia por darle […] gusto" [a mulata entered the kitchen. She was upset because each time her owner's mother came she mistreated and chastised her, lying to her daughter about her. On the contrary, she felt she did all she could do to please them.] (184; 14v). The woman, possibly a nun's servant, enters the kitchen looking for Úrsula's understanding and consolation. In this instance, Úrsula intercedes for the *mulata* by going to the choir during *siesta* to pray for her: "digole a mi señor dios no / soys bos señor padre de misericordias como esta aquella pobre tan desconsolada y no la socorreys disenme yo me agrado de unos sufran / a otros y otros a otros y otros a otros" [I went to the choir and said to my Lord God, 'Are you not God, the Father of mercy? Why do you not alleviate the suffering of this poor, disconsolate woman?' The voices said to me, 'I am pleased when some suffer from what others do to them] (185; 14v). Her communication with God through mystical experiences serve not only the souls of purgatory, but also the real present inhabitants of the convent with whom she shares her life. In another example, it is Úrsula herself who complains to someone else:

> Miercoles por la mañana, enbiame señora doña Antonia de Serantes que le cosine. Dijele a la negra: "¡Beos con Dios! ¡Buestra ama no se acuerda de mi sino para mandarme!" Y bolbila a llamar para aser lo que me desia. (191; 17r)
>
> [On Wednesday morning, doña Antonia de Serrantes sent her slave to ask me to cook for her. I told her Black female slave: Go with God, your owner only remembers me to give orders. But then I called her to do what she asked]

Much like in the previous episode, the tone denotes anger and frustration. She signals the source of her anger by giving the woman's full name and titles but leaves the identity of her interlocutor, the Black woman, in the dark. In fact, most of the incidents that take place in the kitchen involve anonymous *negras* or *mulatas.* Outside the kitchen's limits, the passage

suggests, nuns have names and titles; inside, women are only identified by the color of their skin. They have no names, and are thus replaceable and forgettable. Here, Doña Antonia only seeks Úrsula's earthly work but otherwise forgets to pray for her soul.[28]

The aforementioned examples present the convent's kitchen as a space of reunion and relative autonomy for dark-skinned women. Along with the *torno* and the gate, it is a porous space where the rules of confinement are easily bent. Servants and slaves go out to the secular world to buy the ingredients needed for the meals. It is also one of the few places where nuns are in the presence of men. Men, in particular Black men, perform heavy jobs closely tied to cooking, such as baking and caring for the orchard. In contrast to the choir, where nuns practiced *recogimiento* or listened to mass, one can imagine being in the kitchen was an experience of sensorial overstimulation. The scent of steaming pots, the constant tasting of ingredients while prepping, the heat of ovens and coals, the noisy to and fros of people, and even the sight of masculine bodies at work, would have made the kitchen alarmingly similar to the effervescent streets of Lima. The propensity to "disorder" that religious men saw as intrinsic to women came to life within those walls (Lavrin 2008, 122-123). There, the ideals of self-regulation of the body and detachment from the world were at odds with the material reality of cooking labor.

The porous nature of the kitchen space did not go unnoticed to ecclesiastical authorities. In 1683, the supervisor of female monasteries in Lima issued an *auto* to sanction the transit of servants and "Blacks" that exit the convent "con ocasión y pretexto de que compre el recado para la cocina" [with the excuse of doing errands for the kitchen].[29] The constant coming and going of maids constituted a bad example for the nuns and showed no respect or veneration for the

[28] In another passage, Úrsula recounts a vision of a Black servant who, having been raised all of her life in Santa Clara, has no one to pray for her because no one remembers her, much like doña Antonia does not remember Úrsula's spiritual well-being. In contrast, Úrsula intercedes for the woman's salvation (12v).
[29] *AAL*, Santa Clara, Leg. XVII, ex 96 (1683), 1r.

sacredness of religion. Some convents even tolerated the presence of outside food vendors. In fray Andrés de Borda's 1708 *Práctica de confesores de monjas*, a unique didactic manual that fictionalizes a confession, the kitchen's "openness" facilitates moral relaxation and, in some cases, sin. The nun, for example, asks if the chocolate *molenderas* can come inside the convent. The priest replies: "No señora, que eso es cosa que en muchos conventos se hace en las rejas; aunque pecan gravemente las religiosas que hacen salir las mozas a cuidar las molenderas" [No, my lady, for that is done in the gates of the convent; and those nuns who allow the servants to go out commit a serious sin] (64v). Elsewhere, the nun asks if maids, *mandaderas*, can come and go inside the convent. The priest says: "Ese señora, es uno de los mayores abusos que tienen las religiosas, digno de que los superiores lo remedien, por que ni a un pretexto, cuanto más necesidad tienen de entrar y salir semejantes mandaderas" [That, my lady, is one of the greatest abuses committed by religious women, and their superiors should remedy it because servants have no pretext to go in and out, no matter the need] (67v). The appearance of kitchen affairs as a worrisome issue for confessors attests to the spiritual risks of everyday mundane obligations.

The kitchen is also a site of internal conflict. Cooking meant easier access to food, which was regulated according to a strict schedule. Úrsula's text offers a glimpse of the conflicts that arose when these regulative precepts were not followed:

> A la tarde sali un rato de la cosina y cuando bolbi alle a una conpañera mui enfadada [por]que otra cosinera que echan de mes tomaba mucho, y le dije tan solamente estas palabras: 'Una olla al medio dia y otra a la noche', y ella se quedo con su enfado. Yo todas las beses que se lo beo aser le [de]tengo (184; 14r-14v)
>
> [In the afternoon I left the kitchen for a short time. When I returned, I chanced on a companion who was angry that another cook, whom they assigned to work for a month, ate too much. I simply said to her, 'One pot of food at midday and another in the evening.' Still, she remained angry each time I see her do it I have to stop her]

Clares' *Constituciones* states that in the days when nuns do not fast, they should only eat twice a day. Once more, Úrsula's words comply with the rules of governance of the convent, because she makes sure food is distributed equally and according to the Order's guidelines.

But there could be another side to this incident beyond Úrsula's exemplarity and close observance of Franciscan values. In her extensive study of convents in New Spain, Lavrin explains that "even convents with a limited number of nuns [...] had to face the daily challenge of how to provide for their community" (2008, 148). Peruvian convents faced similar challenges. Throughout the seventeenth century, Santa Clara faced economic debt and related legal conflicts (Andazábal Cayllahua 2011, 1164). In 1630, abbess Ysabel de la Fuente sought the intervention of the archbishop Fernando Arias de Ugarte to resolve the nun's debts. In 1673, the *regidor* of Lima issued an *auto* against the monastery for not paying him for 3,168 pesos worth of wheat.[30] In 1688, the archbishop issued an *auto* for the regulation of superfluous expenses of the monastery, among which food supply figures prominently.[31] While we cannot know the exact dates of this incident, problems of unsteady income and financial debt were a constant for monasteries. Úrsula's disciplining of her fellow cook can also be explained by a practical attempt to regulate the means of her labor, as well as to mediate the conflicts that arise in her workspace.

The Diary as *Migajita*: Reading and Writing in the Kitchen

Towards the end of the diary, Úrsula narrates that she has been assigned to the kitchen during the following year:

> Martes, abianme dicho que me enbiaban a la cosina el año que biene. Yo abia buscando un libro de trabajos de Jesus para que me leyesen, y considerando el poco tiempo que abia de tener para ello, dije al Señor que le queria bolber a su

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[30] *AAL*, Santa Clara, Leg. XIV, ex 33 (1673).
[31] *AAL*, Santa Clara, Leg. XXIV, ex 26.

> dueño. Y despues, estando recojida, disenme que para qué queria yo un libro. ¿Que si no eran trabajos de Jesus aquellos que me enseñan? […] Que yo estaba temiendo un año de trabajo [y] que Él abia estado treynta y tres anos con ynfinitos trabajos. Hubo mucho aquí. […] Disenme que baya con el pensamiento en lo que abia resebido, dandole grasias y que el cuerpo trabajara, que Él siempre trabajo; que cuando yo estubiera trabajando en pie pensara cuando lo tenian en pie, cuando padesio; que cuando trabajara sentada pensara cuando lo sentaron en aquel banquito. (298; 56v-57r)
>
> [Tuesday, they told me that I would work in the kitchen next year. I had looked around for the book about Christ's travails so they could read it to me, but realizing I would have little time for it, I told the Lord I wanted to return it to its owner. While I was in a state of recollection later they asked why I wanted a book. Had they not taught me about Christ's travails when […] I dreaded one year of work when He had had thiry-three years of infinite travail. They said a lot here. […] They said when I went, I should think about what I had received and thank Him. The body should work, for He always worked. Whenever I work standing up, I should think about when they sat Him on that little bench]

In her daily life, she "reads" God's presence through her senses when she contemplates her well-worn hands, dozes from exhaustion in the middle of the day or stands for hours while cooking. In early modern terms, the perception of absent immaterial things—such as God's presence—was possible through the conjoined engagement of external corporeal (sight, smell, touch, taste and hearing) and internal senses (cognition, memory, fantasy, imagination and common sense). As I have argued, the kitchen is a particularly multi-sensorial place where God's presence (or lack thereof) can be perceived through bodily and sensorial experiences. This is what the voices tell Úrsula: a year of hard work in the kitchen provides her with the possibility of "perceiving" God's thirty three years of suffering. Work builds a path towards the experience of the divine as much as reading spiritual texts does.

Nonetheless, Úrsula repeatedly expresses a desire to read books. The text takes an ambivalent stance toward reading. On one hand, it suggests it is not needed because Jesus is the only true source of learning. Daily work brings Úrsula closer to God. Work opens the possibility for *donadas*—who presumably were illiterate and had no time to read—to experience the divine

as much as their black-veiled sisters. On the other hand, because reading stimulated spiritual faculties, it could lead to a deeper connection to God, because his divine presence could be perceived through the intellectual soul, the only one that had traces of God in the human soul. Not knowing how to read potentially produces an imbalance of the stimulation of the senses, because work mostly stimulated the external ones. Reading—or rather, listening to someone read—certainly did not demand the same intense physical engagement as working in the kitchen. In sum, the text presents reading as a desirable way to practice spirituality, but legitimizes the spiritual possibilities of the manual work of cooking. Úrsula's regular mention of her desire to read points to a comprehensive understanding of experiencing God through as many channels as possible: "Disenme que dios es el berdadero maestro ni padre ni los libros que fuese como lo que aqui me enseñan mas, yo digo que aunque sea quien fuere a mi me ase probecho" [They replied that God is the true teacher. What can the priest or books teach me that would do me as much good as what they teach me there? Whoever it is it does me good.] (182; 13v).

Úrsula's spiritual diary ends with an unequivocal declaration of her experience as a *donada*: "mucho dejo de escrebir / porque no puedo mas" [I leave much unwritten because I can do no more] (302; 60r). By adding her diary to the list of fatiguing obligations, writing and work merge as sources of exhaustion. Her narration, she says, is only a *migajita* [little crumb] (201) of her actual life. The bread metaphor further bolsters this relation because it metaphorically blends her writing with the object of her labor. Her writing shows the material traces of her cooking. As mentioned before, Úrsula's diary is a transcribed dictation. Like many other examples of the confessional genre, it strongly resembles the spoken word.

In her analysis of Santa Teresa's writing, Alison Weber proposes that orality serves a rhetorical function directly tied to the context of collective reading in convents. Because nuns

gathered to read together during meals, recreational moments or work, she argues, Teresa's writing keeps a "flavor of the colloquial" that reflects the context of its transmission. This particular *flavor* "places a woman's text within the protective confines of women's conversation" (1990, 103). In other words, the oral-colloquial nature of her speech is pivotal to the construction of what Weber terms the "rhetoric of femininity," a new discursive space that is specifically female.

We know very little about the transmission of Úrsula's diary. Nonetheless, the analogy of her diary to a crumb raises several questions. Her diary rhetorically and literally evokes the colloquial *flavor* Weber identifies in Teresa's work. It evokes the material reality of the kitchen and the work that takes place in it. If Teresa's *flavor* constructs a feminine mode of rhetoric, Úrsula's writing also opens a discursive space among the literal reality of pots and pans. Hence, the diary not only displays a rhetoric of femininity in typical Teresian fashion, but adds a material and bodily dimension to it, opening the possibility for *donadas* to experience and express devotion through the material circumstances of their work.

Úrsula's speech cannot be understood solely through Teresian literary convention because the oral devices of her rhetoric—diminutives, colloquial lexicon, disorderly syntax—are intimately connected to her kitchen work, as cooking skills and knowledge were, and still are, deeply immersed in oral culture. Cooking, is, to borrow Nancy van Deusen's words, a type of "somatic literacy"—that is, knowledge of how to read and write with the body—that is central to the textual production of the diary. The comparison of the utterance-text to a *migajita* calls to mind the modes of transmission that structure the practice of cooking. That is, looking past the rhetorical tool of modesty and humility, the diminutive is a subtle yet compelling nod to "culinary literacy" that is worth unraveling in depth.

In *Graffiti and the Writing Arts of Early Modern England*, Juliet Fleming (2001) poses a transformative view of early modern writing. Through the analysis of graffiti, tattoos and inscriptions on pots, Fleming theorizes Renaissance writing as a practice that was inseparable from its material medium and physical circumstances. These texts, she argues, allows us to appreciate how "matter appears to bind thought" (12). Recently, Wendy Wall has taken Fleming's argument as a springboard to "reconceive domestic space itself as a site of potential inscription" (2016, 116) in her study of recipe writing in early modern England. Both authors expand our understanding of the notion of text by considering the materiality of language. Úrsula's diary can be read along these lines, with the important distinction that hers is a transcription of speech. Her writing is as inextricable from the material situation of her life in the convent as from the embodied practice of dictation. As Steven Wagschal has put it, "concepts not only need a human mind to hold them, but are themselves body-oriented" (2018, 126). In that sense, the meanings of a text are bound not only by "matter", but also by the body. These two dimensions of writing—the material and the bodily—are ingrained in Úrsula's conception of her diary as a *migajita*.

A crumb is that which is left on the table after having eaten. It is a small material reminder of something larger—of a dish and of a social gathering— that can be pieced together with other crumbs to reconstruct the memory of the meal that preceded it, the food that is now inseparable from the body that consumed it. This mnemonic dimension of the tiny seemingly insignificant crumb appears in Úrsula's narration when she says "yo boy/ disiendo - lo que se me acuerda - por que es ynposible desir sino una miga-/ jita de lo que alli pasa" (22v). Of her visions and conversations with divine voices, her crumbly words are the only remainder. The materiality of the small particle is paralleled to the physicality of the manuscript paper, which can only

contain a limited account of her lived embodied experience. Her spiritual experiences are thus connected to the *food* from which those crumbs have fallen; her words but leftovers of that which has been consumed and incorporated to the self. Posing her diary as a crumb suggests that the full account of her spiritual experience lies not on the page-table but in her body and memory. Even more, that her knowledge of God is a type of bodily knowledge apprehended primarily through her working body. Just like the best way of learning to cook is not through cookbooks but through an experience where our bodies replicate what is done by another cook, Úrsula's diary posits the embodied experience of cooking labor as a source of knowledge of God.

On the other hand, *migajita* also connotes an idea of quantity. As evidenced in early modern culinary sources, *migaja* is a unit of measurement open to the cook's judgment, which is more easily interpreted by someone already familiar with cooking practices.[32] In the context of the convent, those most familiarized with them, would be, of course, *donadas* like Úrsula. This ineffability, the idea that cooks can better understand the *migajita* due to their daily interaction with food, suggests modes of knowing and experiencing—both spiritual and practical—that are unique to *donadas*.

Elsewhere in the diary, Úrsula intriguingly refers to her writing as a "migajita boca abajo" [upside-down crumb]. The tiny remnants of a meal are here anthropomorphized through a decidedly corporeal prepositional phrase. Surely, crumbs or pinches of spices have no up and down sides, no mouths either. The strange image of an upside down crumb blends the materiality of the food with the expression of humility and devotion, typical of the praying position.

In the humble *migajita*, Úrsula brilliantly condenses the rhetoric of humility, the

[32] In *Arte de cozina* (1611), Francisco Martínez Montiño, uses "migaja" as synonymous to "pinch": migaja de sal, migaja de clavo, migaja de azúcar, etc.

materiality of her work, the somatic knowledge acquired through embodied experience and the ineffability of recording the sacred on voice and paper. Such a metaphor puts forward a vision of writing that is not at all dissimilar to cooking: a cardinally material, embodied and labored endeavor. This close-knit relationship between writing, spiritual reflection and cooking raises important questions about the circumstances of Úrsula's textual production: Where did Úrsula write? Did she dictate while working or was writing a pause in her normal routines? From what we can extract from her testimony, it is hard to imagine that she took breaks in her routine to write. The text provides us with a hint: "Bíneme luego a la cosina" (188), she narrates. In contrast to other passages where she refers to her movement inside the convent space with verbs such as *salir*, *ir*, *entrar*. here, Úrsula makes a deictic reference through the reflexive form of *venir*. This suggests that, at least occasionally, spiritual reflection and work overlapped in the space of the kitchen. All the more, it is the space where inscription happens on the page as well as on the body. Úrsula's cooking experience is also written on her. However temporary, the burn marks or dryness of her hands remain as signs of her work.

Up until the end of the journal, the narration emphasizes the suffering and fatigue resulting from her work as a convent cook. It transforms the religious convention of *trabajo* by conflating the spiritual, the bodily and the material, and by amplifying its more day-to-day secular dimensions. This depiction of the negative impact of cooking on the bodies of *donadas* discloses the inequities inherent in the convent's hierarchy and advances the idea that, for women like her, divine union is a much more complicated goal to attain. The sensorial overload of the kitchen makes it difficult to practice *recogimiento*, and is instead akin to an earthly purgatory or hell that must be withstood through ties of compassion and solidarity. At the same time, however, the text depicts cooking as a strenuous experience that delineates the similarities

between Úrsula and Jesús. The sensations in her body—her fatigued legs, her burnt skin, her sensation of being constantly suffocated—mirror Christ's own body—his cross-carrying shoulders, his bleeding hands, his wounded skin. To feel herself, her body, is to feel the divine presence of Jesus. Her work thus signals their shared humanity and endurance of bodily pain before redemption. Of course, this is a basic Christian precept. But through cooking, Úrsula's diary presents a notion of endurance that is markedly bodily and material, and that is directly related to the convent's stark social and racial division of labor. In providing this ambivalent view of cooking, Úrsula's diary gives meaning to the seemingly thoughtless and thwarting practice carried out by Black women, while illustrating the tensions between doctrine and the everyday reality of religious life.

Chapter 4. The Culinary Devotion of Sor Marianita de San Joseph: Reading Mysticism in Eighteenth-Century Puebla

Como soy cocinera, no he buscado papel
—Madre María de la Antigua, *Desengaño de religiosos*, XIII. 8.787.

Walking around the busy streets of downtown Puebla, one easily fails to notice the building that once housed the Dominican nuns of Saint Rose of Lima. Compared to its male counterpart located a few blocks away—the convent of Saint Dominic with its monumental golden Rosary Chapel—, the simple style of Saint Rose hardly attracts the sight of passerbys. Behinds its doors, the modest edifice hides one of the most beautiful, best-preserved and emblematic kitchens of the Mexican colonial period (Figure 11). Popular legend has it that it was here, between these Talavera-covered walls, that the famous and celebrated *mole poblano* was cooked for the first time in history. Awaiting the arrival of a new archbishop, the nuns gathered in the kitchen to cook something special. One of them grounded peanuts, cacao, chilis, maize and other ingredients by hand, turned the paste into a sauce and used it to smother pieces of turkey. Upon tasting the delicious dish, one of her sisters exclaimed *Hermana, ¡qué bien mole!*, and lo and behold, *mole* was born. Or so the story goes.

Conveniently located around eighty miles away from Mexico City, the city of Puebla de los Ángeles had been conceived by early Spanish authorities as a city populated only by Spaniards. Shortly after the fall of Tenochtitlan, Franciscan friars and ecclesiastical authorities promoted a utopic settlement where poor Spanish farmers and craftsmen would not rely on indigenous labor and would instead replicate their previous European way of

Figure 11. *Photograph. Kitchen at the convent of Saint Rose of Lima, today Museo de Arte Popular of Puebla.*

living.[1] Puebla was signaled for its fertile soil and strategic location between the port of Veracruz—the gateway to the Atlantic—, Mexico City and Antequera (modern-day Oaxaca). Throughout the seventeenth century, the city experienced an economic golden age thanks to transatlantic commerce, thriving trade with Peru, abundant agricultural production, an important slave market and a growing textile industry. *Poblanos* also prided themselves with being an exceptionally pious metropolis, having more than twenty female convents by the first half of the eighteenth century. Its flourishing economy and devout

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[1] The myth of Puebla's foundation was recorded by numerous chroniclers during the sixteenth century, including Motolinía and fray Juan de Torquemada. At the heart of its foundational history were "visiones idealizadas de un nuevo mundo feliz, en el cual los españoles e indios vivirían en una armonía independiente y los europeos cultivarían como felices campesinos" (Hirschberg 1978, 220). According to oral tradition, Tlaxcala's bishop, fray Julián Garcés, had chosen the location of the new city after some angels pointed him in the direction of a noble land of abundant water.

reputation earned it the titles of the second-most-important and the "most European" city of New Spain.[2]

Puebla's famed prosperity would come to a halt by the end of the seventeenth century. Increased taxes, rigorous controls on commerce, and trade bans with Peru shrunk economic activity and caused many to flee in search of better opportunities. In addition to migration, the *matlazahuatl* pandemic[3] and a reduction of monetary support for religious congregations left the disproportionally large ecclesiastical population without employment and desperate for donations. Once a bustling city of economic prosperity and religious exemplarity,[4] Puebla entered the eighteenth century standing on pins and needles.

Poblanos sought to rebuild their cultural and religious capital. They yearned for the recognition of the city's dignity and richness. Evidence of these efforts is palpable in unique architectonic landmarks such as Saint Rose's kitchen. Indeed, one means of recovering Puebla's prosperity was by funding the lives of religious people, providing them with impressive worship and living quarters. By doing so, poblanos proved that they still had the solvency and resources to support the life of devout people, and that, just like Saint Rose's lavish kitchen, they were unique and worthy of admiration.

Another way of reaffirming Puebla's dignity was by having the recognition of its

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[2] In the eighteenth century, fray Juan de Villa Sánchez, author of a monumental history of the city, described it as: "La Segunda ciudad de Reyno de Nueva Espana, segunda en dignidad, en grandeza, en extensión, en opulencia de fábricas, en número de vecinos, en nobleza, en letras, en policía y en todo aquello que constituye el cuerpo de una ciudad y el alma de una Republica: La Ciudad de los Angeles es verdaderamente el cuello y garganta del vastissimo cuerpo de esta America Septentrional" (1835, 11). For more on the foundation of Puebla see Carrión (1970).

[3] The *matlazahuatl* was one of the many pandemics that devastated New Spain. Its name derives from *matlatl* (net), and *zahuatl* (rash, eruption). Some scholars argue it was the plague, a type of typhus or hepatitis. Regardless, it exposed acute social disparities in the already declining region. See Cuenya (1999).

[4] On Puebla's economic demise, see Ramos (2012, 8-12).

people's spiritual exemplarity. Throughout the second half of the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, numerous beatification and canonization processes of poblanos were put into motion. This desire showed in the written culture of the time, which experienced a true boom of spiritual biographies and religious literature in the eighteenth century.[5] In fact, more religious biographies were published here than any other city in New Spain, suggesting a widespread consumption and transmission of this literature.[6]

The Dominican convent of Saint Rose was caught in the thick of these efforts. Initially a *beaterio*—a community of devout women who did not take formal vows and did not fall under the law of any religious order—, it was founded in 1671 under the sponsorship of the Raboso family. Soon, the Order, benefactors and women themselves set forth a campaign to elevate the community of Saint Rose of Lima from a beaterio into an official convent. In 1740, after a rocky road of more than sixty years and the sustained efforts of patrons and Dominicans, 25 women became the first professed nuns of Saint Rose of Lima.[7] Among them was a young woman who spent most of her days within the

[5] While biographies of holy people were published earlier in the seventeenth century, these tended to follow a traditional model that was markedly Iberian. Between 1650 and 1750, however, the nascent creole consciousness gave way to a genre with a distinct *novohispano* stamp. Rubial García (1999) identifies the pecularities in New Spain hagiography: exaltation of local nature, veiled complaints about discrimination of *criollos*, an excessive presence of the body, and heterodox practices that could be deemed "heretical" (96).
[6] Julie Shean notes that, in Puebla, three hagiographies were published about Isabel de la Encanación, a Discalced Carmelite; four were written on María de Jesus Tomelin, a mystic Conceptionist; and Sebastián de Aparicio was the subject of at least nine publications (2007, 215 and 69). Circulation of print hagiographical literature within the wider public was limited. Nonetheless, as Rubial García notes, reading print directly was not the only mode of transmission: "la difusión oral, los sermones, las confesiones, las direcciones espirituales", "la lectura pública de esas Vidas en las reuniones de las cofradías, en los salones de "estrado" de las mansiones, en los refectorios conventuales y a lo largo de los ejercicios espirituales, multiplicaban a los "beneficiados" por esta literatura edificante" (1999, 113). See Ramos (2012, 95-97) for the beatification efforts of famed Bishop Palafox y Mendoza.
[7] Records show Saint Rose housed 21 black-veiled nuns and 4 white-veiled nuns or *legas* at the time of its foundation as convent. Three of those women were, according to a local chronicler, born in Tlaxcala (Carrión 1970, 273). Though Marianita's name is not mentioned, it is very possible she

bright indigo walls of the iconic kitchen. Her name was Mariana de Villalba Gómez, a young white-veiled nun or *lega* from Tlaxcala whose life is preserved in a lengthy diary.

Mariana worked tirelessly as a cook, making sure food was sufficient and tasty without being too pleasurable. Every so often, Baby Jesus or Mary visited her and alleviated the burden of her work, helping her cook or putting her to sleep after a long day on her feet. Distinctly *criollo* dishes, kitchen labor and exemplary acts make up the daily life of this humble nun, appearing as commensurate in an experience that I will call "culinary devotion": the expression of spiritual perfection through the culinary imagination and the material culture of the kitchen. For this nun, cooking opened the possibility of having a vast array of experiences otherwise hard to attain by a nun of her rank. It granted her the possibility of religious enlightenment, of navigating the prickly politics of convents, of building a strong sense of criollo religious identity, and, ultimately, of engaging with authorized written culture.

Una tonta*, *lega cocinera

Mariana de Villalba—from this point on, *Marianita*[8]—was born in the town of Huamantla, Tlaxcala in 1718.[9] The daughter of Fernando de Villalba and Josefa Gómez, she was the youngest of eight children. Her eldest brother worked in a *hacienda* in the neighboring

was one of them.

[8] For the sake of clarity, I will refer to her with the diminutive. Being that another central figure in my study is also called "Mariana", I will refer to the author of the diary as Marianita, and the famed theological author (who appears in the subsequent pages) as "Mariana". I choose the diminutive because she was lower in rank and younger than Mariana, then prioress of the convent. The current Dominican nuns of Saint Rose also affectionately refer to the manuscript as "sor Marianita's diary".

[9] All biographical information of Marianita de Villalba-Mariana de San Joseph is taken from the manuscript written by his confessor Juan Tirado, object of the current chapter.

Izúcar district, one of the most important sugar-producing regions southwest of the city[10] of Puebla. Favored greatly by the *hacendero* for his hard work and loyalty, his brother ascended to a high-ranking job in the plantation and employed all of the men in the family. When Marianita's father died, her mother and siblings used the money to buy a ranch parcel of their own. She would spend most of her childhood in Izúcar, living a modest but comfortable life like many other *criollos* of the region.[11]

From a very young age, Marianita felt the calling to become a Capuchin nun. She enjoyed being alone, praying, serving the poor and refused to take part in children's games. At the tender age of six, she had her first vision; no other than the famed archbishop of Puebla and a strong candidate for sainthood, Juan de Palafox y Mendoza, appeared to help her evade her mother's angry hand after having scolded her. Her placid way of life would suddenly change after her family was forced to sell the ranch, scattering her siblings across different towns. Some married, some left looking for better opportunities. Marianita, the youngest of them all, stayed with her mother and moved to the nearby town of Atlixco.

One day, a petitioner from Saint Rose arrived at the main plaza of Atlixco bearing an image of the Peruvian saint, canonized less than a decade before by Pope Clement X. Marianita was instantly enamored. She sought Saint Rose's guidance and counsel, unsure about what Order to join. Halfway through prayer, Saint Rose illuminated her soul with the answer. Marianita knew she would take the Dominican habit. She excitingly expressed her

[10] On the history of sugar production in Puebla see Scharrer Tamm (2010). Sugar, like elesewhere in the continent, was tied to slave commerce. See Sierra Silva (2018) important book on the history of Puebla's slave market and urban slavery in the seventeenth century.

[11] Information about Mariana's family history is still unknown. However, these details strongly suggest she was the daughter of poor Spanish or *criollo* farmers, like many of the inhabitants in the Puebla-Tlaxcala region. Moreover, the district of Izúcar emerged as a particularly attractive spot for Spaniards in the second half of the seventeenth century, who saw the opportunity of cultivating cane in the midst of a rapidly growing sugar market (von Woebeser 1983, 40).

fervent desire of pursuing a religious life to her mother, only to find she categorically reprobated the idea.

The beaterio of Saint Rose was tellingly founded the same year of Saint Rose's canonization. Although its members led a lifestyle that resembled the monastic, beatas were not subject to the constitutions of any religious order. This translated into a negative public perception of its members—most of which were of humble social origins—, who were seen as "lacking of order and being somewhat uncontrollable" (Socolow 2000, 160). Beatas were usually white women, frequently from families of artisans and small workers such as Marianita's, although some *mestizas*, *indias* and *mulatas* were accepted in some congregations (Lavrin 2008, 106). While monastic life was a desirable and respectable lifestyle for women, being a beata was a different story.[12] As Jessica Delgado points out: "Their relative freedom from male ecclesiastical oversight in comparison with nuns also led to greater suspicion. While beatas were often highly respected pious figures, they also fell afoul of the Inquisition and other ecclesiastical authorities disproportionally more often than nuns did" (2018, 229). Marianita's mother undoubtedly knew this. Doña Josefa envisioned a much promising future for her daughter by the side of a certain "sujeto de autoridad" (15) who had spent months courting the young girl.

Her mother's reluctance was not without reason. Saint Rose had been in financial trouble from the very moment of its foundation. In 1697, bishop Manuel Fernández de Santa Cruz had paid the *Rosas* a visit, finding them with "semblantes demacrados, pálidos,

[12] Delgado explains that even the lower-ranked positions in convents could be seen as more desirable than being a *beata*: "That some women would choose the option of living as a white-veiled sister in a convent of nuns rather than opting for a beaterio, where they could live as cloistered religious women without the "second-class" status, may have spoken to the prestige and mystique of convents" (2018, 229).

huesosos, más por la miseria y el hambre" (Carrión 1970, 271). After Manuel Raboso—the initial benefactor—had died, the beaterio fell into the hands of administrators who mismanaged its rents, leaving the community in precarious conditions. One chronicler stated that the women ate "de fiado por lo que pedían al Padre Eterno el pan de cada día" (Escalona Matamoros quoted in López Loreto 2000, 74), having but stale tortillas to survive. Halfway under construction, the beaterio became a financial burden for Raboso's widow, who proposed to sell the building. Without strong benefactors or a place to house the women, Saint Rose was dangerously close to shutting its doors for good.

After Raboso's heirs had declared their impossibility of continuing with their patronage, Santa Cruz took it upon himself to help the beatas, save their community and finally turn Saint Rose into a respected convent. Without a finished church and conventual edifice—both Vatican requisites to acquire the formal status of convent—they could never aspire to take the habit. Even if the Dominicans overcame this complex administrative situation, Marianita's family had no means to provide her with a dowry, which placed her at the bottom of the convent's social pyramid. She would have to enter as a *lega* or white-veiled nun, and thus acquire the obligation to perform the basest domestic tasks of daily life: cleaning, attending to the sick and, most importantly for us, cooking.

More than forty years after Santa Cruz's visit had to pass for the *beatas* to become nuns. In order to acquire the denomination of convent, they needed the authorization of both the King and the Pope.[13] In addition to proving financial solvency, they had to justify

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[13] In 1712, King Philip V issued a royal decree, now located at the Newberry Library, stating that the *beaterio* had "rentas bastantes para su manutención, vivienda, capaz en forma de convento y disposición y terreno para reedificar y hacer mayor la iglesia". For a very thorough review of the many administrative issues it faced see Loreto López (2005) chapter "Un modelo de fundación conventual. El caso de Santa Rosa," and Muriel (1982, 43).

the foundation of yet another convent in the midst of a general crisis.[14] The famously pious city of Puebla already had enough convents at the time.[15] If they wanted to add Saint Rose to that list, the beatas and their benefactors needed to present a strong case before the Council.

Despite her mother's resistance, Marianita entered the beaterio at age 19, in 1737. Two years later, to the women's delight, the Papal bull arrived after a long voyage across the Atlantic. At last, Mariana de Villalba Gómez took her vows as bride of Christ, taking the name of Mariana de San Joseph. She became a *lega* and took on as the convent's cook—in her own words, a *tonta lega cocinera*—, one of the humblest jobs at hand.

Hearts of Parchment: Concocting Poblano Sanctity

The story of Marianita's life survives in a manuscript diary currently held in the monastery of Saint Rose in Puebla.[16] It is penned by her confessor, the Mercederian friar Juan Tirado.[17] Following hagiographical convention, it is divided into three sections. In the first,

[14] In 1695, the Council of Indies issued a verdict about the case, rejecting its recognition as convent "por haber en la ciudad siete conventos de religiosas y no convenir añadir este número" (MSS, AGN. Ramo Historia, vol. 97, f. 3 qtd. in Loreto López 2000).

[15] By 1754, Puebla had the impressive number of eleven female convents, even amidst the crisis: Saint Catherine, the Immaculate Conception, Saint Jerome, Saint Theresa, Saint Claire, the Most Holy Trinity, Saint Inez, Saint Monica, the Capuchins, Saint Rose, and Our Lady of Solitude (Ramos 2012, 17).

[16] The manuscript is one of the few records the nuns were able to keep after the exclaustration carried out during Benito Juárez's Reform in the nineteenth century. I thank sor Emma, sor María de Jesús and sor Domi for their immense generosity and warm hospitality. Their willingness and enthusiasm to share sor Marianita's story with me was living proof of their profound connection to the religious women who preceded them. Our conversations, shared meals and gifts of fresh-cut flowers gave my research a humane dimension that have allowed me to better understand this text and the figure of sor Marianita. My sincere gratitude goes to Diana Barreto, who put me on the right path to access the manuscript and shared her initial transcriptions, as well as to fray Eugenio Torres for his enthusiasm and trust.

[17] Information on Tirado is so far scant. We know he stopped being Marianita's confessor after being appointed in the convent of Our Lady of La Merced in Atlixco. His name appears in a 1752 accusation for "solicitación" during confession (AGN, Inquisición 720, 224r-224v).

the friar describes her many spiritual virtues. The second—which is the main object of this analysis—is a biographical account of her experiences from childhood and throughout her time as a nun in Saint Rose. It recounts her many mystical experiences, daily life and relations with other nuns. Finally, the third section, entitled "Dudas", is a thorough theological analysis that proves the authenticity and orthodoxy of Mariana's mysticism. In total, more than a thousand folios make up this unique document, an outstanding number for an unknown humble *lega*.

Tirado's version of the diary is likely based on a now-lost original written by her own hand.[18] Spiritual biographies written by religious men often recurred to the first-person writing of women as "raw material" for their final version.[19] Mariana, like many women who claimed to have visions or mystical experiences, was prompted by Tirado to record her life on paper. Though termed a "diary", the surviving text is a third-person narration that intercalates direct speech and first-person writing. It is a highly mediated text sieved by Tirado's criteria and style. In contrast to the diary of Úrsula de Jesús, the object of the previous chapter, Mariana's is recorded by a male figure of greater authority.

Like in the case of Úrsula's diary, acknowledging the layers of textual mediation and co-authorship is crucial for the interpretation of this text. Tirado selected and edited Mariana's account to present her within an orthodox frame, glossing her experiences,

[18] Tirado presents her writing as a surprising paradox. Though she was illiterate, he states, she was so obedient that she was able to write her experiences: "siguió también su obediencia en la ocasión en que, sin saber escribir, le mandé que escribiese algunas cosas de su interior, como lo hizo, y tengo en mi poder sus papeles" (11).

[19] Antonio Rubial García offers a succinct definition of this mediation-writing dynamic of female hagiography: "La hagiografía femenina es una obra dual del confesor y de la monja: esta aporta los materiales de su intimidad, y a veces incluso los escribe a instancias de su director espiritual; el confesor, que a su vez ha alimentado la espiritualidad de su dirigida, "traduce" esos materiales para difundir lo que era secreto" (1998, 48).

comparing them to Biblical stories or explaining them through canonical patristic literature. Despite this, a great deal of Mariana's life remains in Tirado's words. The daily minutia, unique mystical episodes and variations from religious literary convention—where the male hand is most lenient—make up the distinct colors of this text. These particularities surface with greater intensity inside the bright-hued kitchen of Saint Rose. It is here that Marianita has tender encounters with Jesus and experiences *arrobamientos*. It is here that she cooks for her sick sisters, makes abundant sweets for sponsors, arranges flowers to set the table for meals and spends hours scrubbing dirty pans.

As I have noted, *criollos'* longing for local spiritual figures was materialized into a vast production of the hagiographic genre. The lives of saints and *beatos*, circulating both in print and manuscript form not only served as evidence to argue for canonization before ecclesiastical authorities, they were also the daily bread for an audience of readers hungry for local stories.[20] In the words of Antonio Rubial García, colonial Mexico was "a society thirsty for prodigies" with a "clerical group disposed to providing them through a rich literary production" (1999, 72). Motivated by the canonization of Saint Rose, poblanos pushed for the recognition of several local figures, undeterred by the negative outcomes.[21]

On March of 1744, God spoke to Marianita, urging her to take Santa Teresa's hand as guidance and write all the marvels, favors and pieties of their union (1142). Marianita responds: "Pues señor, hágase en mí tu voluntad, obra en mí según tu palabra, que mi corazón se halla preparado como pergamino en que escribas tus maravillas para hacerlas

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[20] Though the circulation of hagiographical literature was mostly limited to religious circles, clerics disseminated the stories of locals orally through sermons, confessions and public readings (Rubial García 1999, 113).

[21] Among them was María de Jesús, a nun from the convent of La Concepción, who was tellingly nicknamed "the Lily of Puebla."

con la pluma después públicas al mundo" (1142). Though we do not know if her life was read or even known by her contemporaries, it is clear it was intended to see the light of day and avoid its current fate of inhabiting a shoebox.

The story of Marianita was all the more alluring for her close connection to a fellow nun and prioress of Saint Rose, a woman by the name of Mariana Águeda de San Ignacio,[22] whose works were widely read across Puebla. She was loved and venerated by ecclesiastical authorities and the public alike. So much so that, according to a priest, her funeral seemed more like a saint's due to the sobbing crowd gathered to mourn her. Alongside this acclaimed figure, Marianita appeared as her spiritual daughter, adding one more strand to Puebla's exemplary lineage.

Mariana and Marianita professed together in 1740. The former a prioress and ex-mistress of novices black-veiled nun; the latter a white-veiled *lega* who mostly worked in the kitchen. The women of Saint Rose elected Mariana Águeda de San Ignacio as its first prioress. Decades earlier, in 1714, she had been allowed by her confessor Juan de Torres—a Jesuit priest who was then chaplain of Saint Rose—to enter the beaterio without a dowry. Sor Mariana was not warmly received by her sisters, who were already struggling to keep afloat among debts, an unfinished construction and lack of donations. These *criollas* "de casa y solar conocidos"[23] saw Mariana as yet another mouth to feed at an already languishing table.

Since the beginning, Mariana championed the recognition of her community as a formal convent, an enthusiasm that was not shared by all of the women. Two factions

[22] Mariana Águeda de San Ignacio will be referred to as *Mariana*. Mariana too was a *criolla*; she was the daughter of Pedro Aguilar de la Cruz, from Andalucía and Micaela Velarde, born in Puebla.
[23] See Loreto López "Las religiosas del convento de Santa Rosa y sus familias" (2000, 199-212) for a review of the elite origins of most women in Saint Rose.

quickly divided the beatas: the older women who wanted to continue their current lifestyle, and the younger ones who wished to profess as nuns of the Dominican Order. Even so, Mariana slowly won terrain within Saint Rose, thanks to her intelligence navigating ecclesiastical politics. In 1726, her former confessor, the Jesuit Juan Ignacio de Uribe—then deputy of the Company in Madrid and Rome, and New Spain's *procurador* before the Vatican and the Crown—visited Puebla briefly on his way to Veracruz. Mariana seized the opportunity to ask for his intercession before the Roman authorities. Uribe not only agreed but also assured her he would support them financially.[24] After a cumbersome process of several years, many declined requests and episodes of deep crisis, the *beaterio* was finally approved as a convent thanks to Uribe's influence and Mariana's initiative.

Uribe's involvement in the process created an administrative conundrum. It placed Saint Rose under the direct jurisdiction of the Papacy, rather than the archdiocese of Puebla or the Dominican Order. Not surprisingly, the Dominicans were not happy with the fact that, after years of work, Saint Rose became a convent thanks to (of all people!) a Jesuit. This concession gave the congregation a special position among the many other convents of New Spain. Not only did it have more direct communication with Rome, but it assured them with a stable income.

One of Mariana's first goals as prioress was to renovate the convent's battered premises. Her diligent work persuading donors and her political savviness permitted to fund several structural improvements: renovated cells, a brand-new chapel with a high chorus, a beautiful terra-cotta inner patio adorned with Talavera (Figure 12) and the magnificent kitchen where Marianita spent her days. The *Rosas* went from a life of scarcity and facing

[24] See Sor Mariana's *Vida* (1758, 94-97).

the possibility of extinction to having the patronage of the highest authority possible and a dignified office to match.

In contrast to Úrsula, whose coexistence with the nuns was tainted with hostility, Marianita's diary does not suggest she was subject to similar discrimination and abuse. Criollas and Spaniards could profess as nuns, something Úrsula, a former slave, could have never aspired to because of the color of her skin. Saint Rose's *Reglas y Constituciones*, written by Mariana herself,[25] rule out the very possibility of accepting women like Úrsula:

> […] tampoco se críen en el monasterio niñas, ni haya criadas ni para el común ni en particular. Tampoco se reciba alguna para monja, si no fuera hecho diligente examen en secreto de sus costumbres, vida, fuerzas corporales, docilidad y discreción de ánimo: inquiriendo si […] es española legítima e hija de buenos padres (65-66)

Figure 12. Inner patio covered in traditional ceramic tile. convent of Saint Rose of Lima, today Museo de Arte Popular of Puebla.

[25] Lavrin notes that this publication was unprecedented, at least in New Spain. Never before had a woman been granted the authority to write the rules of her community (2008, 361).

Considered together, though separated by more than a century, cultural differences and thousands of miles, Marianita and Úrsula offer contrasting examples of the nature of quotidian relations inside convents. Ultimately, these interactions and the position they occupy within their circles largely shaped their experiences of spiritual cooking. Mariana and Marianita, of similar socioeconomic and racial backgrounds, had a more horizontal relationship that echoed their titles of "Mother" and "Sister", respectively.

The fraternal and maternal vocabulary that permeates religious literature points to a model of relationships that cuts across time and bodily presence, and that is sustained by everyday interactions as well as a deep knowledge of tradition and literature. To borrow Nancy van Deusen's words, religious women were "relational selves" (2018) whose idea of selfhood was shaped by their connection to others:

> Women of the early modern period were part of an intimate and intricate connective web with living and deceased human and divine beings. The question of "Who am I?" was foremost in the minds of many women […] Awareness of self was always relational, whether to their own personae, to God and divine beings, or to those in their immediate social circles (170)

In this sense, it is crucial to look at sor Marianita's diary through the lens of Mariana. According to Josefina Muriel, she was the only woman allowed by the archbishop to write theology in New Spain (1982, 433,469). She wrote books of prayers, pedagogical guides for nuns and theological treatises that made her known to the public and respected among lettered men. Though Mariana Águeda recounts some ecstatic experiences in her writings, these do not exactly fit into the playbook of mystical literature. As Asunción Lavrin (2008) argues, her mystical raptures lack the intimate tone of conventional mysticism. Rather, they serve the more intellectual and pragmatic function of being a source of knowledge that validates her writing (361). Above all, her writing served a didactic goal; namely, to help

women achieve spiritual perfection through literature.[26]

As it will become clear, the connection between the two Marianas went beyond a vertical relationship of prioress and *lega*. Nuns considered themselves to be a part of a larger spiritual family of women whose lives and teachings were accessible mostly through books, though also via visual and oral culture. We can picture female religious writings as iceberg-like texts under whose surface lies an abundance of imagery, oral tradition, everyday mundane interactions, bodily experiences and knowledge of female authors and spiritual literature. To take on Kim Haines-Eitzen's term, these multilayered texts can be considered "gendered palimpsests"[27] in the sense that:

> Textual variants, multiple interpretations of female literary characters, representations of ideal women readers and writers, labels for visual imagery—in each of these cases, the notion of palimpsest illuminates well the process of layering, difference, erasure, and reinscription. The book and body, women and books—both pairs point us toward a gendered, and layered, history. (2012, 17)

Hagiographical literature contrives religious perfection, and it does so through the re-inscription and variation of earlier models, interpretations and representations of devotion.

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[26] Among her works are: *Modo de hacer los oficios de obediencia* (1746), R*eglas y Constituciones de las religiosas de la gloriosa virgen Sta Rosa María de Lima* (1746), *Ejercicios de tres días que se ejercitan en el convento de Santa Rosa*, *Maravillas del divino amor* (1758), *Varias devociones* (1758), *Meditaciones de la Sagrada Pasión* (1764), *Oratorio espiritual* (1774), and *Devoción en honra de la purísima Leche* (1782). Mariana's vast intellectual production, as well as her popularity and authority must be understood within an environment of greater tolerance to female participation in lettered culture and recognition of women's intellectual capacities. As Eich notes, she "benefited from living toward the end of the colonial period, when a change in the attitude of male ecclesiastics manifested itself" (2004, 16). For a history of women in the Spanish Age of Reason, see the book edited by Theresa Ann Smith (2006).

[27] Though Haines-Eitzen's study explores the ancient texts of Early Christianity, her notion offers a model that can illuminate early modern female religious writing. Namely, she explores the connections between body and book (both of them malleable and perfectible) within the multiple rewritings of Biblical texts, wherein female characters are perpetually inscribed and erased in the process of manuscript transmission. She also argues for a history of Biblical textual transmission that considers female experiences of scribal work. Consequently, she considers the ways in which the multiplicity of female representations shed light on disputes about the place of women in society and religion.

It is a genre where the poetics of *aemulatio* (the transformative imitation of more prestigious models) textualizes the Christian precept of *imitatio Christi*. In other words, the layers of literary imitation make up a repertoire of commonplaces (spiritual transformations, moral virtues, miracles, extraordinary events) that provide a step-by-step guide on following the path of Jesus. To follow Margo Glantz, it is a "cyclical, tautological, redundant" (2006, 131) genre that combines commonplaces and a somewhat fixed set of virtues to create a model for saintliness.

The many textual traces found in texts such as Marianita's diary provide a window into the history of women's engagement with the literary culture of their time, either through silent or collective reading. As it will become clear, Marianita's diary reveals knowledge of Mariana's works, in particular *Devoción a la Santísima Virgen María en Honra de su purísima leche* (1785), a treatise on Mary's holy milk. The prioress's scholarly and intellectual knowledge is translated into practical everyday work, providing the theological backbone of Marianita's spiritualization of cooking duties. Marianita also takes motifs, images and representations from the female columns of Dominican religiosity: Saint Catherine of Siena and, of course, Saint Rose of Lima.[28] The confluence of these figures and texts nurture Marianita's text and yield her unique mode of devotion.

We might think that the palimpsest is not an exclusive trait of female religious writing. But while it is true that devout men also built their literary and religious authority on rewritings, their place within lettered culture was different in many ways. In comparison

[28] The nature of the palimpsest is so vast that it exceeds the possibilities of this space. The presence of another feminine figure that is yet to be explored is Madre María de la Antigua (1566-1617), a Spanish *donada* and later white-veiled nun of the convent of Saint Clare in the Andalusian town of Marchena. She is the writer of a devotional book and poetry, *Desengaño de religiosos y de almas que tratan de virtud.* María de la Antigua also worked as a cook and commonly refers to herself as "estropajo de cocina".

to men's, women's writing was taken by ecclesiastical authorities with a little more than a grain of salt. Suspicions of *alumbradismo*[29] and fear of demoniacal visions drove many to scrutinize the assertions of mystics during the era of Counter-Reformation. Women had to self-fashion through a strong network of canonical references that situated them in a lineage of orthodox holy people.

At the same time, however, texts were double-edged swords that could raise the eyebrows of inquisitors, who already censored and regulated women's access to books. An excessive knowledge of religious literature posed the danger of fake mystics taking the experiences of the page onto their own lives. When the process of canonization of Saint Rose of Lima was put into motion in 1614, for example, one of the aspects under scrutiny was whether her mystical knowledge had been learned or experienced (Van Deusen 2018, 55). In light of this suspicion, women developed a particular mode of religious expression at the intersection between writing, reading and the body: "a new kind of readable space […] Instead of reading a book, they could now claim to read God through their bodies" (58). Female mystical writing, then, is a careful balancing act between authorized textual tradition and "somatic literacy"—that is, reading and writing with the body. Bodily and material practices such as dressing the statue of a Saint or kissing their sisters' hands, van Deusen argues, enabled an understanding of theological notions that were otherwise inaccessible to women who were illiterate or uneducated. Through their connections with the physical world, religious women understood that certain matter was infused with holiness and thus, that "the relationship between immateriality and materiality was fluid and interchangeable" (27). In texts such as those by Úrsula and Marianita, where the

[29] Roughly defined, *alumbradismo* was a term used by the Inquisition to refer to false spiritual illumination. For a discussion of the definition of alumbradismo, see Weber (1990).

already somatic experience of literacy encloses an even more embodied activity—cooking—, the boundaries that separate spirit from body, lettered knowledge from embodied experience, are further collapsed into a particular mode of knowing God.

Culinary Imagination in Female Dominican Devotion

On a fall morning of 1741, Marianita attended communal prayer in tears. She desperately pleaded for the soul of one of her sisters, a nun who sustained a "desordenado afecto" with a certain someone from outside the convent. Despite her many promises to leave behind her sinful life, it seemed the nun could not give up the secret nocturnal meetings with her lover. Or in Tirado's words, she continually went back to "las viandas de Egipto" (134-135), a reference to the story of the prophet Hoseas and his unfaithful wife in the Old Testament. Like the wife of Hoseas, the nun too was violating her holy marriage with God by sneaking around with a man.

Marianita offered God to be punished in her place. At night, once in her cell, she lit a candle and knelt before an image of Our Lady of Bethlehem (also known as *Virgen de la leche*) and prayed for her sister's conversion. The image showed Mary offering her breast to baby Jesus, who stared enticingly outside the frame and into Marianita's eyes "como convidando a mamar" (Figure 14). Mesmerized by the Virgin's dripping nipple, Marianita begs for a taste. Suddenly, the image before transforms into Our Lady herself. Marianita enters a sort of trance, loses touch with all external senses and, with the eyes of her soul, sees Virgin Mary inviting her into her breast. A reluctant and humbled Marianita approaches:

> […] se llegó con grande reverencia, y estuvo pendiente de los pechos de la Señora mamando por largo tiempo, quedándole desde entonces, y aún después de seis días tal dulzura y gusto en la boca y paladar que cualquiera

otro manjar o licor que comía o bebía sobre no hallarle el gusto le causaba por lo regular gran fastidio y muchas veces basca, pero se recreaba mucho su espíritu con solo acordarse de la dulzura de la leche de la Señora, tanto que cuando a sus solas hacía memoria de este favor, le redundaba al sentido su gusto y sentía más viva la dulzura (152-153)

Figure 13. *Anonymous. Virgen de la Leche. Oil on canvas. Museo Amparo Puebla. A possible source of this image is Agostino Carracci's (1560-1609) Nursing Madonna in a Crescent.*

In the midst of her mystical ecstasy, Marianita begs for the nun to have some of her sweet milk to help the nun forget the "unclean" aliment of sexual appetite. The final destiny of the nun, however interesting, is beyond the point here. What this passage illustrates is the opposition associated with taste and bodily pleasure. On one side, eating earthly foods is deemed parallel to sex, and thus sin, for the bodily pleasure it awakens; on the other, eating and drinking is a source of spiritual rejoice and intimate connection with the divine—either through being breastfed by Mary or consuming Christ's body in the Eucharist.[30] This

[30] Together with touch, taste was considered an inferior sense for being so attached to the body. In his book of emblems, the Jesuit Lorenzo Ortiz (1687) described it as: "Es el sentido del gustar, el

tension serves as a constant backdrop for Marianita's culinary mysticism.

Her loss of taste must be understood within the context of mystical ecstasy or *arrobo*, wherein the senses are suspended temporarily during rapture, the body detached from the world in order to make way for divine union. Unable to find any sensation in everyday food, her spirit rejoices in evoking the memory of the milk, which materializes inside her mouth every time she remembers Mary's breast. Though she has lost the ability to taste, mundane food and drink repulse her to the point of vomit. Interestingly, it is their insipidness—and not an unpleasant flavor—which makes her sick. Food that has no trace of flavor is denied the very possibility of producing any sensation. It is dematerialized.

This mystical milk-drinking experience is rooted in the literature of Sor Mariana Águeda de San Ignacio. More specifically, it is a materialization of the exegeses in *Devoción de la leche,* perhaps the most important textual source of Marianita's mysticism. Here, Águeda de San Ignacio describes at length the redeeming and mystical nature of Mary's milk:

> Si hubiera un manjar o bebida de tan prodigiosas calidades que confortara la cabeza, animara y alegrara el corazón, aumentara los espíritus vitales, purificara la sangre, corroborara los nervios, atemperara los humores, ordenara y compusiera toda la naturaleza del hombre, este tal manjar o bebida igualmente fuera útil y provechoso a sanos y enfermos, pues los unos aseguraban y aumentaban la salud y se recreaban y los otros sanaban y convalecían. Más excelente y prodigiosa es la leche de los pechos de María y mucho más admirables efectos causa en lo espiritual este dulce y substancial mantenimiento y así es utilísimo y provechoso a justos y pecadores y todos tienen necesidad de él (1782, 15)

As Jennifer Eich points out, Mary is "the redeemer who mystically transforms the sinner

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que más nos emparenta con los brutos, y con que más nos damos a conocer cuando lo somos" (178). He adds a telling story of a saint who burst into tears at the table, saying: "'Siento verme obligado a estar en la mesa, ocupado en comer manjar de brutos cuando debiera estar gustando en la contemplación el manjar de los ángeles'" (178).

into the righteous through her breast milk, which facilitates the practice of virtues leading to Christian perfection, and thereby, to salvation" (2004, 123). The prioress' theology—markedly feminine, motherly, and bodily—makes the Virgin Mary the central figure of mediation between the human and the divine. She is the source of God's nourishment, and thus embodies His humanity. The treatise's distinctly Marian perspective nearly verges on unorthodoxy by fading male divinity and advancing a feminine form of divine knowledge.[31]

The treatise's exegeses coincide with the great surge of the Marian cult and the dogma of Immaculate Conception in the Americas (the latter promoted strongly by Franciscans and Jesuits, Mariana's close friends[32]). According to Jacques Lafaye, the rise of Marian devotion in the eighteenth century is explained by the simultaneous rise of a distinctly American consciousness: "Applying a kind of dialectic to the impenetrable designs of God, the religious […] concluded that where sin had abounded more than elsewhere […], grace should henceforth abound. Mestizos and creoles, treated with the same scorn as the Indians by the *gachupines*, felt the weight of centuries of idolatry and

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[31] For instance, she suggests that milk is superior to wine, the blood of Christ: "licor de tus pechos, que es mejor que el precioso vino" (27). See Eich (2004) 119-126 for a discussion of Mary as Mariana's theological focus.

[32] The cult for Mary and the Immaculate increasingly appeared as one and the same, despite the ongoing theological debates among mendicant orders. Since the sixteenth century, Dominicans were strong opposers of the dogmatization of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. Franciscans, Jesuits and Mercedarians were among the principal champions of Mary's sinless conception. Despite it not being declared official dogma until the nineteenth century, the cult of the Immaculate Conception was extremely popular in Spain and the Americas. King Philip III himself championed its official recognition and tried to persuade the pope to declare it on two occasions. The Order of Saint Dominic thus faced increased pressure to recognize Mary's immaculate birth. By the end of the seventeenth century and beginning of the eighteenth, the heated debates that pit Dominicans and Franciscans against each other had cooled down considerably due to growing ecclesiastical and popular support of the mystery. In 1662, for example, the pope issued a decree that prohibited anyone from saying Mary had been conceived with original sin. A brief history of the debate around immaculateism can be found on Melvin 2012, 205-214.

mortal sin" (1987, 227). Mary personified that promised grace that redeemed their land and history of its sinful past. Marianism thus became an expression of rising criollo identity, for the Virgin signified "the salvation of the New World, a world chosen to be the site of a renewed Christendom" (227). The devotional writings of the prioress, such as her dissertations on milk, shaped the spiritual lives of the *Rosas*, who assimilated her teachings to everyday practice. Marianita's diary attests to this personal transformation of meaning that I have discussed as being pivotal to hagiographical literature. As the following pages will make clear, the learned authority of Mariana is translated into the material familiarity of pots, pans, ovens and stoves.

Devoción de la leche resorts to food and culinary language for theologizing the centrality of Mary. As Bynum (1987) has famously argued and documented, food is particularly important in female Christian religiosity. Numerous female saints have been associated with food miracles and symbolism since the Middle Ages, including the first of the Dominican Order, Saint Catherine of Siena. Like many other pious women, Catherine mortified her sense of taste to deny herself the possibility of pleasure. Her hagiographer tells us that she avoided meat, watered-down wine and mostly ate raw herbs and weeds (296). Deeming her too young to follow a religious calling, her family reprobated her desire to live a life of devotion. Intending to dissuade and humble her, they fired the kitchen-maid and forced Catherine to fulfill her many menial occupations: washing dishes, cooking, sweeping. But instead of yielding to exhaustion or humiliation, the kitchen became a sanctuary where she served God and nourished her soul with his presence (39). These early encounters with kitchen affairs are what helped shape her stunningly original rendering of the Holy Trinity. For Catherine, Trinity is an entity where God is Table, Christ is food and

Spirit is a Divine Waiter.[33] The faithful sit for a meal, sustained by God's love, in which they consume the flesh of Jesus and are humbled by the Spirit's gifts and generous service.

Though a cook is conspicuously absent from this enthralling Trinitarian scene, Catherine was no stranger to food preparation. In a 1378 epistolary exchange with Pope Urban VI—famous for his ill-temper—, Catherine urged him to ease his bitter disposition so as to better confront the political crisis of the Church in the wake of Papal Schisms. Accompanying the letter was a gift of candied oranges that served as a material symbol of his much needed spiritual transformation into sweetness.[34] She offers a spiritual guide for his conversion in the form of a candy recipe.

In these soul-cooking instructions, the Pope soaks in the liquid body of Christ, which empties out his bitterness. Next, the Pope is "filled by God with such objectively comforting and honeyed virtues" (Scott 1995, 105), which brews sweetness in his soul. Finally, the candy is wrapped in golden foil, a symbol of the Pope's virtues that "become brightly visible to others" (105). Catherine's gift of the candied orange is an elaborate representation of what Urban's soul will be like once the divine Cook is finished with him" (105). The transformative power of cooking is vested in God's love and materialized in Catherine's candy-making, which provides a hands-on model on *receiving* the sweetness of the divine.

Many Spanish American women—including Saint Rose, Mariana and Marianita—saw in Catherine of Sienna an ideal to imitate.[35] Her life and works were equally familiar to

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[33] For a discussion of Catherine's figuration of the Holy Spirit as waiter, see chapter 6 of Dreyer (1999).

[34] Some convents under the patronage of Saint Catherine, such as the ones in Cuzco and Oaxaca, even feature oranges and orange trees adorning the walls.

[35] Rubial García notes that Catherine was a preferred model for beatas in New Spain. (Profetisas y solitarios 2006, 85-87). See pages 63, 177-178, In of Sor Mariana de San Ignacio's *Vida* for

women inside convents and outside them.[36] In *Devoción de la leche*, Mariana draws upon Saint Catherine's culinary imagination to formulate her take on Marian theology:

> Tiene María Santísima miel y leche, porque primero paladea a sus hijos con la miel y después los alimenta con su leche substancial y suavísima, compadeciéndose de su necesidad y flaqueza pues todos somos inclinados a lo dulce y huimos de lo amargo, es también proporcionado este alimento para deshacer las hieles amargas que deja el pecado y así como las frutas amargas y desabridas que no son útiles para regalar el gusto del paladar, conservándolas con la miel son de mucho regalo, asi los pecadores que son muy desabridos al gusto de Dios, con esta miel regalada les da tal sazón y los deja tan trocados que pueden ser de mucho gusto al mismo Dios (28).

Fruity bitterness is here transformed into true and sweet aliment by Mary. Whereas in Catherine the allegorical place of the cook was occupied by God, here, Mary's sweet seasonings transform the bitterness of sin into a pleasant taste that delights the divine palate. Throughout the treatise, the spiritual power of Mary's breast is imagined in culinary terms. Her milk is described as being superior to wine and as capable of transforming hot cinders into stars (114-115).

In keeping with the Immaculist thesis, *Devoción de la leche* gives Mary a paramount position that almost rivals Christ's. Mary's body—conceived without original sin—has an essential role in the history of human salvation. For Mariana, that role is akin to that of a cook. She might not have redeemed humankind, but she fostered, nurtured and prepared He who did. She diligently sprinkled the minuscule but essential pinch of salt that orders the universe.[37] She simmered down the implacable wrath of God and nursed his

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instances of devotion in the kitchen.

[36] Both Mariana and Marianita refer to her readings of Catherine's, and, of course, Rose's lives. Works by and about Catherine of Sienna were published in Puebla in 1697, 1773 and 1795. For a full catalog of publications in Puebla from 1640-1821, see Medina.

[37] Mary's utmost virtue is her prudence, from which all other virtues emanate. She calms God's wrath with her loving temper, which is imagined as salt: "Es la prudencia virtud inseparable de las demás virtudes, […] por eso se dice ser la prudencia en las virtudes lo que en las viandas la sal" (Águeda de San Ignacio 1782, 67). Sor Mariana urges her readers to imitate the Divine Cook: "Usar

creation. She is the baker who bound everything together with the warmth of her fingers.[38] In keeping with early modern beliefs about breastfeeding, Christ's own blood is nothing but a transformation of his mother's milk, concocted inside her bosom.[39]

Mary's unparalleled milky ingredient is both infused by God and infuser of God's son: "tu leche, Señora, es leche de Dios, y Dios es de tu leche" (7). Ultimately, without Mary's milk, without her precise skill to get the right balance of salt and without her working hands, the sacred bread of Christ simply cannot be. Without milk, there is no salvation.

At this point, the exploration of Catherine, Rose and Mariana's *Devoción de la leche* might seem excessive in considering the life of a simple *leguita.* But that vertigo produced by never-ending references, by the impossibility of pinning a single source, is exactly what is at the core of relationality. The networks fostered by these texts are like the images in a hall of mirrors, where the position of the self is relegated in importance and displaced by the many versions reflecting upon one another. From Catherine's Rome all the way to Marianita's kitchen in the heart of Puebla, there is a centuries-long game of imitation and representation that puts these women in a spatial and temporal continuum. It is not merely an accumulation of intertexts, but rather a process of embodied and everyday translation of such texts. Letters, diaries and treatises by women of the past are a way to

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de esta sal […] hemos de componer con la prudencia imitando a nuestra madre" (69). The meaning of the verb *componer* is double: to cook and to fix.

[38] Sor Mariana makes a distinction between earthly and spiritual bread. Mary is the baker of the "living bread" of Christ: "Apaciguadora divina, no con pan de higos, sino con el pan vivo, que del cielo descendió y con tu virginal leche se amasó" (68).

[39] Blood was believed to be transformed into breast milk inside a woman's body. The same liquid nurtured the child; menstrual blood fed the fetus and milk fed the newborn. Because milk was believed to be processed—cooked—blood, breastfeeding one's own child was important to preserve bloodline. In that sense, Mary is the giver of Christ's physical body and flesh, of his humanity. For a history of breastfeeding, see Fildes (1988).

access the spiritual practices that women seek to replicate in the present. Relational selves such as Marianita are thus immersed in an atemporal flux of identities, where *originality*—in the most literal sense—is unattainable. Only copies exist.

Yet, every copy is a transformation, inevitably tied to historical realities, material circumstances and contexts of textual transmission. In this particular case, Mariana's Immaculatism and Catherine's culinary imagination impregnate Marianita's everyday life as a convent cook. The high forms of theology and the sophisticated metaphors of conversion are here translated into the ordinary language of the kitchen. Far from existing solely on the page, these dynamic texts come alive in the present through the nun's body and lived experiences.

Add Sweet Milk to Broken Wheat

Now we can approach Marianita's milky experience with a wider understanding of its meaning. The milk does not quite take away her ability of taste but instead replaces it with a new and higher form of sensibility that leaves her in a prolonged state of ecstasy. Her ability to perceive flavor is reduced to tasting sweetness only. While her soul finds nourishment in the knowledge of divinity provided by the sweet milk, her body is rendered useless to taste worldly food and all its flavor combinations. She stands closer to God yet farther from her sisters, unable to obey and comply with her responsibilities. Though a blessing for her spirit, soon her lack of taste begins to pose a problem in her daily life. She is forced to recur to the palates of her sisters, who are not too happy with the extra work: "rara vez encontró entre sus hermanas quien de buena gana lo hiciese; porque las más veces, se negaban, otras lo hacían con tan malos modos que a esto se añadían mil injurias, tratándola de inútil buena para nada, de señora para un estrado y otras pesadeces semejantes

a esta (31-32).” Marianita’s loss of taste immediately signals her out among her sisters, who, at best, give her a reluctant hand. They call her a *señora para un estrado,* implying that she acts out of an unfounded sense of nobility. The other nuns were probably unaware of Marianita’s mystical raptures. They must have simply assumed she was lazy, entitled and thought too highly of herself.

We must remember that humility was fundamental for mystics to prove the authenticity of their experiences. Bragging about knowing God was sure to raise a suspicious flag for Inquisitors. Marianita’s milk-infused palate inaugurates conflicts among the other nuns. At the time, the vast majority of the nuns of Saint Rose were black-veiled, with only four *legas* serving the entire community. Marianita was no less than essential. For her to fail the expectations of her rank meant a disruption—both in the social hierarchy and the everyday operation of the convent.

The accusations quickly begin to escalate into conflict and tension, a new source of mortification for Marianita. Mary’s mystical favor clashes with the most mundane side of convent life. However sweet and beautiful, Marianita has to renounce it to carry on with her duties. She cannot afford to lose the cook’s essential tool:

> No sé qué día de estos le pidió sor Mariana a Nuestro Señor le volviera el sentido del gusto, que había perdido para poder sazonarlos guisados cuando es cocinera, y luego al punto se lo volvió su majestad. El motivo de esta petición fue porque como le es preciso pedir a alguna de las madres que le prueben la comida, a ver si está o no sazonada para que si falta algo, remediarlo, no fuera cosa que por su causa se quedara la comunidad sin comer, y veía sor Mariana que unas se le excusaban, que otras aunque lo hacían era al parecer con poco agrado, mal modo y como violentas, por no mortificarlas. Hizo a dios la petición y su majestad se lo concedió (210).

On one side, her renunciation highlights an exceptional humble character. She is first humbled by Mary’s undeserved generosity, then she conceals her experiences as not to

appear arrogant, and now she gives up the privilege of divine milk to feed her sisters and abate conflict. Her humility is both performative and structural. Being a lega, humility and inferiority were imprinted on her from the moment of professing. That is, her community saw her as humble and small by nature. Even her own ecstasy when drinking from Mary's breasts adds to this sense of smallness. She becomes a child—innocuous, defenseless, fragile—nurtured by the divine mother. In *Devoción de la leche*, sor Mariana Águeda de San Ignacio writes that Mary's children must remain so to receive her favor. She feeds and cares for Jesus and all her other children, with a particular devotion to the smallest and most fragile. Mariana writes: "Todos sus hijos son pequeñitos y por eso humildes, así como el trigo es pisado, trillado y traspaleado, así los felices hijos de María Purísima, siempre andan bajo de los pies de todos, se dejan como el trigo trillar, pero merecen ser recogidos, como el grano (41). The children of Mary are like wheat. They grow next to weeds that, though similar in appearance, bear no grain and thus, stand tall. Wheat, on the other hand, bows to the ground, bending over the weight of its fruit.

In this passage, Mariana represents allegorical wheat as a harvester would. She chooses verbs bordering on wheat-related technicalities—*pisar, trillar* and *traspalear*—, denoting the material and embodied stages of preparing the grain before bread-making. Humble and small yet fecund and nourishing, God's wheat is akin to those who work it, both the harvesters who pick it and the bakers who turn it into food. In New Spain, the working force of agriculture and bakeries was by and large comprised of indios, mulattos, mestizos and Black slaves.[40] Like the whole grains of wheat, these workers stood, as it were, closer to the (social) ground. Legas like Marianita are thus a paradigmatic

[40] See García Acosta (1988 and 1989) for the history of wheat in New Spain.

embodiment of trampled wheat. They literally stand on the floors of the convent's world, kneeling to scrub tiles or grinding corn on the metate. Their humble work brings her near to Mary's embrace. For Marianita, it allows her to be transformed by her milk just as crushed wheat is transformed into bread.

Marianita's humility coexists with a sense of exceptionality. In renouncing Mary's milk, she receives yet another divine favor, this time from no other than God himself. God not only dissipates her sisters' exasperation, it also shields her from their violence. Even more, it signals just how essential she is for the whole community. She is simultaneously the concocted wheat and the concocter of daily meals. As if no other could step in as cook, she says: "lo que más me mortifica es ver que soy cocinera y es preciso probar los guisados y como he perdido totalmente el gusto, de milagro de Dios salen buenos los guisados" (469). Even her impaired palate yields delicious food. Marianita dignifies her position in the convent, subtly underscoring the value and importance of her work.

After God restores her mundane sense of taste, her relation to divinity changes to fit the life and works of a lega. Tasting Mary's sweetness perpetually would have been more apt for a superior nun who could spend her days on prayer and *recogimiento,* but not for someone on whom the community depended so heavily to function. Her initial mystical experiences posed a contradiction that is at the heart of the Spanish word *saber*, meaning "to taste" and "to know". Both words stem from the Latin *sapere*, which also gave us words such as *sabiduría* (*sapientia*, wisdom, knowledge) and *sabor* (*sapor,* flavor, taste). *Saber* encloses two phenomenological experiences that Western philosophical tradition has tended to conceive as irreconcilable. On one side, the experience of the fleeting physical world; on the other, timeless abstract truths. Such a divide between the abstract and the concrete translates into the prestige given to the activities of the mind and those of the

body.[41] In this case, the world of food and the spiritual knowledge of God; the work of Mary and the work of Martha. Marianita is bound to her rank and its expectations of manual embodied labor. She is to serve God as Martha but instead experiences direct and spiritual encounters as Mary. Her loss of taste signifies that divide; knowledge of the divine derives in a disembodied presence in the physical world. This is where cooking emerges as a practice through which another model of unity with God is possible.

Following Lisa Heldke, food preparation is an activity where the divide between theory and practice, and between object and subject of knowledge, cannot be sustained. Heldke (1992) explains: To know how to cook well does not require an abstract measurement-conscious knowledge […], but rather a knowledge in the eyes and in the hands. You have to be able to "finger" a ball of pie dough to tell if it needs a bit more ice water. You must be able to smell when the garlic is just about to burn as it sautés in the oil" (219). Through touch, a baker can tell if the dough has been kneaded enough, through the nose if it is beginning to bake, through hearing if a loaf is hollow or if it needs more time inside the oven. This kind of bodily knowledge—an idea that stands very close to "somatic literacy"—implies a collapse of the dichotomy between subject and object. Food-making, writes Heldke, encourages us to blur the separation between ourselves and our food. If we translate this idea to religious terms, it provides a model in which the boundaries between materiality and immateriality, between human and divinity can—albeit fleetingly—touch.

The Cook and her Helper

Carolyn Bynum has famously argued that food is an overpowering concern for female

[41] I take these ideas from Lisa Heldke's (1992) and Deane W. Curtin's (1992) philosophical discussions of food. See Heldke and Curtin (ed.) 3-22 and 203-229.

religious writers of the Middle Ages. She gives a compelling reason: “This traditional association of women with food preparation *rather than* food consumption helps us to understand certain aspects of the religious significance of food. To prepare food is to control food. Moreover, food is not merely *a* resource that women control; it is *the* resource that women control” (1987, 191). In the convents of colonial Latin America, the lowest-ranked nuns were in control of the sustenance of all, including the highest-ranked, visitors and even unknown outsiders who bought their foods. In that manner, legas like Marianita were responsible not just for the food itself, but for assuring its spiritual correctness. Was meat allowed on that day? Was the taste too pleasurable? Was the pantry being managed responsibly? To control food was to oversee spiritual and financial health, especially for its pivotal role in the spiritual economy[42] of the community. As Lavrin says, food was an expression of “institutional hospitality” that extended bridges to the outside world (2008, 156-57). Banquets were thrown for confessors, bishops and secular authorities. Sweets and pastries were sold for public celebrations and provided important additional income, just as they do to this day.[43]

In light of the importance of food preparation in convents, Marianita cooking emerges as a uniquely interesting expression of devotion. It is one where the kitchen is a passage to the streets of *el siglo* as well as the realms of heaven; where the separation

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[42] I take this term from Kathryn Burns’ study of the convents of Colonial Cuzco. She uses it “to denote the inextricability of the material and the sacred, relying on a very old sense of economy, as the managing of a house (Greek oikos) and pointing to the spiritual goals orienting such activity. In this kind of economy, spiritual foods circulated and might be bought for money with no perceived contamination or contradiction (1999, 3).

[43] Frances Ramos writes that “Puebla had also been famous for its candies and pastries. For annual and extraordinary ceremonies alike, councilmen purchased candies and cookies from individuals, as well as convents” (123). See pp. 122-23 for a description of the council’s expenses in sweets and other foods for ceremonies.

between self and divine other seems suspended by working hands; where expected service and obligation is turned into spiritual rejoice. Culinary devotion, thus, is a particular union with God through the embodied, economic and political act of cooking. Behind Marianita's renunciation of the milky miracle is an effort to retain the power, control and the spiritual reward that come with the spoon and ladle.

Marianita might have lost Mary's sweet taste, but she gains the tender company of Jesus. On July 25th of 1742, baby Jesus paid her the first of many visits. This was hardly her first vision, but it was the first in which he caught her with her hands full at work. She cooks not for her sisters, but for some of the convent's benefactors: "luego que acabó de comulgar y dar gracias, fue a la cocina a hacer no sé qué bocaditos guisados que algunas madres le habían encargado para regalar a algunos bienhechores del convento" (286). Sitting beside the brazier, she makes *albóndigas* when Jesus appears asking to sit on her lap. "Mariana, ¿quieres que te ayude?", he asks. "Por lo mucho que ayer trabajaste, yo quisiera ayudarte hoy en la cocina […] dame la mano para subir ahí y siéntame contigo" (286). Her hands are dirty, so she dares not touch his: "Señor, las tengo sucias, pero aquí está el brazo". Propping himself up, he sits on her lap and rests his head on her chest while she continues to cook. Jesus is not exactly lending her a hand nor does he utter any more words of reassurance or support. His presence and closeness to her heart are enough to lighten the burden of her labor.

Such an image mirrors Mary feeding her child. He lays on her bosom in silence, perhaps sleeping. She is not breastfeeding him. Instead, she works to feed others just like a mother would. Even more, her work feeds the body of the convent itself, as the meatballs are transformed into economic or political favors from the benefactors. Although much less common in religious iconography, Mary is represented in a more mundane scene, feeding

Jesus at the table (Figure 14). Unlike Mary’s food, by nature nourishing and abundant, Marianita’s is the fruit of her hardworking hands. She holds Jesus close in a position akin to the feeding mother, but in reality it is her who is being fed by his divine presence.[44] If in *Devoción de la leche* Mary is the divine cook whose milk and salt gave the bread of Christ to humanity, here Marianita is the cook whose work will allow Christ’s brides to continue serving and loving him.

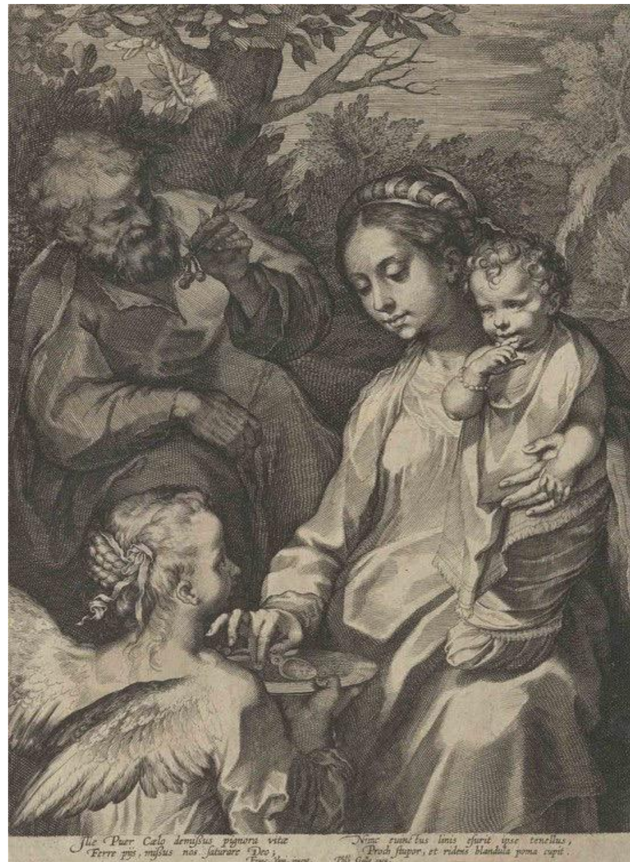

Figure 14. Cornellius Galle, *The Virgin Feeding the Child.*, c. 1600-1610. Museum Boijmans van Beuningen.

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[44] Marianita cooking with Christ also echoes Saint Rose, whose iconography is rife with the presence of the infant. In one of her most famous visions, she sits beside Jesus while sewing his initials on a pillow. In a poem attributed to her, Rose asks God: “How will I love you, Lord / being your creation”. The spiritual vertigo that produces loving the Creator as a spouse is mitigated in this maternal image. As Graziano argues, the infant Jesus is a “more manageable God”, whose presence is gentle and sweet, a sort of small-scaled version of the Almighty (2004, 198-99). In a rather circular relation, Rose tenderly shows and teaches the child how she adores and serves him.

The presence of Jesus lights an inner fire in Marianita. Her physical exhaustion is alleviated and she temporarily experiences the suspension of external senses. This tender moment is interrupted when a nun unexpectedly comes into the kitchen. Marianita's face is lit and her skin is blushed. "¿Qué es eso sor Mariana? ¿Qué tiene su caridad que está tan abochornada?", she asks surprised. "Es el calor del brasero" is her answer. Once more, fire encompasses a rich repertoire of meanings. The fire of the brazier masks the fire hidden inside, a secret she cannot reveal without raising incredulous eyebrows. It is not the purifying fire of purgatory but the burning fire of love. In Teresa de Avila's iconic ecstasy, that flame crowns the piercing arrow that punctures her heart, causing her a clashing sensation of pain and bliss. For our nun, the everpresent blaze under the pots and the flames within her are one but the same. The warmth of the cooking fire is what lights and feeds the fire of mystical love.

Throughout the diary, Jesus will repeatedly visit her while she is cooking. He helps her bake and decorate a cake, tidy up the kitchen and iron the tablecloth before a meal. Almost a month after his first visit, Jesus appears again in the kitchen, this time on one of the busiest days of the year for the *rosas*, the feast day of Saint Dominic. At nine in the morning, with a long day still ahead of her, Marianita was already worn-out. Her biggest task was cooking mole, today's Mexican dish *par excellence*:[45]

> viendo que tenía que moler una porción considerable de chile para hacer un guisado que llaman mole, no dejó de acongojarse su poquillo y levantando el corazón a Dios, cogió el chile y dijo a su majestad 'Ea Señor, dame fuerzas, que ya no puedo más, sólo por ti y por servir a tus esposas lo hago de buena gana' (335)

[45] Mole has a long disputed history. Numerous writers and artists have speculated about its presumed origins, but there is no clear consensus about its history. For a review of some of these hypotheses, see Pilcher (1998, 25-27). Culinary Historian Rachel Laudan has provocatively proposed that mole's roots lie in Medieval Muslim traditions of the Spanish peninsula; see Laudan and Pilcher (1999).

The infant Christ responds to her prayer and offers to help in grinding the mountain of chilis that stands before her in the metate. Today's industrial mole pastes can make us forget the intense labor that goes into cooking it by hand. Mole is essentially a sauce that can contain more than twenty ingredients, including a variety of chilis, vegetables, seeds, fat, dried fruits and a thickener such as maize dough or tortillas, all of which are toasted or fried beforehand, then ground and finally simmered. Though not all moles are made alike, some being simpler than others, it is clear that Marianita's cooking job is far from an easy one. She asks Jesus for strength, an implication that we must interpret literally.

Indeed, there is a lot of sweat involved in achieving the smooth texture of mole with a metate.[46] Picture this: Marianita is on her knees bent over the taunting chilis, dreading the hours of work ahead of her, perhaps with her eyes and throat irritated by the spicy fumes. Kneeling with her gaze on the floor, her body is in an all too familiar position. Prayer and cooking are condensed in her body; it is the primary medium of labor as well as devotion.[47]

Marianita prays to Jesus expecting him to enter her heart like he did before. This time, however, Jesus deems that insufficient: "Sí, Mariana, yo no falto de tu pecho; y en lo

[46] Historian Pablo Escalante gives a precise description of its use: "requería una postura precisa para que el cuerpo hiciera las veces de molino: la mujer se sentaba sobre sus piernas plegadas y así debía producir una presión descendente sobre el metate; lo lograba levantando las asentaderas ligeramente de los talones y precipitando el peso hacia sus brazos para empujar y presionar la mano del metate. Luego volvía a una posición más baja y repetía una y otra vez el procedimiento de elevarse para colocar su peso en la parte alta del metate y dejarlo caer. Los empeines eran el punto de apoyo de esa máquina de doble palanca" (2010, 37-38). Metates were used in indigenous households long before the arrival of Cortés. Grinding corn on it was an exclusively feminine task. This dynamic perdured for centuries until the invention of the mechanical grinder in the nineteenth century. See Olcott (2006, 146-148) and Gómez-Bravo (2020).

[47] In Saint Rose's *Reglas y Constituciones*, sor Mariana Águeda de San Ignacio details the expected bodily behaviors of nuns (1746, 6-22), offering an entire typology of devout corporeal presence. She also notes that, because legas occupied themselves with more corporeal tasks, their interior work was necessarily less than her black-veiled sisters: "Las religiosas legas, por ser recibidas para oficios corporales, y para que con el sudor de su rostro coman el pan, no están obligadas al Oficio Divino como las del Coro, sino que les basta oír Misa rezada" (5).

que mira a lo demás, ya te lo concedo, pero por ahora te he de ayudar a moler, que estás cansada" (336). The narrator continues: "Pusieron el niño y sor Mariana sus manos en el metate, digo en la mano del metate, y con ligereza molieron […]" (336). In this lovely slip of the pen, the spiritual body of Christ, the body of Marianita and the material body of the metate become one. All four hands hold the *metlapil*—also called *mano*—, the moving piece of the metate which receives the body's weight to smooth and bring out the flavors of the chilis. Stone, spirit and skin come together in the hands that hold the metate's *mano*, bringing about a notion of labor that necessitates all three dimensions to create mole. The food the community will enjoy that day is a product of a deep way of working that falls, so the text suggests, into Marianita's hands alone.

The combination of the metate, chili and mole makes for an unequivocally novohispano miracle. Or to be more precise a criollo miracle. Food historians Rachel Laudan and Jeffrey Pilcher have argued that mole is an elite criollo dish originated by the adaptation of Iberian dishes, such as Spanish *gigotes*, *guisos, alcaparrados*, *mollos* (1999, 66). Mole would have been a Spanish conception adapted to the American soil and eventually christened with the Náhuatl word for sauce, *molli.*[48] In that sense, mole would have symbolized an emerging criollo identity; it carries their cultural and gastronomic Iberian heritage and the natural wealth of the soil that fed criollo bodies since birth.

[48] Laudan and Pilcher identify only two examples of the dish being referred to with the Náhuatl name; one from Dominga de Guzmán's 1750 recipe book and the other from the recipes of the convent of Saint Jerome in Mexico City, famously attributed to Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz but written on paper dated in the eighteenth century. For them, "beyond these two examples, there is nothing" (1999, 67). In the diary, Tirado refers to the dish as "un guiso que llaman mole", suggesting a certain degree of unfamiliarity. In addition to the examples mentioned by Laudan and Pilcher, several eighteenth century recipe collections feature instructions to prepare different kinds of mole: clemole poblano in the Gerónimo de San Pelayo's (2000, 27), mole de Oaxaca in the Avila Blancas manuscript, four kinds of mole in two anonymous collections (2001, 140).

Whether or not mole is "originally" criollo or not is a question I do not want to dwell on. What is most memorable of this passage is the convergence of indigenous material culture with Catholic rite and iconography. In a society that still believed food determined one's nature and character by affecting bodily humors,[49] placing mole at the center of an orthodox Marian image of devotion prompts the reader to consider the prospect of Christ sharing mole with his children or Mary preparing it for the son of God.

The mole miracle can hardly be imitated elsewhere in the continent. It puts Jesus in the heart of present criollo daily life, as well as in the ingredients and tools that hold strong ties to the indigenous past.[50] The criollo identity of Saint Rose's nuns is rooted in a distinctly American expression of religiosity that impregnates their entire way of life. They live under the spiritual patronage of a Peruvian saint, but their pantry is loaded with unique Mexican staples. Altogether, the mole scene subtly but surely highlights the presence of Christ on this side of the Atlantic.

Flesh or Meat?

Another emblematic dish of Mexican cuisine makes an appearance in the diary: *chiles rellenos*. This time, a benefactor arrives bearing a portion of the stuffed chilis for the nuns.

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[49] As Rebecca Earle (2012) has argued, in the 16th century, Spaniards who consumed too much of indigenous foods were seen with suspicion by their fellow countrymen (126). While humoralism was beginning to be considered obsolete in the eighteenth century, certain aspects of thinking about the body and the role of food remained. Earle explains that "the idea of the individual complexion, with its associated regimen, persisted well into the eighteenth century, and even nineteenth-century savants and statebuilders attributed far-reaching transformative powers to food" (219).

[50] In the late eighteenth century, the Jesuit Francisco Javier Clavijero would write in defense of the foods of the ancient Mexicans, responding to the attacks of European travelers who saw American cultures as inferior. The so-called "dispute of the New World", as Antonello Gerbi termed it, featured discussions about the nutritional value, taste and "civilization" of many of the staples of ancient Mexico and modern *criollo* foodways. See Juárez López (2005, 11-20).

Accepting the gift meant that Marianita got to skip her normal work that day. She might not have cooked that day, but her responsibilities as manager of food remained in effect:

> Al irlos a repartir en la cena, dudó la prelada si estaban rellenos de carne o de pescado. Dióselos a probar a sor Mariana y juzgando ésta que estaban rellenos de pescado, los dieron a la comunidad en refectorio, y las madres los comieron sin advertir ninguna que eran de carne, porque no lo conocieron ni nadie habló palabra (321)

Traditionally, *chiles rellenos* are filled with minced meat and other ingredients such as diced vegetables, dry fruits and bread crumbs.[51] As we know, nuns were expected to avoid meat.[52] The prioress demands that sor Marianita tastes the food and determines if they are suitable for the community. Just like some cautious Popes had full-time food tasters to protect themselves from their enemies, here Marianita bites into it to protect the spiritual health of her sisters. She concludes the chilis are suitable, for they do not have the expected meaty filling. The nuns happily dive into their plates, blissfully unaware of their offense. Of course, it is difficult to believe that none of the twenty-something nuns realized the taste in their mouths was not fish. Did they choose to swallow their words to enjoy a rare luxury? Or did the complex flavors and seasonings of this dish truly confused their palates? Did they remain silent to avoid disregarding the much-needed support of benefactors? Perhaps all of the above. What the text makes clear is that responsibility lies on Marianita and not the individual nuns. Even when she does not cook, she controls and authorizes the food served on the table.

Marianita soon realizes her mistake but dares not reveal it to the prelate or her

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[51] Recipes for *chile rellenos* resemble Spanish recipes for stuffed eggplants, a dish of morisco heritage. For example, in the 1763 recipebook of fray Juan de San Rafael, currently in Spain's National Library, the friar writes that chiles are stuffed "con lo mismo que las berenjenas rellenas". The fourteenth-century Catalan cookbook *Llibre de Sent Soví* includes an eggplant recipe (2008, XXXVI) with a similar meat filling.

[52] See *Reglas y constituciones* (1746, 34, 50).

sisters: “ella los dejó de comer, pero su apuración era grande, pues por su causa las otras madres habían comido carne y habían faltado a la abstinencia que acostumbraban. Este fue el pecado” (321). She interprets her offense in much grander terms because it is not only her soul but all of her sisters’ that are on the line. The humble yet powerful cook can cause the derailment of the entire community.

Her mistake is then transformed into an expression of her virtuous character. In the initial chapters of her biography, fray Juan Tirado describes her outstanding “simplicity.” As a girl and adolescent, she was so pure that her mind was unable to fathom the concept of the sin of the flesh. She is hardly a girl anymore in this passage, but her innocence is intact. After realizing she is eating meat and not fish, she confesses: “Padre, acúsome de haber cometido el pecado de la carne y haber sido causa de que otras por mí lo cometiesen” (322). Like in Catherine of Sienna’s writing, the abstract is translated into the language she knows best, the language of the kitchen. Though her position as a lega removes the possibility of direct engagement with theology or Scripture, Marianita finds in the kitchen a personal path to understand doctrine. The religious image of *carne* as a metonym of bodily pleasures is obfuscated. Instead, the spiritual meaning is transferred to the material and most literal referent. The conventional phrase *pecado de la carne* is almost foreign to the reality of the kitchen, where actual meat is generally avoided and sometimes prepared. Whereas lust is a sin that occurs in abstract and in concrete—when one desires and when one acts upon that desire—, for Marianita the flesh is reduced to its most mundane and literal materiality. The Word becomes meat. Such an interpretation fits into a performance of candor that highlights her seemingly inferior position as a lega. On one side, it justifies her offense by suggesting her position is intrinsically ignorant; on the other, it presents her under a forgiving light that makes her confessor, and surely the reader, chuckle.

The amusing interpretation of the sinful chile is a paradigmatic example of Marianita's spritualization of every bit of her responsibilities. The disproportionately meaningful dish is the result of her spiritual perfection pushed to the limits of the absurd. Nothing is too small for her to serve as a conduit for devotion. Every greasy pot she scrubs, every particle of dust she brooms, every bad bean she sorts out is the materialization of a prayer.[53] In the words of her prelate, Sor Mariana Águeda de San Ignacio: "habituadas las almas a la contemplación la ejercen en los mismos ejercicios de la vida activa" (*Vida* 1758, 285). Every bite the nuns take has been cooked with contemplation.

The Pot Stirrer

By now, it should be clear that even with all her self-depreciative epithets—*lega idiota, ignorante pecadora, tonta cocinera*—Marianita was well aware of her cooking talents and the important impact her job could have on others. Though legas were officially excluded from partaking in decisions that affected the community, the role of cook came with a degree of power to influence the political order of the convent. No other scene in the diary illustrates this more than when she wishes ill upon a poor old nun. As in many convents, the assignment of tasks rotated weekly in Saint Rose. That week, the nun was to take Marianita's dear place in the kitchen, motivating her to take matters into her own hands:

> le pidió a su Majestad que pusiera a la enferma de suerte que no pudiera bajar a hacer su semana de cocina, no que le diese enfermedad grave, sino sólo una cosita, cuanto bastara para impedirle a que fuera esta semana cocinera. Hizo esta petición por dos causas, porque la enferma no tuviera ese trabajo y porque la procuradora deseaba que fuese Sor Mariana cocinera

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[53] The infusion of material things with spiritual depth remind us of Saint Rose of Lima, commonly represented embroidering alongside Jesus. In the scene, she demonstrates not just her craft but also her embodied way of praying, every prayer materialized in a stitch. For a thorough analysis of the functions of embodied prayer see Van Deusen (2018, 23-46). On Rose's history and iconography, see Mujica Pinilla (2001).

esta semana (161).

Marianita's far from exemplary petition stands out among the many examples of her great devotion. Why engage in such an out-of-character demeanor for the (allegedly) most menial duty in the convent? Marianita's misdeed indicates the high value she assigns to her work and the need to protect her position within the community. As it has become evident, for Marianita, cooking entails much more than just preparing food and sweeping the kitchen floor. It is the position that grants her a degree of agency otherwise unavailable to white-veiled nuns; the task whose performance defines her identity as an exceptionally humble lega; the tedious chore turned ecstatic encounter with divinity; the material translation of learned religious doctrine. In light of this, the stakes of stepping down as cook were exceptionally high. With the nun in bed, Marianita keeps her job and with it her religious identity as a *lega cocinera*.

This unusual passage makes clear that not just Marianita, but also her superiors—in this case, the *procuradora*[54]—set great store by her. We can imagine that the administrator favored Marianita not only for her talent in the kitchen, but for her "economic" savviness; that is, for her ability to make the most out of the pantry budget.[55] Such a skill was essential in a community that lived under the constant shadow of scarcity and was eager to demonstrate frugality and humility. Indeed, in the eve of the Bourbon reforms, which sought to control the excess and luxuries of nunneries, Marianita's cooking contributed to Saint Rose's reputation of spiritual and economic exemplarity.

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[54] Lavrin points out that in Saint Rose the "procuradora" was responsible of managing the daily expenses intended for communal meals (2008, 147).

[55] For instance, one day Marianita spills a pot of beans over the hot coals of the kitchen. With great patience, she picks the beans one by one from the fire, making the *procuradora* chuckle. Marianita answers: "Madre, ¿y cómo nos compondremos con la verdadera pobreza? No es bueno desperdiciar, que somos pobres" (1058).

For better or for worse, Marianita will continue to be singled out throughout the diary, with her sisters continuously questioning the authenticity of her devotion. To their eyes, she is lazy, entitled and favored by the prelate. Among their numerous accusations were:

> que traía alborotada la comunidad, que como la madre priora es tan buena, hacía más aprecio de sor Mariana que de las demás porque la engañaba con sus penitencias, que sor Mariana con esto tomaba alas para despreciarlas a todas y hacer poco caso de ellas, no dignándose de mirarlas, andado muy seria y mortificándolas a todas, que era una engreída regalona, huyendo siempre del trabajo, melindrosa para comer, que buen trabajo se le esperaba a la comunidad si por sus imprudentes penitencias enfermaba, que quién había de aguantar sus impertinencias (182-183).

One nun's penitence is another nun's annoyance; one's blessing is another's nuisance. All the more, one's expression of devotion is another's extra load of work. For the authors of such recriminations, fasting masked frivolity and ungratefulness; humility, disdain; devotedness, arrogance. Ultimately, Marianita's mystical ecstasies and exercises of spiritual perfection drain her to a point where she is incapable of working well, burdening her sisters with having to taste her food or taking on when her penitences make her too weak to carry on.

Ironically, her "persecution" further highlights her spiritual virtues. She is mortified, ashamed and worried that the convent would lose "la buena forma de virtud" (181) because of her offenses. This last preoccupation hints at the dynamics between the inside world of the convent and the secular world, the *siglo.* Though living behind closed doors, the constant visits from authorities, benefactors and confessors posed the risk of such disputes leaking into Puebla's well-reputed streets. Any slip of the tongue could rapidly grow into a negative perception of Saint Rose, a community that sought to demonstrate the exemplarity of New Spain's nuns. With just a few eyes of the public set on them, their spiritual

performance had to be perfect around the clock.

As I have mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the women of Saint Rose were no strangers to internal frictions. The turbulent and politicized history of the convent is full of the tense antagonisms that began during the passage from beaterio to convent, when two factions of nuns emerged. Sor Mariana Águeda de San Ignacio, who supported the conversion to convent and skillfully pulled the strings to speed the process, was herself an object of persecutions that are similar to Marianita's. In her *Vida espiritual*, the Jesuit Joseph Bellido writes that "le llegaba a faltar el aliento, según era el trato que experimentaba en desprecios, baldones, mofas, y risas y palabras tales que ni aun la nombraban por su nombre" (1758, 57). Before she assumed the charge as Saint Rose's prioress, Mariana was treated with the contempt legas knew too well.

Accusations and conflict bring the two Mariana's even closer together. From a paralleled reading of Marianita's diary and Mariana's *Vida*, an image of duplicated spiritual characters emerges in the form of a united front. They might be on opposite sides of the social pyramid, but their devotion and humility binds them. Such a connection was not overseen by the community,[56] who then turned to Marianita for a new target of their scorn, making her take the place Mariana once did. Despite her sisters' antipathy, Marianita's relationship with her homonym no doubt gave her leverage on conventual matters. Having the prioress's blessing (on top of Mary's and Jesus's, of course) was no small thing in a community that strived for perfection amidst ongoing instability and tension.

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[56] Mariana's *Vida* points to a particular sympathy for legas: "Tenía especial amor a las de velo blanco, por ser de estado más humilde […] aun siendo priora por serle dañoso el negro, dijo que si lo hubiera sabido, no hubiera escogido otra cosa que el ser leguita" (1758, 155). This kind of close relationship was also disapproved by certain authorities. For example, Antonio Arbiol, Franciscan theologist of the seventeenth century, thought these relations led to internal divisions, particularly during elections; see Lavrin (2008) 78-79.

The humble lega demonstrates great skill navigating the power dynamics of the convent. She assumes the leadership of political controversies, an unexpected and unsuitable role for a cook. In the summer of 1743, for example, a young orphan girl with no economic means, no dowry and no social stature petitions to enter Saint Rose.[57] The *rosas* refuse to take her in, worried about the convent's already shaky financial grounds. At first, Marianita sides with the majority: "Señor, si es tan pobre, ¿quién le ha de hacer los gastos que son necesarios?" (781) In a heartfelt conversation, God assures her it is his wish to have this girl as his bride and, even more, that an elderly nun will soon perish, leaving a free spot in the community (779). She begins to warm up to the idea.

One day, while working side-by-side her white-veiled sisters, she brings up the matter casually, "como por divertir el trabajo:"

> Bueno será, madres mías, que ahora que estamos todas las legas juntas, hagamos también nuestro cabildo, al modo que lo hacen las madres del coro para las cosas que se ofrecen. Y es que es menester hacerse cargo las madres del coro, que el trabajo del convento es mucho, /estaba la prelada presente/ y que para esto, no somos más que cuatro legas. La una está totalmente impedida por muy enferma, y anciana […] y así, pasa el trabajo como si no hubiera tal monja: la otra está ya muy cansada, todos los días está enferma, por lo que dos quedamos cargando todo el trabajo del convento. Y aunque por ahora gracias a Dios todo lo hacemos, pero Madres, no somos de piedra, también nos cansamos, y en verdad que si caemos malas, o lo han de hacer las madres del coro, o han de meter gente de fuera (784).

Clearly, the issue is much more than a good topic for honest distraction. Marianita's blunt idea is an unusual move for a lega. As white-veiled nuns could enter the convent without a dowry and usually had low-born origins, like in Marianita's case, they were not allowed to vote in elections. In appearance, major decisions were carried out in a "democratic" fashion. In reality, the power to decide was only reserved to some, which, as Lavrin sums

[57] She is referred to as "la niña de la villa", which could indicate a rural and poor background.

up, made for a "estricto orden jerárquico con prerrogativa de antigüedad, experiencia y rango específico individual […] y hacía de la institución una especie de entidad corporativa" (2008, 128). Black-veiled nuns set the pace for the entire community, and legas were expected to obey quietly.

With all the legas gathered, Marianita seizes the opportunity to discuss an issue that could change their living conditions, and she strategically does so in front of the prelate. Working hands were scarce in Saint Rose. Even if all nuns were expected to perform some menial tasks as part of their devotional routine, the convent's everyday machinery was run by a small number of legas. With their hands full but unable to raise them in their favor, legas had no official agency on the decisions that affected their everyday. Challenging the expectations of her position, Marianita takes on the role of leader of this underrepresented faction. Her personal working experience gives her a privileged insight into the unequal distribution of labor and, thus, of the needs of her community.

This passage sheds new light on the aforementioned conflicts of the convent. If a lega gets sick, Marianita notes, a black-veiled nun ought to step in. To ease the tension incited by this lack of working hands, more white-veiled nuns should be welcomed under Saint Rose's roof. Essentially, she proposes the creation of an official corporative entity that would allow them to exert influence over their conditions. The young girl would help ease a conflictive environment. On one side, black-veiled nuns would stop resenting the extra work passed on by the legas; on the other, legas would stop resenting black-veiled nuns who treated them as if they were made of stone, and not flesh. Marianita asks the prelate to bring the matter to the bishop, to which the others agree unanimously.

Bold as it may be, Marianita's political stirring is in fact carefully grounded on the Roses' *Reglas y Constituciones*. Sor María Águeda specifies: "Siendo conveniente o

necesario que entren algunas más, sea consultado al Illmo. Señor Obispo, o al Vicario Capitular, ajustándose en esto a la Bula expedida para la profesión […] aunque se admitan en lugar y por eso sin dote, no ha de ser este motivo para que se les prive hacer bien al monasterio" (73). The legas' petition no longer appears completely out of line. Nonetheless, the anecdote shows how Marianita skillfully manipulates her knowledge of the statutes, her relation to the prioress, her valued position as a hard-working lega and her exceptionally devout reputation in order to make way for the arrival of the poor girl. All of these elements converge to consolidate Marianita's string-pulling abilities in the convent's affairs. Authority not only comes wrapped in a black veil or through dowries and noble lineages. In Saint Rose, it also comes from the experience of working in the kitchen, from spiritual reputation and a deep understanding of the material necessities of the community.

The folios of this manuscript immortalize what our imagination had already guessed: the smell of *mole* prepared on feast day, the columns of smoke touching the vault when chilis were roasted, the sweet taste of the numerous candies and pastries that gave nuns their unblemished culinary reputation. These are the images and sensations that capture us, but as I hope to have shown, much more than *just cooking* happened in this kitchen. The many meanings of sor Marianita's experiences as a cook can actually transform our very notion of what cooking was (and in many respects still is). Cooking is an avenue for close and loving relations with divinity; a physically demanding activity that highlights spiritual endurance and strength; a dirty job that exposes the clean virtue of humility; a repository of local tastes and smells that brings identity and history to the table; a source of reputation and authority for those with little social leverage. And, perhaps less intuitively, a put-in-practice of the knowledge transmitted through the written word. Put another way, the rendering of writing into handiwork, the silence of the quill into the fuss

of clanking pots and ladles.

This document is a rare window into the convents of colonial Mexico. Its wealth of details about the convent's minutia—the food, the gossip, the artworks, the trifles—awakens in the reader as much fascination and curiosity as the surviving kitchen of Saint Rose does in those who visit it. But despite the fact that the convent's history has been extensively documented, the micro-history of this kitchen has been so far sprinkled with popular legend and florid anecdotes with little evidence. The diary of Sor Marianita completely transforms what we know about this iconic space. It completes an otherwise empty space by giving us the missing essential piece: the cook.

As the epigraph that opens this chapter condenses, the religious cook is caught in the space between writing and doing. She does not write. After all, she is just a humble nun. Perhaps she is illiterate or her busy day does not give truce to sit down with her thoughts. Writing is reserved to others, not legas who already have their hands full with other things than paper. "Madre, una lega no ha menester más que saber guisar, barrer, fregar", Marianita tells one of her sisters. And yet, she writes about all those chores that are supposedly good enough for a lega.

Ultimately, what her diary amply documents is another kind of writing. It is as if the immense repertoire of religious literature constitutes the recipes that Marianita reads, interprets and carries out daily in the kitchen. Through her role as a cook, Marianita transforms the originals of the illustrious saintly women that came before her, giving way to a deeply personal expression of their spiritual teachings. The lives and works of Saint Catherine, Saint Rose, and the devotional exercises of Sor Mariana Águeda de San Ignacio are the pieces that, stirred together by her own hand and soul, shape her religious identity and, of course, her own written words. Marianita's cooking speaks to a mode of female

textual transmission and intellectual interchange that escapes the binding covers of a book and froths knowledge into a steaming plate of *mole poblano*.

Epilogue

In 2015, the reality TV show MasterChef aired for the first time in Mexico. Among the eighteen participants was Florinda Juana Ruiz Carapia, a nun of the Congregation of the Passion of Jesus Christ in Puebla. More commonly known as *Hermana Flor*, she was admitted to the show after cooking an *espiral de carnes* in chile ancho sauce, a recipe of her own creation. According to her, she had never practiced it before the audition. In fact, she said, she had never made it before. The judges were captivated by her seemingly natural talent and welcomed her to the show's cohort unanimously. Flor was beyond excited. Were she to win the competition, she planned to donate the entire sum of the prize to her community.

Candid, charismatic and talented, Flor quickly became a beloved favorite among spectators. In the kitchen, she always showed great modesty, yet delivered dishes that astonished the judges—all of them professional chefs. She prayed to God and the Virgin of Guadalupe to help her win a challenge, yet cheated mischievously on several occasions. Week by week, her cooking got better and better, which would eventually make her one of the three finalists of the show. "Tengo la ayuda de Dios pero no todo lo hace Él," she said. On one occasion, after tasting a marvelous spread inspired by her childhood meals, Chef Adrián Herrera voiced what much of the Mexican audience (myself included) had been thinking for months. Arms up in the sky, he asked her: "¿Quién es la monja favorita de México?" Then, he paused: "Bueno, primero Sor Juana."

With her pristine chef apron and proudly-worn habit, Hermana Flor encapsulates two of the mythical figures in the culinary imagination of the Hispanic world. On one hand, the professional, creative, genius cook who is able to whip up the most surprising flavors. The celebrity chefs who host their television shows, write countless cookbooks, and

manage staff at award-winning restaurants—Ferran Adrià, Enrique Olvera, José Andrés, Gastón Acurio. On the other, the humble, anonymous and unassuming nun who cooks almost by divine intervention. The nun's whose cooking is not (allegedly) an act of vanity or pleasure, but of service and love for her neighbors. The ones selling *burritos* outside their monastery or cooking giant pots of *mole* for patron saint festivities.

It is not surprising that Flor was so popular. The tensions inherent to the culture of cooking in the Spanish world—the feminine and the masculine, the professional and the spiritual, the intellectual and the embodied—symbolically come together through her public persona. She is guardian of the past and preserver of a feminine tradition, yet she managed to enter the male-dominated world of fine cuisine. The casual remark made by Chef Herrera is indicative of the two-folded cultural capital she embodies. Albeit jokingly, the chef connects her to the most iconic Mexican poet.

I close with the story of Hermana Flor because I think it speaks to the pervasiveness of both myths, the chef and the nun. In this dissertation, I have tried to demonstrate that these are not transparent cultural icons that simply color our culinary imaginations, but that they, in fact, have long historical genealogies and a rich repertoire of ideas surrounding them. Even more, that behind the myth there is a history of cultural and social struggle, as well as processes of exclusion. For every *oficial de cocina*, there was a pícaro; and for every black-veiled nun, there was an exhausted servant.

It is true that cooks are a difficult object of study, given the few written traces they have left. But I believe their invisibility is not due to the nature of the archive, but to a problem of focus. First, as I have noted, an emphasis on the materiality of food. Approaching food only through consumption and neglecting its production processes, offers a deceivingly agreeable picture of culinary culture. Today, we can skip the labor and

buy a frozen meal. We can extend our arm to purchase the latest new ingredient or try cuisines from across the globe without having to leave our zip code. Amid such convenience and buzz, it is easy to overlook the people who make this possible.

Something similar has happened with our study of food. Through the micro-lens of the cook, I have steered away from macronarratives of food consumption. In the particular case of Spain and Latin America, much of these have been informed by notions of *mestizaje* and cultural syncretism, posing a harmonious "fusion" of the region's food cultures. The idea of a *cocina mestiza* emerging from this discourse erases the historical processes behind the much celebrated food that we enjoy today. It is in this way that studying cooks of the early modern period—precisely the time-frame imagined as the beginning of such exchange—becomes relevant. Cooks reveal the contingent value of food and cooking, and they bring to light the often conflictive cultural and social dynamics that lie beneath the surface. By projecting our current fascination with food onto the past, we risk looking at food as an ahistorical object ready for our consumption, rather than as the product of manual and intellectual work.

Another contemporary notion might have contributed to the blurring of cooks in our cultural narratives. The identity of the cook today is strongly tied to the figure of the chef. To an extent, the overuse of the French word *chef* has narrowed our understanding of the kitchen. By privileging one of the many agents in the collective process of food preparation, it has reified the power dynamics that gave origin to the term in the first place. The kitchen remains a space of political, cultural and social struggles. We must look beyond today's professional identities to truly understand the complex and collective process of food preparation.

In the context of Spain and Latin America, where the food and restaurant industries

have rocketed to international prestige and have been consolidated as cultural capital worldwide, it is fundamental to inaugurate a critical examination about our culinary narratives. Specifically, one that considers the intense human labor that sustains and pushes the industry forward. In doing so, we can begin to imagine new historical genealogies that highlight the role of people of color, women and lower social classes in the formation of our food cultures.

In this dissertation, my objective has been to approach cooks as subjects with social and cultural agency. By tracing the contributions of ordinary workers to the early modern Spanish culinary and literary cultures, this dissertation highlights the people whose labor and literary practices gave way to the regions' rich cultures. In that sense, it allows us to consider the historical disputes that slowly paved the way for the recognition of cooking as a prestigious and culturally valuable activity.

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