

nature of the contexts in which these occurred. His book thus demonstrates well the truth of the observation made some years ago by a former president of Burkina Faso that if you want to see colonialism, “look at your plate!”

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*Las palabras del silencio de santa Rosa de Lima o la poesía visual del inefable.*

By EMILIO RICARDO BÁEZ RIVERA. Biblioteca Indiana. Madrid: Iberoamericana; Frankfurt: Vervuert, 2012. Figures. Notes. Bibliography. 196 pp. Paper.

When it comes to religious figures in Latin America of any time period, one can hardly think of a more widely venerated person than Saint Rose of Lima (1586–1617). For Catholics, she is the first canonized saint from the Americas and was later named patron saint of Lima, Latin America, and the Philippines. She has been a favorite subject of religious scholars, who have produced numerous biographies over the centuries frequently hagiographic in nature, based as they were on the documents surrounding her beatification and canonization. Scholars of Christian mysticism and women’s spirituality have studied the many descriptions of her ecstatic experiences in order to chart the early expansion of Spanish mysticism across the Atlantic and beyond. Rose of Lima has also received intense interest from historians of colonial Latin America, since she is seen as a key figure in the development of a criollo identity that first sought parity with, and then separation from, that of the imperial center. The loss of Saint Rose’s own spiritual autobiography shortly after her death meant a certain amount of recycling of those same seventeenth-century church documents. The discovery, in the early twentieth century, of two mixed-media works attributed to the mystic from Lima has provided additional material for continued study. These are a series of images that Rose of Lima constructed from different materials and then added text to in the form of labels, epigrams, and other writings in order to describe her experiences of mystical union.

It is indeed the hybrid nature of these works that has resisted sustained textual analysis, although Ramón Mujica Pinilla and others have discussed them as part of broader studies. Emilio Ricardo Báez Rivera approaches these holographs from the perspective of literary studies in order to explore Saint Rose’s own brand of mysticism. He begins with a biography of Rose (originally named Isabel Flores de Oliva) that addresses her Peruvian and Puerto Rican parentage and important elements of her life such as her early vocation, her decision to not enter a convent, her interview with inquisitors, and her ascetic practices. He then contextualizes Rose of Lima and her two texts by connecting her mysticism to Iberian predecessors (Teresa of Ávila, John of the Cross, and others) and medieval antecedents, most notably Catherine of Siena. He also necessarily delves into the rather difficult spiritual atmosphere that predominated both in Counter-Reformation Spain and its overseas colonies. Those who claimed to have experienced extraordinary spiritual gifts or who were given to spectacular displays of ecstatic trances were objects of suspicion and investigation. Female mystics were

particularly vulnerable; so much was made by her early biographers of Rose of Lima's doctrinal purity and excellent conduct. The second half of Báez Rivera's book attempts to establish Rose of Lima's mystical poetics based on a reading of both word and image. Although the two short documents appear at first glance to be the result of a few hours' pastime, Báez Rivera firmly situates them in well-established traditions from the Middle Ages and early modern Spain. The heart is the centerpiece of both visual and textual expression in these works. For Báez Rivera, this recalls both the growing veneration of the sacred and suffering heart of Jesus and the concept of the mystic's own heart as dwelling place for the Holy Spirit—a frequent theme of Spanish mysticism. He then seeks to redeem the artistic and poetic value of the two documents by proposing that they mirror well-established classical, medieval, and Renaissance genres like *ars memoriae* and the emblem, and that they can be considered a precursor to modern techniques like collage in the visual arts and the calligram in poetry.

Although Báez Rivera engages occasionally with some of the contemporary historians and literary scholars who view mysticism as a phenomenon that both allows religious women to communicate with authority and at the same time places strict boundaries on these discursive possibilities, his main project is not to add to that growing body of work. Nor does this book reveal new findings from the colonial archive. It is a work directed more toward scholars interested in colonial period religious art and literature than historians. His insistence on the artistic value of the two documents in question points to a desire to redress certain misconceptions about the saint, misconceptions perpetuated in part by assumptions based on the gender stereotypes of her time. For Báez Rivera, the visual and textual elements of these two works are evidence not only of Rose's high level of literacy but also of her extensive knowledge of mystical theology. He advocates for an image of Saint Rose of Lima as visual artist and poet. Whether the saint's scholars and admirers fully embrace this will depend on what further attention these documents receive from art historians, the church, and her devoted followers.

The question of artistic talent aside, Báez Rivera's analysis of such texts combining the visual and the poetic forces the viewer to understand mystical phenomena as multifaceted. Mysticism becomes not only an extraordinary experience but also simultaneously an iteration of spiritual tradition, an expression of local religion and politics, and an embodied performance, as well as any resulting written text.

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*Indians and the Political Economy of Colonial Central America, 1670–1810.*

By ROBERT W. PATCH. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013. Maps. Tables. Appendixes. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xi, 284 pp. Cloth, \$36.95.

Robert Patch's fine book makes three main points. First, far from being either a peripheral or preindustrial economy, Spanish Central America in the late colonial period was a key supplier of finished cloth for miners in Zacatecas and Honduras, indigo