

GENDERING THE LATE MEDIEVAL AND EARLY MODERN WORLD



Margo Echenberg

The Fame of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz

Posthumous
Fashioning in the
Early Modern
Hispanic World

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The Fame of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz



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Gendering the Late Medieval and Early Modern World

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Early Modern Hispanic World*

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Table of Contents

A Note on the Text	7
Abbreviations	9
Acknowledgments	11
Introduction	13
Negotiating Rumor and Fame: Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's Posthumous <i>Fama</i>	
Sor Juana, Agent of Her Own Celebrity Status	25
The <i>Fama</i> and Sor Juana's Retreat from Public Life	28
<i>Exempla</i> , Edification, Posterity and the Written Word	34
More Than a Sourcebook	38
Chapter Outline	42
Appendix	44
1. The <i>Fama</i>	55
A Posthumous Imaging and Imagining of Sor Juana	
The Engraved Portrait: Gateway to the Volume	57
The <i>Fama</i> 's Prologue: A Guide to Unearthing the Volume's Struc- ture	72
A Private Dialogue Made Public: Sor Juana Engages the Editor of Her <i>Fama</i>	84
Conclusions	88
Appendix	91
2. Soaring above the Rest	99
Sor Juana as "Sacred Phoenix" and the <i>Fama</i> as Moral Exhortation	
Tales of Virtues: Posthumous Fame for Holy Women of Seven- teenth-Century Mexico	105
Father Calleja Tries His Hand at Hagiography	112
Paying Homage to Sor Juana's Spiritual and Literary <i>Desengaño</i>	122
Conclusions	134
Appendix	138



3. Light from the New World	147
Posthumous Praise for an American Mind	
Sor Juana, An American Treasure	154
American Tributes: Sor Juana and a New World Order	171
Not Woman at All?: Sor Juana and the Discourse of New World Abundance	182
Conclusions	198
Appendix	202
4. With “Quills of Ink” and “Wings of Fragile Paper”	213
Sor Juana Responds to Her Public Image	
Sor Juana as Panegyrist: In Praise of Doña María de Guadalupe de Lencastre	219
Sor Juana Vilifies and Promotes Her Renown in the <i>Respuesta</i>	228
“I Have No Knowledge of These Things”: Sor Juana’s Careful Crafting of Her Literary Self-Portraits	236
Conclusions	254
Appendix	262
Afterword (Or Why Think of the <i>Fama</i> as a Success If It Fails on Almost All Fronts?)	271
Appendix A	281
Appendix B	289
Bibliography of Works Cited	291
Index	309
Figure 1. Frontispiece of the <i>Fama y obras pósthumas</i> . Madrid, 1700. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University	90

A Note on the Text

All citations from the *Fama y obras póstumas*, unless otherwise indicated, are from the 1995 facsimile edition of the original 1700 publication. The same facsimile series is used for references to the preliminary matter from the two volumes published in Spain in Sor Juana's lifetime, *Inundación castálida* (IC) and *Segundo volume* (SV). The *Fama's* pagination begins only well over a hundred pages into the text. Page numbers cited within square brackets, therefore, refer to the unnumbered pages of the original. I have modernized the spelling (except for the volume's full title) but have conserved the original punctuation and capitalization in most instances.

References to individual poems by Sor Juana will employ Méndez Plancarte's numeration as it appears in his edition of her *Obras Completas* (OC). In addition to identifying the number Méndez Plancarte assigns each of the writer's poems, I also indicate the number of the volume, page, and verse as they appear in his definitive editions. When the English translation of Sor Juana's works has appeared in print, I have used those sources and noted any discrepancies I have with these. When no print translation is noted, it is my own with the invaluable assistance of Jessica C. Locke. In those instances, English translations appear in prose.





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Abbreviations

- CA *Carta Atenagórica*, SV, pp. 1–34; OC IV 412–39.
- Fama *Fama y Obras pósthumas del Fénix de México, Décima Musa, Soror Juana Inés de la Cruz*. Edited by Antonio Alatorre. Facsim. Edition. México: UNAM, 1995 [1700].
- IC *Inundación Castálida de la única poetisa, Musa Décima. Soror Juana Inés de la Cruz*. Edited by Sergio Fernández. Facsim. Edition. México: UNAM, 1995 [1689].
- OC *Obras completas de Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz*. Edited by Alfonso Méndez Plancarte (vols. I, II, III) and Alberto G. Salceda (vol. IV). México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1951–1957.
- Respuesta *Respuesta a sor Filotea*, in *Fama*, pp. 8–60; OC IV 440–75.
- SV *Segundo Volumen de las Obras de Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz*. Edited by Margo Glantz. Facsim Edition. México: Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, UNAM, 1995 [1692].





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Introduction

Negotiating Rumor and Fame: Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's Posthumous *Fama*

Abstract: This chapter examines the conditions and qualities of Sor Juana that made her a celebrity in her time and warranted her posthumous fame in a transatlantic tribute published in Spain. Instead of the limits of existing models of renown transforming to accommodate a colonial woman author, she is reconciled into conventional notions of fame. The three fictions of Sor Juana that emerge most clearly in her posthumous tome are that of the saintly exemplar, the Tenth Muse of New Spain, and the New World marvel. All three help bridge the gap from celebrity to being worthy of enduring fame and can be traded in the male literary marketplace. Within the framework of Celebrity Studies, I examine both Sor Juana's role as agent of her own celebrity and the negotiations of her panegyrists.

Keywords: Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz; *Fama y obras póstumas*; posthumous fame; Celebrity Studies; Hispanic Baroque; seventeenth-century women writers

The third and final volume of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's works published in her time (if not her lifetime), appeared posthumously in Madrid in 1700. Organized and edited in New Spain and Old, the *Fama y obras póstumas* [Fame and Posthumous Works] includes writing by Sor Juana (1648–1695), the cloistered Hieronymite nun known as New Spain's "Tenth Muse," dozens of elegies written upon her death by Spanish and Mexican peers and a voluminous paratext in the way of licenses, a frontispiece, a vita and two prologues.¹ Alone in being the third volume of work published by a New

¹ *Fama y Obras póstumas del Fénix de México, Décima Musa, Soror Juana Inés de la Cruz* [Fame and Posthumous Works of the Phoenix of Mexico, Tenth Muse, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz] herein abbreviated as *Fama*.

World *criolla* nun in Spain,² the complex baroque volume is also her *fama póstuma*, a tribute to her posthumous fame, written and printed at a time in which fame was off limits to women and literary posthumous fame (a male affair) did not assure glory. As Ann Rosalind Jones has shown, although the winged figure of allegorical Renaissance iconography that personified Fame was a woman, seventeenth-century women were excluded from her realm (1986, 74). And posthumous literary fame could not be uncoupled from the author's moral exemplarity until well into the eighteenth century (Goodman 549). No other writer in the Hispanic world of her time, male or female, published as prolifically as Sor Juana and no female contemporary that I know of was honored with a posthumous tribute.³ In fact, the only other posthumous tome published to honor literary genius and guard it for time immemorial in the early modern Hispanic world was that dedicated to Lope de Vega, the giant of Spain's Golden Age theater, a year after his death in 1635. The very existence of Sor Juana's little-studied posthumous volume that went on to be reprinted three times (1701, 1714, 1725) begs the cardinal questions of this book, the implications of which potentially span well beyond Spain and her colonies in the seventeenth century: Why does Sor Juana have a *Fama*? And why is she alone in this regard?

Everything about Sor Juana made her exceptional in the seventeenth century, a time in which women were steadfastly kept outside the realms of knowledge, erudition and authorship. Born on American soil, Sor Juana had a prodigious intelligence, learned voraciously from sources of all kinds (from theological treatises to cooking ingredients) and engaged in what Margaret Ezell has called the "'game' of authorship" in Spain from within her Hieronymite convent in New Spain's capital (1999, 1). For twenty-six years, the duration of two viceroys' regimes between 1665 and 1691, she was what Stephanie Merrim deemed the viceregal capital's "unofficial official court poet" (1999, 35), writing occasional verse and participating in tournaments.⁴ Much of this occasional verse written at the behest of the

2 I use the Spanish term to refer to American-born individuals of Spanish descent. See Bauer and Mazzotti on the origins and usage of the term in Spanish America (2009, 23–25).

3 While I have yet to find another account of posthumous fame compiled for a woman of the Hispanic world, there are tributes in verse published for European women (although not always posthumously). The Swedish poet, Sophia Elizabeth Brenner (1659–1730), for example, was honored with a volume entitled *Poetiske Dikter* (Poems) (Stockholm, 1713), as were the Italian humanist, Olympia Morata (1526–1555) (Smarr, 1999), and the Dutch polyhistorian, Anna Maria van Schurman (1607–1678) (See Gilberto, 1642).

4 For more on the subject see Tenorio (1999). On the topic of Sor Juana's occasional verse, see George Antony Thomas, *The Politics and Poetics of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz*.



viceroys went on to be printed in Spain, but her *villancicos*, or carols, were published and widely disseminated in New Spain. According to Stephanie Kirk, “[i]n the entirety of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Sor Juana was one of only three women—both religious and secular—whose works were to emerge under their own names from the Mexican printing press and, moreover, the only one whose works demonstrated training in rhetoric and classics” (2016, 150).⁵ It’s believed, moreover, from the details surrounding the unauthorized publication of her “Crisis de un sermón” [Appraisal of a Sermon], that Sor Juana held tertulia-like sessions from within the *locutorio* of the convent (Kirk 2016, 150), and her printed works make reference to her wide-reaching correspondence with intellectuals in Europe and other parts of the colonial world such as Peru and Nueva Granada (although all traces of any correspondence have been lost).

Together with her ally, María Luisa Gonzaga Manrique de Lara, Countess de Paredes and Marquise de la Laguna, the woman responsible for the publication of the first two volumes of her work in Spain, Sor Juana tirelessly promoted her writing and her renown. Writing at the end of Spain’s Golden Age, Sor Juana alone was to see all three volumes of her works published in her time. Her many European publications appeared between the years 1689 and 1725 and the unprecedented number of editions and printings of her poetry and prose is staggering. Her first two volumes of works published in Spain were revised and reprinted in an unparalleled manner. The first volume, (originally entitled *Inundación castálida* (IC) and then modified to *Poemas*), dated 1689, had by the year 1725 seen two editions and had been printed nine times, while by that same year her *Segundo volumen* (SV), originally published in 1692, had seen six editions (Sabat-Rivers, 1982a, 72–75). For its part, volume three, the *Fama*, saw three separate editions and was printed a total of five times.⁶ It’s estimated that by 1715, twenty thousand copies of Sor Juana’s three volumes of poetry had been published

5 Kirk follows Josefina Muriel who registers the other women as a nun, Sor María San Agustina, of the order of St. Clare, and two poets, Catalina de Eslava and María de Estrada Medellina (Muriel 122–24).

6 There are five editions of the *Fama*: Madrid, 1700; Lisbon, 1701; Barcelona, 1701; Madrid, 1714; and Madrid, 1725. The last edition includes all three volumes of Sor Juana’s works (Sabat-Rivers, 1982a, 74; 1995a, 52). Enrique Rodríguez Cepeda estimates that the printer Ruiz de Murga printed more than two thousand copies of the *Fama* of 1700 over the course of two or three years. “[N]o [son] muchos si tenemos en cuenta que tenía que completar los miles de juegos que había en el mercado español y americano de los dos volúmenes primeros” (47). [It is not a large quantity if we consider the number of volumes needed to complete the thousands of collections of the first two volumes owned in Spain and America].



in Spain (Rodríguez Cepeda, 1998, 64); and this in a time when most authors' work only flourished after their deaths.

Many of those volumes, like the manuscripts that preceded them, crisscrossed the Atlantic Ocean on what the nun deemed in her *romance* #37 "wings of fragile paper" and could just as easily be called "the wings of fame."⁷ If the "game" of authorship involved mediated negotiations, the Mexican Phoenix (another of her epithets) excelled at these. Her publications, her reputation as an American Tenth Muse and her negotiations with patrons and ecclesiastical hierarchs made Sor Juana a transatlantic celebrity in her own time. But so too did her oddity, her freakish exceptionality as a prodigy, a wonder of her sex and treasure of the feminized New World. Indeed, her peers marveled that someone as different and exotic as she could think, reason, and write as she did.⁸ As Georgina Sabat-Rivers put it, "We may wonder whether the glory accorded to this woman in her own day [...] was due to her genius itself or to those Baroque ideas of being unusual, extraordinary, and amazing in a topsy-turvy world" (1992, 144).

As will become clear, Sor Juana's celebrity status stemmed from a fortuitous combination of what was perceived by others as her exceptionality and her own clever mediations. She also had help from her friends. Her best-known contemporary and fellow *criollo* intellectual, the savant Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora, attests to her fame in no uncertain terms in his *Theatro de virtudes políticas* [...] [Theater of Political Virtues]: "debemos aplaudir las excelentes obras del peregrino ingenio de la Madre Juana Inés de la Cruz, cuya fama, y cuyo nombre se acabará con el mundo" [We must applaud the excellent works stemming from the unmatched inventiveness of Mother Juana Inés de la Cruz, whose fame and name will last as long as the world does] (1680, 20). Yet the leap from being renowned in her lifetime to deserving of a posthumous tribute, of posthumous glory itself, was an enormous one. The *Fama y obras póstumas* of 1700 grants us a window onto how and why her peers wanted to add her name to the annals of fame. Exploring their motives and machinations, furthermore, sheds light on the wider implications of considering early modern women writers of the New World as famous. Less interested in uncovering historical inaccuracies or finding elusive biographical truths about Sor Juana in her posthumous

7 The *romance* roughly corresponds to the English ballad; it has an octosyllabic or eight syllable line and alternate lines rhyme assonantly.

8 Antonio Alatorre's last substantial contribution to Sor Juana studies, *Sor Juana a través de los siglos 1668–1910*, allows scholars to consult what was written about the Mexican nun and writer over the course of almost two hundred and fifty years in one annotated source book. The entry from 1700 reprints the elegies of the *Fama*.



volume, I examine how the Mexican nun's peers grappled to fit her into models of posthumous fame that hadn't changed since Horace and Renaissance Humanism and were unlikely to budge to accommodate this unusual woman. Instead of the limits of existing models of renowned women being stretched to accommodate a colonial woman author, it is she who must be accommodated to the notions of fame, both posthumous and literary. To accomplish this, her elegists reduce her to emblems or images, fictions that allow her to be intelligible to her reading audience, either by responding to the Baroque aesthetic of the bizarre or upholding the hegemonic orthodoxy of the Counter-Reformation.

For Sor Juana's peers of the *Fama*, the death of an individual signaled the removal of a physical presence and of an authorial voice. With her person expunged from the terrestrial world, not only could Sor Juana's panegyrists temper the normative sanctions held against a woman's public reputation in the seventeenth century, but they could also use her person and life to reaffirm the existing ideology. Ironically, then, her death allowed Sor Juana's panegyrists to praise what for them were her "unwomanly" qualities without empowering her and to reconstruct her life along exemplary lines without being contested by her.

As her laudators both recreate and laud Sor Juana in their elegies, they also reveal the moral codes of the societies of Spain and viceregal New Spain. The many negotiations played out by Sor Juana's elegists regarding her singularity as a learned and New World woman writer provide vying images symptomatic of the late Baroque in Spain and her colony. Writing in the last decade of the seventeenth century, the nun's admirers must contend with such conflicting ideas as extolling her fame despite believing in the fleeting rewards of worldly achievements and knowledge, and postulating her as deserving of the publicity of saints when she is far from saintly. If by rule panegyrics dedicated to women reinforced gender specific behavior and identified exemplary early modern women, then the *Fama's* collaborators would need to devise a way to make Sor Juana, whose worldly knowledge and public celebrity fueled her fame during her lifetime, deserving of a posthumous tribute. The *Fama* thus provides insight into the underlying tensions of the epoch by exemplifying how contradictions such as the very notion of a New World woman-writer were understood in their own time. As Kathleen Ross suggests in her incisive re-reading of the "Barroco de Indias," conventional readings have often led to static interpretations of the inherent contradictions of Baroque culture in which exceptional individuals are considered to be beyond their time and not as having a significant impact on the overwhelming trend of paralysis and stagnation

(1994, 238). Indeed, creative individuals who are thought to have done more than simply uphold the neo-medieval, scholastic worldview tend to be studied as monstrous individuals both inside and especially outside their own time and place. Disassociating these individuals from their historical time undervalues the importance implied in being an exception in one's own time.

Sor Juana was exceptional during and after her lifetime. True to their baroque sensibility, her peers crafted her into what Stephanie Merrim has called an "anomaly cum cultural icon" (1999, 30). Their posthumous imaging of her, in its attempt to safeguard her as a nun, a colonial, or a woman writer and Tenth Muse, most often reduces her to a stylized, iconic, baroque and, at times, contradictory textual emblem.⁹ As will become clear, these machinations allowed for the nun to be commodified as a New World treasure wielded and exchanged by men.

The three fictions of Sor Juana that emerge most clearly in her posthumous tome are that of the saintly exemplar and devout penitent, the Tenth Muse of New Spain and, finally, the exotic, monstrous, New World, marvel. Studying how the fictions around Sor Juana are construed, her image and life re-scripted according to those seventeenth-century female archetypes considered worthy of renown heeds historian Joan Scott's behest to consider women as "sites [on which] political and cultural contests are enacted" (Scott 1998, 15–18, 31–33). As contemporary readers, we have to resist the urge to parse the configurations of a saintly Sor Juana from those that fashion her as anomalous. The two versions, the transgressive "monstruo de las mujeres,"¹⁰ [monster among women] and the sanctioned exemplar collide and coalesce throughout a posthumous volume that grapples to justify her fame in perpetuity.

Inspired by the work of Stephanie Jed and Patricia Parker, I sustain that in all three of the "fictions" of Sor Juana offered up to readers in the *Fama*

9 In her study of the SV, Margo Glantz has suggested that there too Sor Juana is transformed into an emblem albeit for somewhat different reasons (1995, IX).

10 It was not uncommon to consider Sor Juana as a monster for being a woman with male characteristics. Here, I quote Fray Pedro del Santísimo Sacramento, author of a laudatory work written for Sor Juana during her lifetime and published in the SV. The epithet also echoes one attributed to Lope de Vega. An incomparably talented and prolific dramatist, Lope was known in his time as "un monstruo de la naturaleza" ["a monster of nature"]. Stories of female "monsters" such as that of Catalina de Erauso (1592–1650), the cross-dresser known as the Monja Alférez, were intended more to entertain than to instruct. For a suggestive comparison of Sor Juana and Erauso, see Merrim 1999, chapter 1; Myers (2003) also offers a suggestive reading of her alongside other women in Spanish America.

she is commodified by the Imperial male gaze, made legible, and “vendible” in the Spanish literary marketplace (Jed 195). For Jed:

The epithet ‘Tenth Muse’ [...] provided a fiction to make sense of or explain the emergence of significant women writers in the colonial literature market. Taking on this explanatory function, the category ‘Tenth Muse’ became a taxonomic ‘fact’ which could account for the otherwise unintelligible appearance of women writers. As a fictional or constructed ‘fact,’ it provided a solution to the taxonomic impossibility of classifying [Anne] Bradstreet and Sor Juana either as women or as writers. This ‘fact,’ moreover, had the function of commodifying these writers within a system of assumptions about authorship (men, inspired by Muses, did it) and gender (women did not write). As a ‘fact’ designed to account for and control any variance from the gender norm, the fictional classification ‘Tenth Muse’ made these writers more intelligible, and thus more ‘vendible,’ in a taxonomic system which separated women from writers. (1994, 196)

The Sor Juana “fictions,” which existed to a greater or lesser degree in her lifetime, are modified after the nun’s death to help bridge the gap from celebrity to an individual deserving of a posthumous tribute. As will become clear, gendering and control are vital in the commodifying of the fictions created about Sor Juana given that in her time, Fame, The New World and the Tenth Muse were all gendered as female. Another key notion in Sor Juana’s fashioning, perhaps the definitive one, was her relation to the public-private divide that placed enormous constraints on women’s behaviors in the seventeenth century, keeping them tethered to the domestic sphere and banished from the public one for reasons both social and moral. It also proves useful in sorting out what contemporary readers, especially, perceive as contradictions regarding renowned women, as well as what was understood as the distinction between a writer and an author in the early modern period. In what follows, I explore how central this divide was in terms of the notions of fame and authorship that buoy the Mexican nun’s posthumous fashioning.

How, for example, are contemporary readers to understand that Fame wasn’t for women, yet undoubtedly there were famous women? Queens, saints, martyrs, crossdressers, such as the Monja Alférez in the Hispanic world, and some women writers were all widely known in their own times. The contradiction is in part an inconsistency between theory and praxis. In her discussion of the works of women who defied gender restrictions in



seventeenth-century Seville, Mary Elizabeth Perry writes “[...] neither the eloquence of preachers nor the number of books published by writers could bridge the gap between the order they idealized and the disorder of their society. This gap produced a tension that invigorated much of the moral exhortation of the Counter-Reformation” (1990, 179). As Carlos Eire has noted, paradigms suggest how things *should* be and “offer the comforting reassurance of perfection and stability within an imperfect world of flux and decay” (1995, 364). Part of the idealized order was that all women—forever susceptible to sin and falling from grace—be virtuous and protect their reputations at all costs. The most effective way to do this was to avoid the public sphere and any behaviors that could be regarded as an “opening up” of the self publicly, including of course prostitution, but also speaking and writing.

As it were, speaking up and out are acts tied to fame, which stems from Greek and Latin words meaning “to speak.” The implication is dual, as the famous both speak and are spoken about. For women, however, Fame’s morally contentious counterpart, Rumor, was always only a blink away. A powerful and fearsome goddess personified in Virgil’s *Aeneid* and Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Rumor (Pheme or Fama) “has many eyes, ears, and tongues; she heedlessly mixes truth and lies. She is a creature of the present moment, a vehicle of contemporary opinion, notoriously fickle” (Jackson 2). And, while Rumor’s work is done in the present, her effect can be everlasting as attested to in the Latin proverb: *Vel mala furta teges praeclaro nomine parto* [*La mala llaga sana, la mala fama mata*; a bad wound heals but infamy is deadly] (*Diccionario de Autoridades*). So, while there were famous women, it remained imperative to not refer to them as famous, as references to fame and *vox populi* meant invoking the dreaded Rumor.

The distinction between being considered a woman writer versus an author also responds to restrictions in terms of the public-private divide in the seventeenth century, as women were viewed as less problematic when they wrote and remained in the more private sphere of manuscript circulation, as opposed to the public marketplace of print (Ezell 1999, 1). Writing about New Spain, Stephanie Kirk explains that “[i]n the discursive web that operates to exclude women from literary and intellectual production, an important thread is connecting acts of publishing by women to unseemly inappropriate public visibility” (2016, 6). Arguably, Sor Juana’s celebrity among her peers, cultivated in part by her published and manuscript works that crisscrossed the Atlantic, enabled her renown in her lifetime, but also left her vulnerable to criticism for circulating as a published author, a role reserved for men. For Margaret Ezell, writing about seventeenth-century



England, the “author is categorized as a person writing for material gain, whether cash or influence with more powerful readers” (1999, 11). We know that Sor Juana pursued and relied on her powerful readers, but the public nature of publishing was precisely what was questioned by her adversaries. As is well known, Sor Juana’s troubles with her religious superiors stem from her *public* writing and the circulation of her name alongside them, what Beatriz Colombi calls her “excessive public exhibition” (2015, 83). Her eventual renunciation of the pen, likewise, is thought to have been her eschewing of seeing her work in print, as opposed to the act of writing itself (Luciani 159). As such, the distinction between being a woman who writes and an author who circulates in the literary marketplace could potentially be critical in establishing posthumous fame on literary grounds. Moreover, if literary fame as posthumous fame was linked to character, morals and exemplarity, as was the case with Lope de Vega already mentioned, this prescription would be even more strict in the case of a woman writer and helps us explain the transformation of a colonial author—Mexico’s Tenth Muse—into an exemplary model of devout penitence. Colombi rightly speaks of how fame is intimately tied to power: “For although her contemporaries were able to acknowledge and even celebrate a *mulier docta* [...], they were not capable of approving her public attention, renown, or worldliness, not to mention the effects these could potentially have on women’s power” (2015, 84).

As I have begun to lay out, Sor Juana’s status as a transatlantic celebrity in her own time was spurred by her publications, her reputation as an American Tenth Muse and her negotiations with patrons and ecclesiastical hierarchs, as well as her oddity, her monstrous exceptionality as a prodigy, a wonder of her sex and treasure of the feminized New World. If celebrity indeed catapulted Sor Juana’s fame, then the burgeoning field of “early celebrity studies” (Wanko 351) provides the best framework for exploring Sor Juana’s posthumous fame immediately following her death. Ultimately, the conditions that enabled Mexico’s Tenth Muse’s transatlantic celebrity become as important as the images of her celebrity itself. For Cheryl Wanko, the field of celebrity studies “can be understood as unified by scholarly methodology that examines the social, media, and economic events that create local conditions of popularity and disseminate public images” (351–52). Reading the *Fama* according to this theoretical framework allows me to move away from the biographical impetus that has prevailed in Sor Juana studies and to situate the last of her works published in her own time within the trajectory of her career as a published author and in the larger context of her popularity, the dissemination of her public image and the “early modern paradigm of the Tenth Muse that allowed for an uneasy acceptance



of the woman into the public sphere as well as for her containment, in a circumscribed and exclusive third space" (Merrim 1999, 30–31). Although the scholarly landscape has changed some since the tricentury conferences in 1995, the context just after which Linda Egan writes, she is right in claiming as a general rule that "the goal of most sorjuanine scholarship now as before her death is to understand not the poetic voice but the woman of flesh and blood who confounded her peers and whose multiple volumes of writing set a hook into the collective imagination that continues to reel scholars in toward the center of what her life might finally be said to signify" (2002, 206). In my approach, the structural framework that comes to the foreground in celebrity studies becomes paramount (Mayer and Novak 151) and preoccupations with a woman's life are less urgent than issues of agency and self-fashioning. This focus, then, serves as a framework in which to more fully study how Sor Juana's celebrity fed her posthumous fame; it also proves useful in guiding my inquiries into notions of authorship for women, the nun's public and private writing on her own celebrity and fame, as well as the negotiations carried out by authors, editors, panegyrists and censors in the literary marketplace.

It is worth clarifying my use of the terms celebrity and fame. In his influential *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and its History*, Leo Braudy wrote that "[f]ame is made up of four elements: a person and an accomplishment, their immediate publicity, and what posterity has thought about them ever since" (1986, 15). Today, three elements encourage distinguishing celebrity from fame. First, the temporal distinction—celebrity happens in one's lifetime, while fame is granted posthumously; secondly, it is one's contemporaries who grant celebrity status, while (mostly) men of taste and cultural institutions decide who is worthy of glory for posterity. The third is a result of the previous two determinations: posthumous renown is recognized as a far worthier goal than celebrity status as, in the words of Braudy, "celebrity is fame's ill-begotten and cannibalizing offspring" (2011, 1071). Braudy goes on: "Celebrity is in the moment, but fame sits on the cusp between the material—the myriad ways that it can be created and manipulated—and the immaterial: Why this person? Why now?" (2011, 1075). In her study of eighteenth-century France, nonetheless, Jessica Goodman suggests that while ephemeral celebrity and posthumous glory are traditionally set up as polar opposites, they are closer than what the standard reading suggests (545). Clearly, if being well-known causes one to be a celebrity, this held the potential reward of Fame and glory that are brought on by death. "[T]he similarities in theoretical discussions of posthumous literary reputation and lifetime celebrity suggest that they might be more



closely linked than the accounts cited give them credit for, and furthermore, that exploring these connections in the context of literary fame might prove enlightening about celebrity and posterity, and the status of author and text in relation to both" (Goodman 457). Celebrity may be suspicious because it is potentially "false-valued" (Marshall 1997, 5–6), a response to the vagaries of fashion, partisanship or personal interest (Jackson 16), but it can become blurred with fame, especially of the literary sort. Indeed, literary fame has its particularities. As H. J. Jackson observes in *Those Who Write for Immortality: Romantic Reputations and the Dream of Lasting Fame*, literary fame is not entirely of the past; unlike deeds, thoughts expressed in words can be experienced again. Writers "potentially have two ways of being famous, whereas most people have only one: they can be celebrated for something they have done that is over, or for something they have done that is still current. Or both" (Jackson 7–8).

Interestingly, the *Diccionario de Autoridades* of the early eighteenth century considers *celebridad* as a synonym of *alabanza*, *aplausos* and *elogio* [praise and applause] and does not mark any temporal distinction.¹¹ What is clear is the lack of consensus on the matter, especially since the rise of Celebrity Studies, which can be traced, as much as these things can, to the creation of the homonymous journal in 2010. In essence, critics tend to disagree as to whether celebrity is a term reserved for our current time, or the stress on agency, identity, authenticity and intimacy, public and private selves, myth-making and revelation, cultural memory and identity politics (Mayer & Novak 150) makes it useful for contemplating the social, media and economic conditions that enable a person to be transformed into a celebrity, regardless of the historical period. In my own study, I refer to Sor Juana's lifetime renown as that of a celebrity and believe that it played a decisive role in the shaping of her posthumous fame.

One way of potentially working out the fame–celebrity distinction in the case of Sor Juana is to think that the material nature of her literary production, her life's achievement, allowed for her fame, while her celebrity status, enjoyed in life, was fueled by her being a prodigy, a Tenth Muse, a wonder of her sex and treasure of the feminized New World. When we consider her posthumous *Fama*, however, we see that these clear distinctions cannot hold as many different facets of the Mexican nun's life and character are put forth as matters to be praised and remembered posthumously. The *Fama* upholds Goodman's appraisal that ephemeral celebrity and posthumous glory are indeed closer than standard readings suggest.

11 According to Cheryl Wanko, this distinction is drawn as of the eighteenth century (351).

That being so, the categories of celebrity studies that contemplate the events that create local conditions of popularity and disseminate public images suggested by Mayer and Novak work well to uncover more about Sor Juana's *Fama* and its goals. Within the realm of the social, I examine the relationship between Sor Juana's private and public forays into writing (and the images of public and private selves), her literary patronage as well as her relationship with Church authorities and her negotiations at the "game" of authorship in the literary marketplace. The "media" of the time entails exploring the material culture of printed books, epistolary exchanges and the reception of these. For Wendy Wall, print commodity can be informed by the reciprocity of social exchange through letters with family members (297). In Sor Juana's case, social exchanges seem to happen in and out of print, as letters, poems, but also favors exchanged hands. In his study of the Mexican nun's occasional verse, George Antony Thomas argues that while highly literary, these works also "document literary networks, reveal systems of patronage, provide evidence of intellectual exchanges, and substantiate the creation of literary communities" (2016, 6–7). Economic conditions, meanwhile, include the brokering of printed books, of the *Fama* and of Sor Juana herself, (a New World "treasure"), as commodities caught up in the dynamics of male exchange.

Two other components of celebrity studies relevant to studying Sor Juana's posthumous fame are myth making and cultural memory (Mayer & Novak 150). Both prove particularly useful in making sense of Sor Juana in today's Mexico where she is no longer read much, but carries on as a celebrity: her face printed on bills and her life story recreated in television series and novels. Understanding to what degree she was a celebrity in her own time helps explain why her contemporaries, or some of them anyhow, were concerned with her everlasting fame; but it is also true that the fact that today she remains a celebrity surely affects the way we read her posthumous figuring in the *Fama*. As literary historian Gillian Beer reminds us,

We need a reading which acknowledges that we start now, from here; but which re-awakens the dormant signification of past literature to its first readers. Such reading sees meaning embedded in semantics, plot, formal and generic properties, conditions of production. These have been overlaid by the sequent pasts and by our present concerns which cannot be obliterated, but we need to explore both likeness and *difference*. Such reading gives room to both scepticism and immersion. (Beer 234, emphasis in the original)



The result, as Catherine Boyle astutely remarks, is our ongoing engagement with Sor Juana as a text open to apparently endless interpretations.

The figure of Sor Juana is asked to act differently for us at the moment of our engagement with her. In this sense, Sor Juana is an eternally translated text, brought into new life from the position of her interlocutors' ever-changing time and place, interpreted as a text that will respond to and shed light on the historicity and specificity of its translator—as if she could only be what we are capable of understanding, or what we want her to say for us, at any given moment. In this way, Sor Juana lives on as an echo of the ways in which she made her world. Modern scholarship has given us entryways into her world making and has made her more material, more readable, more gendered. But this has also made her more complex, more “monstrous,” for she becomes uncontainable as one woman; it is this uncontainability that propels us into the tantalizing complexity of a person constructed by her own narrative and the endless narratives of others. (Boyle 2016, 76)

Sor Juana, Agent of Her Own Celebrity Status

Reading Sor Juana's ideas on how she was represented or “fictionalized” while alive, together with her own fashionings of self, her thoughts on fame and the possibility of another kind of exchange possible amongst women, serve as key points of comparison with how her peers portrayed her posthumously. Sor Juana struggled during her lifetime with her celebrity; she claimed to abhor it but also used it to her advantage in publishing her work despite her enclosure in New Spain's Hieronymite convent. Always cognizant of the perils of falling victim to Rumor, Sor Juana walked the tense line between celebrity and infamy, using her writing preemptively to solidify her fame and mocking her monstrous fame that ultimately rendered her a pariah (Merrim 1999, 34; 36). In her response to a gentleman recently arrived in New Spain (*romance* #49), for example, she writes: “¡Que dieran los saltimbancos, / a poder, por agarrarme y llevarme, / como Monstruo, / por los andurriales de Italia y Francia, que son / amigas de novedades / y que pagaran por ver / la Cabeza del Gigante, / diciendo: Quien ver el Fénix / quisiere, dos cuatros pague” [What would the circus folk give if they could capture and parade me around out-of-the-way places in Italy and France, where they enjoy novelties and pay to see the giant's head, crying: two quid



to see the Phoenix!] (OC 4:147).¹² Thomas argues that with her occasional epistolary texts, she “transformed vacuous praise into an ideal mode of self-promotion,” noting that “[w]hile the realm of personal and unofficial occasional verse has often been gendered feminine and regarded as ‘trivial,’ these compositions enabled Sor Juana to step outside of the private sphere and establish herself as a woman of letters” (80).

Sor Juana fashioned her public identity through her writing, not as “documents of lived experience” but as “cultural constructions of the self” (Nussbaum 149), what Frederick Luciani, following Stephen Greenblatt, calls self-fashioning. In Luciani’s words, she “engaged in a complex, varied and strategic process of literary self-fashioning that proved both self-promotive and self-protective functions” (16). And, to the degree that she could, she *relied* on her celebrity to speak and publish: “[f]ame itself [was] Sor Juana’s courtly portfolio, which legitimize[d] her public and political speech” (Luciani 2004, 23). Many of these fashionings were decidedly public, and thus allow us to consider the idea of Sor Juana as a public author, worthy of publicity and, eventually, or potentially, of fame itself. “Playing” the “game” of authorship proves a helpful way of thinking about Sor Juana’s agency in her writing and publishing and the role her celebrity played in enabling both of these. Sor Juana chose what texts to print and which should remain in manuscript form; in so doing, she showed her orchestration of her publications and how tied what she wrote, for whom, and whether privately or publicly, was to her negotiations of her celebrity status.¹³

Sor Juana was aware of the fact that images that circulated around her gender and New World birth allowed her to venture beyond the convent in the world of ideas and publishing, but also could be distorted and used against her. Patricia Parker speaks of women being blamed for being talked about, for allowing such opening and publicity (138). Undoubtedly, as Wendy Wall has studied in women writers of the Renaissance, Sor Juana too needed constantly to negotiate her public exposure (309). Her public persona, who could risk the dangers of fame, may well be best understood as “a form of negotiation of the individual in their foray into a collective world of the social” (Marshall and Henderson 1). This remains true even when the social, collective world is the world of print. In her study of celebrity in the long eighteenth century, Cheryl Wanko notes that seeking fame meant the “relinquishment of some control of one’s public image” (359). Sor Juana’s deflecting attention from her person onto her publicly crafted and circulated

12 *Obras completas de Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz* (1951–1957) herein OC.

13 See Poot (1999) for more on the revealing play between Sor Juana’s private and public writing.



image in *romance* #51, her last, unfinished, poem, seems a testament to how she struggled both to create a cultural construction of her self and to guard herself from notoriety. In *romance* #51, she accuses her admirers of celebrating an image of their own making: “La imagen de vuestra idea / es la que habéis alabado” (OC 1.161:113–14) [“Your praises have been lavished / on an image of your idea” (Juana Inés de la Cruz 1988, 107)]. Knowingly, she attributes the fashioning of her distorted public image both to her admirers—“[v]osotros me concebisteis / a vuestro modo” [“The conception you hold of me / is proportionate to yourselves”] (OC 1.161:109–10; Juana Inés de la Cruz 1988, 107)—and to her own works. By granting her work (as opposed to her self or her life) and the words of others the responsibility of formulating her image(s), Sor Juana protects herself; she ensures that she remain absent, carefully ensconced in the convent.

Not only was Sor Juana adept at carving out a space for herself in which to read, write and publish, she also skillfully managed her own celebrity. As Stephanie Merrim puts it, “Sor Juana not only actively produced her fame but also managed it with the skill of an expert impresario” (1999, 35); I think Linda Egan agrees when she calls her “a savvy queenpin, a ‘player’, as we say, someone to be reckoned with” (2002, 216). But what did she need her celebrity for? Certainly, it was of little help to her with daily affairs in the convent, but it could help her accrue influence and allies that would allow her to devote part of her day to reading, thinking and writing; powerful allies could also keep critics at bay. That the writer and the Marquise de la Laguna, her most powerful patron and for Beatriz Colombi “the true agent of Sor Juana’s fame,” were able to penetrate the literary marketplace shows just how vital their respective negotiations must have been (Colombi 2015, 88). Yet Sor Juana also engaged in negotiations that potentially opened up a place for women outside a system of male exchange. Her epistolary exchange with the Portuguese nuns and noblewomen of the secret literary academy known as the Casa del Placer [the House of Pleasure], that brought about the text known as the *Enigmas ofrecidos a la casa del placer* [Enigmas Offered to the House of Pleasure] (Juana Inés de la Cruz 1994b), suggests the possibility of another system of exchange that surely could also fuel a woman writer’s renown entirely removed from the literary marketplace of printed books.¹⁴ So, despite the fact that female authority and authorship were considered contradictions in terms in her time, Sor Juana’s agency, negotiations and literary self-fashionings stand in contrast to the imperial male gaze that

14 ⁴ For a useful overview, see Munguía Ochoa (2020).



fictionalized her, making her legible, and “vendible” (in Jed’s words) for the readers of said marketplace.

The *Fama* and Sor Juana’s Retreat from Public Life

1700, the year of the *Fama*’s publication, marked the waning of the controversy surrounding Sor Juana. It was her writing that emerged from within the walls of Mexico City’s Hieronymite convent in the years spanning between 1689 and 1693 that not only brought her renown but also embroiled her in a dispute with her religious superiors who opposed her public life at a time when enclosure was the norm for women, most especially those who took the veil.¹⁵ It’s worth noting that Sor Juana was actively writing before and after this four-year period. 1689 marks not the beginning of Sor Juana’s career as a writer, but rather the onset of her impressive number of publications printed in Spain; 1693, meantime, signaled the end of her publicly heralded literary career, her decision to no longer participate in the “game” of authorship.

In many ways, understanding Sor Juana’s fame and celebrity is the key to beginning to unearth and understand her many complexities and outright contradictions. She was the subject of praise *and* envy, criticism *and* acclaim. Her fame ultimately proved a double-edged sword: it is both what allowed her to thrive as a writer and an intellectual and what brought about the scorn, and most likely, the pressure to capitulate to the wishes of her ecclesiastical superiors. It allowed her reputation to soar abroad but brought her trouble locally. Indeed, the *Fama* forms part of the crisis surrounding the last years of Sor Juana’s life; it speaks directly to her contested fame in her lifetime only to try to rewrite her renown posthumously as one free of dispute. In this sense, the *Fama* serves as a kind of a response to her problematic public celebrity status. The fact that to answer in Spanish—*contestar*—shares the same Latin root as “contested,” underlines my reading of the posthumous volume as a response to what had been Sor Juana’s decidedly controversial renown in life in the hopes of recasting it for posterity.

15 The subject of Sor Juana’s controversial entanglement with her religious superiors has engaged scholars a great deal, especially following the publication of Octavio Paz’s *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz y las trampas de la fe* in 1982. While there is too much bibliography to cite here, Bénassy-Berling (2000) has summed up the circumstances well until the end of the twentieth century. More recently, Nina Scott (2007) offers an excellent introduction to the controversy as does the second edition of Arenal and Powell’s *The Answer/La respuesta* (2009, ix–xvi). Arguably, the fierce debating among critics continues as Alejandro Soriano Vallés (2008) has resuscitated the hagiographic interpretation of the end of the nun’s writing career to which Kirk (2016) has responded categorically.



Today it is well-known that Sor Juana's privileged status that came hand in hand with her fame brought about the envy of those close to her, most especially her religious superiors who formed the upper echelons of New Spain's ecclesiastical hierarchy. For Arenal and Powell, she was "kept on a pedestal, provisionally protected yet isolated amid the ceremony and the turbulence of Mexico City" (1994, 2). After engaging in New Spain's courtly life as a personality and a writer in the years between 1665 and 1690, Sor Juana became a thorn in the side of highly influential ecclesiasts in the viceregal capital, namely Mexico City's archbishop Francisco Aguiar y Seijas and the nun's one-time confessor and well-known misogynist, Antonio Núñez de Miranda. In question was her close ties to the viceroys, especially the Marquise de la Laguna, as well as her participation in the public world of letters that culminated in the publication of the first two volumes of her collected works (*Inundación castálida* (IC) and *Segundo volumen* (SV)).

The goals of these two volumes are distinct. The first launched Sor Juana's career as a published author of surprising talent in a volume printed in Spain. The IC was also a political move as "discovering" Sor Juana is parlayed into a political victory for the viceroys after their calamitous reign in New Spain from 1680 to 1686. Lisa Rabin argues that the friendship between Sor Juana and her patron and friend, the Marquise de la Laguna, benefitted both women: the nun gained protection at court and the publication of her work was one of the lone triumphs upon the viceroys' return to Spain (Rabin 1997, 158–59; Colombi 2018, 33–34).¹⁶ The second volume of her Works, edited by Don Juan de Orve y Arbieta, ostensibly under the direction of the Marquise de la Laguna, was meant as an apologia, as will become clear.

It is thanks to her celebrity, her publications, and her calling that the Mexican nun found herself embroiled in controversy over the course of the last few years of her life. In what follows, I briefly outline the circumstances surrounding the debate that had at its center the relationship between the nun's publicly speaking out by publishing her works, her ensuing celebrity and her decision to no longer play the "game" of authorship. I do so not because I am entirely convinced that the *Fama* is organized and prepared as an apologetic in direct response to this crisis—a hypothesis set forth by the Mexican historian Elías Trabulse—but rather because it is the only extant literary testimony in print following the crisis and, as such, there is undoubtedly a tacit dialogue between what supposedly occurred in those

16 Hortensia Calvo's and Beatriz Colombi's (2015) unearthing and publication of the correspondence of the Marquise de la Laguna has helped shed new light on the travails of this period.



“final years” and the image of Sor Juana that her panegyrists formulate in the posthumously published tribute.

Yet again, the public-private divide that held at its center the notion of enclosure and obedience for women that I have already referred to, and that plagued Sor Juana throughout her career, is paramount in her last years. Veronica Grossi has noted how the “officials came to view her literary activity as threatening and autonomous, as ‘different’ (and, moreover, as flaunting its strangeness, its otherness, its marginal nature), as impossible to integrate into the socio-literary structures of the hegemony and as unfitting to the symbolic values of the reigning political order” (38). For Archbishop Aguiar y Seijas and Núñez de Miranda, for example, Sor Juana’s fame was equivalent to rumor, precisely what all women of good repute, and especially nuns, must avoid (being talked about) or guard carefully (their reputations). How she negotiated her relations (or failed to do so) as she moved between the spheres of influence of the Court and the Church helps shed light on this conundrum. By 1690 there was little doubt that Sor Juana’s literary career was flourishing and yet her celebrity was dividing those around her. In fact, it was the publication of the *Carta atenagórica* (CA) [Letter Worthy of Athena] in 1690 that exacerbated the divide to a point beyond repair. Following the publication of what she called her “Crisis de un sermón,” which consists of Sor Juana’s refutation of a sermon given fifty years earlier by the distinguished Jesuit, Father Antonio Vieira, Mexico’s intellectual community was divided among those who defended the nun and those who worked to censor her. Unfortunately, most of the documents that attest to the debate have been lost.¹⁷

Juan Ignacio María de Castorena Ursúa Goyeneche y Villareal (1668–1733), the editor of the posthumously published *Fama*, was clearly in the first camp and is believed to have written a defense of the nun. While the text has been lost, we know of its existence thanks to a *décima*, (a stanza of ten octosyllabic lines), of Sor Juana’s in which she thanks him by writing “pues debéis a mi

17 The *Carta de Serafina de Cristo* (1691), unearthed in 1996, is believed to be one such document. The subject of much speculation and controversy, this letter has been attributed to both Sor Juana (a belief held by Trabulse (1998)) and Castorena (a theory put forth by Alatorre and Tenorio (1998a)). According to Rodríguez Garrido: “En el lapso de unos cuarenta días se predica un sermón y se escriben y se difunden por la Ciudad de México al menos ocho obras (incluido el mismo Discurso [Discurso apologético]) que expresan su crítica o su defensa a la obra de sor Juana” [In a period of forty days, a sermon was predicated and at least eight works (including the “Discurso apologético”) that expressed either a critique or a defense of Sor Juana’s *Crisis* were written and distributed] (2004, 40). See Kirk (2007, chapter 5) for a discussion of the controversy surrounding the *Carta de Serafina*.

defensa / lucir vuestro entendimiento” [You owe to my defense the chance to display your learning] (OC I, 249: 9–10). The Peninsular equivalents of Castorena’s lost text can still be read today as they make up the better part of the very lengthy paratext of the SV published in Seville in 1692.¹⁸ Meant as an apologia, and strategically planned by the Marquise de la Laguna and Sor Juana herself, this volume defends the nun from accusations that she had gone too far in her theological critique of Vieira’s reasoning by *publishing* an interpretation of the “finezas de Cristo” (Christ’s expression of love) that differed from that of the celebrated Jesuit orator. Yet unlike her two volumes printed in Spain, Sor Juana did not consent to the publication of this manuscript, a fact that she makes clear in her largely autobiographical *Respuesta a sor Filotea* [Answer to Sister Filotea]. The publication in the Mexican printing press of Sor Juana’s appraisal of Vieira’s sermon was carried out by the Bishop of Puebla, Manuel Fernández de Santa Cruz, as a very public means to chastise the nun for her trespassing. As Stephanie Kirk has noted, “[i]n ‘outing’ Sor Juana, Fernández made a woman’s theological observations public, taking her already daring private debate with Vieira to a far more dangerous degree” (2016, 158). Arguably, the trespass here was double as Sor Juana is accused of *publicly* making known her ability to engage with the most erudite of Jesuit scholars. Kirk notes that the Jesuits were firm in creating a “male-only proto-public sphere of institutional culture” (2016, 8), a community of scholars built on formal education and the concomitant production of knowledge and high culture erudition, that was decidedly off limits for women. The Spanish apologetic of 1692—that printed the *Crisis* in its pages, this time in Spain and flanked by approving praise—turned out to be a tactical mistake. Instead of clearing her name, it stirred up even more trouble for Sor Juana.

Following the publication of the SV, and perhaps more importantly, the arrival of the contentious tome in Mexico, comes the period known as her “last years.” These final years, dating between 1693 and her death in 1695, are marked by her silence. This period has been read by Sor Juana scholars in two ways, entailing either her “silencing” or her “conversion.” According to the conversion myth, Sor Juana recognized the error of her ways and, of her own volition, abandoned her worldly pursuits in order to devote herself entirely to her duties as a nun. There are both actions and texts that seem to uphold this line of thinking. Her charity was exceptional: she donated her extensive library (thought to have been the largest individual collection in New Spain, comprising some 4,000 volumes) and tended to her

18 Margo Glantz (1995, IX) has analyzed a number of its commendatory paratextual materials.



fellow sisters who had fallen ill with the epidemic disease that eventually claimed her life. As for the documentation, she signed with her own blood her formulaic and self-deprecating renunciation, the “Protesta de la Fe” [Solemn Declaration of Faith], dated March of 1694, and no further secular writing reached the presses.

Trabulse considers Castorena responsible for setting the conversion myth into motion with the publication of the *Fama*, which he calls the “official, hagiographic and edifying version of the final years” (1999, 37). The *Fama* does publish the “Protesta,” along with two other penitential documents, but it is also true that Aguiar y Seijas publishes the “Protesta” in Mexico just after her death in order to circulate it among nuns in New Spain.¹⁹ According to Trabulse’s reading, the Archbishop is the mastermind behind the myth of sanctification; the fact that the *Fama* published the retraction of the Mexican nun speaks to Aguiar y Seijas’s plan to “cleanse” Sor Juana’s name by assuring that her posthumous image is guarded in an edifying hagiography. For his part, Castorena is little more than a “un instrumento dócil y fiel” [a docile and faithful pawn] of the archbishop’s looking to advance his ecclesiastical career (1998, 153–54). While Trabulse’s suggestive reading of the *Fama* as “gestado and promovido” [solicited and promoted] by Aguiar y Seijas (1998, 154) is tempting given that it helps explain the edifying portrait of Sor Juana fashioned within its pages, it overlooks some of the textual evidence that challenges the idea of presenting the nun in a homogenous manner. For one, the devotional and penitential writing in the *Fama* appears alongside Sor Juana’s *Respuesta* and secular poetry, including the above-mentioned *décima* #112 that thanks Castorena for what was most likely his *defense* of her display of erudition in the *Crisis* / CA. Regardless of their individual preferences for eulogizing Sor Juana, it would seem that all of her admirers in the *Fama* at the very least pay lip service to a sanctified image of her and at most cast her as a saintly figure. Yet alongside this fiction, the many-faceted *Fama* offers other representations of the nun, including those of sage writer and anomalous prodigy, all of which undermine the notion that she could be reduced to little more than a penitent.

Trabulse’s interpretation of the *Fama* as hagiography bolsters his belief that there never was a conversion of which to speak. He adheres to a more recent interpretation of the so-called final years, more in tune with our

19 The two other texts are the: *Docta explicación [...] y voto que hizo de defender la Purísima concepción de Nuestra Señora* [Learned Explanation [...] and Vow that she took to Defend the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady] and the *Petición [...] por impetrar perdón de sus culpas* [Petition [...] to Implore Forgiveness for her Sins].

contemporary beliefs, which argues that Sor Juana's silence was the result of the intense pressure exerted on her by Church authorities. According to this view, she was forced to capitulate, sign the penitential documents, and renounce all intellectual and public pursuits. It is believed that despite all of this, she most likely continued writing and reading, but this time containing her name, reputation, and her work within the walls of the convent. Both Luciani and Francisco Ramírez Santacruz's recent biography of Sor Juana support this contention; the first from intuition, the second based on the inventory of her cell upon her death that documents 180 books and a "cartapacio con quince legajos de versos" [a folder with fifteen bundles of pages of poetry] (Ramírez 2019, 229). The above-mentioned *Enigmas* don't offer categoric evidence since we can't know exactly when Sor Juana's corresponded with the European nuns, but given that this correspondence was meant to be private, entirely removed from the public eye (Kirk 2007, 143), it is possible that she penned these verses after 1693.²⁰ Myers, too, supports the idea of "Sor Juana's continued literary activity with her composition of the *villancicos*, *romances*, and *Los enigmas*" (2003, 110). For his part, Alejandro Soriano (2018) decries any potential conversion or renunciation; in his reading, the Mexican nun is unfailingly devout and contemporary critics are all off the mark.²¹ Scholarship by Stephanie Kirk regarding the nun's trespassing on the domain of the masculine intellectual elite bolsters the idea that Sor Juana reconsidered her public celebrity and authorship under the pressure of Church authorities in New Spain (Kirk 2016, 157–59).

Regardless of whether she chose silence and the renunciation of her celebrity, or felt obliged to do so, Sor Juana's rift with the upper echelons of the Church had been laid to rest by late 1700 when the *Fama* reached New

20 Alatorre rightly suspects that the manuscript took a long time to take form as it moved from one convent to another. The tongue in cheek title page is dated 1695 and was most likely added last, along with two "licenses" by nuns at the Bernardine convent at Odivelas and the Franciscan convent in Vialonga, Spain (Alatorre 1994, 17). His speculation that Sor Juana sent her *Enigmas* to Spain after 1691, when she sent her manuscript works to be published in the SV (1692) and before her retreat from "mundane activities," however, assumes that she would consider these works for the press, which seems highly unlikely given the secretive nature of the Casa del Placer.

21 Soriano Vallès's scholarship seems guided by the denunciation of what he calls the "black legend" around Sor Juana, which he suggests was begun by Dorothy Schons in 1929 when she argued, unsubstantially in his view, that an inquisitorial process stripped the nun of her cherished library. Soriano believes that once prominent voices the likes of Octavio Paz and Antonio Alatorre picked up this view, the legend propagated uncontrollably. The twentieth clause of a recently unearthed will, belonging to the cleric José de Lombeyda Ayala and found in Mexico's Archivo General de la Nación, bolsters Soriano's argument that Sor Juana did not capitulate against her will, but freely gave her books to be sold for alms (Soriano 2011, 62).

Spain. And while it is necessary to consider the crisis years and to ponder Sor Juana's motives for no longer participating in the public sphere, there is an important caveat that makes me inclined to believe that the *Fama* was planned as a forward-looking volume—aimed at preserving her for time immemorial—and not one that harked back to the contentious final years. Significantly, Sor Juana's death makes a moot point of the controversy surrounding her. And by the time the *Fama* was published in 1700, regardless of their stance vis-à-vis the writer, whether friend or foe, no one spoke of the controversy that had plagued her in life. Notwithstanding whether or not her contemporaries believed her deserving of a posthumous fame, it was perhaps more prudent to not stir up the murky waters of the turbulent past. Instead, they worried about preserving her memory for time immemorial. It seems to me that in the years following her death, clearing her name was important not in order to prove Aguiar right and Sor Juana wrong, but to ensure that her fame endure—by whatever means possible. I would not argue, as Trabulse does, that “the erudite intellectual of the first two volumes becomes the ‘venerable’ Mother Juana, ‘Martyr of the Conception’ in the *Fama*” (1998, 153), but rather that the two fashionings coexist, along with others, in the third tome.²² The *Fama* construes not one prevailing image, reading, or interpretation of the nun, but rather several, and each of those has a say in her posthumous renown construed for the literary marketplace. Could it not be that editor Castorena was hedging his bets by trying to assure her posthumous fame through various means? What is certain is that Castorena was a key player in disseminating images of Sor Juana and his publishing of works like the biographical “Aprobación” [approbation] written by Father Calleja and Sor Juana's *Respuesta* have fueled her contemporary celebrity enormously.

Exempla, Edification, Posterity and the Written Word

As young, wealthy, Mexican Jesuit and intellectual, Juan de Castorena would have been well-versed in the importance of preserving his illustrious compatriot's name in print in order for it not to be lost. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the works most prescribed in Spain's colonies, in addition to Biblical texts and the lives of the saints, were elegiac texts published either in the form of *vidas* (vitae) following the saintly model,

22 “[P]asa de ser la mujer letrada y sabia de los dos primeros volúmenes a ser la ‘venerable’ Madre Juana, ‘Mártir de la Concepción’ de la *Fama*” (Trabulse 1998, 153).



funeral accounts (including sermons) which recounted exemplary lives, and other occasional texts devoted to holy matters.²³ This large and somewhat varied body of literature worked both to uphold Catholic dogma and to preserve the lives of those deemed worthy of posthumous fame. In turn, all of these texts played a role in the subject formation of the viceregal populace. In the words of Sor Juana's confessor, Antonio Núñez de Miranda, the appropriate reading materials for Catholics were those books which encouraged "nuestra instrucción y provecho espiritual" [our spiritual instruction and progress] (1712, 109).

Significantly, these panegyric works most often turn on the death of socially relevant individuals whose virtue in life granted them the honor of being preserved for posterity through the written word. The motivating factors behind the publication of such texts were manifold. In some cases, the lives of the virtuous were recounted in the hopes of bringing posthumous fame to those who had lived in relative anonymity. In the case of those individuals who were already renowned, their religious biographies written in prose and poetry were able to elaborate on their fame without running the risk of damaging their reputations. In both cases, model individuals were to serve their community by existing as exemplars and by bringing recognition to their place of origin. In Spain and New Spain alike, priests, poets, and literary academicians celebrated the fame of their carefully chosen heroes, extraordinary poets, nobles, saints, and the saintly by means of brilliant images, extravagant comparisons and often tortuous hyperbole. Even in those cases in which the notable personages had been openly celebrated in their lifetime, it was upon their death that panegyrists by means of funeral elegies praised the deceased most ebulliently, generally accentuating their exemplarity above all other accomplishments. Their works could take the form of poetry, prose, sermon, or full-fledged biographies as, ultimately, each genre shared the goal of edification.

By elegizing individuals in light of the Christian Renaissance ideal—a life dedicated to the cultivation of virtue and exemplary service to God—panegyrists assured them a means of survival on earth, as conceivably in heaven, through posthumous renown. Eulogies in prose and verse, furthermore, employed the *exempla* and allegories of patristic and Biblical authors as

23 Scholars have worked extensively on *vidas* of women in the Hispanic colonial period, and, in so doing, have helped reinstate the significance they held in their own times; see Myers (1990; 2003), Bilinkoff (1983), McKnight (1997), Ibsen (1999) and Eich (2004). The work of Lavrin (2008), Muriel (1982), Kirk (2007) and Arenal and Schlau (2010) on Hispanic colonial nuns helps inform our current understanding of the gendered experience of piety and female instruction.

yet another means by which to diffuse Christian doctrine (Buxó 1975, 18). In testimony to its preoccupation with perpetuity, the century saw entire volumes of laudatory poetry dedicated to poets such as Lope de Vega and the Gongorist, Francisco Soto de Rojas, upon their deaths. In addition, poetic tournaments (*certámenes*) celebrating religious occasions, including canonizations and holy feasts, and countless funeral sermons and *vidas*, which chronicled the lives of religious and secular figures of extreme piety, were printed and circulated throughout Mexico, Lima, and Madrid.

Although each of these occasional texts can differ notably in style and composition, they all subscribe to the notion that those preserved in writing following their deaths must be exemplary individuals who serve to edify those left behind on earth. Posthumous renown was a means of positing the life (and death) of the deceased as one of the extraordinary examples upon which the populace could model their own lives. Undoubtedly, the goal of edification by means of what panegyrists envisioned as enduring testimonies to a life well lived was one of the principal reasons that the elegy prevailed in the literary milieu of the seventeenth century.

Elegy, moreover, often worked hand in hand with the revived classical tradition of fame as the ultimate reward for only the most distinguished of notables. As Leo Braudy reveals in his wide-reaching study of fame, famous people throughout time had to be both exceptional *and* exemplary (1986, 5, emphasis added).²⁴ With regard to the early modern period specifically, Neil Kenny has noted that “the relative increase in the [...] amount of posthumous communicating that was delegated to writing was the greater interest in the biography and moral character of the author figure. This interest became evident especially from Petrarch onwards” (2015, n.p.). Nowhere is this truer than in the case of women. The machinations employed to fix Sor Juana’s individual characteristics to traditional forms of renown reflect the didactic role that fame was forced to play in the lives of women. As much as elegists might have wanted to praise Sor Juana only for being the Tenth Muse or a prodigious autodidact, these qualities alone were not enough in 1700 to justify a posthumous tribute. The *Fama* needed to inscribe itself, at least to some degree, into the tradition of hagiographic *vidas*, funeral

24 While Braudy’s book traces the continuity of the cult throughout medieval times and its emphatic revival in the Renaissance, it is inadequate in its treatment of the Hispanic world. María Rosa Lida de Malkiel (1952) has studied the notion of fame in her important *La idea de la fama en la edad media castellana*. As Geoffrey Ribbans has noted, it is in the medieval period that specifically Christian alternatives, namely martyrdom and renunciation and self-abnegation, rival worldly fame (1986, 8). Jorge Manrique’s “Coplas por la muerte de su padre” [Stanzas on the Death of his Father] exemplify how, in the medieval world, individuals sought both earthly renown and eternal glory.

sermons, and biographies, that is, the most common forms of eulogizing and commemorating women in the century. For Josefina Muriel,

Exemplarity, understood as abiding by the values inherent in the Christian virtues, was what impelled the writing of biographies at the time. It is for this reason that in the colonial period life stories and full-fledged biographies devoted to women depicted those women renowned for their virtue who could serve as examples for all of their sex as well as for men given that they had reached “the heights of Christian perfection,” a state which transcended that which was considered merely feminine or masculine. (1982, 27–28)

As will become evident, one of the most intriguing aspects of the *Fama* is its original way of engaging Sor Juana’s life, death, and fame vis-à-vis the normative means of writing about them and the implications they held in the literary context of the time. After all, despite the fact that the pursuit of glory may have been an individual effort, its achievement depended as much on the celebrated figures’ actions as on those around them who expounded their fame, and those who, it was hoped, would engage in their direct imitation. Fray Agustín de Vetancurt, for example, begins the preliminary matter to his *Menologio seráfico* [Seraphic Menology], the fourth volume of *Teatro Mexicano* and an account of the exemplary lives of men and women of Mexico from 1600 to 1695, by reminding his readers that were it not for efforts such as his, the memory of exemplars would be lost: “Del no saber de los hechos, y virtudes de varones memorables, no tiene la culpa el tiempo cuando descuidos caseros sus ilustres hazañas pasan en olvido, que contra los resabios del tiempo que las oculta, es memorial perpetuo el cuidado de los Archivos que lo escriben” (1961, 1) [It is not time that is to blame for our ignorance of the feats and virtues of men worth remembering, but rather carelessness that allows their illustrious deeds to be forgotten; only the care of the archives that record their achievements by writing of them will protect them from being buried by time].

Seen in this light, Castorena’s desire to aid in preserving the memory of Sor Juana seems quite natural. After all, the editor of the *Fama* had before him a most unusual woman who, he believed, in spite of her celebrity accrued in her lifetime, may well have been forgotten were it not for his compilation. If Álvaro de Luna had written in his *Libro de las claras e virtuosas mugeres* that “the fame of any mortal, regardless of how pure and magnificent, will fade with time if it is not assured by the written word” [“qualquier cosa mortal, como quiera que sea muy clara y magnífica, por tienpo viene a parescer de su fama, si non es ayudada con beneficios de escriptura” (28)], then Sor Juana,



who promoted her own celebrity and at times publicly defied convention, would surely need much help of this kind from her posthumous panegyrists.²⁵

More Than a Sourcebook

As an admirer and, possibly, a friend of Sor Juana's, Castorena personally oversaw the publication of the last volume of her work to be printed in her own time. Two years after her death in 1695, the young priest traveled to Ávila to pursue a doctorate in theology. He took with him texts of Sor Juana's and those of some other contemporaries with the decided purpose of honoring his late and esteemed compatriot. Castorena would spend the next three years toiling to arrange and finance the publication of the polyphonic volume comprised of materials that he himself had edited and compiled. Having brought along with him all of Sor Juana's highly coveted unpublished works that he managed to amass, as well as a series of elegies written by fellow *criollos* (clergymen, military officers, university intellectuals), he set about collecting panegyrics from Spanish clerics, nobles (and their servants), and a handful of Spanish nuns. The result was the *Fama's* swelling paratext of well over a hundred printed pages of elegies. Paying attention to these in terms of the potential of early modern paratexts imbues them with a wealth of interpretative potential.

In their introduction to *Renaissance Paratexts*, Helen Smith and Louise Wilson argue that early modern paratexts “operate in multiple directions, structuring the reader's approach not only to the text in question but to the experience of reading, and of interpreting the world beyond the book” (2011, 6). By bearing the title of Sor Juana's *Fama*, the volume assumes the potential of drawing a direct parallel between itself—as a body that preserves the works of a famous individual—and the very concept of renown. In other words, the volume hopes to *be* her fame and to both trumpet and preserve her renown. Castorena's compilation suggests that Mexico's Phoenix, like the mythological bird whose epithet she shares, will be reborn and indeed improved upon in her posthumous fame on earth, and, accordingly, in the hands of her panegyrists within the pages of her *Fama*.

This is a far cry from how the book is understood in the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries. When read at all it is usually easily dismissed, its contradictions smoothed out by the reader's own biases. Indeed, with

25 De Luna's work, along with others, such as *Triunfo de las donas* by Juan Rodríguez de la Cámara, forms part of the fifteenth-century debate on women. As its title suggests, it sides with Boccaccio's *De mulieribus claris*.

one notable exception, Antonio Alatorre's important "Para leer la *Fama y Obras póstumas*," the *Fama* has always been considered little more than a sourcebook that originally housed some of Sor Juana's most important work.²⁶ For decades scholars have not questioned the fact that these works have been extracted from a volume without paying heed to the tome itself. It goes without saying that most readers happen across Sor Juana's most well-known work of prose, her defense of her right to study and learn subjects both secular and sacred and a moving account of her life known as the *Respuesta a Sor Filotea de la Cruz* [Answer to Sister Filotea de la Cruz] in an anthology and are not aware of the circumstances regarding its first printing.

In reading Sor Juana's writings on herself and her fame as engaging in a dialogue with works written about her shortly after her death, I play her many textual fashionings off one another. In so doing, her slippery self-portraits undermine her fixed iconic representation by others. For their part, the elegies of the posthumous volume have rarely been studied and never put into dialogue with one another or with the praise lavished on the nun while she was alive. Indeed, the remarkably little notice that has been paid to the *Fama* as an integral volume is due in part to readings which, until recently, have held firm ground in the study of the literary climate of Spain's colonies in the seventeenth century.

According to these interpretations, volumes such as the *Fama* are born of a place and time that supposedly bred only uninspired works—primarily civic, social and religious panegyrics—in order to uphold an inward-looking and self-serving literary milieu.²⁷ For example, in a discussion of the literary prose of the Spanish American Baroque, David Brading refers to its triviality, to how "classical epithet was piled on classical epithet, with metaphors multiplied beyond control, meaning was sacrificed to literary effect, and critical acumen destroyed by the imperatives of eulogy" (1991, 376). Although it would be misleading to argue that the *Fama* is not rife with imitative poetic form, tired metaphors and fanciful flights of hyperbole, the conflict that arises from the attempt to integrate Sor Juana into traditional modes of writing about the famous—and famous women particularly—lends it special significance.²⁸

26 Another significant exception is Georgina Sabat-Rivers's bibliographic investigation, "Sor Juana: Bibliografía. Las ediciones de *Fama y obras póstumas* de Lisboa y Portugal, 1701." (1995a).

27 Interpretations by seminal authors, such as Irving Leonard and Mariano Picón-Salas, assent to the notion that eulogistic texts did little more than uphold the allegedly static literary climate of the seventeenth century. See particularly Alfonso Reyes's chapter entitled "Virreinato de filigrana (XVII–XVIII)" in his *Letras de Nueva España* (1948).

28 The fact that the *Fama*'s prefatory material and poetic tributes all converge around the single theme of Sor Juana's death—either by retelling her life story or speculating about her

There is little doubt that the posthumous volume concedes to the imperatives of eulogy, given that the praising of its subject and co-author is its primary purpose. What makes Sor Juana's tribute different, however, is how it employs strategies taken from the modes of writing about women renowned for their virtue—that is, poetic elegies, *vidas* (exemplary “lives” or religious auto- or bio-ographies, cultural products of the seventeenth century), and sermons—to construct a tribute to a woman who in her time was a controversial celebrity. The *Fama*'s collaborators also borrow from literary tributes dedicated to male poets, adapting them by making what they believed were the necessary emendations in light of their subject's sex. As an amalgamation of different genres, and in its attempt to assign Sor Juana a posthumous fame, the *Fama* challenges the commonly held notion that like many other works produced in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, it is worthless.

It is primarily that bias, coupled with the belief that the volume is merely a sanctification of Sor Juana, which has led to the *Fama* being disregarded or simply overlooked. In suggesting a new reading, one that turns on the nun's celebrity and that considers the volume as a carefully structured and planned whole, my aim is to garner a better sense of how it was pieced together and might have been read in its own time. The importance of these critical questions can be surmised from the following example. Contemporary critics can easily ignore the fact that Sor Juana's *Respuesta* or *Answer* is published in the *Fama* alongside her spiritual exercises for nuns, the *Ejercicios de la Encarnación* and *Ofrecimientos de los Dolores*. The effect of this decision carried out by the volume's editor would not have been lost on his readers: the Mexican nun was capable of writing extraordinary texts for devotional purposes and for her admirers—that is, her readers—both in the Church and in the courts of Mexico and Madrid. Simply in its structure, then, the *Fama* presents a continuous struggle to fashion Sor Juana as a devout nun and as the rarest of birds: a colonial woman author. In fact, it can posit the two images of Sor Juana together. As a posthumously published tribute, the *Fama* can confidently argue that the nun's forays into the world of profane letters did not mislead her from her chosen path to God and salvation.

Castorena's editorial decisions regarding the organization of the volume can easily be dismissed if we attribute them to baroque excesses or to the short-sightedness of a compiler who published the carefully collected texts according to whim. But to overlook the structure of the *Fama* is an oversight

afterlife—makes it reminiscent of the poetic tournament, a popular tradition of the seventeenth-century Hispanic world orchestrated most often to extol an important noble or saint (Peña 1995, 432).



that diminishes the importance of the book. Castorena's interventions, which number no fewer than eight, six in prose and two in verse, inform us as to his careful deliberations in ordering his volume. Moreover, it is within that order that we become privy to his objectives of singing Sor Juana's praises and underscoring his decisive role as a *criollo* in preserving her for posterity. His writing, like all writing, also reveals much about the writers themselves. None of Sor Juana's admirers achieved the likes of her fame (nor did they share her talent), but their tributes reveal much about the state of poetry in Old and New Spain at the turn of the eighteenth century and some of their own ambitions as men and women of letters in their own right.

Far from being mere hyperbole then, the paratext of the *Fama* (its approbations, dedications, prologues and elegies) form an essential and even original part of the baroque volume.²⁹ As will become clear, tracing a divisionary line between text and paratext is a complex task in a tome whose prologue only surfaces after 165 pages.³⁰ For a reader in the early modern period, the preliminary pages of a book, this collection of underappreciated and little-studied texts, would never have been considered as independent segments that may be disregarded, but rather as an integral part of a whole. As Smith and Wilson note, "paratextual materials work both outwards, altering the contexts and possibilities of the book's reception and inwards, transforming not only the appearance but the priorities and tone of the text" (2011, 6). By playing the many texts of the *Fama y obra pósthumas* against each another, I seek out textual negotiations and dialogues that reveal much about the strategies of granting posthumous fame to an anomalous woman by means of forcing her into strict notions of fame, about *criollo* desire to

29 Gérard Genette devotes a great deal of attention to the matter of paratext in his *Sueils* (*Paratexts* in the English translation) of 1987. According to the French thinker, paratexts include, among other structural elements of a literary text, epigraphs, prefaces and epilogues, titles, subtitles, prologues, margin and footnotes. The paratext is "the means by which a text makes a book of itself and proposes itself as such to its readers" (Genette 1991, 261).

30 Closer to what we call today an anthology (or miscellaneous volume), the *Fama* is not unlike other publications of its time that united texts of disparate natures in a single volume. Texts about women, in fact, are especially embedded within other publications of the seventeenth century. Sigüenza y Góngora's *Parayso occidental* [Western Paradise] of 1684, in which several nuns' biographies are published within the chronicle of the foundation of the convent of Jesús María de México is a case in point. And of Sigüenza's three objectives for his volume, two are clearly politically motivated: to write a history of women for women, to inform the Royal Council of the Indies, the authorities of New Spain and the Spanish monarch of the history of the religious order, and of the convent particularly, in order to incur the favor of the king and, finally, to relay information regarding the founding of the third convent for Conceptionist nuns in Mexico City (Ramos Medina n.p.).

seek out recognition through literary endeavors and about how carefully and meticulously crafted a textual project that strives for those means must be.

Chapter Outline

Chapter 1 describes the *Fama's* contents, structure and organization. It also traces the designs of the volume's editor; specifically, his actions in transforming manuscript into print in order to influence potentially powerful readers in his endeavor to recast Sor Juana's lifetime celebrity into posthumous renown. In conjunction, the intricate frontispiece and lengthy prologue set up editor Juan Ignacio María de Castorena Ursúa Goyeneche y Villareal's framing of the *Fama* for his contemporaries. I use the engraving that opens the volume to show how its many Baroque intricacies both underscore and undermine its endeavor to preserve Sor Juana's lifetime celebrity for posterity. An examination of the editor's prologue, meantime, allows me to detail the contents, structure and organization of the *Fama* as it conjoins the nun's writings with the tributes of her admirers. While there is a decided emphasis on portraying the nun as a pious exemplar, it is by no means the only posthumous representation of her. The final section of this chapter explores part of a private dialogue between Sor Juana and the editor of her *Fama* that, once published, renders public their ties to one another and underscores her role as author, a recognizable figure albeit an unlikely one for a woman.

The second chapter reads Sor Juana's *Fama* within the seventeenth century's attempts to create holy subjects for the purpose of edification. Examining the Mexican nun's posthumously published volume alongside female Mexican penitents of the Counter Reformation eulogized in little-known, contemporary, funeral sermons situates her posthumous fame within a context in which women's lives are recounted in order to praise their Christian virtues of charity, humility and obedience. Father Calleja's approbation that opens the *Fama* echoes, in both tone and subject matter, biographies or *vidas*, and funeral sermons dedicated to women. Importantly, while Calleja's text on Sor Juana's life and death adheres to the sanctified model I lay out in this chapter, it also divests from it as he finds ways to vindicate her singular mind and literary production. The chapter then explores the work of other collaborators of the volume who follow Calleja's lead, interpreting Sor Juana's *desengaño* [her disabusing of the error of her secular, worldly, ways], death, and salvation, as means for both warranting her renown as a religious exemplar as well as championing her literary and



intellectual fame. Concretely, I examine the effects that Sor Juana's renewal of her vows, her charitable duties in the convent, her death, her devotional writings, her teachings, and her God-given grace had on their portrayal of her person and life. By considering Sor Juana's life story and her work as a writer over and against that of female penitents, comparisons with male saints and even *imitatio Christi*, or the paradox of the inimitable female exemplar, I examine how and why the volume's collaborators chose to align Mexico's *rara avis* to staunchly entrenched formulae to make her legible for her contemporaries, thereby increasing the promise of posthumous fame.

Chapter 3 contemplates how the *Fama* honors Sor Juana from a secular standpoint, be it as Tenth Muse or exotic New World marvel, thus fashioning her posthumously to mold her more closely to existing forms of enduring fame. In order to make her intelligible to European readers, the Mexican writer's panegyrists write her into the language of American abundance and riches and debate whether her sexless soul, her manliness, or her otherworldliness was responsible for her surprising *ingenio* [inventiveness]. Sor Juana's posthumous fame could be associated to her intellectual prowess and to her role as author if framed within the familiar discourse in which she is brokered as a New World "treasure," a commodity caught up in the dynamics of male exchange. Another, transatlantic, line of inquiry examines the role that the writer's birth in Mexico plays in her European posthumous imaging and how she embodies a problematic icon of New World culture in the minds of her Mexican peers seeking recognition from the Spanish literary marketplace that traded in intellectual goods. Two other contemporary and polemical debates make appearances in the more secularly minded elegies of the *Fama*: the question of whether women have infused or acquired knowledge and whether American minds are equal to those of their European counterparts or are adversely affected by the geographical and humeral conditions of their birthplace.

The closing chapter examines Sor Juana's textual responses to her public image and contrasts it with her posthumous imaging in the *Fama*. Throughout I examine how her carefully construed images of self reverberate within the volume, at once revealing her conflicting feelings about her fame and informing her posthumous depiction. The chapter opens with an examination of Sor Juana's *romance* #37 in order to explore her ideas on representation, her role as a female and New World elegist, her familiarity with the traditions of the panegyric, and her original modifications to the genre. I also suggest that this response to the Duchess de Aveyro, that mentions her friend and patron, the Marquise de la Laguna, introduces a potential reciprocal exchange among women absent from her responses to



her male peers. Next, I consider Sor Juana's ideas on fame as expressed in her *Respuesta*, concretely in her daring comparison with the martyrdom of Christ. In the analysis of the literary self-portraits *décima* #102, sonnets #152 and #145, I continue to explore the Mexican poet's musings on images and representation and delineate the means she uses to destroy her public image, commercialized and traded in the literary marketplace by her editors, patrons and elegists. Finally, the chapter closes with the suggestion of another means of exchange in the form of the *Enigmas ofrecidos a la Casa del Placer*, a text and tribute to Sor Juana that emerged from an all-female literary academy. Insofar as it functioned as a distinct transatlantic discursive community made up of only women, it surely also held the potential of fueling a woman writer's renown entirely removed from the literary marketplace of printed books.

A brief Afterword asks whether we should think of the *Fama* in terms of a successful volume insofar as it promotes Sor Juana's posthumous fame when in fact it fails to expand the notion to a New World woman writer; the volume also falls short in establishing the writing of "famas" as a practice that takes hold in its time. Surely, however, the volume does encourage our sense of how the Mexican nun and poet was understood in her own time, how, albeit for different reasons, her exceptionality was consolidated in elegiacal writing about her in her lifetime and shortly after and lasted two hundred years until the end of the twentieth century. That today critics have moved beyond understanding Sor Juana as an exception in her time, turning their attention to other women writers and subjects of writing, makes the study of her exceptionality all the more relevant.

Appendix

Table 1. Contributors and Texts Cited in the Chapter

Contributor	Title	Form	Volume	More
Sor Juana	"Crisis de un sermón" [Appraisal of a Sermon]	prose		also known as the CA (1690)
Sor Juana	romance #37 "Elogio de Doña María de Guadalupe de Alencastre, Duchess de Aveyro"	romance	IC	dedicated to the Duchess de Aveyro, who lived in Madrid and was married to the Duke de Arcos (several of his attendants also contribute to the volume)



Contributor	Title	Form	Volume	More
Pedro del Santísimo Sacramento	Elegy	prose	SV	he calls her “monstruo de las mujeres” Spanish Discalced Carmelite
Sor Juana	<i>romance</i> #49 “Respuesta de la poetisa [a un caballero recién venido a la Nueva España]”	<i>romance</i>	SV	response to a gentleman recently arrived in New Spain (OC 1) (Eng 1994)
Sor Juana	<i>romance</i> #51 “Romance en reconocimiento a las inimitables plumas de la Europa, que hicieron mayores sus obras con sus elogios; que no se halló acabado”	<i>romance</i>	FAMA	to the inimitable pens of Europe who improved on her work with their praise; found unfinished (OC 1; Juana Inés de la Cruz 1988)
Sor Juana	“Engimas ofrecidos a la discreta inteligencia / de la soberana asamblea de la Casa del Placer / por su más rendida y aficionada / Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Décima Musa” [Enigmas Offered to the Discrete Intelligence / of the Sovereign Assembly of the House of Pleasure / by their Most Humble Follower / Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, the Tenth Muse]	20 riddles and 2 dedicatory poems (a <i>romance</i> and a sonnet), plus prefatory material in verse and prose by Portuguese and Spanish noblewomen, most of whom were nuns		eighteenth-century manuscripts were found in Lisbon in the 1960s
Sor Juana	<i>décima</i> #112	<i>décima</i>	FAMA	dedicated to Castorena
Sor Juana	<i>La respuesta / The Answer</i>	prose	FAMA	Written in 1691 in response to “Sor Filotea” and published posthumously; (OC 4; Juana Inés de la Cruz 1994a)
Unknown	<i>Carta de Serafina de Cristo</i>	prose		Serafina’s identity remains unknown (it has been attributed both to Castorena and to Sor Juana); dated 1691
Sor Juana	<i>Docta explicación del misterio y voto que hizo de defender la purísima concepción de Nuestra Señora [...]</i>	prose	FAMA	[Erudite explanation of the mystery and vow that she took to defend the immaculate conception of Our Lady]

Contributor	Title	Form	Volume	More
Sor Juana	<i>Petición [...] que [...] presenta al Tribunal Divino [...] por impetrar perdón de sus culpas [...]</i>	prose	FAMA	[Petition that she presented to the divine tribunal to plead for her sins to be forgiven]
Diego de Calleja	Approbation	prose	FAMA	Spanish Jesuit, corresponded with Sor Juana
Sor Juana	<i>Ejercicios devotos para los nueve días antes de la purísima encarnación del hijo de Dios Jesu Christo Señor Nuestro</i>	prose	FAMA	spiritual exercises for nuns
Sor Juana	<i>Ofrecimientos para el santo rosario de quince misterios que se ha de rezar el día de los dolores de Nuestra Señora la Virgen María</i>	prose	FAMA	spiritual exercises for nuns
Juan de Castorena y Ursúa	"Prólogo al que leyere" [Prologue to the reader]	prose	FAMA	Followed by a second prose intervention later in the volume (see appendix B)
Sor Juana	<i>décima #102, "Décimas que acompañaron un retrato enviado a una Persona,"</i> [Décimas that accompanied a portrait sent to a person]	<i>décima</i>	SV	poem intended to accompany a pictorial self-portrait, which, as indicated by its appended title, is a gift for the Vicereine, the Marquise de la Laguna. (OC 1)
Sor Juana	sonnet #152 "Verde embeleso de la vida humana" [Green allure-ment of our human life]	sonnet		appears on the Miranda portrait of 1713 (OC 1); (Juana Inés de la Cruz 1988)
Sor Juana	sonnet #145 "Este que ves, engaño colorido" [This object which you see—a painted snare]	sonnet	IC	(OC 1; Juana Inés de la Cruz 1994a)

Sources: Juana Inés de la Cruz 1995b; Juana Inés de la Cruz 1995a; Juana Inés de la Cruz 1995c; Juana Inés de la Cruz 1995d; Juana Inés de la Cruz 1988; Alatorre and Tenorio 1998a; Alatorre 1994

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