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Amores perritos: Puppies, Laughter and Popular Catholicism in Bourbon Mexico City

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Abstract. In late eighteenth-century Mexico City, Spanish colonials, particularly members of the urban middle and popular classes, performed a number of weddings and baptisms on puppies (which were wearing clothes or bejewelled collars) in the context of *fandangos* or dance parties. These ceremonies were not radical challenges to orthodoxy or conservative reactions in the face of significant economic, political, religious and cultural Bourbon reforms emanating from Spain. Employing Inquisitorial investigations of these ceremonies, this article explores the rise of pet keeping, the meanings of early modern laughter and the implications of the cultural and religious components of the Enlightenment-inspired Bourbon reforms in late colonial Mexico.

Keywords: Bourbon reforms, popular religion, laughter, pets, dogs, dance parties

Of all living creatures only man is endowed with laughter.
Aristotle, *De Anima* (320s BCE)

Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.
Charles Caleb Colton, *Lacon* (1820)

On 25 March 1771, Juan López appeared before Inquisitors in Mexico City to clear his conscience. Apparently, while gossiping about the various parties that had recently occurred throughout the capital, Don Gabriel Bordazu told a story so scandalous that López felt compelled to report it. Bordazu, a Spaniard, had recently attended a *fandango* (dance party) where the highlight of the festivities was a marriage between two dogs. Two partygoers apparently held the dog-bride and dog-groom while responding to the questions put to them by a 'priest' as two other guests held dog-*padrinos* (wedding witnesses).

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The priest performed all the formalities of an official wedding, including closing with 'I thee wed in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.' Subsequent witnesses would underscore the hilarity of the dog wedding, testifying that the attendees laughed hysterically throughout.[1]

This wedding and two baptisms are the only such imitative sacramental ceremonies performed on animals that exist among the records of the Inquisition of New Spain (colonial Mexico).[2] All three took place in Mexico City between 1770 and 1780, and the major participants were almost exclusively Spaniards, either *peninsulares* (born in Iberia) or *criollos* (creoles or American-born). One baptism, like the wedding, occurred at a Spanish dance party in 1770, while the other took place in a tenement house in 1780. These cases open a window onto urban popular culture, particularly of Spaniards, in late colonial Mexico City. They are invaluable because they are descriptive of actual behaviour, allowing us to move beyond elite condemnations of popular practice in the search for colonial cultural expressions. They provide evidence of the potential chasm between those popular practices and official religious orthodoxy, but one that need not be read as heretical. Moreover, they allow for a consideration of the hitherto underdeveloped histories of laughter and the rise of pet keeping in late colonial Spanish America.

The Inquisition and Bourbon Cultural Reform in New Spain

Inquisitors would describe these ceremonies in hyperbolic language as profane, sacrilegious and scandalous.[3] Those official concerns arose because the ceremonies were performed on non-human, and therefore non-rational, beings, and because of the possibility that participants were both mocking key sacramental ceremonies and impersonating churchmen. Inquisitors would therefore expend considerable energy investigating them for signs of heresy.

However, the Spanish Inquisition – and its Office in New Spain – was not as sadistic, oppressive or reactionary as one might think. While its mission was to enforce and protect orthodoxy, and the accused did potentially face public

[1] 'El S[eño]r Inq[uisido]r Fiscal de este S[anto] O[ffico] contra D[o]n Thoribio Basterrachea clerigo ordinado *in sacri* por haber hecho de ministro en el matrimonio de unos perros. Cuidad de Mexico (1771)', Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, Manuscript Collection, 96/95m, vol. 10 (hereafter 'Contra Thoribio Basterrachea').

[2] Based on a keyword search in ARGENA II, the complete computerised index of the Ramo de Inquisición from the Archivo General de la Nación de México (hereinafter AGN INQ). Zeb Tortorici also uses these cases to explore the metaphoric meanings of animals in theological debates on the nature of animal-human relations in '"In the Name of the Father and Mother of All Dogs": Canine Baptisms, Weddings, and Funerals in Bourbon Mexico', in Martha Few and Zeb Tortorici (eds.), *Centering Animals: Writing Animals into Latin American History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), pp. 93–122.

[3] 'Contra Thoribio Basterrachea', fol. 10.

humiliation, flogging, torture and even execution, the extreme excesses generally associated with the Inquisition occurred much less frequently than popularly believed.[4] Still, these ceremonies led Inquisitors to worry about the nature of belief of lay Catholics and spoke to elite concerns regarding the declining propriety of colonials in the late eighteenth century.

These ceremonies took place squarely in the context of the Bourbon reforms (1750–1821) that aimed to reshape colonial realities. Economically and politically, these reforms sought to increase royal revenues and to strengthen absolutist control over colonial political structures.[5] In terms of cultural reform, after 1750 some secular and religious elites sought a radical transformation of colonial religious practice through the imposition of an austere, individualised, inner piety in place of the ostentatious, collective and mediated piety that defined baroque Catholicism. These reforms, grounded in Enlightenment thought, aimed to modernise, in late eighteenth-century terms, the socio-religious culture of the colony.

Yet these reforms met with little success in transforming colonial cultural practices due to reactions ranging from ambivalence to outright resistance from nearly all sectors of the population.[6] Margaret Chowning divides the cultural reform effort into a largely unsuccessful phase during the 1760s–1770s and a period of more successful reformism in the 1790s.[7] As but one example of this resistance, scholars generally agree that the great majority of late colonial, urban, Spanish testators rejected attempts to transform funerary practices from the baroque style of large, ornate funerary processions

[4] Henry Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition: A Historical Revision* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), pp. 305–20; Edward Peters, *Inquisition* (New York: Free Press, 1988), chaps. 5–8.

[5] D. A. Brading, *Miners and Merchants in Bourbon Mexico, 1763–1810* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), pp. 33–92.

[6] See D. A. Brading, 'La devoción católica y la heterodoxía en el México Borbónico', in *Manifestaciones religiosas en el mundo colonial Americano* (Mexico City: Universidad Iberoamericana, Departamento de Historia, 1993), pp. 25–49; and 'Tridentine Catholicism and Enlightened Despotism in Bourbon Mexico', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 15: 1 (1983), pp. 1–22; Serge Gruzinski, 'La "segunda aculturación": el estado ilustrado y la religiosidad indígena en Nueva España (1775–1800)', *Estudios de Historia Novohispaña*, 8 (1985), pp. 175–201; Cheryl English Martin, 'Public Celebrations, Popular Culture, and Labor Discipline in Eighteenth-Century Chihuahua', in William Beezley, Cheryl English Martin and William E. French (eds.), *Rituals of Rule, Rituals of Resistance: Public Celebrations and Popular Culture in Mexico* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1994), pp. 95–114; William B. Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred: Priests and Parishioners in Eighteenth-Century Mexico* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996); and Juan Pablo Viqueira Albán, *Propriety and Permissiveness in Bourbon Mexico* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1999).

[7] Margaret Chowning, 'Convent Reform, Catholic Reform, and Bourbon Reform in Eighteenth-Century New Spain: The View from the Nunnery', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 85: 1 (2005), p. 27.

culminating in church burials to private, quiet affairs culminating in interment in newly constructed cemeteries.[8] This truculence can lead to the impression that colonials were culturally intransigent, static and/or reactionary.

Official condemnations of these ceremonies, when combined with the fact that they took place within a pervasive reform effort, particularly one met with such opposition, result in a strong but misguided temptation to read them as conservative cultural resistance. Official anxiety that these practices reflected a breakdown of orthodoxy proves to be in significant tension with the nature of the actual ceremonies themselves. Inquisitors, distracted by their own concerns, missed how exactingly the participants imitated official sacramental ceremonies, rather than parodying or satirising them, revealing how deeply embedded in baroque Catholicism they actually were. Historians of late colonial Mexico are now beginning to see unsanctioned displays of religiosity, like mysticism and unofficial lay brotherhoods, as popular appropriations of orthodoxy rather than as heterodox cultural resistance. Thus it may prove more fruitful to read these ceremonies as popular forms of deviant orthodoxy rather than as resistive.[9]

Explaining these 'enigmatic social expressions' in this light requires a detailed description of the ceremonies, of the contexts in which they were recreated and of the official rituals they imitated. It also necessitates a consideration of the significance of the dogs at their heart and the laughter they inspired.[10] Although numerous studies have begun to locate the origins of Latin American modernity in the eighteenth century, the argument here is neither that these ceremonies suggest that the participants were modern, nor that they represented conservative reactions to modernising reform from above.[11] Rather, the argument is that they provide evidence of cultural

[8] Brian R. Larkin, *The Very Nature of God: Baroque Catholicism and Religious Reform in Bourbon Mexico City* (Albuquerque, NM; University of New Mexico Press, 2010); Pamela Voekel, *Alone Before God: The Religious Origins of Modernity in Mexico* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002).

[9] Nora E. Jaffary, *False Mystics: Deviant Orthodoxy in Colonial Mexico* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2004); Matthew D. O'Hara, 'The Orthodox Underworld of Colonial Mexico', *Colonial Latin American Review*, 17: 2 (2008), pp. 233–50.

[10] Clifford Geertz, 'Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture', in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 5.

[11] Patricia Seeds argues for the rise of the economically self-interested 'modern individual' in *To Love, Honor, and Obey in Colonial Mexico: Conflicts over Marriage Choice, 1574–1821* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988); Pamela Voekel focuses on the religious origins of the rise of the modern 'internally regulated' or bounded individual in *Alone Before God*; Brian Larkin adds Foucauldian notions of modernity to Voekel's consideration in *The Very Nature of God*; Irene Silverblatt explores bureaucratisation and racial thinking as markers of modernity in *Modern Inquisitions: Peru and the Colonial Origins of the Civilized World* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004); and John Tutino, while not focused on modernity per se, argues that the world's first capitalist society developed in northern

conservatism (but not necessarily resistance) *and* cultural dynamism.[12] The ceremonies reflect how immersed in traditional baroque religious culture the participants were. At the very same time, they provide evidence of new cultural behaviours that seem out of place in colonial Latin America at first glance; a new canine–human relationship that appears quite familiar to the modern reader, which scholars identify as modern pet keeping. The laughter the ceremonies provoked highlights the incongruity between what appears so traditional (the ceremony) and what feels so modern (the nature of the canine–human relationship) at the same time.

The Marriage of Two Dogs

Joseph Argandoña, a Castilian liquor shop owner, provided a detailed description of the dog wedding to Inquisitors. He began his testimony with the story of Miguel Rodríguez's visit to his shop to purchase liquor in late January or early February 1771. Argandoña was struck that Rodríguez had with him a little dog, dressed up like a man. When asked why the dog was wearing clothes, Miguel responded that they were on their way to a dog wedding about to be celebrated in the nearby home of Don Francisco González. Although Argandoña refused Miguel's initial invitation to the party, when Miguel returned for more alcohol Argandoña and two Spanish friends, Don Joseph Bernal and Don Tomás Garay, gladly accepted.

They arrived before the wedding ceremony to find the González home full of people enjoying music, dancing, food and drink. Soon thereafter Toribio Basterrechea officiated at the wedding, while 'dressed as a priest', as the partygoers watched. Tranquilo González, the host's 18-year-old son, and his aunt, Doña Juana Varas y Valdez, held the dog-groom and dog-bride, who witnesses described as 'dressed as a man and woman' or 'wearing petticoats'. Antonio and María Antonia Gambeta, brother and sister, held the dog-padrinos decked out in collars decorated with jewels and pearls.[13]

The attendees fell silent when Basterrechea asked everyone to stand to begin the ceremony. When he inquired whether he should celebrate the wedding with the traditional formalities, the answer appears to have been yes. In conducting the ceremony, Basterrechea asked the *perrita*, named Niña, if she

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New Spain, not England, in *Making a New World: Founding Capitalism in the Bajío and Spanish North America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).

[12] Peter Burke warns both against seeking too clean a break between 'festival' and 'leisure' culture associated with the transition from pre-modern to modern society and against assuming continuity and projecting modern concepts back onto the past in his 'The Invention of Leisure in Early Modern Europe', *Past & Present*, 146 (1995), p. 138.

[13] 'Contra Thoribio Basterrachea', fol. 28.

took the other unnamed dog to be her husband. Doña Juana, holding Niña, responded 'Yes'. Basterrechea then turned to the *perrito* and asked if he took Niña to be his wife. Tranquilo, holding the dog, replied affirmatively. Then Basterrechea took the dogs' paws in his hand and gave the Benediction, saying, 'I thee wed in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.' One witness suggested that the dogs lay in a miniature matrimonial bed before the ceremony began, while another testified that they hugged on the priest's order following the Benediction.[14] The attendees were apparently laughing uproariously throughout. The ceremony complete, the crowd returned to the party, replete with music provided by a female singing group accompanied by members of the local militia band. It is easy to imagine the guests drinking, dancing and flirting as they gossiped about the ceremony, about how the dogs were dressed and about the laughter as the music played well into the night.

Basterrechea's ceremony followed very closely that described in the widely used *Manual for Parish Priests: How to Administer the Holy Sacraments and Perform Other Ecclesiastical Functions Conforming to the Roman Ritual*, released in at least five printings in eighteenth-century Mexico.[15] The *Manual* advised priests to conduct wedding ceremonies as follows: the wedding party would appear before a priest, who was dressed in a white stole and surplice. The priest would ask, three times, if there was any impediment to the couple's marriage. If there was none, the priest would ask the bride, and then the groom, the following questions in Spanish: 'Señorita/Señor [name], do you desire for your legitimate husband/wife Señor/Señorita [name], who is present here, as is mandated by the Holy Mother Church? Do you give yourself to him/her as his/her wife/husband and legitimate woman/man? Do you receive him/her as your husband/wife?' After both had answered affirmatively, the priest would join together their right hands and say, in Latin, 'What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder: and I thee wed in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen', while making the sign of the cross. He would then anoint the couple with holy water, and warn them not to cohabit until they had attended a nuptial mass and had their union blessed.[16]

With the exception of the anointing with holy water, Bastarrecha's ceremony seems to have followed this description closely. While witnesses did not describe him as wearing the stole and surplice, he was wearing black clothes, a black cape and a white collar that clearly identified him as priestly. In his own defence, Basterrechea, who was in fact a priest, worked hard to distinguish between his ceremony and that prescribed by the Church.

[14] *Ibid*., fols. 4–5, 11–12.

[15] Manuel Venegas, *Manual de parrocos, para administrar los Santos Sacramentos, y exercer otras funciones Ecclesiasticas conforme al Ritual Roman* (Mexico: Por Joseph Bernardo de Hogal, ministro, ê impressor del Real, y Apostolico Tribunal de la Santa Cruzada, en toda esta Nueva-España, 1731), pp. 115–17.

[16] *Ibid*.

Basterrechea, who had studied theology at the Colegio de San Pedro y San Pablo in Mexico City, rebutted the charges that he wore clerical vestments (the absence of the stole and surplice being key) and flatly denied offering to perform the wedding formally and using the Benediction. He claimed instead that he had said, 'I thee wed, in the names of the dogs' mothers and fathers' – an assertion supported by witnesses called on his behalf.[17]

Argandoña declared the ceremony 'an atrocity' to his friends because he believed that Basterrechea was impersonating a priest (he learned the truth *after* his initial testimony), not because he had just witnessed a dog wedding. According to Argandoña, Joseph Bernal suggested that such ceremonies were very common in Mexico City and went on to describe another woman who spent a considerable amount of money on a belt and matching jewellery in preparation for the marriage of her dog. Bernal denied any knowledge of any other dog weddings, but he did suggest that it was common for people to spend lots of money on their pets in Mexico. He then told the story of a Doña María Antonia who sent candy and a dog collar decorated with bells to Doña Ana Mendieta to celebrate the birth of her dog's puppies.

Testimony from witnesses suggests that they were not significantly troubled by the event. When seeking information from witnesses who were summoned, as opposed to those who appeared voluntarily, Inquisitors often employed a standard set of broad questions to elicit descriptions of anything that might be considered contrary to the Catholic faith. If that did not provoke a response, Inquisitors would then ask a more specific question, which in this case was generally: 'What do you know about the celebration of a wedding between two dogs using Church ceremonies?' With the exception of Bordazu, every witness – including Basterrechea – had to be prompted about the dog wedding before discussing it. Only Argandoña, of 13 witnesses, gave any indication that he found it scandalous. Moreover, Inquisitors asked many witnesses if the wedding was meant to be an affront to the Holy Sacraments, or if it was just a joke (*burla*), a diversion (*diversión*), or something to pass the time (*pasatiempo*). They all testified that it was a simple diversion motivated by the fiesta and not meant to undermine the Church or the sacraments. Many witnesses pointed to the accompanying laughter to underscore this point. Basterrechea insisted that the marriage was pure entertainment, adding that if his participation actually undermined the sacraments he would have confessed to the Inquisition himself.

The date of the ceremony, while difficult to pin down, is also of interest (though it wasn't to the Inquisitors). Ignacio Sánchez testified that the party was the belated Saint's Day celebration for the son of the hostess, Doña Francisca Picazo y Medina, postponed due to a lack of funds. Unfortunately,

[17] 'Contra Thoribio Basterrachea', fols. 73–8.

Doña Francisca and her husband never testified about their personal motivations for the party or the dog wedding, which took place in late January or early February of 1771. Ash Wednesday, the end of Carnival and the beginning of Lent, a period of abstinence leading up to Easter Sunday, fell on 13 February in 1771. The party likely took place, therefore, during pre-Lenten Carnival, one of the most significant early modern festival periods.[18]

Carnival was marked by the suspension of normal rules of behaviour, by ceremonious reversals of the social order, and by parody, satire, violence and explicit sexuality in the name of testing social boundaries and degrading the high and mighty before the reimposition of order during Lent. In the early modern period, this period of the 'world upside-down' was accompanied by riotous parades and public celebration which included masquerades, cross-dressing, the laity dressing up as clergymen, and high levels of alcohol consumption.[19] These Carnivalesque behaviours, perhaps best commemorated in Francisco de Goya's *The Burial of the Sardine* (see Figure 1), also became associated with numerous other Spanish festival days.

Spanish reformers throughout the eighteenth century, particularly the Bourbons, sought to reduce both the number and the lavishness of such Carnivalesque celebrations. For example, the Fourth Provincial Council of Mexico (1771) proposed to reduce the number of official festival days from 48, as established by the Third Provincial Council (1585), to 23.[20] Carnival was not included among sanctioned festivals, but the exuberant celebrations associated with it, Corpus Christi and other festival days became a key target for Bourbon reformers who hoped to transform them into solemn affairs that would serve as 'a model of decorum and reverence'.[21] A series of edicts suppressing the raucous activities associated with Carnival and Corpus Christi – such as cross-dressing, the laity dressing up as clergy, masquerades and alcohol consumption – were issued and reissued throughout the eighteenth century. While Corpus Christi would not be sanitised until the

[18] San Antonio Abad's January festival day, which includes animal blessing in churches, is another possibility: see Laura Hobgood-Oster, *Holy Dogs and Asses: Animals in the Christian Tradition* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2008), p. 110.

[19] See Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London: Temple Smith, 1978), p. 182; and Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1984), p. 83.

[20] The crown never approved this reduction: see Luisa Zahino Peñafort, *El cardenal Lorenzana y el IV Concilio provincial mexicano* (Mexico City: Porrúa, 1999), pp. 146–7; and *Concilio III provincial mexicano celebrado en México el año de 1585* (1st edition, Mexico City: Porrúa, 1859), pp. 135–7.

[21] Brian R. Larkin, 'Liturgy, Devotion, and Religious Reform in Eighteenth-Century Mexico City', *The Americas*, 60: 4 (2004), p. 494; Pilar Gonzalbo Aizpuru, 'Las fiestas novohispanas: espectáculo y ejemplo', *Estudios Mexicanos*, 9: 1 (1993), pp. 19–45.

Figure 1. *Francisco de Goya,* El entierro de la sardina*, 1812–19*

Source: Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando, Madrid.

1790s, Juan Pablo Viquiera Albán argues that the viceroy dealt Carnival a death blow in 1731 by banning cross-dressing and masquerades under severe penalty. Descriptions of Carnival from 1757 and 1783, he argues, demonstrate that it had become a much subdued affair in Mexico City after 1731. However, the re-issuance of the 1731 prohibitions in 1774 and 1783, when combined with the 1780 prohibition of Indian Carnival processions in the city centre,

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might suggest that this process was more contentious than he concludes. Viquiera Albán speculates that a 'privatization of diversion', or the movement of Carnivalesque celebrations off the streets and into private homes, accompanied these reforms.[22] While the dog-wedding fiesta may reflect such a change, it is difficult to connect it to specific attempts to sanitise Carnival. So, while reform was certainly in the air, the dog wedding does not appear to be a direct reaction to that effort.

A Puppy Baptism

As Inquisitors scrutinised this dog wedding in mid-1771, they were also investigating a dog baptism celebrated during another of the many dances that occupied Mexico City's Spanish residents. Joseph Arias Villaseñor, a creole lawyer for the Audiencia, denounced a baptism of three dogs celebrated during a soirée he attended in one of the country homes on the outskirts of the city.[23] The house belonged to Don Baltasar de Mendieta, a principal scribe for the Mexico City *cabildo* (city council), his wife Doña María Magdalena de Balbuena and their two teenage daughters, Micaela and María. Mendieta frequently hosted parties, but this particular celebration was in honour of Doña María's patron saint, Mary Magdalene (21 July 1770). Arias found the house full of people enjoying themselves. Music was playing in one of the great halls, and the guests, some of 'very high distinction and character', were dancing minuets. Arias listed numerous people he recognised at the party, including creole and peninsular Spaniards, churchmen and government officials including Don Joseph Gorraez Beaumont y Navarra, a secretary to the viceroy.

This event proves quite similar to the González party discussed above. Late colonial art and literature can provide a better sense of what these celebrations were like. Representations of Spanish parties were a common theme in *biombos*, a particular form of *novohispano* art based on painted room dividers originally imported from the Philippines. The images on biombos, such as festivals and parties, stand in stark contrast to the standard religious subjects and portraiture that dominated traditional colonial artistic production. The depictions of parties on some biombos appear quite similar to the soirées

[22] Viqueira Albán, *Propriety and Permissiveness*, pp. 107–9; Linda A. Curcio-Nagy, 'Giants and Gypsies: Corpus Christi in Colonial Mexico City', in Beezley Martin and French (eds.), *Rituals of Rule*, p. 20.

[23] 'El S[eño]r. Inquisidor fiscal de este Santo Oficio contra don Antonio Balbuena, don Baltasar Garcia de Mendieta escribano mayor del cabildo de la N[uestra] C[iudad], en cuya casa de campo en la calzada de la Tlaxpana, bautizaron a dos perritos, para agasajar a una de sus hijas llamada Magdalena (la que estaba enferma de perlesia). [Ciudad de] Mexico (1771)', AGN INQ vol. 1241, exp. 4 (hereafter 'Contra Antonio Balbuena'), fols. 64–6.

Figure 2. *Room Divider Depicting a Garden Party on the Terrace of a Country Home, Anonymous, Mexico, c. 1730*

Source: Denver Art Museum.

described here. Figure 2 provides a good visual representation of the various activities that might have taken place at Spanish parties: here partygoers are eating, playing cards and listening to music provided by the musicians to the right of the image. The figures at the centre of the image could be dancing or simply talking. Perhaps ironically for our purposes, between the central figures and the card table on the left is a little dog. Comparable images show similar activities associated with partygoing – dancing, drinking, card games and flirting.[24]

José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi conjures a much more debauched image of these fandangos in his 1816 novel *El periquillo sarniento* (*The Mangy Parrot*), a scathing critique of late colonial society in New Spain. Lizardi warned that

> the dancers, or 'useful' lads [*útiles*] ... are a bunch of outrageous rogues; they go to the dance with two objects in mind: to have fun and to 'tease' ... which amounts to seductions and crudeness. If they can, they pervert the maiden and corrupt the married woman, and all without love, but only out of depravity or simply to pass the time ... But even ... when by good fortune all the girls at the dance are judicious, honest, and demure, knowing how to mock the lads' flirtations and conserve their honour ... even in such rare cases as this ... they satisfy themselves with what they call the *caldo* [groping]. Watch out, you fathers and husbands ... this caldo consists of the pawing they give to your daughters and wives, the thousands of liberties taken that

[24] See '"Courtship and Leisure on the Terrace of a Country Home", Anonymous, Mexico, c. 1750–60', in Rogelio Ruiz Gomar and Clara Bargellini (eds.), *Painting a New World: Mexican Art and Life, 1521–1821* (Denver, CO: Denver Art Museum, 2004), pp. 150–4; or for a representation of a festival complete with maypole, see '"Festival in an Indian Village", Anonymous, Mexico, c. 1650–1700', in *ibid*., pp. 226–9.

become hidden and furtive kisses ... The worst thing is that all this pawing and groping, accompanied by the customary giggling and chatter, is to many women as venial sins are to the soul, with the difference that venial sins warm the soul and dispose it to commit mortal sins, while this pawing, this caldo ... inflames some young women and disposes them to toss aside their honour ...[25]

Lizardi's condemnation of these parties coincided with a heightened concern about the increasingly lewd nature of popular dances and songs in late colonial Mexico. The Inquisitors, however, did not inquire about the nature of the dancing at either of the fandangos discussed here.[26] Still, these images and descriptions allow us better to imagine partygoers at both fiestas having a raucous time as they chatted, flirted, danced, ate and drank late into the night.

Returning to the Mendieta party, Arias heard someone call out that it was 'time for the baptism' soon after sunset. Motivated by curiosity, he followed a mass of people into an adjacent corridor decorated with palm fronds and flowers. There he found a table adorned with a water-filled silver basin, a lit candle, a silver cup and a vessel of salt. Beside the table was a man dressed as a priest and a bassinet full of puppies where their mother lay 'as if she were pretending to be a person'. Arias testified that the throng of people in the room made it difficult for him to follow the ceremony closely, but that he was disgusted by what he saw. Afterwards the guests returned to their dancing while Arias and Don Joseph de Quintana, a Spanish official of the tobacco monopoly, returned to the city.[27]

Don Antonio Balbuena, a musician, performed the ceremony while wearing a cassock borrowed from Father Joseph Velázquez de la Cadena. He also used a scarf to make his hat look like that of a priest. Father Cadena, as witnesses called him, had provided the entertainment and refreshments at the party but refused Micaela's request to perform the baptism. María Agustina de Salazar, a 27-year-old unmarried creole, served as a godmother. She testified that the puppies were dressed up like children, wearing mantles, as they lay in the bassinet with their mother, Pusiana. Apparently, Pusiana tried to bite María Agustina when she reached for the first puppy, so Micaela retrieved it for her. According to Joseph Salazar, a creole guild inspector and María Agustina's cousin, Balbuena did not know the correct words, most likely because baptisms were conducted in Latin, so he made some up.

[25] José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi, *El periquillo sarniento* (16th edition, Mexico City: Porrúa, 1978), pp. 106–7.

[26] Sergio Rivera Ayala, 'Lewd Songs and Dances from the Streets of Eighteenth-Century New Spain', in Beezley Martin and French (eds.), *Rituals of Rule*, pp. 27–46; José Antonio Robles-Cahero, 'La memoria del cuerpo y la transmisión cultural: las danzas populares en el siglo XVIII', in *La memoria y el olvido: segundo simposio de historia de la mentalidades* (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1985), pp. 165–78.

[27] 'Contra Antonio Balbuena', fols. 64–7, 72.

Balbuena 'christened' the dogs as Vireno, Clavellina and Pusiana, but witnesses disagreed as to whether or not he actually anointed them with water and whether he gave them salt. There was also little consensus as to what Balbuena said during the ceremony. According to María Agustina, who held the puppies during the ceremony, Balbuena baptised the puppies in the name of Satan (*Satanás*). However, Joseph Salazar testified that Balbuena christened them 'in the name of the hen and the cock [*gallina y gallo*]'.[28] Once the ceremony was over, the puppies were returned to the bassinet with Pusiana to suckle, and the party resumed.

Again, the similarities between Balbuena's ceremony and that prescribed by the *Manual for Parish Priests*, which was grounded in the instructions from the *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, are remarkable. An official baptismal altar included two vessels with the holy oils of the catechumens and the chrism; another containing blessed salt; a silver cup used to christen the initiate; a basin, to catch the spilt water; cotton cloth to wipe the holy oils from the initiate's head and some bread to clean them from the priest's fingers; a pitcher of water with which to wash the priest's hands following the ceremony; both a purple and a white stole; a white mantle to cover the initiate's head; a lit wax candle to be given to the baptised child; and finally, the baptismal register.

Excluding all Latin prayers, a baptism went as follows. The priest met the infant and his/her godparents at the door of the church, asked for the child's name, blew on the child's face to exorcise Satan, made the sign of the cross over the child and gave it the sacred salt. The ceremony then moved to the baptismal font, where the priest anointed the child with his own spittle and asked the child to renounce Satan (if Balbuena recreated this portion of the ceremony, it might explain testimony that he invoked Satan's name). The priest then anointed the initiate with the oil of the catechumens, asked for a declaration of faith on behalf of the child, named the child and baptised him or her with water from the font using the Benediction, anointed the child with the oil of the chrism, placed a white veil on the child's head, and finally bestowed the lit candle to the godparents before bidding the child to go in peace. At numerous points throughout the ceremony the priest made the sign of the cross, three times, over the child while reciting specific Latin prayers. Finally, he entered the child in the baptismal registry.

Although Balbuena's altar was obviously incomplete, his ceremony mirrored closely that described in the *Manual.* It included many of the key elements required in a baptismal ceremony: a silver basin and cup, salt, a lit candle and a white mantle, each of which had important symbolic meanings for colonial Catholics. The *Catechism* exhorted priests to explain the

[28] *Ibid*., fol. 72.

intricacies of the sacraments to their parishioners, including the meanings of these various items. According to the *Catechism*, the salt represented 'the food of divine wisdom' which would deliver the initiate from 'the corruption of sin', the white mantle symbolised 'the glory of the resurrection to which [the initiate is] born by baptism', and the burning candle signified 'that faith received in baptism, and inflamed by charity, is to be fed ... by the exercise of good works'. The participants, then, would have recognised these as key elements of an actual baptism. The *Catechism* clearly states that a baptism required only two components to be binding: anointing with water, and the use of the Benediction, '... in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit'.[29] And thus, Balbuena may have purposely avoided anointing the dogs with water and refused to use the actual Benediction, indicating just how aware of the meaning and practice of the sacrament of baptism he was.[30]

Inquisitors pressed witnesses about the motivation for the baptism and particularly if it was meant as an affront to the sacraments. In so doing they employed another term, 'jocosidad', along with 'burla', 'diversión', 'juego' and 'pasatiempo', which had been employed in the investigation of the dog wedding. Eighteenth-century Spanish dictionaries defined 'jocosidad' as a mixture of the derisive and the serious in the name of a joke, and linked it to festival culture.[31] Witnesses described the event as pure entertainment. Only Arias asserted that it crossed the line of licit enjoyment, worrying that it set a bad example for the Mendieta girls. He lamented that the frequent baptisms of dolls and pets performed by the colony's youth, with their parents' knowledge and tacit approval, might cause them to abandon the sacraments. Numerous other witnesses also connected the ceremony to those performed on rag dolls.

María Agustina freely admitted that the baptism was her idea. Upon learning that Pusiana was pregnant she told Micaela, 'Well, I suppose I'll have to be your *comadre* [godmother to your child] then.' She subsequently sent Micaela a gift to celebrate the birth of her puppies, raising the possibility that María Agustina and Micaela Mendieta were the same women that Joseph Bernal named María Antonia and Ana Mendieta in his testimony surrounding the dog wedding. Micaela had recently been diagnosed with palsy, and her doctors urged her parents to work to lift her spirits as part of her recuperation.

[29] Venegas, *Manual de parrocos*, pp. 16–24; Rev. J. Donovan (trans.), *The Catechism of the Council of Trent* (New York: Catholic Publication Society, 1830), pp. 116, 134–6.

[30] The mock baptisms were more problematic than the wedding. Any Christian could perform a binding baptism provided they used water and the Benediction. The wedding could never be binding because the bride and groom, not the priest, bestowed the sacrament on each other through their willing participation.

[31] *Diccionario de la lengua castellana*, vol. 5 (Madrid: Herrederos del Francisco del Hierro, 1737), p. 320.

María Agustina's offer to be Micaela's comadre, therefore, became transmuted into the decision to baptise the puppies at her mother's Saint's Day party. When pressed, however, María Agustina asserted that the sole motivation for the ceremony was Micaela's 'love' for her dogs.

There were significant similarities between the González and Mendieta ceremonies. Both occurred during Saint's Day parties in the context of increasing official concern regarding Carnivalesque celebrations. Both were performed on dogs, perhaps suggesting Carnivalesque overtones. Yet each was marked by exacting imitations of important baroque Catholic rituals, underscoring a sincere respect for the sacred. Such exacting imitations, while potentially resistive, also signalled, paradoxically, religious compliance and affirmation.[32] Furthermore, the expressed motivation behind each was entertainment, not subversive social commentary.

In both ceremonies the partygoers were all creole or peninsular Spaniards and the major participants were addressed with the honorific titles of Don, Doña or Doncella, suggesting some social status. The participants, however, were neither the highest-ranking bureaucrats and churchmen, nor large landowners and merchants who made up the colonial economic and political elite. Rather, they came from the middling sectors of the social hierarchy of shopkeepers, local merchants, churchmen and low-level bureaucrats in the burgeoning Bourbon state. Don Francisco González, the host of the dog wedding, was described as a local merchant. Don Balthasar de Mendieta, the host of the dog baptism, was a head scribe for Mexico City's cabildo. The attendees of the Mendieta soirée actually appear to have been of a slightly higher social standing than those at the González party, as they included lawyers for the Audiencia, secretaries for the viceroy and officials of the tobacco monopoly.[33]

A Puppy Baptism, Part II

The final dog baptisms share many of these same characteristics but also prove distinctive in important ways. María Vázquez denounced these ceremonies in 1780 but, like Juan López above, she did not actually witness them. She learned of them from a friend, María Rodríguez, who described to Inquisitors, in great detail, two dog baptisms performed on consecutive nights in April 1780 in a Mexico City tenement house. The overwhelming majority of participants, more than 20 in both instances, were women and children who

[32] O'Hara, 'Orthodox Underworld', p. 237.

[33] For the distinctions between the elite, middling and plebeian classes in colonial Latin America, see Susan Migden Socolow, 'Introduction', in Louisa Schell Hoberman and Susan Migden Socolow (eds.), *Cities and Society in Colonial Latin America* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1986), pp. 8–9.

resided in the boarding house. Although nearly all witnesses described themselves as Spaniards, they were clearly not the social equals of the partygoers described above.[34]

According to Rodríguez, the caretaker of the tenement, José Armas – a married creole tailor – baptised two puppies owned by María Dolores Cuebas. Armas wore a priest's cassock, surplice and stole to perform the ceremonies. His altar, which included a basin of water, a cup, a vessel of salt, a flask of oil, some cotton cloth, a candle and a large, old book, echoed the instructions in the *Manual for Parish Priests* closely. On the first night Armas christened a puppy Señorito, with María Guadalupe Cuebas, the teenage daughter of the dog's owner, serving as godmother. The next night Armas baptised Serena with Andrés Cervantes, an Afro-Mexican guard from Mexico City's Metropolitan Cathedral, as the godfather. During the ceremonies, while the godparent brought the puppy forward, Armas pretended to read from the old book. According to multiple witnesses Armas was speaking gibberish or 'talking through his teeth' so that no one could actually understand what he said, causing everyone to laugh uproariously.

Armas took the puppy in his arms, gave it some salt, anointed it with the oil and christened it with water from the basin.[35] Some witnesses testified that he anointed the puppy with oil and christened it three times (evoking the Trinity). María Rodríguez noted her surprise when Armas did not actually pour water on the dogs. María Dolores Cuebas, the dog's owner, explained that they did not want to get the puppy wet because they were afraid it might kill him. In language remarkably similar to that from the Mendieta baptisms, Armas baptised the puppies in the name of the 'hen and the cock'. After christening the puppies, Armas had a young assistant clean the oil from their heads using cotton cloth. After the second ceremony, Andrés Cervantes, the godfather, presented Armas and María Dolores Cuebas with a peso each, while he gave Armas' assistant and María Guadalupe Cuebas half a peso each. The motivations for these baptisms are not recorded, and it is impossible to connect these ceremonies to a specific Saint's Day celebration. Yet the level of planning involved for Armas in preparing the proper vestments and a nearly complete baptismal font in his rooms suggests that this was not just a spontaneous, spur-of-the-moment occurrence.

The lengths to which the authors of these ceremonies went to imitate the sacramental ceremonies that they regularly witnessed in their parish

[34] 'Señor Inquisidor fiscal del Santo Oficio contra Jose Armas, de oficio sastre, de calidad española. Por haber bautizado unos perros. Cuidad de Mexico (1780)', AGN INQ, vol. 1535, exp. 5 (hereafter 'Contra Jose Armas'), fols. 172–227.

[35] For the symbolic importance of the oils, see *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, pp. 135–6.

churches are striking. That effort demonstrates the respect and reverence the participants showed for those church ceremonies. The dog weddings and dog baptisms were very different to the public mock baptisms or mock weddings of animals that were stock methods of satirising ecclesiastical ceremonies throughout early modern Europe. They were not the same as desecrating churches by bringing in domestic or farm animals to baptise them, christening a horse after urinating in the baptismal font, or officiating a marriage between a man and a bear. They even pale in comparison to another mock baptism described by María Rodríguez, who witnessed a foal named Zangano (Lazybones) christened with pulque (an indigenous alcoholic drink) at the home of a rural parish priest in 1772.[36] It is difficult to read these events as reflecting a deviant theological position precisely because of the reverence with which the participants approached and imitated the sacraments.[37] Similarly, they stand apart from twentieth-century bar mitzvahs and weddings for horses, cats and dogs precisely because they lack the element of parody, accomplished by playing with the wording of the ceremonies in service of a joke, which is fundamental in these modern ceremonies.[38]

Only Teresa Rincón found these ceremonies disturbing, chiding Armas that it was wrong to 'play games with the matters of God'. He dismissed her concerns, responding that baptising dogs was no different to the christening of rag dolls that was common throughout the colony. Other witnesses echoed this sentiment, and most testified that the sole purpose of the ceremony was a diversion, that those who attended laughed throughout the ceremonies and that the goal was not to undermine the sacraments.[39]

[36] 'Contra Jose Armas', fols. 177–80.

[37] Burke, *Popular Culture*, pp. 122–3, 185; Keith Thomas, 'The Place of Laughter in Tudor and Stuart England', *Times Literary Supplement*, 21 Jan. 1977, p. 78; David Cressy, *Agnes Bowker's Cat: Travesties and Transgressions in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 173.

[38] See Norine Dresser, 'The Horse Bar Mitzvah: A Celebratory Exploration of the Human–Animal Bond,' in Anthony L. Podberscek, Elizabeth S. Paul and James Serpell (eds.), *Companion Animals and Us: Exploring the Relationships between People and Pets* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 103. Susan Stewart, in *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), pp. 119–21, describes mock 'Tom Thumb Weddings' from the twentieth-century United States that included only children or all men, which could be either 'idealized weddings' on a miniature scale or hyperbolic parodies of weddings depending on context.

[39] 'Contra Jose Armas', fol. 194. Barbara Mauldin explores the modern tradition of selecting padrinos for communally and privately owned icons of *El Niño Santo* (the Holy Child), who were charged with clothing the idols and taking them to church to be blessed in rural Mexico: see 'Images of the Christ Child: Devotions and Iconography in Europe and New Spain', unpubl. PhD diss., University of New Mexico, 2001.

Doll Baptisms

The recurrent insistence that these ceremonies were similar to baptisms performed on dolls throughout New Spain may have been well founded. In 1719 Dominican censors provided evidence of the potentially deep history of imitative sacramental ceremonies performed on dolls in the colony. In their response to an order to warn a member of the Zacatecas elite to desist in his practice of performing weddings and baptisms on rag dolls during his fandangos, they noted that 'marriage and baptism of dolls is not a new thing'. They argued that the Marquesa de Salvatierra, a member of the Zacatecas elite, had hosted a doll baptism in her home. Moreover, they asserted, Doctor Don Juan Ignacio de Castoreña y Ursúa, an Inquisitor, officiated at the baptism, and he would not have allowed such a thing to occur if it were illicit.[40] Castoreña y Ursúa (1668–1733), born in Zacatecas, famously edited the works of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, his close friend, entitled *Fama y obras póstumas del fénix de México* and published in 1700. He also founded Mexico's first news periodical, *Gaceta de México*, in 1722, and was appointed bishop of Yucatán in 1729.[41]

Furthermore, two very different rag doll baptisms are described in Inquisition records from the early eighteenth century. In February 1736 two siblings, Miguel and Lorenza Rubio, put on a puppet show in which a puppet-priest baptised two other dolls as entertainment at a party. The second took place during a fandango in the home of Rosa de San Juan and Diego Ramírez, hispanicised Indians, in the modern state of Querétaro in 1707. This baptism, accompanied by music, dancing, drinking and an afternoon snack, was the centrepiece of the party. Pedro de Burgos, a lay Spaniard, constructed an altar with an earthen jar of water and some lit candles and performed the ceremony in a Franciscan habit. Ignacio de la Parrilla served as his assistant and stood nearby holding a silver plate full of candies and a lit candle. María Mendoza, a *mulata*, was the godmother. Burgos christened the rag doll 'in the name of the cock and the hen'. As in the Armas baptism, María then gave Burgos one peso and Parrilla one real (one-eighth of a peso).[42]

The similarities between this doll baptism and the dog baptisms suggest that mock sacramental ceremonies may have had a long history in the colony.

[40] 'Autos sobre unos bautismos y casamientos de muñecas efectuados en la ciudad de Zacatecas' (1719), AGN INQ, vol. 777, exp. 63, fol. 473.

[41] E. Gîmez Tagle, 'Castorena y Ursúa, Juan Ignacio de', in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 3 (2nd edition, Detroit, MI: Gale, 2003), p. 218.

[42] See 'El S[eño]r Inquisidor contra Manuel de Cordova, official de carpintero y demas complices en el bautismo de ciertos muñecos. Guadalajara (1735)', AGN INQ, vol. 872, exp. 27 (hereafter 'Contra Manuel de Cordova'), fols. 395–404; and 'Autos sobre un bautismo de muñecos que se celebro en el pueblo de S[an] Juan del Rio (1707)', AGN INQ, vol. 731, fols. 391–401.

These ceremonies largely occurred during public parties or were, at least, performed in front of large audiences, suggesting that they were entertainment. They were marked by genuine attempts to re-enact official sacrificial ceremonies. Interestingly, all three baptisms described herein included the same phrase, 'I baptise thee in the name of the cock and the hen', suggesting a common language for such ceremonies.[43] Additionally, they all elicited significant amounts of laughter from observers, a laughter that the observers themselves described as non-subversive.

Yet, while the nature of the testimonies from various witnesses suggests that doll baptisms had a deep history in the colony, the performance of the sacraments on pets might have been a fairly recent phenomenon. The examples of doll baptisms all date from the first half of the eighteenth century, whereas those performed on dogs all took place after 1770. Of the six witnesses who evoked doll baptisms to contextualise the dog baptisms they attended, only one, Joseph Arias Villaseñor, mentioned similar ceremonies performed on animals at all.[44] No one else suggested that performing sacraments on pets was a common occurrence. Assessing why colonials were now enacting mock ceremonies on dogs, as opposed to the apparently well-established practice of doing so on rag dolls, requires a deeper consideration of the position of dogs in eighteenth-century Europe and the Americas.[45]

A History of Spanish Pet Keeping

The proliferation of pet keeping is generally understood as a fairly modern phenomenon. Current understandings of pets often begin with a distinction between 'necessary' or 'working' animals, often regarded without sentimentality, and 'unnecessary' or 'dependent' pets, which receive real affection from their owners. Most studies focus on the nineteenth century and tie pet keeping to emerging bourgeois culture, suggesting that pets became an expected part of nineteenth-century middle-class households in Europe and the United States.[46] Yet, these studies admit that these modern pet-keeping practices represent the popularisation of practices that had their origins within the medieval and early modern elite. Even as the presence of pampered pets can be

[43] I have yet to discover the significance of that phrase.

[44] 'Contra Antonio Balbuena', fols. 64–70; 'Contra Jose Armas', fols. 185–7, 190–3.

[45] For similar lines of inquiry, see Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre*, pp. 75–104; and Clifford Geertz, 'Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight', in his *Interpretation of Cultures*, pp. 417–9.

[46] Kathleen Kete, *The Beast in the Boudoir: Petkeeping in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994); Katherine C. Grier, *Pets in America: A History* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987).

traced to both medieval monasteries and the homes of the medieval social elite, the origins of modern pet keeping, particularly of dogs, began with European royalty and their courtiers as early as the sixteenth century.

Charting a concise chronology for the proliferation of pet keeping from the rise of early modern elite pets to the nineteenth-century phenomenon of modern, middle-class pet keeping proves difficult. Still, scholars of English history often point to the eighteenth century as an important transitional period in the general conception of dogs and pets more generally. Keith Thomas suggests that the modern phenomenon of pet keeping reached full florescence or widespread practice beyond the nobility in England by 1700. Ingrid Tague charts a transition in the human–canine relationship through changes in the primary English conception of dogs from hunters, workers and status symbols associated with elite luxury to 'companion' animals defined by emotional attachment across the eighteenth century. These transitions derived from multiple parallel processes: economic change associated with the rise of the market economy; increasing recognition that humans are a part of, rather than distinct from and superior to, the animal kingdom; the growth of the emphasis on the individual; the rise of sentimentality; and the rise of compassion for animals, which eventually resulted in the creation of humane societies throughout the West during the nineteenth century (Spain's first humane society was founded in Cadiz in 1872).[47]

Spain appears to have followed a similar trajectory in terms of the growth and proliferation of pet keeping, particularly dogs. Well-kept dogs abound in the portraiture of the Habsburg royal court (1516–1700), particularly in the works of Diego Velázquez, such as *Las Meninas*.[48] Carlos Gómez-Centurión Jiménez argues that pet keeping became commonplace in the eighteenth-century Bourbon court, with dogs, birds and monkeys all inhabiting royal residences at different points in time. He continues that 'the quotidian presence of dogs in the royal residence became one of the defining characteristics of court life under Charles III (1759–1788)'. As was the case throughout Europe, Gómez-Centurión connects the changing position of dogs in the mentality of the Spanish elite to the association of dogs with fidelity, an important component of chivalrous aristocratic culture, which

[47] Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: A History of Modern Sensibility* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), pp. 102–19; Ingrid H. Tague, 'Eighteenth-Century English Debates on a Dog Tax', *Historical Journal*, 51: 4 (2008), p. 19; José Marchena Domínguez, 'El proteccionismo hacia los animales: interpretación histórica y visión nacional', in Arturo Morgado García and José Joaquín Rodríguez Moreno (eds.), *Los animales en la historia y en la cultura* (Cádiz: Universidad de Cádiz, 2011), pp. 191–220. See also Sarah Hand Meacham, 'Pets, Status, and Slavery in the Late-Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake', *Journal of Southern History*, 77: 3 (2011), pp. 521–54.

[48] Abel A. Alves, *The Animals of Spain: An Introduction to Imperial Perceptions and Human Interaction with Other Animals, 1492–1826* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 158–60.

transformed dogs into essential hunting companions for elite men and into faithful companions for ladies.[49]

While we await studies of the popularisation of pet keeping among the non-elite in the Spanish-speaking world, a comparison of the nature of the human–canine relationship as depicted in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Spanish literature, dictionaries and popular culture with that from the late eighteenth century suggests a similar transition to that identified for England. Those comparisons indicate that pet keeping was becoming more popular, extending beyond the social elite across the eighteenth century, something quite unexpected for colonial Spanish America.[50]

Perhaps the most famous piece of early modern Spanish literature that speaks to the nature of human–canine relationships is Miguel Cervantes' *The Dialogue of the Dogs* (1613). In this critique of early seventeenth-century Spanish culture, two dogs, Berganza and Scipio, serve as Cervantes' narrators to satirise humans, their supposed superiors, and to point out the corruption, the bestial nature, of humanity. In the course of their story, they also describe their relationships with numerous different owners and in so doing offer 'some indications of what might be expected in an early modern Spanish dog's life'.[51]

Cervantes' decision to employ dogs as his narrators is meant to evoke their paradoxical symbolic status created by positive and negative metaphorical understandings of canines in early modern Spain. Cervantes played on the open hostility towards dogs in early and medieval Christianity and the negative symbolic association of canines with lowly elements, traitors, slanderers and false prophets in the Bible.[52] Francisco de Rosal's discussion of why Spaniards called their slaves 'dogs', in his dictionary of early modern Spanish proverbs, highlights the denigrated social position of dogs.[53] Rosal suggests that dogs, like slaves, were the 'lowest and vilest' part of the family

[49] Carlos Gómez-Centurión Jiménez, *Alhajas para soberanos: los animales reales en el siglo XVIII: de las leoneras a las mascotas de cámara* (Valladolid: Junta de Castilla y León, 2011), pp. 366, 375; Sophia Menache, 'Hunting and Attachment of Dogs in the Pre-Modern Period', in Podberscek, Paul and Serpell (eds.), *Companion Animals and Us*, pp. 42–60.

[50] In his compelling study of Spanish intellectual discourses on or about animals, Abel Alves postulates that pampered pets 'seem to have been kept by families of different social ranks' in early modern Spain: see *The Animals of Spain*, p. 160. However, he does not explicitly consider how the history of Spanish pet keeping may have evolved.

[51] *Ibid*., p. 56.

[52] A. J. Close, *Cervantes and the Comic Mind of His Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 32–3; Sophia Menache, 'Dogs: God's Worst Enemies?', *Society and Animals*, 5: 1 (1997), pp. 23, 29.

[53] According to eighteenth-century Spanish dictionaries, 'dog' also had pejorative meanings associated with drunkenness, religious infidelity ('Jewish dog') or racial inferiority ('black dog'): see *Diccionario de la lengua castellana*, vol. 5, pp. 231–2. Interestingly, the *Laws of Burgos* strictly forbade Spaniards from calling natives 'dogs'.

because of their 'brutish and irrational' nature.[54] These negative associations might explain why the torture of dogs was an important component of early modern Spanish Carnival, where it was a common practice to toss dogs into the air with a blanket or tie flame-filled gourds to their tails and send them yelping through the streets.[55]

Yet A. J. Close, in his discussion of *The Dialogue*, also points to the more positive attributes of fidelity, gratitude and friendship often associated with canines, an aspect hinted at by Rosal when he remarked on the positive qualities of dogs that made them good servants. In describing the position of dogs in society, Scipio, a dog himself, says:

> I have heard praised and extolled our good memory, our gratitude and fidelity; so much so that we are generally portrayed as the symbol of friendship. Thus you will have noticed (if you ever considered it) that where there are alabaster tombs which usually have effigies of those buried beneath, if it should be a man and wife, they always place between them at their feet the figure of a dog, as a sign that during their lifetime they preserved an inviolable friendship and fidelity to each other.[56]

Yet, there are significant differences in the position of dogs as described in *The Dialogue* and in the ceremonies described above. These distinctions may provide evidence of a changing perception of dogs, of a growing culture of pet keeping in Mexico City and in the Spanish world more generally, in the second half of the eighteenth century. For, based on the testimonies above, these particular puppies were clearly beloved, as dressing them up in petticoats and bejewelled collars suggests. This stands in stark contrast to the treatment of dogs in early modern Spanish Carnival celebrations and the portrayal of dogs' lives in Cervantes' *Dialogue*, where Berganza and Scipio, the main characters, were clearly working dogs. Nothing in *The Dialogue* suggests that dogs were perceived as pets in the modern sense. Berganza's and Scipio's relationships with humans were not grounded in affection. Rather, their experiences were defined by work and significant abuse. If this portrayal can stand as a representation of the nature of the canine–human relationship in the early seventeenth-century Spanish world, it would seem that some Spaniards in Bourbon Mexico City had developed bonds with their dogs that were quite new and that appear quite familiar to the modern reader. Most importantly, these dog owners were not members of the colonial elite, but middling and plebeian Spaniards who had adopted pet-keeping practices from the Spanish aristocracy.

[54] Francisco del Rosal, *La razón de algunos refranes: alfabetos tercero y cuarto de origen y etymologia de todos los vocablos de la lengua castellana* (London: Tamesis Books, 1975), p. 81.
[55] Julio Caro Baroja, *El Carnaval: análisis histórico-cultural* (Madrid: Antropología Alianza, 2006), pp. 63–5.
[56] Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (trans. William Rowlandson), *The Dialogue of the Dogs* (London: Hesperus Press, 2003), p. 19.

Puppy Funerals

The apparently privileged, and potentially new, position of dogs in the lives of humans suggested by the imitative wedding and baptisms discussed above is further borne out by a limited number of funerals celebrated for puppies in Bourbon Mexico City. For example, Señorito died soon after his baptism in 1780. His owners made him a small coffin, covering him in a white shroud (like the Carmelites), and decorated his coffin with a garland of flowers and palm fronds before burying him. Similarly, Bernarda Caldera and her son shrouded their recently deceased puppy's corpse in vestments similar to those of an Augustinian friar, decorated his coffin/bier with palm leaves, flowers and candles, placed a crown on his head and held a wake-like fandango in his honour in 1768.[57] These descriptions are very similar to those of human funerals at that time.[58] The position of the puppies in these wakes does not evoke a sense of the lack of sentimentality associated with working animals. Instead, it suggests that these dog owners conceptualised these animals as pets and that these wakes were actually about mourning the loss of a beloved companion. Underscoring this possibility is María Antonia Salazar's testimony that the sole motivation for the 1770 baptism was Micaela Mendieta's love for her dogs. That love suggests that the dogs were the centrepiece of these ceremonies, not because of their largely negative metaphorical meanings in medieval and early modern thought, but due to their modern, preferential status as pets. In fact, it is possible that the reverence evident in these particular ceremonies was only possible because of the new sentimental relationship between humans and canines, a relationship reflected in the tendency to articulate pets as family members. Before canines became conceptualised as pets, the distance between humans and dogs would have been so great that the presence of dogs in such ceremonies could only serve as parody.

The wakes described above pale in comparison to that described in the satirical critique of baroque funerary practices entitled 'Funerary Honours for the Dog Pamela', penned anonymously by José María Guridi y Alcocer in late eighteenth-century Mexico.[59] The tract laments that the dearly beloved

[57] 'Denuncia que hace Maria Dorotea Crespon, española, contra los dueños de un perrito que murio y a quien lo amortajaron de religioso Agustino, poniendole palma y corona etc. Se deprecio por un puro juguete de muchachos y no resultar delito contra persona alguna. [Cuidad de] Mexico (1768)', AGN INQ, vol. 1072, exp. 24, fols. 385–8; 'Contra Jose Armas', fol. 175. [58] Voekel, *Alone Before God*, pp. 33–4.

[59] Guridi y Alcocer is perhaps most well known as a key creole advocate at the Cortes of Cádiz: see D. A. Brading, *The First America: The Spanish Monarchy, Creole Patriots, and the Liberal State, 1492–1867* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 574–5. José Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi identified Guridi y Alcocer as the author when he included this tract, with commentary, in his 1818 novel, *La Quijotita y su prima* (Mexico City: Porrúa, 1973), pp. 193–203. For more in-depth interpretations of 'Funerary Honours', see Ma. Isabel Terán E., 'Dos sátiras del siglo XVIII contra la actitudes funerarias barrocas',

Pamela 'never learned to sit, to stand on her back legs, to beg, to jump and catch a treat ... to play dead, or any of the other tricks that recommend her species', before dying. Later the author continues that compared to songbirds, parrots, cats and even monkeys, 'dogs are superior [pets], because of their loyalty, their knowledge, their playfulness, and their innumerable tricks. For these reasons, dogs are worthy of the greatest attentions, even sleeping in the beds of their owners and being treated like humans by the ladies.'[60] Guridi y Alcocer's discussion of the treatment of dogs stands in stark contrast to that seen in Cervantes' *Dialogue*. In using dogs to critique baroque funerary practice, Guridi y Alcocer may also be pointing to the new position of dogs as pets in the lives of some eighteenth-century Spaniards. Paradoxically then, 'Funerary Honours' reads as a satirical critique of the two contradictory cultural patterns evident in the imitative ceremonies discussed above: traditional religiosity and the new phenomenon of pet keeping in the colony. Both are seen as decadent.

Furthermore, the ceremonies described above suggest that the conception of dogs as pets was not isolated to the colonial elite, but had begun to filter down into the middle and popular sectors of Spanish urban society. The list of attendees at the González and Mendieta parties demonstrates that the authors of these ceremonies were not the feared, racially mixed lower classes of Mexico City, who might have misunderstood the complexities of Catholicism. Nor, however, were they from among the true social elite who had a longer history with pet keeping in Europe. In the Armas baptism from 1780, the overwhelming majority of participants were creole Spaniards, but clearly of lower socio-economic standing than the participants in the first two ceremonies. These dog owners ran the gamut of Spaniards from the middling and plebeian classes, reflecting the popularisation of pet keeping for eighteenth-century England described above.

A History of Laughter

This potentially new position of dogs can help us understand the meaning of the laughter associated with these ceremonies. Most discussions of the history of laughter begin with Mikhail Bakhtin's theories on Carnival and

in Bárbara Skinfill Nogal and Eloy Gómez Bravo (eds.), *Las dimensiones del arte emblemático* (Michoacán: El Colegio de Michoacán and Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología, 2002), pp. 247–62; Tortorici, 'In the Name of the Father'.

[60] 'Honras fúnebres a la perra Pamela' (transcribed by Edmundo O'Gorman), *Boletín del Archivo General de la Nación*, 15: 3 (1944), pp. 537, 542–3. Hester Hastings identified in French literature a similar tendency to satirise the 'excessive affection' that elite ladies bestowed on their pets: see Hester Hastings, *Man and Beast in French Thought of the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1936), pp. 210–12.

Carnivalesque laughter. Bakhtin presents a vision of emancipating laughter that he believed to be at odds with the severity and intolerance of the medieval and early modern Church, as Carnival was understood as the degradation of the sacred. Bakhtin defines Carnival laughter as:

> First ... a festive laughter. Therefore it is not an individual reaction to some isolated 'comic' event. Carnival laughter is the laughter of all the people. Second, it is universal in scope; it is directed at all and everyone, including the carnival's participants ... Third, this laughter is ambivalent: it is gay, triumphant and at the same time mocking, deriding. It asserts and denies, it buries and revives.[61]

According to Robert Darnton, 'Bakhtin uncovered a strain of popular culture in which the riotously funny could turn to riot, a carnival culture of sexuality and sedition in which the revolutionary element might be contained within symbols and metaphors or might explode in a general uprising.'[62] Bakhtin also distinguishes Carnivalesque laughter from its modern forms when he laments that by the nineteenth century laughter was cut down to cold humour, irony and sarcasm.[63]

Keith Thomas also suggests that early modern 'laughter has a clear social dimension', and that the subject matter of laughing situations can be a revealing guide to past tensions and anxieties. He, like Bakhtin, identifies a form of radical, transformative laughter which 'sought to give a nudge in a new direction'. Yet, both he and Natalie Zemon Davis also identify a conservative laughter that 'preserv[ed] established values and condemn[ed] unorthodox behaviour'.[64]

So, was the laughter at these ceremonies radical and subversive, or was it conservative? It may not have been either exactly. The ceremonies that provoked the laughter were not profane and heretical uses of the sacraments; they were not performed with the goal of mocking or deriding anything specific. Nor were they marked by the cold, sarcastic laughter that Bakhtin suggests had supplanted Carnivalesque laughter in the nineteenth century. These ceremonies feel different precisely because of the care that participants took to imitate, as closely as possible, key sacramental ceremonies, and the privileged position of the pets which were the subjects of the celebrations. In the end, the timing and collective nature of these events suggest that they were

[61] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1984), pp. 11–12, 71.

[62] Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre*, p. 99. Umberto Eco rejects the 'revolutionary' nature of Carnivalesque laughter in his 'The Frames of Comic "Freedom"', in *Carnival!* (Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1984).

[63] Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, pp. 21, 38. Daniel Wickberg presents a model of laughter at odds with Bakhtin in *The Senses of Humor: Self and Laughter in Modern America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).

[64] Thomas, 'The Place of Laughter', p. 77; Natalie Zemon Davis, 'The Reasons of Misrule: Youth Groups and Charivaris in Sixteenth-Century France', *Past & Present*, 50 (1971), p. 65.

conducted for entertainment's sake even as they had clearly Carnivalesque overtones. Importantly, a majority of witnesses dismissed the potentially subversive nature of these ceremonies precisely because of the context in which they took place and the laughter they engendered. Thus, sometimes a dog wedding is just a dog wedding.[65]

But that does not mean that the ceremonies do not have much to tell us about late colonial Spanish popular culture. If these ceremonies were meant as social commentary, one searches in vain in the testimonies for a clue as to what the participants were reacting to. There are simply no hints that the participants were parodying the Church, rejecting the Bourbon reforms, commenting on the increasing divisions between creoles and peninsular Spaniards that defined the Bourbon period or marking growing anxieties regarding the apparent breakdown of the racialised order of the colony. These ceremonies seem to have been performed as fun for fun's sake.[66] The laughter that accompanied the ceremonies need not be read as resistive, as a steam valve venting potentially revolutionary energies or as enforcing compliance. The fact that participants gossiped about these ceremonies highlights that they were not fleeting moments. People felt compelled to talk about the ceremonies *and* the laughter that accompanied them. Our knowledge of two of the three ceremonies is wholly dependent upon people who heard about them but did not witness them. Historical laughter can provide insight into the social anxieties of the past, and the laughter surrounding these ceremonies does just that. All theories about laughter, Vic Gatrell argues, share one thing in common: the sense that 'laughter depends on the sudden and surprised recognition of *incongruity* between two mutually exclusive codes or contexts, when these are unexpectedly yoked together in verbal play, images, or behaviour'.[67] Incongruity then becomes the potential key to understanding the meaning of the laughter associated with these ceremonies. The incongruity here was no longer that created by enacting sacraments on animals, understood as distinct from and less than humans, but rather that created by enacting them on *pets*, understood as possessing human attributes and as being worthy of affection generally reserved for other humans.

Conclusions

Up to this point, the focus on the ceremonies, the dogs and the laughter has allowed for a discussion of the potential meanings for the participants, distinct

[65] The author wishes to thank one of the anonymous reviewers for this specific language.

[66] For a similar conclusion, see Ingvild Gilhus, 'Carnival in Religion: The Feast of Fools in France', *Numen*, 37: 1 (1990), p. 45.

[67] Vic Gatrell, *City of Laughter: Sex and Satire in Eighteenth-Century London* (New York: Walker, 2007), p. 166.

from Inquisitor reactions. Still, it is worth noting how these cases were adjudicated. The priest Basterrechea became the focus of the dog-wedding investigation. Two Franciscan censors charged with determining the potential heresy in such acts wrote that on the surface the dog wedding raised suspicions of vehement (*vehementi*) heresy, but concluded that it really rose only to the level of light (*levi*) heresy. They concluded that while the ceremony, although ridiculous, vain and jocose, did not induce the participants to commit other sins or heresies, it did undermine the sacrament of marriage and border on blasphemy. Basterrechea was eventually threatened with torture if he did not confess, and was sentenced to confinement in the convent of San Cosme, on the outskirts of Mexico City, for four months. The Mendieta case ends without a conclusion. The Armas transcript ends with two opinions written by Inquisitors indicating that the participants should not be charged with major heresy. Still, they recommended that major participants be given an *audiencia de cargos* in which they were to be officially charged by the Inquisition, warned never to do such a thing again and given a heavy penance to ensure that they would maintain their respect for the Church and her Holy Ceremonies, and be forced to perform an *abjuración de levi*, best defined as a public proclamation of faith, an admission of light heresy and a promise not to condone or commit further heresy.[68]

Again, a comparison with doll baptisms, in this instance in terms of Inquisitorial reactions, is insightful. In 1719 Dominican censors disregarded concerns about baptisms and weddings performed on dolls, suggesting that they were quite common. Similarly, Dominican censors dismissed the Rubios' 1736 puppet baptism as a venial sin; instead, they argued, it merited only a slight penitence because it would be misguided to expect even the grown women in attendance, much less young people, to recognise the error in what they had witnessed, as they lacked the reason to do so.[69] That Inquisitors did not excuse similar ceremonies performed on dogs suggests just how seriously they took them even as they found no significant heresy therein.

The exacting imitations of baroque ceremonies, the apparently new status of dogs and the laughter that these ceremonies engendered suggest that the participants were not as conservative, static or reactionary as previously thought. The participants, representing the Spaniards of late colonial Mexico, peninsular and creole alike, appear very modern in how they related to their pets (even in the twenty-first-century sense), and yet very early modern at the same time. The apparently new human–canine relationship evident in these

[68] 'Contra Thoribio Basterrachea', fols. 85–6; 'Contra Jose Armas', fols. 207–13. For definitions of the different types of heresy, see Henry Charles Lea, *A History of the Inquisition of Spain*, vol. 3 (London: Macmillan, 1907), pp. 123–6.

[69] 'Contra Manuel de Cordova', fol. 402.

cases, the careful attention paid to imitating baroque sacramental ceremonies, and the laughter, in combination, highlight the changing subject position of these colonials. No longer fully early modern, and clearly not fully modern even in eighteenth-century terms, their laughter was aimed neither at maintaining the social order nor at challenging it. Rather, that laughter seems to mark that the social order was subtly changing around them in ways that historians may not yet fully appreciate.

Spanish and Portuguese abstracts

Spanish abstract. A fines del siglo XVIII en la ciudad de México, colonos españoles, particularmente urbanos de las clases media y popular, realizaron un número de casamientos y bautizos de perritos (portando ropa o collares con joyas) en el contexto de los *fandangos* o fiestas de baile. Estas ceremonias no eran desafíos radicales a la ortodoxia o reacciones conservadoras frente a las importantes reformas económicas, políticas, religiosas y culturales borbónicas que emanaban de España. Empleando investigaciones inquisitoriales de estas ceremonias, el artículo explora el surgimiento de las mascotas, los significados de los inicios de la risa moderna, y las implicaciones de los componentes culturales y religiosos de las Reformas Borbónicas inspiradas por la Ilustración en el México colonial tardío.

Spanish keywords: Reformas Borbónicas, religión popular, risa, mascotas, perros, fiestas de baile

Portuguese abstract. Na Cidade do México, colonos espanhóis, particularmente membros da classe média e popular, promoveram vários casamentos e batizados de filhotes de cachorros (vestidos a rigor ou com coleiras adornadas) no contexto dos fandangos ou festas dançantes do final do século XVIII. Estas cerimônias não eram enfrentamentos radicais à ortodoxia ou reações conservadoras em virtude das significativas reformas econômicas, políticas, religiosas e culturais bourbônicas originadas na Espanha. Empregando investigações inquisitoriais destas cerimônias, este artigo explora o aumento da criação de animais de estimação, os significados da risada em tempos modernos, e as implicações no México colonial tardio dos componentes cultural e religioso das reformas bourbônicas inspiradas no Iluminismo.

Portuguese keywords: reformas bourbônicas, religião popular, risada, animais de estimação, cães, festas dançantes