Following the Seven Years War, developments worldwide and in Europe in particular eased the gravitation of other Europeans to Spanish American coasts. The 1767 Free Ports Act opened Britain's monopoly in the Caribbean; the American Revolution saw a boom in US shipping around Cape Horn, and the French Wars disrupted Europe's colonial trade; Spain licensed neutral shipping to and from Spanish America – fostering a greater intermediation of its commerce by 'foreign' merchants. Piecemeal commercial legislation in Madrid did not pull British, US and Portuguese shipping (especially after the Court's move to Rio de Janeiro in 1808) over the Atlantic and the Pacific; it just reduced intermediation costs. Commerce was never 'closed' – even trade at Cádiz was never fully controlled by Spaniards – as reflected in the problems of estimating 'illegal' trade mentioned in some chapters. Foreign shipping made commerce more direct and more available via bypassing local privileged merchants, who, in collusion with royal officials, controlled the access to consumers inland – and silver exports, more importantly – in each of the ports or large cities. More direct and more frequent, rather than freer, access to exchange silver for imported consumer goods – Asian or European – improved the purchasing power of silver money and changed relative prices between tradeable and non-tradeable goods. It thus fostered the production of other export commodities in regions poorly endowed with metals, altering the leverage of local elites and colonial authorities and making commerce and politics more competitive and open. Naturally, old and new economic interests clashed over legitimacy issues when Spanish governance crumbled; indeed, regional divergence had started well before Independence. Any qualification of the outcomes of such transformations in the commerce and politics of Spanish America should take stock of the valuable empirical information presented here.

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Brianna Leavitt-Alcántara, *Alone at the Altar: Single Women and Devotion in Guatemala, 1670–1870*

(Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018), pp. xi + 283, £44.75, hb.

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Recent scholarship on gender and religion in colonial Spanish America has increasingly considered subjects and regions previously neglected. Thanks to these efforts, we are beginning to trace a more accurate picture of how the lives of the majority of women were affected when coming into close contact with the Catholic Church. By studying non-elite lay female religiosity and the ways in which it shaped local religion in Guatemala, *Alone at the Altar* represents one of these efforts. Brianna Leavitt-Alcántara uses a variety of sources in her book, yet the core of her study

relies on her analysis of 539 wills produced in 13 selected years between 1700 and 1870, in which she finds invaluable information about religious mentalities and practices. The book is divided in two parts: Part 1, with three chapters, focuses on the period between 1670 and 1770; and Part 2, also with three chapters, looks at the years between 1770 and 1870.

Chapter 1 analyses the experiences of Ana Guerra de Jesús, whose spiritual biography was published by a Jesuit priest after her death in 1713. Ana was not a cloistered nun, but rather a poor abandoned wife and mother, and yet her religious experiences were considered worthy of praise and admiration by the local church and lay community. Leavitt-Alcántara uses the life of Ana as a starting point to reconstruct the religious landscape of Guatemala City, including valuable information such as the numbers of churches, priests and brotherhoods that existed in the city. Chapter 2 explains the active promotion of the lay tertiary path for single women in the hands of the Franciscan order as a phenomenon that responded to the social and cultural context of Santiago de Guatemala. The author notes how in some instances both Franciscans and Jesuits worked together to encourage this kind of religiosity in lay women, and that Ana's spiritual biography was most likely conceived as propaganda to encourage lay women's religiosity since it provided a model of lay piety. Chapter 3 argues that non-elite, unmarried women were successful in navigating the religious landscape of Guatemala by becoming increasingly involved in the spiritual economy as pious benefactors and allies to local priests. Moreover, the author traces the ways in which these women's wills invoked feminine ideals that differed from the traditional notions of chastity and enclosure. As donors and active members of confraternities and brotherhoods, non-elite, single women shaped local religion and claimed a form of religious authority.

Part 2 opens with a brief narrative that explains the chronological divide of the book by pointing to the devastating earthquake of 1773, and the newly arrived captain-general's controversial decision to move Guatemala's capital to a new location, leaving Santiago as the old city or 'Antigua'. Chapter 4 centres on the three schools for girls that opened between 1780 and 1795 in Guatemala City, and more specifically on the role that lay women had in shaping education through engagement with enlightened ideals and Catholicism. Lay women took an active role in reforming education and expanding it to poor, mixed-race and indigenous girls. These schools sought to provide not only basic education but also training in activities that would be productive in economic terms. There was more emphasis on useful knowledge like sewing and making cigars, and less on learning music, for example.

Chapter 5 is the only one dedicated to a religious woman, Sister María Teresa Aycinena, a Carmelite nun whose mystical experiences attracted the attention of religious authorities and the political *criollo* elite in the early nineteenth century. She was a controversial figure who, through affective spirituality, gained authority and found herself in the middle of a political controversy after Independence. The author argues that Sister María Teresa's mystical experiences were interpreted as a sign of God's favour of *criollo* resistance. While the nun didn't declare political allegiance to either party, her family and her followers were involved in the independence-era political strife. Just as in Mexico, this period saw a renewal of affective piety and miraculous cults in which Sister María Teresa took the lead.

Chapter 6 considers the period after Independence, and the newly created devotional opportunities that allowed non-elite, single women to take a leading role in rebuilding the Church. The promotion of a Marian feminine ideal of sexual purity and the dramatic decline of confraternities presented challenges for working-class women, yet the prominent role that they took in battling anti-clerical legislation granted them moral status and spiritual authority. The book ends with a brief epilogue that recounts the political changes that Guatemala has undergone in the years between the 1865 fall of the conservative government and the present, highlighting the ways in which political changes have affected the religious landscape of Guatemala and the options that single women have found in the Church.

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Stafford Poole, *Our Lady of Guadalupe: The Origins and Sources of a Mexican National Symbol, 1531–1797*

(Tucson, AZ: Arizona University Press, revised edition, 2017), pp. x + 346, $35.00, pb.

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The story of the apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico is now legendary. In December 1531, the Virgin appeared to Juan Diego three times at Tepeyac, a hill outside Mexico City. She instructed him to ask Archbishop Juan de Zumárraga to construct a temple to her there. To prove her favour, the Virgin gave Juan Diego flowers and even a beautiful image of herself painted on his cloak. In recognition of this miracle, Zumárraga and countless generations of Mexicans afterwards venerated Guadalupe with special fervour.

Stafford Poole's revised edition of *Our Lady of Guadalupe* dismantles this traditional narrative by meticulously analysing the veracity of the available written evidence. Such rigour, he states, corrects the tendency of writers like Virgil Elizondo who believe that faith and tradition should prevail over historical accuracy, thus opening 'the way for extravagant interpretations … without any need to prove them' (p. 11). His study convincingly shows that the accepted version of Guadalupe's apparition developed over time from unsubstantiated oral history, hopeful interpretation and pious fraud.

Much of the book remains the same as the 1995 edition. The additions – some recent historiography and a few new sources such as some *anales* (annals) (pp. 55–6) and the *Códice de 1548* (p. 179) – do not change the work appreciably. As in the first edition, the study's strength in the critical analysis of these primary accounts of the apparition is most evident in two key periods.

For the sixteenth century, Poole examines *anales*, *códices* (codices) and *relaciones* (testimonials) cited by other studies in support of the Guadalupan