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Figure 1. El Greco, *The Vision of Saint John on Patmos,* ca. 1580–1585. Oil on canvas, 236 × 118 cm. Photo: Courtesy of Museo de Santa Cruz, Toledo.

Image and apparition

Spanish painting of the Golden Age and New World popular devotion

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In the complex development of the iconography of the Immaculate Conception, there is a crucial moment when the devotional image is presented as the plastic materialization of a vision, namely the one described in the twelfth chapter of the Apocalypse: "A great sign appeared in the sky: a Woman! the sun envelopes her, the moon is under her feet and twelve stars crown her head."[1] What follows is not meant to reopen the debate on the historical, doctrinal, or dogmatic features of this biblical adaptation; rather, it is to attempt an in-depth analysis of its effects on modes of representation. The rapport between "image" and "vision" will be discussed in three different contexts: the rhetoric of Spanish painting of the Golden Age, the role of paintings and engravings in the diffusion of mystical visions in the New World, and finally, the survival of the vision/image rapport in the vernacular religious art of Latin America.

1. Picture and vision in Spanish painting of the Golden Age

When El Greco painted *The Vision of Saint John on Patmos* around 1580, the iconography of the Immaculate Conception was far from being completely formed (fig. 1).[2] The most important characteristic of this picture is the half-figure of Saint John in the bottom left corner of the foreground. This position is very significant because the perceptive habits of Western spectators dictate that the picture be read from left to right. Consequently the spectator is invited to look at the vision through the eyes of Saint John; by the same token, Saint John himself is presented as an "integrated" viewer. He is, therefore, an ambivalent figure because of his dual status as a spectator and as the "medium" of the vision he—and we—see.[3] In this respect, it is important to note that in the late sixteenth century the Immaculate Virgin was viewed both as the major component of Saint John's vision at Patmos and as an elaborate pictorial metaphor designed to emphasize her immaculate state as one who, unlike mortals, was not created in sin. Thus, the proponents of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception often employed the metaphor of the Virgin as a "divine painting," created by "The Divine Artisan":

> The Conception of the Virgin [is] an image both artificial and made by the hand of the celestial painter.
> *(La Concepcíon de la Virgen* [es] *imagen fabricada y hecha por las manos del divino y celestial pintor.)*[4]

or:

> In the mind of that supreme painter, God, I was conceived eternally.
> *(En la mente de aquel supremo pintor Dios, fuy yo ab eterno concebida.)*[5]

In this context, the most significant document is probably the Baroque tract by Francisco Soriano of 1616, in which the Immaculate Conception is seen as the fruit of a metaphorical act of pictorial creation that, in quite transparent terms, replaces the carnal act: "God took the brush of divine wisdom and thrust it inside the shell of his almightyness."[6] El Greco's painting proposes a complex relationship between

I thank Francesco Pellizzi and Cynthia Elmas for editing and translating this manuscript, and my wife Anna for her collaboration. The first part of this article is developed in my book, *Painting and Visionary Experience in Spanish Art* (London, in press).

1. See Aug. M. Lepicier, *L'Immaculée Conception dans l'art et l'iconographie* (Spa, 1956).

2. See M. Levi D'Ancona, *The Iconography of the Immaculate Conception in the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance*, Monographs on Archaeology and Fine Arts, vol. 7 (New York, 1957), and S. Stratton, "La Inmaculada Concepcíon en el Arte Español," *Cuadernos de Arte e Iconografía*, 1 (1988): 3–127.

3. See the illuminating analysis by David Freedberg of Lucas Cranach's painting of Frederick the Wise adoring the Virgin (1517) in *The Power of Images* (Chicago, 1989), pp. 297–298.

4. Pedro de Ona, "Primera Parte de las Postrimerías del Hombre" [Madrid, 1903], in *Los Sermones y el Arte*, ed. María del Pilar Dávila Fernández (Valladolid, 1980), p. 98.

5. César Calderari, "Conceptos scripturales sobre el magnificat," [Madrid, 1600], trans. Jaime Rebullosa, in Stratton 1988, p. 36.

6. Fr. Soriano, "Sermón predicado en el Convento de San Francisco de Granada, en la fiesta de la Inmaculada Concepción de la Virgen, Nuestra Señora" [Granada, 1616], in Dávila Fernández 1980, p. 126: "*Tómo Dios el pincel de su divina sabiduría, y lo entró en la concha de su omnipotencia.*"

Figure 2. Diego Rodríguez de Silva Velázquez, *The Immaculate Conception,* ca. 1618. Oil on canvas, 135 × 102 cm. Photo: Courtesy of The National Gallery, London.

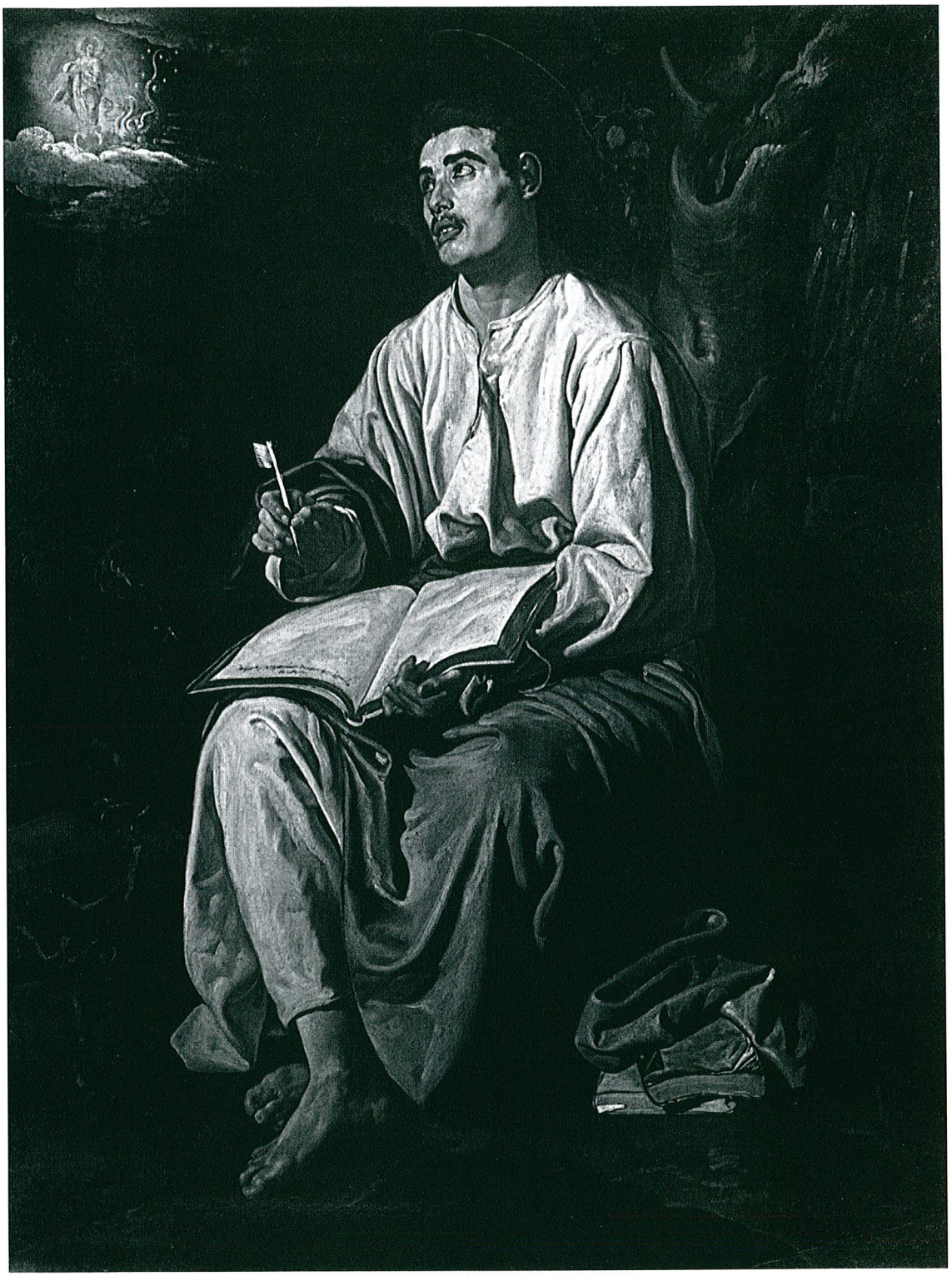

Figure 3. Diego Rodríguez de Silva Velázquez, *The Vision of Saint John the Evangelist on the Island of Patmos*, ca. 1618. Oil on canvas, 135 × 102 cm. Photo: Courtesy of The National Gallery, London.

picture and vision. The viewer sees a picture by El Greco representing a vision that is in turn an image created by the "divine brush."[7]

A later example further illustrates the range of concerns that sprung from the relation between picture and vision in the Spanish Golden Age. It is an early work by Diego Rodríguez de Silva Velázquez—*Saint John the Evangelist on the Island of Patmos* (circa 1618)—which, although well known to art historians, has only received little attention. The picture is usually described as the somewhat traditional work of a young student still influenced by Francesco Pacheco's teaching (fig. 3).[8] Yet already it seems to reveal one of the major characteristics of all of Velázquez's oeuvre, which is its inclination to metapictorial reflection. Here, in fact, the relationship between vision and picture is subject to an obvious work of interpretation. The painting focuses on the figure of the Evangelist who, being inspired, lifts his eyes toward the vision that rises in the upper left-hand corner. There, the woman of the Apocalypse, the *mulier amicta sole,* is attacked by the seven-headed dragon.

This iconography is not new; it was a new elaboration of a theme that had been widely diffused in the Netherlands, of which Velázquez was probably cognizant through engravings. If one compares this painting with its probable models, however, Velázquez's innovations become quite evident.[9]

An engraving by Jan Sadeler, for example, is divided by a strong diagonal: the right half encloses the visionary and the left half shows the vision itself (fig. 4). In Velázquez's painting, Saint John occupies practically

7. Notice the original iconography of the picture, where the crescent moon is not at the Virgin's feet but next to the symbols taken from the litanies.

8. See, however, D. Angulo Iñiguez, "Velázquez y Pacheco," *Archivo Español de Arte*, 23 (1950); J. Brown, *Velázquez, Painter and Courtier* (London, 1986), pp. 25ff.; and especially J. F. Moffitt, "Ut Pictura Sermones. Homiletic Reflections of Velázquez's Religious Imagery," *Arte Cristiana*, 75 (1987): 295–306.

9. Brown 1986, p. 25 and pl. 32.

Figure 4. Jan Sadeler, *Vision of Saint John on Patmos,* ca. 1590. Engraving. Photo: Courtesy of Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

the entire picture plane, while the vision is relegated to one end; the former is monumental, and the latter is nearly unreadable. If this engraving (or perhaps a similar one) is considered the point of departure for Velázquez, one may reasonably wonder what, indeed, led him to make such noticeable changes. An answer to this question immediately presents itself: Velázquez reduced the vision because he developed it in another related painting (fig. 2). Fortunately, both of these paintings—originally in the Carmelite church of Seville—are now in the National Gallery in London;[10] there, one may easily contemplate them together, just as Velázquez must have initially intended.

I do not know of any other case where the vision of Saint John at Patmos and the Immaculate Conception are represented in pendant paintings. It cannot be explained without considering Velázquez's interest in double representations, which is already evident in his early years in Seville and produced famous achievements later on.[11]

The London "diptych" probably derives from Velázquez's confrontation with what must be recognized as one of the biggest problems of figure painting in his time: the relationship, that is, between "vision" and "picture." His diptych is a double work whose theme is actually the "passage" from one kind of representation to the other.

In one of the paintings Saint John holds his pen in the air as he looks at a vision appearing among the clouds. On his knees is an open book, in which two written lines appear at the top of the right page; the rest of the page, as well as the left page, is blank. These pages are definitely those of the twelfth chapter of the Apocalypse: "A great sign appeared in the sky: a Woman."

Saint John's suspended gesture refers to himself. The viewer sees the visionary act that interrupts the writing of the text. What is important in this picture is not the written text (the open book merely suggests the momentary interruption of the act of writing), nor even the vision (it is so tenuously indicated that no viewer could decipher it). What is stressed here is the "act of vision" itself and its "medium," Saint John. His physical traits are extremely individualized, and his facial expression, with mouth open and eyes turned toward the sky, is rhetorically emphasized.

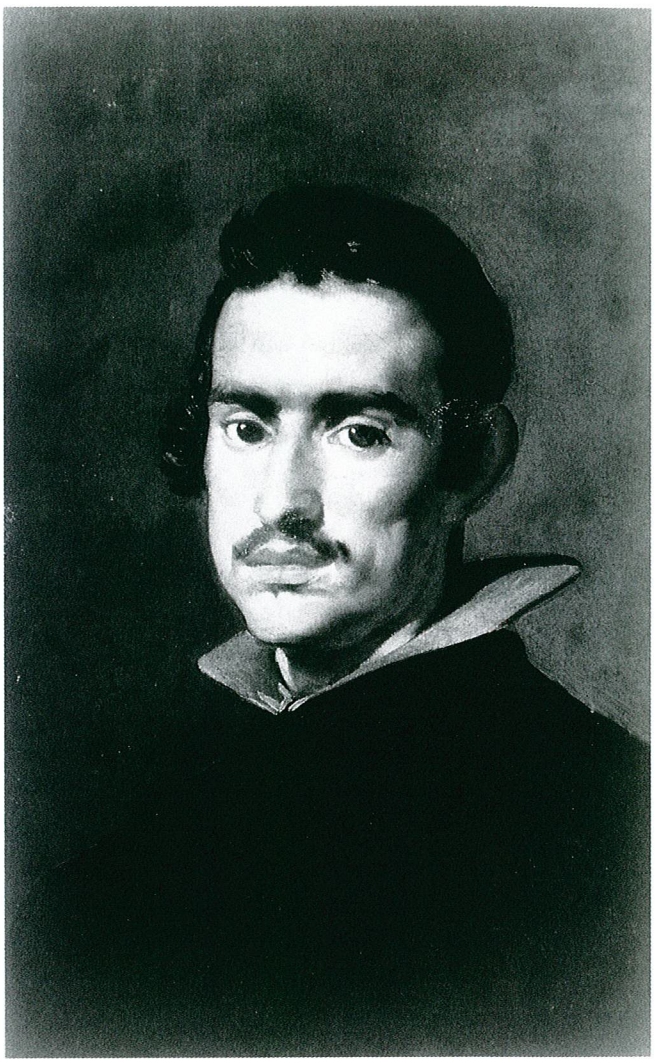

Figure 5. Diego Rodríguez de Silva Velázquez, *Self Portrait*, ca. 1623. Oil on canvas, 56 × 39 cm. Photo: Courtesy of Museo del Prado, Madrid.

Pacheco, Velázquez's master and Seville's highest authority on Christian iconography, insisted that John at Patmos be shown as an old man.[12] How can the liberties his young student took with this figure be explained? An explanation becomes possible if one compares the London painting of Saint John with an early self-portrait in the Prado (fig. 5).

The resemblance between the two models has been often discussed, but strangely, no one has ever asked why Velázquez chose to represent himself with the

10. See N. MacLaren and A. Braham, *The Spanish School. National Gallery Catalogues* (London, 1970).

11. I am referring to the *bodegones*, above all, such as Velázquez's *Christ in the House of Mary and Martha* (circa 1618) in the National Gallery of London. These are discussed in V. Stoichita, *L'instauration du tableau. Métapeinture à l'aube des Temps Modernes* (Paris, 1993), pp. 21–27.

Figure 6. Diego Rodríguez de Silva Velázquez, *Las Meninas*, 1656. Oil on canvas, 3.21 × 2.81 cm. Photo: Courtesy of Museo del Prado, Madrid.

traits of Saint John on Patmos.[13] It is difficult to give a precise answer to this question, but one can at least affirm that Velázquez, in relation to his Flemish models, accentuated the typology of "the visionary" subject surprised in the moment of generating a "representation." Sight (the vision) interrupts—and in the next moment provokes—the representation. Velázquez dealt with a similar situation thirty years later in the painting one could call his artistic manifesto: *Las Meninas* (fig. 6).

If, as Michel Foucault said, *Las Meninas* can qualify "as a representation of classical representation,"[14] then the diptych in London can be thought of as a representation of a religious, indeed, visionary representation. In spite of inherent differences between the two works, the most important elements of the thematization of the representational act are present in both of them: the gaze aimed at the model, the suspension of the hand, the frozen act of representation (scriptural in the *Saint John*, pictorial in *Las Meninas*), the play between the concealment and unveiling of the content of the vision, and the direct presentation of the objects surrounding the figure (in one case, brush, palette, upturned canvas, and in the other, a feather pen and a white page). But the differences are also

12. Fr. Pacheco, *Arte de la Pintura* [1649], ed. B. Bassegoda i Hugas (Madrid, 1990), p. 672: "*A la isla de Patmos . . . padecío grandes trabajos y tuvo admirables ilustraciones y revelaciones y escribió el Apocalipsis. En todas estas historias se ha de pintar anciano y venerable.*"

13. Most recently in A. Domínguez Ortiz, A. E. Pérez Sánchez and J. Gallego, *Velázquez*, exh. cat. (Prado, Madrid, 1990), pp. 90–92 (with anterior bibliography).

14. M. Foucault, *Les mots et les choses* (Paris, 1966) pp. 19–31. See also V. Stoichita, "Imago Regis. Kunsttheorie und königliches Porträt in den Meninas von Velázquez," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 49 (1986): 165–189.

significant: the first concerns the unmediated presence of the artist-painter in the midst of his representation (in *Las Meninas*) instead of his "masked" self-representation (Velázquez as Saint John) in the London diptych. Then there is the difference that concerns the object of contemplation: "reality" in *Las Meninas*, and "heaven" in the London diptych. Finally, in *Las Meninas* Velázquez's metapictorial meditation translates itself into the use of a system of frame-forms, such as the famous mirror, whereas in *Saint John* the adopted solution is the framing of the vision through a process of redoubling and amplification.

The *Immaculate Conception*, pendant of *Saint John*, is, in fact, "vision" turned into "picture." Seen together, the two canvases were meant to give evidence that the "great sign" of the Apocalypse (the vision of Saint John) had transformed itself into an image, or, more precisely, a picture. The distance between the vision and the picture could not have been emphasized more sharply, and it took the *ingenio* of a Velázquez to arrive at such a solution. The framing of the "great sign" is equivalent to a process of visual and conceptual clarification: the Virgin emerges from the clouds that envelop the apocalyptic woman—the sign becomes an image. One could even say that Velázquez, with this transformation, had been able to stage the entire problematic of the rapport between the apocalyptic vision and the new image of devotion (the Immaculate Conception).[15] The attentive spectator has the privilege to witness indirectly the manufacture of an image: this actually takes place in the interstice that separates one panel from the other.[16] The painting of the *Immaculate Conception* fills up, as it were, the white page void on which the Evangelist has not had the time to write but two lines: "a great sign appeared in the sky." The great painting is the hypotyposis of this hidden text: "A Woman! the sun envelopes her, the moon is under her feet and twelve stars crown her head."[17] If, in the panel of Saint John, one sees only the "sign," then in that of the *Immaculate*, one sees its description turned into a picture. The written text is amplified in the pictorial image; the feather pen cedes its place to the brush; and the painted canvas replaces the white page.

2. Vision and image in New World devotion

The relationship between mystical vision and pictorial image is, however, ambivalent. If visions engender pictures, then pictures in turn can provoke visions. More often than not, Western mystics compared their visions to preexisting artistic images.[18] The movement from the painted image of the Immaculate Conception to its reiterated apparition (inverse to what has been analyzed above) concerns the cult and function of sacred images, as well as their rapport with the collective imagination. One can easily follow it within the framework of the acculturation

15. It is necessary to realize the fact that the two paintings by Velázquez barely follow the formation in 1616 of the *Real Junta de la Inmaculada Concepción*, which had to fight for the establishment of its dogma. In theory, Pacheco's text on the iconography of the Immaculate Conception (575–577) could not be more precise: he establishes a rapport of dependence between "the painting" of the Immaculate Conception and "the vision" of Saint John, and he speaks (in terms of pictorial technique) of the "path" one must take to transform the "mysterious" apparition in "painting." This text is necessary as a theoretical accompaniment of Velázquez's practical bearing:

> *Esta pintura, como saben los doctos, es tomada de la misteriosa mujer que vio San Juan en el cielo, con todas aquellas señales; y, así, la pintura que sigo es la más conforme a esta sagrada revelación del evangelista . . . : vestida del sol, un sol ovado de ocre y blanco, que cerque toda la imagen, unido dulcemente con el cielo; coronado de estrellas . . . ; las estrellas sobre unas manchas claras formadas al seco de purísimo blanco, que salga sobre todos los rayos; . . . debaxo de sus pies, la luna que, aunque es un globo sólido, tomo licencia para hacello claro, transparente sobre los países; por lo alto, más clara y visible la media luna con las puntas abaxo. Se no me engaño, pienso que he sido el primero que ha dado más majesdad a estos adornos, a quien van siguiendo los demás.*

See also Moffitt 1987, pp. 295–299.

16. Here I refer to the imperative, which is the norm in the literature of the period, of the "prudent reader" as opposed to the "vulgar reader."

17. See P. Fontainer, *Les figures du discours* [1821 and 1827] (Paris, 1968), p. 390: "*L'Hypotypose peint les choses d'une manière si vive et si énergique, qu'elle les met en quelque sorte sous les yeux, et fait d'un récit ou d'une description, une image, un tableau, ou même une scène vivante.*" In this context, one will benefit from reading B. Gracian's writing on "*agudeza por semejanza*" and on "*ingeniosas transposiciones*" in *Agudeza y arte del ingenio* [1642], ed. E. Correa Calderón (Madrid, 1969), vol. 1, pp. 114, 179ff. The problem of the initial linking of the two pictures remains unsolved. Today, the National Gallery in London exhibits the *Immaculate Conception* on the left and the *Vision of Saint John* on the right. In this scheme, the viewer is asked to read from the picture (left) toward the vision (right). Conversely, M. A. Asturias and P. M. Bardi in *Velázquez*, Classici d'Arte Rizzoli (Milan, 1981), propose the opposite: the first image is the *Saint John* (left), and the second, or resultant, image is the *Immaculate Conception*.

18. See E. Benz, *Die Vision* (Stuttgart, 1969), pp. 311ff., 489ff.; S. Ringbom, "Devotional Images and Imaginative Devotions," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 73 (1969): 159–170; David Freedberg 1989 (see n. 3), pp. 161ff., 283ff.; H. Belting, *Bild und Kult* (Munich, 1990), pp. 457ff.

process that was taking place at that same time in the Spanish-American colonies.

On 9 December 1531, the Virgin appeared to an Indian peasant named Juan Diego as he climbed the hill of Tepeyac, at the foot of which stands today the church dedicated to the Virgin of Guadalupe, in northern Mexico City. The Virgin ordered the Indian to carry a message to the bishop Zumárraga: a temple should be built at this site so that she could look after and protect the Indians. The bishop refused to believe the story and asked for a "sign." After several new apparitions, the miracle finally took place: the Virgin ordered Juan Diego to climb to the top of the hill and gather the roses growing there among the rocks. He obeyed and offered the roses to the Virgin, who touched them. Juan Diego then took these roses to the bishop, wrapped in his *ayate* (an Indian cloth made from the fiber of the maguey agave plant). When he opened the bundle in front of Zumárraga, the image of the Virgin appeared, imprinted on the fabric exactly as it can be seen today, hanging above the altar of Guadalupe (fig. 7). This was the birth of one of the two national emblems of Mexico.[19]

This foundation myth does not differ greatly from other numerous tales of visions and of the origin of miraculous images. It also contains, however, certain special traits. A particularly striking aspect of most of the later representations of the Virgin of Guadalupe is that they show in the center an Immaculate Conception (that is, a *mulier amicta sole*, with her feet on the crescent moon) (figs. 8–9); four cartouches in the corners relate the most prominent moments of the transformation of the vision into a miraculous image, while the central figure unequivocally presents itself as the result of this transposition.

The development of the legend of Our Lady of Guadalupe is too well known to be recounted in detail here.[20] I would like, however, to underscore some important points in the context of the present discussion. The most authoritative studies have emphasized that the apparitions of the Virgin of Guadalupe took place on the site of the former

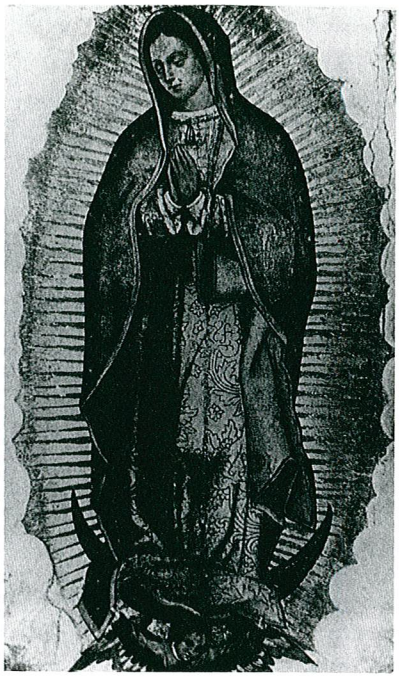

Figure 7. *Our Lady of Guadalupe,* Sanctuary of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mexico City.

sanctuary of the ancient Mexican mother goddess, Tonantzin.[21] This is not surprising, as the phenomenon of replacing ancient divinities with new ones is universal. One aspect of this particular substitution remains strange, however. On the one hand, it evoked the name, already quite famous in the sixteenth century, of the Virgin of Guadalupe, from Spanish Extremadura (fig. 10). Previously known as the Romanesque "Black Virgin," she had herself undergone several transformations, due to secular devotion.[22] On the other hand, the resultant image (the Mexican *Virgen de Guadalupe*) presents itself as a version of the Immaculate Conception. The legend of this miraculous Mexican figure is the result of a double transposition: the name of the Virgin was adopted from that of an old devotional image in the mother country, while the added iconography of the Immaculate Conception was a product of the Spanish Counter-Reformation.

The process of this double borrowing was undoubtedly slow and laborious. Between 1531 (the

19. The other symbol of Mexico is, of course, the Aztec emblem of the eagle perched on a cactus and fighting a snake.

20. See J. Amaya, *La madre de Dios, Génesis e historia de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe* (Mexico City, 1931); S. Marti, *La Virgen de Guadalupe y Juan Diego* (Mexico City, 1972); J. Lafaye, *Quetzalcoatl y Guadalupe. La formación de la conciencia nacional en México* (Mexico City, 1974), pp. 207ff.; S. Gruzinski, *La Guerre des images* (Paris, 1990), pp. 152ff.

21. Lafaye 1974, pp. 295ff.

22. See F. G. Rubio, *Historia de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe* (Barcelona, 1929).

Figure 8. Antonio Vallejo, *Our Lady of Guadalupe*, 1782. Oil on canvas. Parish church of Montemolín, Badajoz.

Figure 9. Antonio Vallejo, *Our Lady of Guadalupe*, detail.

year of Juan Diego's vision) and 1648 (the first appearance of a text written by the lawyer Miguel Sánchez, concerning the origin of the canonical Mexican image), a veritable battle for the supremacy of one or the other form took place.

Around 1600, tens of thousands of small prints of the Spanish Virgin of Guadalupe were commercialized in Latin America, mostly by the proud Hieronymites of Extremadura.[23] The Franciscans, devotees of the "new" Immaculate Conception, however, thought that whoever had concocted the story of the apparition of the Extremaduran Virgin in Mexico should have been publicly flogged.[24] Yet sources also speak of a Mexican atelier directed by Pedro de Gante, a Franciscan, which would have mass-produced images of Juan Diego's Virgin under the aspect of the Immaculate Conception.[25] By 1648, the "immaculist" tendency had won out: Miguel Sánchez's tract, entitled "Imagen de la Virgen María Madre de Dios de Guadalupe milagrosamente aparecida en México, celebrada en su historia con la profecía del capítulo doze del Apocalipsis," demonstrated that the vision of Juan Diego was indeed that of the Immaculate Virgin under the aspect of the "Great Sign" of the Apocalypse. One year later, an account in Nahuatl, attributed to Doctor Lasso de la Vega, established the myth and image among the indigenous people of Central Mexico. The role of these images in the creation of the myth of the Virgin of Guadalupe was revealed in 1779 by Juan Bautista Muñoz, in his "Memorias del Nuevo Mundo":

> This is how fables are born. A painter, for example, depicts Our Lady of Guadalupe on the hill with a faithful follower at her feet. A simple Indian, seeing this painting, will believe that the Virgin appeared to the devotee. Another hears the news and spreads it. From there, and through successive additions, a complete story is created. That is how myths are born.[26]

The most authoritative studies have shown recently that the legend of the *mulier amicta sole* who appeared to the peasant Juan Diego in 1531, developed through such a slow process, culminating in Sánchez's definitive formulation of 1648.[27]

23. Lafaye 1974, pp. 322–323.

24. Lafaye 1974, p. 329.

25. See Servando Teresa De Mier, *Memorias* (1822) and *Apología del dr. Mier* (Mexico City, 1946), vol. 1, p. 65; and Lafaye 1974, p. 362. See also L. Gómez Canedo, *Evangelización y conquista: Experiencia franciscana en Hispano-américa* (Mexico City, 1977), and, concerning the rapport between Spanish and Mexican devotion of the Virgin of Guadalupe, see Sebastián García, O. F. M., "Guadalupe de Extremadura: su proyección americana," *Guadalupe*, 713 (1991): 23–38, and A. Álvarez Álvarez, "Guadalupe: dos imágenes bajo una advocación," in *Guadalupe: Siete siglos de fe y de cultura* (Madrid, 1993), pp. 523–533. I thank Father Sebastián García of the monastery of Guadalupe for having informed me of these two articles.

26. My translation of this passage in Lafaye 1974, p. 367, is approximate:

> *Tales son los modos como nacen las fábulas, y con otros semejantes se les va dando cuerpo. Un pintor por ejemplo, representa a Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe en su cerro del Tepeyac con un devoto a sus pies orando. Ofreciósele a un indio simple si la Virgen se habría aparecido a su devoto. Otro, que oyó la especie, la propaló afirmativamente de ahí, cunciendo la voz, y añadiéndose cada día nuevas circunstancias, vino a componerse la narración entera. Éste es uno de tantos modos cómo pudo empezar el cuento.*

27. See recently, S. Gruzinski, *La Colonisation de l'imaginaire. Sociétés indigènes et occidentalisation dans le Mexique espagnol: XVIe–XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1988), pp. 239–297.

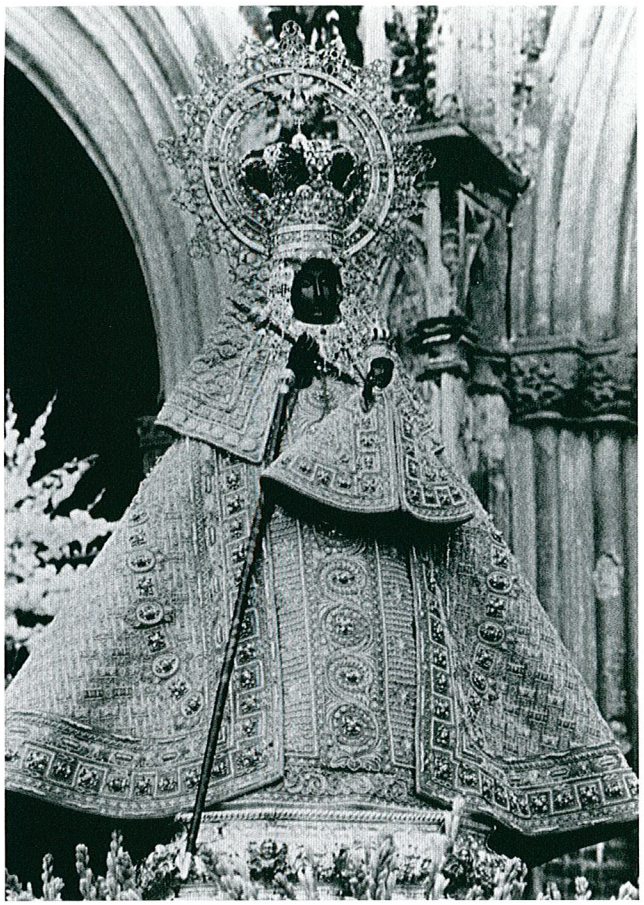

Figure 10. *Our Lady of Guadalupe,* monastery of Guadalupe, Spain.

There are other facts, however, that need to be taken into consideration. The first concerns the necessity of providing an adequate cult image for the Indians and mestizos. In the battle of images that ensued, the strongest of the *mulier amicta sole* won out. But the process of mythical stratification cannot be overemphasized: sacred site of the Indians, name of the archaic Black Virgin, and final image of the Apocalyptic Lady. The three elements of place, name, and image converge in one of the most significant examples of acculturation.

In this context, the name of the Indian shepherd who had the vision that founded the cult and assisted the miraculous fabrication of its image is equally important. It is a double name: that of the visionary of the Apocalypse, John, and that of the patron saint of Spain, Diego.[28] The symbolic correspondence between the apostle John and his Indian namesake was already noticed by Miguel Sánchez: the first man to "see" the heavenly original of the (Mexican) Madonna of Guadalupe was actually John, of Book Twelve of the Apocalypse.[29] Juan Diego's vision is an "archetypal" repetition of a hierophant, and it concerns "a new sky and a new earth."[30]

The objective here is not to insist on all the eschatological implications of the myth of the Virgin of Guadalupe. What is of interest, rather, is that in the elaboration of the Mexican national image, we witness a "recycling" of visionary imagination. As shown above, the Spanish painters of the Counter-Reformation broached the very complex problems of its representation: an El Greco or a Velázquez reflected on ways to effect a translation between vision and image. Popular piety presented another important problem of representation in that the "recycling" of an image happened in several stages. If the problem of painters was the rapport between vision and image (or picture), the metabolism of popular devotion integrated the two terms in a much more complex "rhythm," that is, in the oscillating alternance from vision to image, and vice versa. More specifically, the "Great Sign" of the Apocalypse led to the creation of an image (the Immaculate Virgin), which, after prevailing in a struggle with other possible forms, gave place to that of the new vision of the new *John*, an Indian. The result is a miraculous image that, in turn, generates other visions.

3. The enduring relation between image and vision in popular devotion

The value of such a "recycling" of the image can be illustrated by a few examples. The Virgin of Guadalupe, once invented, projected through the centuries the healing power of an image periodically tested by national calamities of which it was the sole remedy, or by personal misadventures.[31] It must be emphasized, however, that the visual traces of her interventions (commemorative engravings, ex-voto) are somewhat ambiguous.[32] For example, the sign that appears in the

28. Lafaye 1974, p. 387.

29. Lafaye 1974, p. 341.

30. See M. Eliade, *Le mythe de l'éternel retour: archétypes et répétition* (Paris, 1969); and Lafaye 1974, p. 389.

31. See Freedberg 1989, pass.

32. All the examples that follow are taken from the Musée Royal des Beaux-Arts, Antwerp, *America: Bruid van de zon. 500 jaar Latijns-Amerika en de Lave Landen*, exh. cat. (Antwerp, 1992), pp. 356–365.

Figure 11. Jose de Ibarra and Baltazar Troncoso, *Our Lady of Guadalupe Appears During the Epidemic of Matlazahuatl in 1737*, 1743. Copper engraving, 26.8 × 18 cm. Photo: Courtesy of Museo de la Basilica de Santa Maria de Guadalupe, Mexico City.

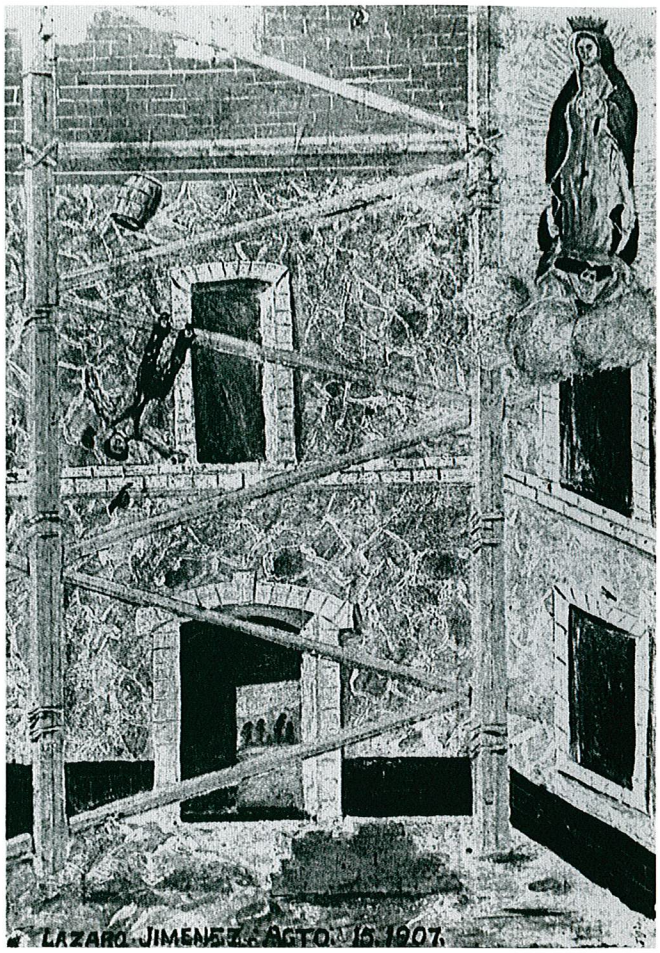

Figure 12. *Ex-voto of Lázaro Jiménez*, 1907. Oil on copper, 25.6 × 35 cm. Photo: Courtesy of Museo de la Basilica de Santa Maria de Guadalupe, Mexico City.

sky and marks the end of the epidemic of Matlazahuatl in 1737 is simultaneously a vision and a figurative object (fig. 11), as is that which saved Lázaro Jiménez in 1907 (fig. 12).

In most ex-votos, the placement of the divine intervention is highly significant. In the home of Magdalena Pérez, a copy of the Virgin of Guadalupe hangs on one of the walls of the bedroom, while a landscape is hung on another wall (fig. 13). Here images of different value are seen: it is not the "picture" that heals the child but the lineage of the "Great Sign."

The ex-voto of Mateo Ponse of 1878 is even more interesting in this context, in spite of its poor quality (fig. 14). The inscription says that Mateo, having fallen ill in the Guadalajara prison, appealed to the Virgin of Guadalupe, who saved him. In this prison, as can be seen, each cell was provided with a crucifix. But for Mateo, this was obviously not sufficient, because he was moved to pray in order to provoke the apparition

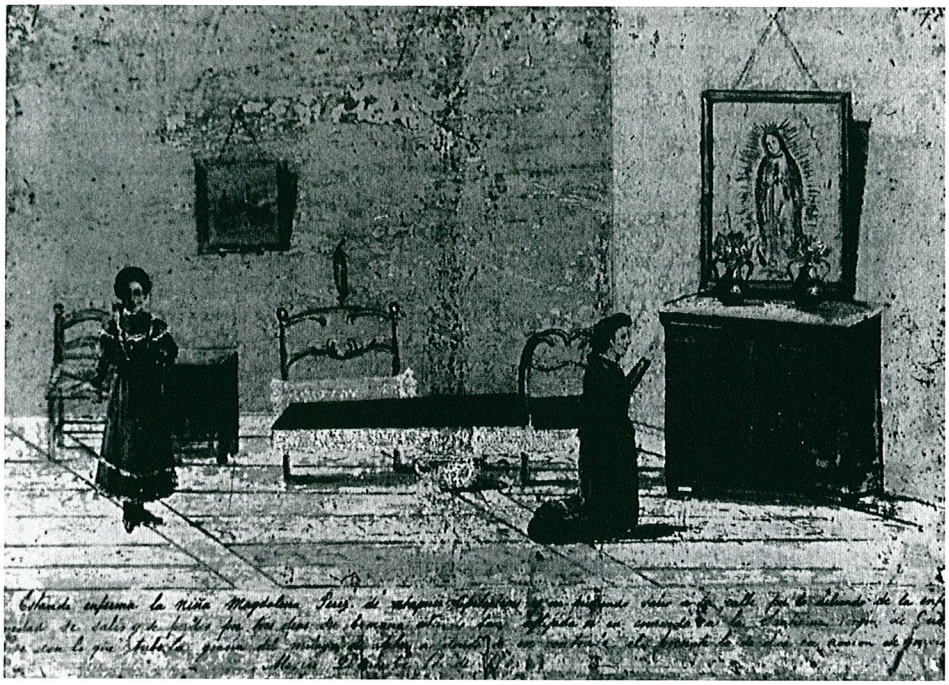

Figure 13. *Ex-voto of Magdalena Pérez*, 1908. Oil on copper, 25.5 × 35.5 cm. Photo: Courtesy of Museo de la Basilica de Santa Maria de Guadalupe, Mexico City.

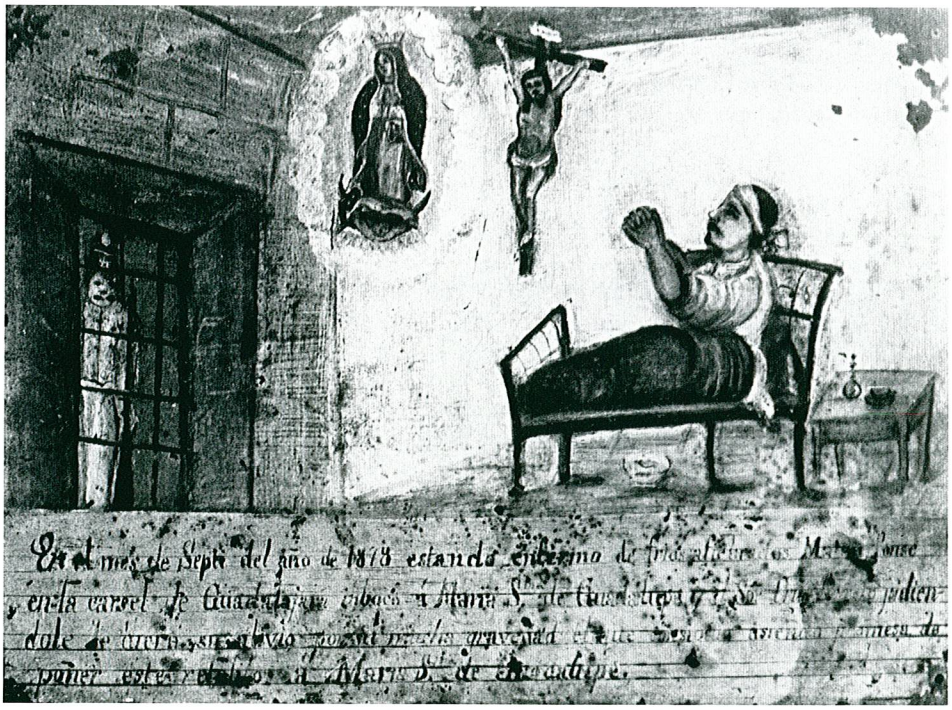

Figure 14. *Ex-voto of Mateo Ponse*, 1878. Oil on copper, 25.6 × 35 cm. Photo: Courtesy of Museo de la Basilica de Santa Maria de Guadalupe, Mexico City.

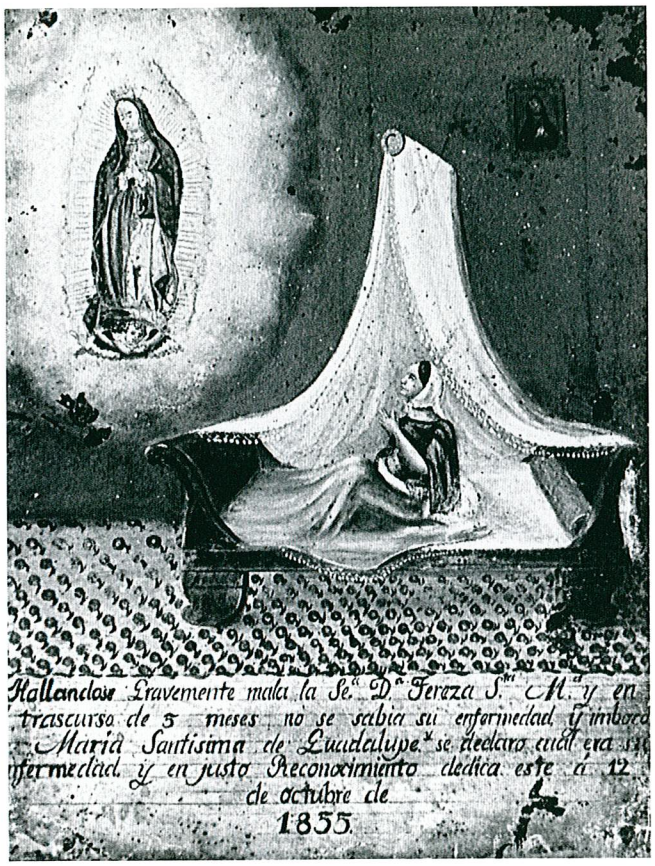

Figure 15. *Ex-voto of Teresa Santa Maria,* 1855. Oil on copper, 32.9 × 25.3 cm. Photo: Courtesy of Museo de la Basilica de Santa Maria de Guadalupe, Mexico City.

of the National Virgin. And just so, in the ex-voto, the great power for immediate action of this image/vision becomes visible as proof of Mateo's good reasoning.

The discrepancy between vision and devotional image is so recurrent in Mexican ex-votos that it is difficult to attribute it to chance. According to the inscription of her ex-voto, Doña Teresa became ill for five months in 1855 without a discernible cause (fig. 15). In her bed, over which hangs the protective sign of an icon, she learned the name of her malady, thanks to the direct "intervention" of the Virgin of Guadalupe. The naive language of the text of this image makes its message not so clear: one could alternatively surmise that, by means of praying in front of the icon (which is only a symbol of a higher reality), a sign of a higher reality appears in the form codified by a long tradition.

Whatever the answer, this ex-voto clearly indicates an interesting fact: the date, 12 October, is that of the "discovery" of America. If Doña Teresa's sign of recognition, which she dedicated to the Mexican *mulier in sole*, is dated correctly on the "day of the Americas," then a symbolic rapport exists between the "uncovering" of the new land and the cyclical hierophancy of the "new skies."

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