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April 12, 2022

La Bruja Enamorada: Love Magic as a Form of Resistance in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century

Colonial Mexico

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Abstract

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This paper will focus on the complex and intersectional issues that characterize love magic in Colonial Mexico. The topics of gender, body, and race are key factors which will be examined through such lenses by means of early documents and case studies. In delving into love magic, the power of domesticity and intimacy in shaping the lives of Indigenous Women will become apparent. It will also reveal fascinating dynamics concerning the role of women in connection to colonial domination and a violent patriarchal society.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge and give my warmest thanks to Dr. Javier Villa-Flores for supervising this thesis to its completion and for all the guidance he has given me. In addition, I would like to thank the Department of Religion as a whole for supporting me throughout my college career and inspiring this project; it has been all the more touching as a first-generation student. Thank you to my committee members, Dr. Eric Reinders and Dr. Rocio Zambrana for their stimulating questions and constructive comments. Lastly, I thank my mother and my friends for devotedly supporting all my endeavors and intellectual pursuits.

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What is Love Magic?

Past lovers haunt our dreams and new lovers can turn a mundane day into a special date, but our pursuit of love was not always based on the desire for affection and companionship. Sixteenth and Seventeenth century Mexico restricted women to domestic life and forced them to center their lives around marriage and interpersonal relationships. With little control over their lives, the power of love magic would provide the illusion of autonomy. Love magic lends users the ability to repel unwanted people and attract or maintain the interest of spouses. This made it hugely popular among women to use against husbands and lovers. Wielding a “dangerous” form of influence over men generated concern over the “proper place” of women and whether access to love magic would be detrimental to established power structures. Such a display of control over men by women terrified colonial institutions such as the Church and the Spanish royal crown which revolved around patriarchal settings, leading to a strict outlawing of love magic and indigenous practices. As the old saying of women ‘being seen and not heard’ implies, the private world of domesticity and intimacy were the few corners of life where men were discouraged from participating in as it was relegated to women. Domestic life involved household chores, childrearing, and food preparation all within the realm of women’s work. However, men were considered head of the household with little acknowledgement of women’s labor. The limitations placed upon women in early modern Europe and later in Colonial Mexico would be defined by their relationships to men. Or more importantly, white men, since this demographic held the most sociopolitical power of all other groups of men. This is especially true of indigenous women, who found favoritism by and proximity to men resulted in protection and empowerment in the oppressive colonial setting. For them, love magic was not simply a practice to garner

affection from a lover but also used as a tool to manipulate fragile relationships in their favor. Their utilization of love magic was a reflection of their social status and a subversion of their political reality.

This paper will analyze the usage and prosecution of love magic by indigenous women in Colonial Mexico during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries. This is a dynamic era to examine, as both the church and the crown were concerned with repressing indigenous religious beliefs and practices in favor of Christianity. While early missionaries were hopeful in quickly converting the people of the new world, but were later faced with a challenging mission as in Mexico City (1530s), Yucatan (1561), and Oaxaca, led to disappointment and pessimism. Their oppressive regime affected black and indigenous women in a unique way as both their race and gender only intensified their precarious position as converted Christians. Indeed black and brown women became a source of contempt for their knowledge outside of Christian practices, and their subversion of gendered norms and ideals. The key to the subordination of Amerindian and Afro-descendent women lied in their cultural erasure and religious conversion—the Crown needed Christianity to justify their colonial domination of Indigenous inhabitants, while the Church relied on the Crown’s political might to outlaw non-Christian practices and force conversion among surviving native populations. For indigenous women, love magic became a popular medium to take back power from the violence of colonial patriarchy. Love magic became a popular medium to take back power from the violence of the patriarchy, yet it also served as a form of resistance to the agenda of Christianization of colonized peoples spearheaded by the Church. I will explore these dynamics through the role love magic plays among them, beginning from the nature of magic in connection to women before delving into the connection between love magic and gender, race, and religion.

A Brief Scholarship on Love Magic

Scholarship on Love Magic the last few years have centered heavily on who and why these spells were cast; mostly by analyzing witchcraft cases from both the Spanish Inquisition, or more specifically, Sixteenth and Seventeenth Colonial Mexico. By re-examining the depictions of women who practiced love magic in light of oppressive church restrictions and colonial domination. Modern scholars such as Ruth Behar and Martha Few delve into the effects of love magic on gender relations and racial dynamics established during Colonial Mexico. It points toward the understanding that indigenous women were held at different social expectations due to their racial and socioeconomic background.

Love magic, as defined by demonologist Martin Del Rio who became known for his scholarship on witchcraft, as a type of magic with three different methods of spellcasting with either two goals: “that which intends to kill the victim and that which is intended to provoke love.” Whether through food, objects, or bodily fluids, love magic places emphasis on intimacy and privacy in many ways. Bewitched food eaten in the comfort of one’s home or menstrual blood to symbolize physical touch between two bodies. Del Rio makes key observations on the ultimate end goal of these spells, which is not merely to secure a desirable relationship but to secure control over the intended victim. Magic has long been attributed to women in early modern Europe, and through colonization, such associations continued their legacy well into the society of the new world. Further exploring the development of love magic in Colonial Mexico, contemporary scholarship paints a different picture on love magic than one painted by early modern demonologists. Anthropologist Ruth Behar centers the conversation surrounding love magic around food, describing it as a substance used to nurture but also bewitch. Ensorcelled food was a symbolic and literal way for women to penetrate and control the bodies of men,

usually without their knowledge. It flips the notion of safety within domesticity on its head and reverts the position of power into a state of fear. The obedient wife the patriarchy praises is now a figure with questionable intentions, one that instilled a fear of women and their evil natures. Martha Few and Naomi Quezada, other modern scholars focused on gender and love magic, discuss similar ideas but also examined the element of resistance when it came to these bewitching acts. In turning traditionally women-led tasks such as food preparation into a source of anxiety for men, the security of the patriarchy and the subordination of women is questioned in that men are no longer safe within their own homes, nor can they trust their own spouses. Such a switch, they argue, illustrates the fragility of the patriarchy and colonial domination at large; if men, especially white men, lived in fear of love magic then colonial rule was also threatened by the continuation of indigenous practices. Indigenous women, a powerless demographic in Colonial Mexico, had become the face of witchcraft and love magic. The goal of the Crown was to establish communities that continued the beliefs and customs of Spain within the colonies by suppressing indigenous culture and exploiting their resources. Examining this clash through the lens of love magic has shed light on gender and racial issues that were enabled by the church themselves. The historian Ramon Gutiérrez explores the concept of sexual inversion and racial boundaries enacted by indigenous women. Similar to the idea illustrated by Behar of women subverting men through paranoia in their home, Gutiérrez discusses the image of lustful Native witches in a society obsessed with the sexual purity of women. A woman embracing sexual autonomy would have been branded as unnatural and a product of devilry. With the imbalanced sex ratio throughout the colonies, the rising number of mixed-blood offspring would upset the hierarchy of colonial society by blurring racial lines. In denouncing witchcraft and forbidding interracial couples, the Church and Crown policed racial boundaries to further suppress Native

practices while also preserving the existing sociopolitical order. The ramifications in reviewing the case studies by Behar and Gutierrez, the notion of unequal gender relations characterizes most of the reasoning behind the use of love magic specifically, but such reasoning is applied to witchcraft in general by other historians whom will be included later sections.

In jumping from different demonologist texts, the question of how the usage and purposes of love has changed from early modern Europe to sixteenth through seventeenth century Colonial Mexico. Indigenous women were key to dismantling and resisting the patriarchy at the time, casting spells for women in all sorts of questionable partnerships. Indigenous women existed on the outskirts the power structures of gender and race due to their powerlessness in either institution. Their social status was defined by their gender as women and their racial identity as natives. They held onto as much cultural remnants that the Spanish allowed but religion quickly became the main source of contempt. Their identities and social power were contingent on what they were not: white and male. However, their knowledge in love magic undermined both systems as it puts in allows women some semblance of control over their men rather than vice versa. Love magic was a force that subverted colonial domination from behind closed doors, regardless of whether it occurred as heavily as it was feared.

Our journey in delving into these dynamics starts with a discussion of love magic and superstition in Early Modern Europe, with close attention to how ideas surrounding love magic developed in the New World. Who were the bewitchers and who were the bewitched? Reactions to their transgressions varied based on race and class. The specifics of how love magic was practiced the symbolic meaning behind each method will also be discussed with regard to gender dynamics. The depiction of Indigenous women as witches and temptresses will be examined; what are the implications of sexual autonomy in women? Why are Indigenous women associated

with love magic and the occult? Finally, we will explore how Indigenous women magic to threaten the Church and the Crown by placing women on top.

Chapter One: Love Magic and Superstition: From Europe to the New World

The journey of beliefs outside the Church has fascinated the European imagination for centuries, resulting in bloody persecutions of those deemed as “heretics” or the quiet re-invention of pagan traditions into staple Christian holidays. This section will examine a few classic works surrounding witchcraft by scholars who will define witchcraft in various ways before delving into the relation of women and magic during early modern Europe. In the case of magic and superstition, early modern Europe was not quite as receptive to either as the publishing of Heinrich Kramer’s influential *Malleus Maleficarum* (1486) introduced a different perception of witchcraft and those who practiced it. The book cemented the idea that witchcraft and devil worship were related or even synonymous with each other. This began the shift of witchcraft merely involving other deities to directly making deals with the devil—an outsider of Christianity to actively Anti-Christian. Kramer also keenly focuses on the inclination of women toward the occult instead of men, as clearly suggested by its infamous subtitle: “A Hammer of Witches”. By deeming women as less rational and more ‘physical’ than men, witchcraft—which Kramer considers an inherently physical practice—would therefore be widely more appealing to women. The connection was further elaborated, with some skepticism, by “demonologists” such as Martin de Castañega’s *Treatise on Superstition and Witchcraft* (1529), and Pedro Ciruelo’s piece *A Treatise Reproving All Superstitions and Witchcraft* (1538), both of which discuss the relationship between female witchcraft and the devil. Lastly, examining Martin Del Rio’s work *Investigations into Magic* (1599) which will expand upon the definition of magic and give

further insight into how women became entangled in centuries-long obsession with quashing occultic practices.

In 1529, the Franciscan Martin Castañega (1511-1551) published his *Treatise on Superstition and Witchcraft* (1529), the first Spanish vernacular book on witchcraft. Published in the wake of the controversial witch trials of Pamplona (1527) and Navarre (1525-27), Castanega's tract was informed by a healthy skepticism about the existence of witchcraft.

The treatise spent considerable time examining the different forms of spells, incantations, and ointments used by women in pursuit of pragmatic goals: learn new things, gain riches, or satisfy carnal appetites. There's no discussion, however, of sabbat meetings, group sex, women flying on sticks, and similar practices described in the *Malleus Malleficarum*. In contrast to Kramer's book, all the cases discussed by Castañega emphasize the instrumental nature of witchcraft. In his eyes, women engaged in these practices because they saw no other alternative to improve their situation. In contrast to later demonologists like Pedro Ciruelo, Castanega was rather skeptical regarding the likelihood of diabolic possession and the "magic" behind healing practices. Castanega offers instead alternative explanations to rationalize the behavior of supposedly possessed or bewitched people, with reference to the afflicted person's past health history versus their current state. Castanega places emphasis on finding normal causes to strange situations before jumping to supernatural conclusions, which would allow the results of supposed love spells to be explained by normal events rather than enchanted food or spellcasting women.¹

Unfortunately, Castanega's book was overshadowed by Pedro Ciruelo's *A Treatise Reproving All Superstitions and Witchcraft* (1538). Reprinted ten times in the next two decades, Ciruelo's treatise was much less skeptical regarding magical conjurations, possessions, and

¹ See, David H. Darst, "Witchcraft in Spain", *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 123:5 (1979), p. 298-322.

bewitchments. In Ciruelo's favor, nevertheless, is his refusal to consider witchcraft as the purview of women. Rather, he points to the devil as the root of all temptation and malefice, regardless of gender. Indeed, he writes about necromancy, "To necromancy also belongs the art which the devil has taught to male or female sorcerers or witches who have made an agreement with him."²

Ciruelo defines magic as a "covenant of friendship with the devil...to ask for secret knowledge."³ The use of the word friendship implies an exchange made between the sorcerer and the devil, involving either sacrifice of food items such as bread or wine, fumigations made of herbs, or rituals to conjure his power. Regardless of how contact was established, Ciruelo notes that it requires *trust* in the Devil's power to accomplish their whims but unbeknownst to them, all the visions and "miracles" given to them are false. Bending the will of another to yourself is sinful, and thus the question of love magic arises. In casting a spell unto another person would be to have control over another's free will, which posed serious questions regarding the defiant nature of love spells. Unlike Kramer's *Malleus Maleficarum*, Ciruelo's intention throughout his treatise was focused on informing those intent on dismantling heresy and witchcraft what to be vigilant about, rather than offering detailed guides on ceremonies or other Satanic activities.

Ciruelo notes that people can practice magic in a variety of ways, whether channeling through certain objects such as special water or ground markings, precious stones (the earth) or even through fingernails (the body). What should be noted in this explanation is that these modes of interaction and connection are primarily through physical means, rather than verbal. The draw of witchcraft is that exchange is required in order for any action to occur. Like Del Rio, Ciruelo emphasized the pursuit of forbidden knowledge as one of the most important reasons to engage

² Ciruelo, Pedro. *A Treatise Reproving All Superstitions and Forms of Witchcraft*. 1977, p. 80

³ Ciruelo, *A Treatise Reproving All Superstitions and Forms of Witchcraft*, p. 53

in witchcraft. In the eyes of Ciruelo, this was an assault of the Christian covenant with God, an unequal relationship in which all knowledge belongs to Him, while the believer can only claim faith and trust God that will protect and provide as He sees fit. Hence the heinous nature of necromancy which coaxes humans to seek “secret knowledge” or actions only God can perform. By seeking this knowledge, the sorcerers must replace the covenant of baptism by friendship with the devil—the body of the practitioner serves as a battle ground for both entities.

While both Castanega and Ciruelo were at odds with Kramer’s characterization of magic and sorcery was exclusively female practices, Jesuit Martin del Rio (1551-1608) had no qualms in embracing the prosecuting mind-set of the Malleus “hammering” of women. Between 1599 and 1600, Marin del Rio published his *Investigations Into Magic* in three volumes. Famously described by scholars such as Hugh Trevor Roper as the “Catholic Malleus,” Del Rio’s work was immensely popular, going through dozens of editions in the next two centuries. By the time Del Rio published his work, the tide had turned against skeptics in Europe, as encyclopedias of witchcraft such as Jean Bodin’s *The Demonomania of Witches* (1580) and others offered detailed and thorough guides for the identification, prosecution and execution of witches. Though Martin Del Rio didn’t fully agree with Bodin and his enthusiastic followers, he shared the conviction that witchcraft was a real and present danger to Christianity.

Del Rio (1551-1608), defines love magic as a type of malefice carried out with the purpose of accomplishing either of two goals: “that which intends to kill the victim and that which is intended to provoke love.”⁴ Del Rio discusses a wide array of forms of magic, ranging from manipulation of objects, alchemy, to the use of evil spirits. Whether through food, objects, or bodily fluids, love magic places emphasis on intimacy and privacy in many ways. Bewitched

⁴ Martin del Rio, *Investigations Into Magic*, 2009, p. 121.

food eaten in the comfort of one's home or menstrual blood to symbolize physical touch between two bodies. Del Rio makes key observations on the ultimate end goal of these spells, which is not merely to secure a desirable relationship but to secure control over the intended victim. He dubs magic as simply trickery on behalf of the magician and that magic will never be able to accomplish miracles because those are only achieved by God alone.⁵ In this context, Del Rio stresses the importance for the magician to secure the help of the Devil. While Ciruelo referred to a form of covenant of friendship with Satan as an aid for malefice, Del Rio identified the presence of a pact with the Devil by word or deed, rather than the practice of harmful magic, as the source of witches' power—an idea first articulated by Kramer's *Malleus Maleficarum*.⁶ Endowed with weaker minds and fragile bodies, women emerged from Del Rio's treatise as more likely to be seduced by Satan in order to access unwarranted power over men.

As Spanish colonizers reached American lands, they brought with them the language of witchcraft and their concerns with devil worshipping, love magic, idolatry and superstition. The Christian priest Gonzalo de Balsalobre (1634-1665) was a prime example of misconstruing indigenous practices as idolatry, particularly things such as medicine and rituals. Usage of herbs to cure ailments and ceremonies to channel responses from the gods wildly mirrored condemned idolatry practices in Europe.⁷ The first missionaries were initially elated about the possibility of establishing a new church among newly converted Christians, their enthusiasm turned to bitter disappointment by the middle of the sixteenth century. The discovery of continuous idolatry and superstition was blamed on direct Satanic intervention, leading missionaries to cast Indians as active devil-worshippers. As disappointment turned into repression, "extirpators of idolatries"

⁵ Del Rio, *Investigations into Magic*, p. 121.

⁶ Kramer, *Malleus Maleficarum*, Part. II. Qn.1. Ch.2, "Of the Way Whereby a Formal Pact with Evil is Made," p. 99

⁷ Ponce, Pedro. *Hechicerías e Idolatrías Del México Antiguo*, 2008. p. 222

resorted to European demonology to explain and uproot Satan's work in the New World. Not surprisingly, the first book on diabolism written in Mexico, *Andres de Olmos's Tratado de Hechicerias*, written in Nahuatl, was based entirely on Martin de Castanega's *Treatise on Superstition*. This allowed Olmos to account for local indigenous traditions as forms of witchcraft and superstition, and to condemn female practitioners as devil-worshippers. Like de Olmos, many other extirpators borrowed freely from other demonologists in order to make sense of the New World realities. This does not imply, however, that they ignored completely the specificity of the sacrilegious ceremonies, superstitions, and rites of Amerindians.⁸

An important case in point is the work of Jacinto de la Serna (1595-1681), who strived to capture the specificity of indigenous love magic in the New World as seen in *Tratado De Las Supersticiones, Idolatrias, Hechizerias, Y Otras Costumbres De Las Razas Aborigenes De Mexico* (1629). In a striking passage, de la Serna addresses the need to learn the Native's "idolatries" and superstitions in order to refute them. While seemingly partial to the plight of Native communities—with regards to their cultural preservation—de la Serna's "ethnographic" approach was part of a long tradition of collecting and registering "superstitious" practices for a more efficient repression. But the indigenous deviant practices and spells did not quite fit the inherited models of European demonology. While De la Serna disparaged indigenous knowledge and religious practices, he also recommended a more lenient approach towards their offensive "transgressions." Amid a repressive turn towards indigenous religious practices, De la Serna made evident the need for the Church and Viceregal authorities of adopting a pragmatic tolerance, in spite of the complaints of local priests and missionaries.⁹ This interplay between tolerance and repression was especially evident in the case of love magic among indigenous

⁸ Fernando Cervantes, *The Devil in the New World*, 1995, p. 25.

⁹ Valsera, Viviana. *Guardians of Idolatry*, 2018, p. 16

women. As we will see, love magic specialists endured both a stern scrutiny as sources of danger, while also regarded feeble-minded practitioners since love magic was not seen as complicated. But before we talk about the plight of indigenous women, we need to take a detour and start with the European Context.

Chapter Two: Love Magic and the Female Body

In Early Modern Europe, women's lesser status was attributed to their bodies with emphasis on the women's natural deficiencies compared to the perfection of men. As explored previously, women were seen as predisposed to evil since they did not have the direct relationship men were said to possess with God. Thus, as the serpent did so many ages ago, women were more likely fall into temptations and be carried away with the devil to do his bidding. Love magic was born from this conception of the female sex—they are emotional, non-rational, and lustful if left unchecked by a male overseer such as a father, brother, or husband. Yet, under such tight supervision, women were still likely to be accused of seduction and other forms of manipulation against the men in their lives. However, women who pursued these forms of power were considered crafty but not quite lofty, as the realm of love magic was not considered among the more challenging or complicated forms of witchcraft such as spirit-conjuring or demonic invocations.¹⁰ *Malleus Maleficarum* sets this precedent by tying women to witchcraft solely due to their inferior nature and natural tendency for evil—one overlooked aspect of the witch-demon dynamic is the carnal relationship believed to be shared. A woman's value was rooted in her purity and chastity. Women who corrupted their bodies outside of marriage were scorned but to engage in these practices and further corrupt their soul would be

¹⁰ Lara, Irene, *Bruja Personalities: Toward a Chicana/Latina Spiritual Activism*, *Chicana/Latina Studies*, 2005, p. 18

met with the fiery wrath of the Church. Yet, the wrath of the Church was not rooted in concern with the woman's soul so much as the fate of the afflicted men who would fall under her spells.

The body of the woman was uniquely tied with a myriad of restrictions and responsibilities; ridiculed for its deficiencies but held to higher moral conduct eg. chastity, modesty, or traits attributed to the Virgin Mary as she was the standard for women's conduct. In foregoing these virtues, a woman was seen as rejecting God and Christianity as a whole. Thus, the way women inhabit their bodies was seen as a reflection of their character—those who stray from God, such as witches, were branded as lustful and promiscuous. Women's bodies were also seen as the lesser half of men, hence love magic often employed menstruation blood as an equivalent to semen and consumption of ensorcelled food akin to penetration. Spells that incited lust or love usually employed menstrual blood for this reason, and due to being seen as female semen, is also linked to fertility in many instances.¹¹ But including this, a person's hair, skin, sweat or even their articles of clothing were usually linked to their personhood as well as their autonomy—by accessing their body through these “instruments”, the spell-caster is able to directly influence the person to do their bidding. In the case of love magic during early modern Europe, marriage and intercourse as opposed to simply desiring a partner out of romantic affection. Love in early modern European cases was equated to lust or infatuation, unlike the deep or profound romance depicted in contemporary pop culture. These two emotions related to carnal relations directly involve the body with corruption of the mind, which is why love magic is perceived to be more appealing to women. Thus women, who represent the material world, can easily access emotions of the body more readily than men, or so the church assumed. The power of emotionally controlling a man is more feared than binding a man physically; one places a

¹¹ Watt, Jeffrey Love Magic And The Inquisition, *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 2006, p. 677.

strong but chaotic force into the hands of the “inferior” sex while the other simply demands from a man their time and labor. Aside from controlling the victim, earlier forms of love magic were used to manipulate the body of the caster to “maintain” love through means of preserving their beauty and youth.¹² This still contributes to the idea that a woman’s body has an influence on men, whether it is to seduce or constrain them, the end result is the same.

Love magic involves intimacy with others, and “evil” women were typically depicted as seductresses who would lead God-fearing men astray. The responsibility of emotional and physical intimacy was placed solely on women, whether it was to dress modestly to avoid provoking men or using their feminine wiles to control their husbands. Emotions were seen as a feminine trait, since it was regarded as irrational and impulsive to be controlled by them whereas men were expected to be level-headed and logical. Thus, women were more likely to be accused of witchcraft and love magic than men—it was “easier” to know if a man was under a spell because he would be more temperamental, passionate, and even obsessed with the object of their desire. The key to these cases is finding instruments used in the spell; tampered wine, cloths stained with menstrual blood, locks of hair, or anything pertaining to the physical body of the victim.¹³ Yet, not all cases were backed with substantive evidence, many were simply accusations resting on the behavior exhibited by men, oftentimes the accusers were other women.¹⁴ However, this also brings an interesting concern surrounding love magic in relation to women: if according to *Malleus Maleficarum*, men’s nature was inheritably stronger and smarter, why would a man be susceptible to manipulation and love spells? Or to women’s influence at all? This goes back to the immense culpability women were assigned in interpersonal relations—

¹² Watt, *Love magic And The Inquisition*, p. 677.

¹³ Del Rio, p. 118

¹⁴ Behar, Ruth, *Sexual Witchcraft, Colonialism, and Women’s Powers*, p.186

if her husband no longer loved her, it was her fault. If her husband loved her obsessively, it was also her fault but all the while, the husband was considered the superior half with little accountability.¹⁵ The proliferation of love magic only underlines the social dynamics at play, specifically the power imbalances between men and women. To have a man at your disposal, especially an influential one, would be akin to having access to their power through the private sphere. The church, in its concern for the general safety of Christians, was further threatened by love magic because women could acquire power through such means.

This leads to another layer of Love magic, which is the weaponization of women's sexuality and men's susceptibility to their temptations. Love magic concerned itself with any and all affairs that were intimate, yet so much power was given to sexuality even if it was regarded as evil. Love magic automatically was disparaged due to the nature of its spells, but also the demographic of its users. Sexuality was considered evil because it was corporeal, and feelings associated with the body are usually susceptible to the influence of demons. Thus love spells, even if used to "encourage" the development of love, were seen as innately evil since the use of these spells typically had underlying agendas. Even if love magic was considered less malevolent than conjuring demons or curses, it required a lot of "instruments" and posed a threat to the church, so those who went through with their spellcasting typically had powerful or lucrative targets. Collecting locks of hair and dousing wine in menstrual blood, all these steps required support, planning, and confidentiality for it to be successful. But in its early days, Love magic was typically regarded by church officials as "superstition"¹⁶ rather than a dangerous ritual to be feared, but as love magic quickly became more accessible with the publication of witchcraft

¹⁵ Lara, *Bruja Personalities*, p. 17

¹⁶ Del Rio, p. 246

treatises and the connection between devil worship to witchcraft, women quickly became the poster face of the Inquisition across Europe and the New World.

Besides the manipulation of corporeal desires and acquisition of power, love magic also threatened the “natural order” of life as was established by the Church. Witchcraft is connected to the earth and nature at large, but rather than abiding along rules set forth by God, it uses nature to bring about change according to the whims of its casters. To defy nature is to defy God and his plan on Earth, hence magic and witchcraft were seen to mirror God’s miracles. In the case of Love magic, it actively subverts European gender roles by making men irrational and giving women the dominant role in the relationship.¹⁷ Such a dynamic was perceived to be unnatural and a clear result of witchcraft rather than genuine human interactions. This line of thinking led to women who defied conventional norms to be lumped with witches and other heretics. The subversion of gender roles in love magic, interestingly, only further solidified beliefs about each of the genders: men are dominant until they confront a woman’s manipulation, but women are instructed to be submissive while also being the driving force of interpersonal relationships, eg. keeping their spouses and loved ones happy. Love magic capitalized on the dynamic already established by the church, rather than actively dismantling it.

Love magic’s relation to women was one embroiled with fear, as the general consensus in early modern Europe considered women’s nature as innately flawed and skewed toward evil. The use of bodily fluids to illicit lust and infatuation among targeted men only exacerbated conception of women; it further confirmed that women are inherently connected to corporeal world and can easily dominate men if they so choose. By tapping into their darker nature, women who use love magic subverted gender roles and tied themselves with demonic forces to do so.

¹⁷ Gutiérrez, Ramon. Women On Top. *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 2007, p. 384

But this concept of corporeal desires and women was further explored as the Spanish began interacting with non-Christian people. Their societies were built upon different gender constructs and roles which led to the Spanish to attribute their “savagery” to their lack of Christianity. By operating along non-Christian ideas of gender, their society was deemed demonic in origin.¹⁸ Indigenous women will begin to play a different role to that of their Spanish counterparts as their dark skin would be equated to their “dark” morals.¹⁹ The political ramifications of love magic in the New World went beyond acquiring power from men, but became an act of resistance against colonial domination, as indigenous women would be pushing against power structures such as the Church, colonial rule, and the caste system. In a world of clashing religious and social norms, different women were held to different moral standards, which applied to the usage of love magic as examined by love magic cases in upcoming section III.

Chapter Three: Indigenous Women and Love Magic

Gender roles were so deeply embedded in the early modern European way of life that straying from them could only be the result of an evil influence, one that would make people go against the structure God had created for people. However, this way of thinking was mainly applied to the behavior of women, who were expected to be virtuous while also being considered by nature to be wicked and easier to be controlled by the devil. This idea of women would transfer to the new colonial territories in interesting ways, as different beliefs and roles women abided by did not neatly correlate with Christianity. Women in Colonial Mexico were, like in Spain, considered inferior to men in every capacity but the most pressing difference lay in their domestic relations. Women were subject to the will of their husband and all their property went

¹⁸ Behar, Ruth. Sex and Sin, Witchcraft and the Devil, *American Ethnologist*, 1987, p. 44

¹⁹ Lara, p. 18

to his name.²⁰ To function without a husband in colonial Mexico would be very tricky as women were barred from a number of different professions and educational opportunities. Most concerning, colonial rule placed heavy emphasis on women abiding by traditional roles and straying from such norms could result in physical punishment by the husband—an act encouraged socially to keep women in line. Many women were unable to leave their abusive marriages but could appeal to courts for protection, though a ruling in their favor would be difficult. This reality led to a different twist in the way magic was used by women in Colonial Mexico in comparison to the European setting. Unlike their northern neighbors:

In both Spain and Mexico, people accused of witchcraft were treated leniently, as ignorant folk rather than heretics...The Spanish Inquisition and its colonial Mexican tribunal also shared a common inquisitorial style, seeking to understand the motives of a person's beliefs or acts rather than being concerned to establish legal responsibility for the deeds of witchcraft or magic.²¹

There was more emphasis placed on repentance rather than punishment or accountability, which led to a unique dynamic between accused women and the church. Since casting spells and engaging in witchcraft did not warrant extreme punishment, many women ended up confessing to their actions on their own accord.²² As long as their confession and repentance seemed genuine, the church usually absolved them of their actions. The use of love magic in colonial Mexico was still rooted in control, but rather than gaining access to their husband's power, women used love magic to protect themselves from them. Violence in the home ran

²⁰ Behar, *Sex and Sin, Witchcraft and the Devil*, p. 35

²¹ Behar, p. 36

²² Behar, p. 42

rampant and the only source of power women had access to was the supernatural—the belief that women were predisposed to love magic seemed to be a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The role of the Church slowly shifted as they gained power among the colonies. Their imposition of Christianity unto the natives was both political as it was spiritual. Religion and politics were aligned in their goal of colonial domination. This materialized in their designation of women of all backgrounds as subordinate to men—an identity familiar to Spanish women but a new status to Indigenous women who had their own understanding of gender. Their unfamiliarity with the new dominant religion led to their exclusion of certain moral precepts, such as the use of love magic or the practice of witchcraft in general. If anything, Indigenous women were often the source of knowledge for Spanish women in concern to these practices.²³ The oppressive structure of the colonial patriarchy no longer afforded women access to their husband's influence, instead survival and protection was sought after by battered wives. Love magic, in this context, shifted from a tool of seduction to a mechanism of control. Battered wives were not the only users of this form of love magic either; vengeful mistresses were also interested in disrupting the lives of the men who had seemingly wronged them. Consider the case of Lorenzo Martinez Montañes in Mexico City, who in 1709 had attempted to break off his illicit affair with a mestizo woman by the name of Bonifacia Miranda. He proposed to be co-godparents or *compadres* to their daughter in order to maintain a “spiritual link” and have access to her. This offer would prevent the two from having intercourse since *compadres* were considered spiritual and actual kin by the Church.²⁴ “This proposition angered Bonifacia and she announced that if he dared do such a thing ‘he would remember her all his life.’ She also wished that his wife, who was already sick, would die...he had ignored her curses, until he realized she

²³ Ana Sánchez, *Remedio Para el Mal de Amores*, 2009, p. 24

²⁴ Behar, p. 43

had, indeed, tied and ensorcelled him.”²⁵ Rather than seduce Lorenzo, Bonifacia decided to “tie” or render him impotent with his wife so that his marriage would continue unconsummated. The lack of consummation would render both mistress and wife as equals, since they were equally unmarried.²⁶ Lorenzo eventually sought out help from the Church in which he would confess both his illicit affair and his suspicion of Bonifacia’s magic or *maleficio*. Interestingly, Lorenzo’s admission of his wrongdoing was not a concern for the church, rather their concern lied in “putting himself” in a position to be ensorcelled due to his adulterous ways.²⁷ In other words, Lorenzo was not necessarily held accountable for his adultery but rather his lack of judgement.

While men in these love magic cases were typically seen as the victim, women were depicted as plotting and scheming harpies. Yet, not all women were subject to the same level of moral scrutiny by the church. Colonial Mexico was organized by a complex racial caste system that placed Spain-born Spaniards at the top and Indigenous and African slaves at the very bottom. The middle classes were often a racial mixture of all three and enjoyed varied privileges based on their proximity to whiteness. However, the *casta* system was more than a racial and economic social system—it imposed differing moral and religious standards for each demographic.²⁸ The most clear example would be the use of witchcraft; Spanish women were taught to be examples for the “new” Christians and thus, were heavily monitored and indoctrinated to choose “God” over their own comforts.

Women seemed to think it was better to have the clear conscience that came from the holy martyrdom of knowing that they were on the side of God than to provoke the devil by flirting with ‘his stuff.’...thereby giving in to the structure of male domination and

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Behar, Sexual Witchcraft Colonialism and Women’s Power, *American Ethnologist*, 1987, p. 184

turning in those women who posed a threat to that structure. Such women were their own best inquisitors.²⁹

If anything, by heavily emphasizing the importance of Christian values, women were often the ones monitoring and oppressing each other. There was ever more pressure to turn each other in since the Mexican Inquisition was not allowed to prosecute Indigenous people since again, they were “new” to the faith and thus, did not know any better.³⁰ Their perceived ignorance of Christianity and primitivity led to the notion of Indigenous women possessing occult knowledge. This fact made many Spanish women seek out Native women for their knowledge on love magic and other forms of witchcraft as they were unlikely to be subjected to extreme punishment should they be discovered. Not only were Native women seen as “new” to the faith, but their lower status corresponded with the idea of their savage or immoral character; a Native woman practicing witchcraft was less reprehensible than a Christian Spanish woman. Yet the business of love magic was a tricky endeavor to engage in, as the watchful eyes they strived to avoid were not of men but of women.

Love magic in Colonial Mexico served a variety of purposes, but was chiefly used to subdue or dominate men rather than charm them. The proliferation of domestic violence and its condoning by the Church only further destabilized an already unequal gender dynamic. But these structures maintained themselves as women were indoctrinated to value their faith over external pleasures eg. using magic to tame a violent husband, because that would require engaging with the devil in some form. Their unwillingness to displace male hegemony led to the polarization of women, of which led to Inquisition cases led by women and women who proudly claimed their pact with the devil if it meant liberation from an oppressive social structure. But these

²⁹ Behar, *Sexual Witchcraft Colonialism and Women’s Power*, p. 191

³⁰ Behar, p. 183

discussions center on Mestizo and Spanish women, who were expected to abide by Christian principles with little leniency. The conversation of love magic as practiced by Native women will be explored in the next section.

Chapter Four: Gender and Love Magic

Having established the social dynamics of Spanish colonial society, specifically that between men and women, the question surrounding how Indigenous women operate within such constructs remains to be discussed. Colonial domination largely influenced how these women expressed themselves and defined their social status in Colonial Mexico. Indigenous women occupied a unique space in both colonial society and religion, or Catholicism to be exact. They were not completely subject to the rigid standards Spanish Catholic women were expected to abide by, yet in the same breath, suffered at the hands of a patriarchal system that privileged white men. As was the case in Europe, the association between witchcraft and women's inferiority had not completely dissipated, but instead, embraced racial and classist ideology that had emerged alongside Colonial domination. The fear of love magic was rooted in the idea that indigenous women safeguarded "unknown" but dangerous knowledge.

Colonial society had placed native women toward the bottom of the racial hierarchy which rewarded proximity to whiteness. But Colonial domination is not simply taking over the physical land as we have explored, but completely stomping out native practices and beliefs to replace them with Catholicism. The Church's concern involved "Christianizing" native peoples by villainizing their belief and knowledge as witchcraft and banning its active practice in order to expunge all that remained of pre-Hispanic life. But simply pressuring practitioners to abandon their way of life can be immensely tricky, thus the Church devised a way to study and learn their beliefs in order to stamp it out.

Sanchez (2005) in her article about the legacy of magic and Brown women notes that:

Conscientes de la persistencia de prácticas supersticiosas que el catolicismo no estaba listo para extirpar, hicieron uso de los confesionarios para conocerlas mejor, reprimirlas y suprimirlas. Mediante preguntas directas sobre las prácticas más conocidas, casi todas de origen prehispánico, se obtenía la confesión de los indígenas que debían de cumplir con las penitencias apropiadas.”³¹

Fixated on learning Indigenous knowledge in order to dismantle it, churches treaded into dicey waters by engaging in more strategic forms of colonization. The important thing to keep in mind is that the church would act as an agent of the crown both socially and politically.

Where do indigenous women fit into this picture? Women were not typically seen as gatekeepers of knowledge by Europeans, yet in colonizing the new world, it seems women were very much involved with affairs outside the home. They served as priestesses, vendors, midwives, and healers which demanded expertise beyond that of house wives.³² This may have further rendered Indigenous women as suspicious and morally-suspect since they did not strictly conform to European gender roles. Ramon Gutierrez hints at this in his article, “Women on Top” in which he describes the domineering aspect of women practicing love magic. “Wives could imagine no other explanation than the work of Indian witches. The 1708 witchcraft denunciation that Dona Leonor Dominguez of Santa Fe leveled against three Indian women from San Juan Pueblo, two of whom were crippled, illustrates this point very well.”³³ In this case, the immediate assumption of “Indian witches” as the source of malevolence due to their race as well as physical deficiencies alludes to their inherent “evil” nature. Indigenous women, as the keepers

³¹ Ana Sánchez, *Remedio Para el Mal de Amores*, 2009, p. 22

³² Sánchez, *Remedio Para el Mal de Amores*, p. 20

³³ Gutiérrez, *Women On Top*, p. 381

of pre-Hispanic traditions, were seen as the antithesis to Spanish women in certain ways. A native women's draw to witchcraft was seen as innate; their active roles during pre-Hispanic history usurped the idea of women's inferiority and only solidified the Spaniard's view of Natives as barbaric and uncivilized.³⁴

The religious and healing knowledge of Native women painted them in a mystic light. Even today, there still remains an air of mystery surrounding native practices and a belief that their "spirituality" is rooted in their material existence rather than an all-powerful creator, such as the worship of sacred lands rather than God. Alongside an existence shrouded in secrets, the European association of women and the devil was extended to native women as well, perhaps even worsened. Witches were not confined to the limits of time and space as seen in the case of Beatriz de los Angeles of Santa Cruz transporting herself to different towns in 1731.³⁵ Likewise, the role of love magic in Colonial society deviated from romantic affection to a weapon of survival. The connection between native women and gender roles left Spanish wary of women bewitching their husbands through food, Whether it is through bodily means or her food, the role of native women in weaponizing their role as women to seek dominance over men by violating the European norms of gender. This defiance, would be considered wicked—to resist the "natural order" God has created is to purposefully shun him and embrace the devil.

Colonial domination rendered native women as lesser beings for both their gender and their race. "Witchcraft denunciations and the investigations they precipitated were precisely the mechanism Spanish New Mexicans and imperial authorities used to police the racial boundaries of this local society."³⁶ By equating native women to instant witches shows the

³⁴ Gutiérrez, p. 378

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Gutierrez, p. 377

dichotomous mind of colonial society, in which every act falls into a black or white box. Under the heavy pressures of a racist and patriarchal society, Native women have used their knowledge and bodies to resist Colonial domination which will be further explored in the next section.

Chapter Five: Repression, Resistance, and the Body

In Colonial Mexico, the looming threat of colonial domination and the patriarchy controlled the lives of any woman under the care of a man. As noted in previous chapters, violence against women was not uncommon or condemned, in fact, was looked upon as an appropriate mechanism of control by husbands. Rather than suffer at the hands of abusive and controlling men, women would look to witchcraft and love magic to deal with their predicament. This particular section will examine how women used their bodies to resist the immediate aggression of men as well as colonial society. By asserting power back into their physical bodies and lessening the threat that the bodies of men posed, women found a way to resist the colonial patriarchy. However, the Church was far from supportive of such a movement in that the subversion of gender roles was considered unnatural and against the will of God. The control and subjugation of the female body was at the center of many colonial rules—whether it involved violence from a husband or marriage, restrictions on their employment options, or restrictions/outlawing of interracial couples. Colonial domination was sustained by these various tactics by placing the agenda of both the Church and the Crown above all else.

By placing total focus on controlling the bodies of women and the interaction of bodies as a whole, women were cautious in using their bodies for resistance but nonetheless found creative methods to do so. Their first method of resistance was to control the body of their husbands through means of love magic. Not exactly to turn the man into a servant, but to make him more docile and lessen the violence wives would face. This was not the only form of control

women employed on men; for those who entertained mistresses or any kind of sexual relation, the use of love magic to cause impotence and wreak havoc on men's sex life. This is a direct attack on the body on the part of women—they wanted the man to be embarrassed and mortified, attacking both men's bodies and their role as a man. The use of digestion was also another tactic used to control men's bodies. "From the number of cases in which food was the medium for witchcraft, it appears that ingestion was thought to be one of the most effective ways of passing on the polluting substances of witchcraft; in eating, the pollution was introduced directly and effectively into the body."³⁷ A notable aspect of this method is the involvement of food and specifically food served to husbands; women were tasked with homemaking which included the preparation of meals. To use a daily chore as part of a love magic ritual was both clever and ironic, as women used their traditional gender role to undermine the power of their husbands who believed themselves to be the head of the household. Different types of food were used as well, from a cup of chocolate or any beverage to an innocent dinner imbued with magic³⁸; men lived in suspicion of what their wives had prepared alone in the kitchen, yet their aversion to cooking meals for themselves was stronger.

These ensorcelled foods were typically mixed with bodily fluids, typically menstrual blood from the affected woman. Back to the topic of "polluting" or ensorcelling the food served to men, the symbolism behind menstrual blood denotes certain perceptions surrounding the nature of women. "Para tener a un hombre incondicional, amante y fiel bastaba con verter su sangre menstrual o el agua con la cual habían lavado "sus partes íntimas" en su chocolate o cualquier otra bebida, creían que esto generaría lo que deseaban dado que el hombre habría

³⁷ Behar, *Sexual Witchcraft Colonialism and Women's Power*, p. 180

³⁸ *Ibid.*

ingerido su sustancia”³⁹ Menstrual blood was seen as dirty and it embodied the negatives of women's bodies, whereas the bodies of men were regarded as perfect or physically pure. In polluting the bodies of men with the essence of women, women establish both spiritual (eg. corrupting their bodies) as well as physical dominance over the bewitched men. Menstrual blood was symbolic of women’s lesser place in society as well as a form of resistance against such notions.

The repression of love magic and idolatry were enforced in a variety of ways; the Church was able to identify love magic as the source of evil rather than the oppressive system of the patriarchy. The Church and the Crown knew that allowing women any more freedom would tamper with their social and political power, and to suppress these forms of resistance, they must be hyperfocused on controlling women through their status in society as well as the home. Love magic, in particular, posed a great threat to the church’s dominance and spiritual conquest. Spanish women and indigenous women alike resorted to its usage which undermined the legitimacy of the Christian faith. But in conditioning women to be more fearful of God and the clergy, women often turned themselves and other women to the Church. Aside from witchcraft accusations, the restrictions of racial mixture were used to control the bodies of women.

Their social primacy was fundamentally tied to the sexual purity of their women and to their men's sexual avoidance of Indian slaves, ex-slaves, and mixed-blood women...distinct. If left unchecked, mestizaje would surely over time create contention over personal identities, social belonging, communal loyalty, and the rights that citizenship guaranteed.⁴⁰

³⁹ Sánchez, *Remedio Para el Mal de Amores*, p. 24

⁴⁰ Gutierrez, p. 386

Should women be given sexual liberty over their bodies, colonial rule would cripple and the colonized (eg. Indigenous, Africans, and mixed persons) would claim equality among races or more specifically, to white Spaniards. Not only did love magic usurp the many ills of the patriarchy, “the integrity of the state”⁴¹ would be at the mercy of women seeking autonomy over their bodies—knowledge provided by Indigenous women which the Church had then deemed as witchery and heresy. However, this mentality did not apply to all classes in Colonial Mexico. To safeguard the rights and privileges of the white elite, maintaining racial purity was essential to the ruling classes. However, poorer demographics of society were not nearly as concerned with their racial backgrounds and identity was passed on mindlessly with no regard for specifics.

Cope Douglas delves into attitudes toward race in his article, “The limits of racial domination: plebeian society in colonial Mexico City” and briefly notes:

“The conflict among various criteria for racial identification, the relative unimportance of parish records, the ‘illogical’ transfer of racial status between generations, and the vague and imprecise knowledge of ancestry all suggest that, for plebeians, lineage was not central to self-definition.”⁴²

In adopting frivolous attitudes toward race, maintaining strict racial boundaries for marriages in the white elite was crucial toward colonial domination. In that same line of thinking, sexual autonomy was villainized and attributed to black and brown women—they are depicted as temptresses and hypersexual with abilities to enchant men to their ruin.⁴³ White women also perpetuated this stereotype by actively reporting Indigenous women as witches while also seeking out their services.⁴⁴ Other women were love magic users greatest threat, as

⁴¹ Gutierrez, p. 387

⁴² Douglas, Cope. *The limits of Racial Domination*, 1994, p. 71

⁴³ Lara, *Bruja Personalities*, p. 19

⁴⁴ Behar, *Sexual Witchcraft Colonialism and Women’s Power*, p. 182

they monitored and policed each other's activities in their role as dutiful Christians. In fighting both a racist and misogynist government, Indigenous women continuously punched upward while Spanish women only concerned themselves with dismantling *one* oppressive system, the patriarchy. Differentiation among women based on race would make it extremely unlikely for either oppressive systems to disappear or become equal.

The true oppression of Indigenous women is rooted in white women's subservience to white men, be it their religion or political systems. They were content with their status in the *casta* system and usually clung to what little privileges were afforded to them due to their whiteness. Hence many denunciations of witchcraft were not from men, but from women who felt morally responsible for policing the usage of magic. However, indigenous women's resistance was threatening enough to warrant strict laws on religion and interracial marriage for the elite while operating within the confines of Christian gender roles.

Conclusion

In compiling the many intricate details of love magic in colonial Mexico, we see love magic as both a tool and a force to be reckoned with among users and onlookers alike. Love magic first began as a means of seduction and a way to ensure a more pleasant marriage by making men more docile. In dominating men in the domestic sphere, the natural order the church has advocated for would have been flipped on its head. In going against the natural order, the church could only chalk up love magic as a product of witchery and demonic influences, but upon further examination—political resistance as well. This is more blatantly seen in colonial Mexico, where love magic morphed from a means of seduction into a tool of survival for women

in abusive marriages or sexually exploitive affairs. It became a form of resistance against the patriarchy.

Colonial domination called for the repression and even the outlawing of Indigenous knowledge. This primarily affected Indigenous women, who were more likely to be keepers of such ancient knowledge which came at the cost of further ostracization by colonial society. The Church has also faced the influence of witchcraft by encouraging more witch accusations and restrictions on marriage along racial lines. Why was the control of women's bodies and autonomy so vital to both Church and the Crown? In keeping the narrative of having a racially as well as the morally superior race, the colonial domination of black and brown bodies would be readily justifiable alongside their subservience. Should the church let women, especially white women, have sex at their own discretion as well as marry whoever they desire—the idea that whiteness is exclusive and interracial marriage merely a practice reserved for the lower classes would be disregarded. This attitude toward racial identification would threaten the very rigid *casta* system that kept Colonial Mexico under tight control should upper classes adopt it.

But when these notions are brought to the New World from Western Europe, the status of women became one of the points of contention and confusion especially during the evangelization of Indigenous populations. Without Christianity, Indigenous communities operated along different gender roles that seemingly blurred the lines between men and women which only further magnified their image as uncivilized barbarians. This notion affected Indigenous women primarily in their role as women—they were often depicted as hypersexual idolatresses with knowledge of magic. The Christianization of native people introduced the values of patriarchy, white male domination, and religious persecution unto a new populace.

But in circling back to the notion of resistance and repression, Indigenous women operated on the outskirts of the patriarchal and racial parameters of power, as they did not benefit from either structure. Their gender made them subject to Christianity's rigid understanding of gender roles while also disparaging their culture due to the "idolatry" they practiced pre-Colonization. However, Indigenous women were resistant to the tactics of the church to condemn and quash their culture through love magic. Forced to abandon pre-Hispanic gender norms, the confines of domesticity brought about a new way to usurp colonial domination and patriarchal power. Yet even in domestic settings, the husband was expected to lead and make decisions for the family despite the fact women were only allowed to operate within "domestic" spheres with the majority of the labor falling onto them as well. Overall, the labor of men and women were seen in unequal terms with men's role being more valued. Love magic was cast within the home, but its usage can be seen beyond the walls of domesticity. These spells were performed to control husband and lovers, but in controlling a man these women could have access to their privileges and protection by winning their favor. This also raises the question the question of the power of emotional intimacy and interpersonal relationships in connection to hugely political and rather "un-domestic" institutions such as colonial domination and the church.

Whether the church made this connection or not, enforcing their established gender roles involved the condemnation of love magic and the regulation of women's sexual autonomy through emphasis on purity, submission to male family and spouses, and marriage.⁴⁵ In retaliation, Indigenous woman used their bodies and knowledge to resist colonial domination through love magic. This either involved direct usage of their bodies or manipulation of men's

⁴⁵ Seed, Patricia. *To love, honor, and obey in colonial Mexico*, 1988, p. 133

bodies, body, such as utilizing their menstrual blood in spells to prepare ensorcelled food for dinner and rendering the body of the husband harmless or impotent.⁴⁶ In Behar's clever words, "they set the world in reverse" with women controlling the sexual and political autonomy of the men in their life to resist patriarchal oppression.

But in realizing this incredible form of resistance, what is there to learn and what is there to unlearn? The plight of current indigenous women is usually framed as an economic and social problem, but in visualizing Indigenous women as destitute even in the modern day only emphasizes the importance of celebrating and recognizing their triumphs. Their legacy as both *curanderas* and *brujas* has fueled the artistic imagination as well as perpetuate injustices toward them. As movements in Mexico call for justice toward murdered and missing Indigenous women, apathy from authorities speaks to the ongoing narrative that Indigenous women are not valued members of society.⁴⁷ Their likelihood to live in extreme poverty and lack of resources make them much more likely to face violence and be vulnerable to sex trafficking. While gone are the days of the *casta* system, the labor and sexual exploitation of indigenous women remains an on-going issue with many indigenous activists finally voicing their dissent. Ongoing scholarship should analyze the effects the colonization on colonized subjects, but also examine the various ways Indigenous women have resisted and defied such oppressive structures—they have never been complacent, merely silenced.

⁴⁶ Gutiérrez, p. 377

⁴⁷ Madison Eagan. *Indigenous Women: The Invisible Victims of Femicide in Mexico*, 2020

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