

◆ CHAPTER FOUR

Disciplining Sinful Women: Magdalena de San Jerónimo's All- Work, No-Play Model of Punishment and Rehabilitation

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*Para las que ahora están vagando y están ya perdidas
es necesario castigo y rigor [en la Galera]
(For those women who are wandering and already lost,
punishment and severity are needed [in the prison])¹
Magdalena de San Jerónimo*

Magdalena de San Jerónimo's 1608 treatise and petition to the king, *Razón y forma de la galera y casa real* (Reason for and Form of the Prison and Royal House), is the product of its author's internalization of dominant gender ideology, as well as of many years of administrative experience working as founder and administrator of women's *recogimientos* (houses of reclusion) in Valladolid and Madrid. The well-known text offers both a rationale and a detailed plan of operations for a woman's prison. At once a justification of Madre Magdalena's method, and a treatise outlining in specific detail how to carry out her objectives, the document incorporates a long history of thinking about how to discipline women and also advances the revolutionary idea that women's prisons should reflect the unique experiences of their inhabitants, as women. That is, the nun-reformer constructs a discourse on how to transform women deemed unrespectable (such as false beggars and prostitutes) into modestly dressed and mannered workers, docile and ready, able to enact the commands of others.

Underlying the project was the fear that "vagabond and delinquent" women, and especially those who commodified and transacted their sexuality on city

**Confined Women:
The Walls of Female Space in Early Modern Spain**
Hispanic Issues On Line 25 (2020)

streets, would erode hegemonic ideas and social structures, bring disorder and unrest, and, ultimately, destroy the status quo. Within the walls of the *galera* (prison), Madre Magdalena hoped to provide a protected space in which its inhabitants could be rid of their disreputable and libidinous impulses, and taught not only a trade, but also how to be a “good” wife and mother, if not a religious recluse. Once a woman crossed the threshold, the specter of punishment for deviating from the norms and practices established within the walls of the institution, with increasing severity and publicity for repeat offenders, made escape almost impossible. From a Foucauldian perspective, the *galera* was theorized in a context of disciplinary discourses that served the interests of church, state, and society. As with all prisons, by training those confined within its physical space to conform to institutional rules and regulations, Magdalena de San Jerónimo’s ultimately served the purpose of supporting prevailing power relations and structures, while impeding independent thought and action.

Little is known about the woman who wrote *Razón y forma de la galera*, including her secular name and the dates of her birth and death. Isabel Barbeito Carneiro suggests that she probably belonged to the Zamudio family, noting Camilo María Abad’s assertion that her name was Beatriz de Zamudio, and that she professed as a Bernardine, but also that he does not document the statement (37–38, fn. 1). The earliest extant recorded information characterizes her as the founder of a *Casa de Recogidas* in Valladolid in 1586, funded by Isabel Díez (Torremocha Hernández 26).² Her affiliation with this Magdalen house remained throughout her life. She was most likely the principal author of the “Memorial” (1591), listing nine principles for its governance, as well as its Constitution of 1594, the year in which she left the *Casa*. Madre Magdalena returned there in 1605 to once again take up the reins of governance; in that same year, she included a clause in the “Concordance” she authored that provided a permanent residence in the Magdalen house for herself and a maid, should she ever decide to live there. At the same time, she made the institution her principal beneficiary; the legacy included relics purporting to be the bones of two of the eleven thousand virgins that accompanied St. Ursula.

The only other documentary evidence of her life that has survived is the correspondence with two prominent women: the Infanta (Princess) Clara Eugenia, with whom she met in Brussels, and for whom she performed some errands; and the aristocratic mystic, poet, and missionary Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza (1566–1614), whose remains she was asked to identify in 1615.³ Both relationships denote Madre Magdalena’s relatively high status in the social hierarchy. In addition, Father Ángel Manrique, author of the *vida* (Life) of Ana de Jesús, mentioned that Madre Magdalena and Madre Ana had met in Paris.⁴ He noted that Magdalena de San Jerónimo was “una muger de singular

virtud y de mucha oración y trato con Dios; y á ese título conocida y estimada de toda Europa” (qtd. in Serrano y Sanz 305) (a woman of singular virtue and extremely pious and who was close to God, and by this title known and admired throughout Europe). Ironically, given her well-placed connections and the royal recognition of her work, Magdalena de San Jerónimo subsequently faded from history, without further trace.

Sixteenth-Century Spain: Historical and Ideological Context

The projects for which Magdalena de San Jerónimo is known, the establishment of *casas de recogidas* and the manual for a *galera* for women, reflect the ideologies of reform movements within the Church, which insisted that sinners could be changed, and that discipline should aim at redemption rather than punishment; they also mirror the gendered assumptions that included the demand for enclosure and discipline of all women as an antidote for disobedience and uncontrolled sexuality (Perry, “With Brave Vigilance” 4). Indeed, as institutions, the *recogimientos* implied a belief in women’s ability to change, to be redeemed through work (Pérez Baltasar, “Orígenes” 17). The emphasis on women’s enclosure by Church and State occurred not only because of new rules hammered out at the Council of Trent (1543–1565), but also because of the socioeconomic conditions that existed at the time.

In the sixteenth century, Spain experienced significant growth of its cities, largely as a result of the migration of the poor from rural areas. Because urban infrastructures were not equipped to deal with the influx of people, many of the newly arrived poor faced extreme shortages of employment, housing, and food. The poverty rate in the 1590s rose from 15 percent to 25 percent (Parello 59). Concomitantly, provision of assistance came to be viewed as a function of secular rather than religious institutions, and those who provided relief were defined as curing societal ills. A recent scholarly analogy that compares those who dispensed charity to physicians is particularly apt, insofar as it echoes the early modern language of illness and disease that was used to represent socially unacceptable behaviors: “Cette réhabilitation du rôle du médecin de la république va de pair avec la laïcisation de la charité et la sécularisation de la bienfaisance” (Parello 66) (This rehabilitation through the role of doctor to the nation is accompanied by a secularization of charity and good deeds). Madre Magdalena was far from the only writer of the period who noted not only the possibility of spreading venereal disease transmitted by prostitutes, but also designated them as a serious illness, requiring a physician’s cure, in the very first part of the *Razón* (71). References to scourges and infectious disease abounded in treatises about social evils, as well as recipes for their

cure. Magdalena de San Jerónimo utilized the metaphor of disease when she argued for the necessity of preventing the plague (of socially unacceptable women) from spreading by separating them out and destroying any connection they had with the larger society and with behavior deemed undesirable (94).

Escalating social need made increasing demands on wealthy noblewomen to supply social services; they employed nuns of their class (such as Magdalena de San Jerónimo) to carry out those functions (Lagunas 167–68). Thus, a new system of client-patron relationships emerged, one in which Magdalena de San Jerónimo played a significant role, mediating between wealthy aristocracy and those (especially women) deemed problematic to society: “participaba, en calidad de subordinada, en un sistema clientelar femenino paralelo y dependiente del entramado de relaciones estamentales masculinas—nobles—que detentaban, con el Rey a la cabeza, efectivamente el poder” (Lagunas 167) (she participated as a subordinate in a female clientele system parallel to and dependent on the network of male noble class relations that effectively held power, with the king at its head). A functionary of a kind of ladies’ auxiliary of institutionalized power structures, the nun-reformer advanced the agenda of the hegemonic system while at the same time purporting to provide needed aid and succor to women of the poorer classes. This classification of relationships, in which wealthy women were expected to help in ameliorating social ills such as poverty, meant that Sor Magdalena played a pivotal role in coordinating and organizing the structure and methodologies of dominance and subordination, disguised as an early modern version of social work.

As the monarchy issued decrees aimed at cleansing and ordering urban spaces, “a focus on housing and rehabilitating women emerged” (Boyle 22). In fact, among marginalized groups of people, a large number of widows, orphans, and indigent women were forced to turn to crime and/or prostitution to survive (Pérez Baltasar, “El castigo” 62). Further, violence, prostitution, and destitution were linked (Parello 62). In this context, government and church officials became increasingly concerned with prostitution, which meant that, combined with the Counter-Reformation fervor to redeem sinners (Perry, “With Brave Vigilance” 5), “the troubles produced by the economic crisis were redressed and dealt with as moral concerns” (Boyle 23). Indeed, as Torremocha Hernández has reminded us, the difference between crime and sin in the early modern period is difficult to unravel (39).

During the sixteenth century, officials sent many “incorrigible women” to prisons, “which gradually adopted programs of work and correction” (Perry, “With Brave Vigilance” 8). But women’s prisons did not solve the problem of unenclosed nonconforming women in seventeenth-century

Spain. Declining fortunes combined with repeated epidemics to increase concern with the state of public morals, especially the moral frailty of girls and women (Perry, *Gender* 146). As nonconforming women continued to wander, ostensibly free of the social injunction to enclose them, institutions continued to attempt to confine and reform them, although with minimal success (Perry, “With Brave Vigilance” 13).

Prostitutes and Other “Bad” Women

In the mid-sixteenth century, prostitution was criminalized (Fernández Sobremozas 4). Difficult socioeconomic circumstances and Counter-Reformation ideologies meant that prostitutes came to be perceived as depraved: rather than being a necessary part of the urban environment, they came to be considered as inviting vice and sexual debauchery, and thus a religious, social, and public health danger (Parello 60). Philip II even published a royal edict in 1575, specifically prohibiting women who sold their bodies for sex from wearing scapulars or any religious habit (Pérez Baltasar, “El castigo” 63). Public dialogue developed “through a ritualized confrontation of money and morals, purity and evil, rich and poor, Church and state,” with power, sin, and sex underlying the euphemisms evident in discourses about prostitution (Perry, *Gender* 143–44). Clerics began to portray sex workers more often as sinners requiring redemption, rather than as a necessary evil (Perry, *Gender* 145). In hegemonic discourse, the unchaste woman posed not only a threat to the social order but also a real danger to the salvation of men’s souls (Perry, “Magdalens” 124). Prostitutes were deemed “deviant outsiders” of the moral order, because they provided sexual services to unmarried young men, which helped to maintain other women’s chastity (126).

In addition to moral concerns, the specter of syphilis lurked in the background and was explicitly raised in civic debate.⁵ From a conceptual perspective, syphilis was viewed as a “divine illness,” a punishment for excess lust (Perry, “Magdalens” 131). The disease as transmitted by prostitutes was symbolically and discursively linked to the perceived openness of their bodies: “This openness, characteristic of the fragmented, grotesque, and even carnivalesque body, stands in marked opposition to the closed, integral body of the virgin” (Dopico Black 84). Furthermore, suggests the same critic, it is possible to read “a body of Spain that is fantasized as a public woman or, more strikingly still, as a syphilitic whore” (88); this imperial body “was punished for . . . its illicit consortiums overseas: the whoring, in other words, of empire itself” (89). If the analysis implicit in this extended metaphor offers a useful insight, then both the archetypal fallen woman and sinning empire required

cleansing and rehabilitation. Syphilis might therefore be a metaphor for the socio-economic and political illness that spawned the transaction of sexuality and led to imperial failures (such as bankruptcy and losses in battle). The expectation was that regulating both might lead to public health and general redemption.

At the same time that prostitution was being policed and confined to specific spaces, *recogimientos* began to be established (Fernández Sobremazas 15). These institutions served as halfway houses for women who hoped for redemption. Indeed, sympathetic treatment successfully convinced many former prostitutes to kneel, choosing the physical and mental stance displayed in iconographic representations of Mary Magdalene. But conversion merely redefined their degradation, since they were only reintegrated into society as penitents begging for forgiveness (Perry, “Magdalens” 134). Symbolically, though, “the *arrepentida* stands for . . . the promise of an integrity of the soul, even (or especially) when that integrity is no longer available to the body. The spiritual intactness that penance re-confers takes precedence, then, over any claims of bodily integrity” (Dopico Black 84). Ultimately, the end goal was for repentant women to move from the brothel to some sort of institutional enclosure, and subsequently to another kind of enclosed space, preferably within the home and inside the structure of marriage (Perry, “Magdalens” 131). Both the *recogimiento* and the *galera* thus oriented rehabilitation (and in the case of the latter, punishment) toward a lifetime of confinement. Once a penitent, however, the stigma of previous delinquency was erased with great difficulty. While compliance with spiritual and social regulations cleansed body and spirit, only through the restrictions imposed in social institutions such as marriage might hegemonic norms be maintained and enforced.

Cleansing Eve’s Daughters: The Galera as a Site of Punishment and Transformation

Although Manuel Serrano y Sanz, reflecting the conservative Catholic ideology that predominated in early twentieth-century Spain, celebrated Magdalena de San Jerónimo’s impulse to eradicate prostitution (he called it a “cancer” of society; 305), and Isabel Barbeito praised her “riqueza expresiva y claridad de ideas” (64, fn. 1) (richness of expression and clarity of ideas), many scholars have criticized the *Razón y forma de la galera* as an expression of its author’s intransigence, misogyny, rigid adherence to hegemonic norms, and class prejudice (such as Boyle, Laguna, and Perry). Certainly, implicit (yet visible) in Sor Magdalena’s treatise are the hegemonic norms of her time, especially regarding rigid class hierarchies of dress, behavior, expectations, and resources.

Madre Magdalena's plan was not without precedent. Many have pointed out that her experience with *casas de recogidas* provided practical background, and possibly, she had read and was influenced by Cristóbal Pérez de Herrera's 1598 treatise, which included a discussion of women's prisons (Barbeito Carneiro 19, 56). The *galeras* for women were her idea, but not her project; she dedicated herself mainly to the *casa de recogidas* in Valladolid, to which, as noted earlier, she left her relics and all her possessions: "un proyecto mucho menos novedoso, y por ello más afianzado mental y socialmente, para el que el camino estaba allanado y la aceptación social asegurada" (39) (a much less innovative project, which made it easier to accept mentally and socially, so that the path was relatively clear and social acceptance guaranteed). Torremocha Hernández additionally maintains that Sor Magdalena upheld a hard line regarding the *galera*, but a giving, religious spirit regarding the *casa de recogidas* (39), a dichotomy not fully accepted by all historians, who perceive Magdalena de San Jerónimo's position as rigid and unyielding in severity (such as Pérez Baltasar).

The proposal is at once a document of persuasion for a model prison, evidence-based testimony on existing practices of women's rehabilitation, and an account on rehabilitation by a woman as a practice made more effective if directed to women's specific needs (Boyle 31). One logical conclusion resulting from this position is the author's argument for equitable punishment between men and women (32). In any case, as many scholars have noted, Magdalena de San Jerónimo had a significant impact on the shape of women's rehabilitation; after the publication of her 1608 treatise, *casas galera* were built in Valladolid, Zaragoza, Salamanca, Barcelona, Valencia, and Granada (30).

Torremocha has rightly noted that readers often confuse the *galera* and the *casa de recogidas*, but the two institutions, while linked in some ways, differed in concept and purpose. Still, the public-private dichotomy extended to the practice of *recogimiento* in general, insofar as it involved scenes of rehabilitation and staging of women's bodies (Boyle 28). The use of the verb "*recoger*," however, emphasizes conflicting institutional mission as a space of both punitive containment and spiritual retreat (26). Nevertheless, the primary function of Magdalen houses was not to punish, but to rehabilitate and encourage conformity to gender and class expectations. That might include providing an alternative for those who could not or would not marry (Perry, "Magdalens" 132). *Galeras*, on the other hand, were specifically intended to rectify behavior perceived as criminal: Perry argues that "madre Magdalena's proposal . . . promoted a gender-specific transition from corporal public punishments to private reformatory incarceration" ("With Brave Vigilance" 3–4).

Several historians have coincided in the belief that the author of *Razón y forma* deliberately chose the term *galera* (galley) to evoke a parallelism of

punishment between women and men; the *galeras* constituted not only hard labor, but the most severe kind of penalty possible, short of death. Parello, for instance, has noted the levels of meaning in the word as Sor Magdalena used it (64–66), explaining that the imposition of punishment in the galleys in the sixteenth century was related to the needs of the State for a cheap, docile labor force to aid in maritime combat in the Mediterranean (against the Turkish empire). It would be difficult to miss the resonance of empire in the *Razón*'s prefatory letter to Philip III, when the author designates him admiral of the seas (the Spanish empire), and therefore of the *galera*: “¿Cómo podía entrar esta nueva *Galera* en la mar . . . sin el timón y gobernalte de tan sabio piloto como V. Majestad?” (66) (How might this new galley sail the sea without the rudder and control of such a wise pilot as Your Majesty?). Emphasizing the role of the state in this enterprise, Lagunas avers:

la propuesta de Sor Magdalena reconoce por una parte el compete al Estado de penalizar y castigar el delito, erigiendo cárceles reales para mujeres y, por otro lado, a la Iglesia—garante de la ortodoxia en materia religiosa—para castigar las conductas delictivas, moralmente pecaminosas separando y encarcelando con fines correctivos a quiénes provocan el desorden, en este caso mujeres. En su escrito, Sor Magdalena generaliza desde el dogma religioso el sistema penal de la monarquía absoluta, justificando la erección de un centro disciplinador de extrema dureza, la Galera o cárcel de mujeres. (170–71)

(Sor Magdalena's proposal recognizes on one hand the State's responsibility to penalize and punish the crime, building royal prisons for women, and on the other, the Church—which oversaw orthodoxy in religious matters—to punish immoral behavior, separating and imprisoning with corrective aims those who provoked disorder, in this case women. In her writing, Sor Magdalena conceptualizes from religious dogma the absolute monarchy's penal system, justifying the erection of an extremely harsh disciplinary center, the *Galera* or prison for women.)

Clearly, those who managed the structures of government during this time period, including the monarchy, felt compelled to intervene in defining and confining women deemed as requiring radical enclosure. Sor Magdalena's

galera, transposed from a seagoing to an earthbound form of punishment, constituted a spectacle of the victory of virtue over vice (Parello 66).

The *galera*'s target population included the most criminalized women: excessively sexual, destitute, sickly, or otherwise considered dangerous, primarily false beggars, but also prostitutes, who, because they were poised to trap men, brought disorder upon themselves and society. The specific terms of Madre Magdalena's censure of public women designated them as damaged, which in turn meant that they damaged the nation. Her criticism was not religious or moral, but based on a language of infection and uncontrollable circulation (Dopico Black 83). Here, she portrays them as literal carriers of disease:

De este género de gente, además de las graves ofensas que se hacen contra nuestro Señor, se sigue un grave daño en la república, que, como muchas están dañadas, inficionan y pegan mil enfermedades asquerosas y contagiosas a los tristes hombres, que, sin reparar ni temer esto, se juntan con ellas; y éstos, juntándose con otras, o con sus mujeres, si son casados, las pegan la misma lacra; y así, una de éstas, contaminada basta para contaminar mucha gente. (72)

(Of this kind of people, aside from their grave offenses against our Lord, serious damage to the nation also occurs; since many are damaged, they infect and pass on a thousand disgusting and contagious diseases to the sad men, who without being aware or fearing this, have intercourse with them, and the men, who then have intercourse with other women, or with their wives, if they are married, pass on the same scourge; and so, one of these women, if contagious, is enough to infect many people.)

Disease is spread from prostitutes to men; at no point does the author entertain the possibility that men might infect prostitutes, in keeping with the orthodox view of women as temptresses and purveyors of fleshly desires.

In Sor Magdalena's view, sex workers, as noted above, are symbolically contaminated and infected as well. Early in the treatise, she speaks of the need to clarify the nature of the illness: "será necesario poner aquí los grandes males y daños que este género de mujeres hacía de veinte años acá en la república, para que por la gravedad de la enfermedad y dolencia se conozca la importancia y necesidad de la medicina y remedio" (it will be necessary to

mention here the great evils and damage that this kind of woman caused the nation about twenty years ago, so that by the seriousness of the illness and suffering is the importance and necessity of the medicine and remedy is known), specifying that “hay muchas mujeres mozas, vagamundas y ociosas, y entre ellas algunas muchachas de dieciséis y menos años, que no se sustentan de otra cosa, sino de mal vivir. Para esto, llegada la noche, salen como bestias fieras de sus cuevas a buscar la caza. . . . hechas lazos de Satanás, caen y hacen caer en gravísimos pecados” (71) (there are many young women, lazy and aimless, and among them some girls sixteen years old or younger, who survive only from immoral living. For this, when night falls, they leave their houses like ferocious animals emerging from their caves to hunt . . . turned into weapons of Satan, they fall and make others fall into the most grievous sins). The simile (of savage animals emerging from dark caves to hunt) heightens the dramatic impact, calculated to ensure that her readers are as convinced as the author of the potential for harm. Indeed, the persuasive rhetoric of *Razón y forma* reflects the underlying currents of dis-ease and tension regarding the poor extant in the upper levels of Spanish society at the time.

Both prostitutes and false beggars provided poor role models for “honest women” (Boyle 33–34): “estas miserables mujeres enemigas de Dios y contaminadoras de la república . . . con su mal ejemplo y escándalo son ocasión y tropiezo a muchas mujeres honestas y honradas para caer en semejantes maldades” (75) (these miserable women, enemies of God and contaminators of the nation, with their bad example and scandals are the reason for many honorable, honest women’s stumbling, and falling into similar evil deeds.) Accordingly, it was important that the prison offer its own model of female behavior, strictly enforced both within its walls and in public:

En la Galera se ha de practicar una cierta «pedagogía del terror» destinada a suscitar ejemplo tanto en el exterior como en el interior de la institución. Dentro se exhiben los instrumentos de tortura y el castigo se da en público; fuera, los altos y espesos muros, la ausencia de ventanas, la exposición del cadáver de la díscola ajusticiada y las marcas con hierro de las reclusas liberadas constituían la mejor lección de moral para disuadir a las delincuentes. (Morel D’Arleux 117)

(In the *Galera* a certain “pedagogy of terror” should be practiced, whose purpose is to provide examples both within and outside the institution. Within, the instruments of torture are openly displayed and

punishment is given in a public setting; outside, the tall, thick walls, lack of windows, exposure of the corpse of a condemned disobedient woman, and the brands placed on former prisoners constituted the best moral lesson to dissuade the delinquents.)

While the *galera* was enclosed, with no windows and thick walls, the sign at the entrance announced its intent and name. Indeed, Boyle has suggested that Madre Magdalena intended that the physical space of the building manifest the tension between the spectacle of deviance and its containment (36). She, like other scholars, analyzes as emblematic of the tension between display and enclosure the spectacle of the transfer to a new building in 1623 of the *arrepentidas* housed in the Casa de Santa María Magdalena de la Penitencia's, which was vividly described by the chronicler Manuel Recio in 1777, and subsequently quoted often.

In her treatise, Magdalena de San Jerónimo painstakingly detailed the layout of the *galera*. Its exterior should be a conveniently located, well-constructed building without windows, with a plaque on the door with the royal arms, a sword of justice, and a sign announcing the nature of the institution and who lived within (76–77). She was no less thorough in describing the interior: a large communal sleeping area; another room for work; a well and trough for laundry—with no rope, in case someone were tempted to commit suicide or escape; pantry; chapel; and secret holding cells for incorrigible prisoners.⁶ As an additional deterrent, to prevent and punish disobedience, she demanded that the prison be equipped with “todo género de prisiones, cadenas, esposas y grillos; y mordazas, cepos y disciplinas de todas hechuras, de cordeles y hierro; que de sólo ver estos instrumentos se atemoricen y espanten, porque ésta ha de ser como una cárcel muy penosa, conviene que haya grande rigor” (78) (all kinds of prisons, fetters, handcuffs, and shackles; so that just by seeing this equipment they will be afraid and fearful, because this should be a terrible jail, with especially harsh treatment). Clearly, the author intended this space as a prison designed to instill repentance through fear, not a Magdalen house designed to modify behavior through Christian charity.

Stereotyped as seductresses, but also as liars and vagabonds, the women whom Madre Magdalena wanted to incarcerate were deemed dangerous, partly because of their apparent freedom of movement. Indeed, the call for the *galera* required the confinement of “mujeres vagantes, ladronas, hechiceras, alcahuetas y otras semejantes” (68) (wanderers, thieves, witches, go-betweens, and other, similar women). In this text, these women were portrayed as circulating on urban streets expressly to deceive men, including officials of the Church and State: “ya sabemos por experiencia los embustes y ensayos de estas mozas vagantes” (85) (we already know from experience the lies and

tricks of these wandering young women). The author represented them as a clear and present threat to the status quo, and cautioned against being “duped” by them (84). Madre Magdalena insisted that extreme measures needed to be taken to guarantee that (a certain segment of) women stayed off the streets: once the *galera* was built, the public crier was to announce the event for six days, during which all young working-class and poor women (*mozas*) would need to find a place of employment, and all *mozas* from other towns would need to make themselves known to the warden’s wife (or spend three days in the *galera*). Any woman who did not comply, she specified, should be forcibly taken to the prison. A vision of streets, empty of women, guided by the model of other cities that had already purportedly accomplished this aim, such as Granada, structures the narrative.

Setting Out the Terms: Madre Magdalena Disciplines and Punishes

The view of the women confined in the *galera* as daughters of Eve, responsible for humankind’s sins, provides the ideological basis for the imposition of the harsh rules and conditions outlined in *Razón y forma*. Anticipating and paraphrasing assertions that she is too harsh regarding others of her gender, the author preempts the gendered criticism: “teniendo el nombre y hechos de esta *Galera* por demasiado rigor y severidad, particularmente siendo inventada por mujer contra mujeres” (66) (those who judge the name and deeds of this *Galera* as too rigorous and severe, especially since it was created by a woman against women). Still, as is evident in the epigraph that introduces this essay, Sor Magdalena articulates the premise that both disciplinary severity and Christian charity should be applied in the conception and operation of the women’s prison she envisions. Deliberately authoritative, the authorial stance revealed in her discourse contradicts the use of the standard trope of humility in the speaker’s self-identification as a “pecadora” (65) (sinner)—who, by the way, writes this “little treatise” or “little work” (66). Clearly, the assured tone buttresses the claim to knowing how to combat the scourge of “bad women” that she presents as harmful to Spain. Indeed, the damage to Spanish customs, she tells the king in the prefatory letter, “nacía de la libertad, disolución y rotura de muchas mujeres, sentía (aunque gran pecadora) un gran dolor en mi alma, así de ver a nuestro gran Dios y Señor ofendido, como de ver este nobilísimo y cristianísimo reino estragado y perdido” (65) (was born out of the freedom, dissolution, and faults of many women, I felt (though a sinner) a great suffering in my soul, as much from seeing our great God and Lord offended, as from seeing this most noble and Christian reign ravaged and lost). In the introduction following the letter, she reiterates, “algunas mujeres . . .

con su libertad y disolución, por no la llamar desvergüenza, han perdido el amor a Dios y a la justicia, y hecho increíble riza y estrago en los hombres y en las mismas ciudades y pueblos” (68) (some women, with their freedom and wantonness, so as not to call it shamelessness, have lost the love of God and of justice, and have caused incredible hurt and difficulties in men and in cities and towns). The document, *Razón y forma*, announces in writing the author’s commitment to her crusade, a war against what she perceives as these crimes, perpetrated by those whom she views as criminals.

Describing the root cause of the proliferation of sinful women, Madre Magdalena asserts that is not: “bastante castigo en España para este linaje de malas mujeres, y que, así, el remedio sería que hubiese tantas suertes de castigos para ellas como hay para los hombres delincuentes, pues muchas de ellas les llevan harta ventaja en la maldad y pecados” (68) (enough punishment in Spain for this group of evil women, and so, the remedy would be that there be as many kinds of punishment for them as there are for criminal men, since many of the women are even more evil and sinful than their male counterparts). A principal and repeated argument in her treatise, that “bad” women, like “bad” men, require punishment, suggests that treating them with *rigor* (severity) is in fact charity and mercy, because only through the strong deterrent of fear of punishment, together with an enforced regimen of regulated hard labor, can positive change occur. Logically, she argues, Spain needs a system of punishment for women parallel to men’s:

Uno pues de los castigos, y muy general, que hay en España para los hombres malhechores es el echarlos a galeras por dos o más años, según sus delitos lo merecen. Pues así, haya galeras en su modo para echar a las mujeres malhechoras, donde a la medida de sus culpas sean castigadas. (68)

(One of the very common punishments in Spain for condemned men is to sentence them to the galleys for two or four or more years, as appropriate to their crimes. In the same way, there should be *galeras*, to confine women found guilty of crimes, where they may be punished in conformity to their crimes.)

This harping on the term *galera* and the insistence on the need for gender-specific punishment constitute two principal hallmarks, one lexical, the other conceptual, of the treatise.

Several specific groups of women, as noted above, are targeted as especially in need of correction. The first section of the treatise, “De la importancia y necesidad y de la galera” (Of the importance of and necessity for the *galera*), elaborates, paragraph by paragraph, the criminal behavior of each. Although she discusses false beggars, lazy servants, and, of course, sex workers, Madre Magdalena reserves her harshest words for *alcahuetas* (go-betweens), older women whom she describes as using various tactics of deception in order to practice their trade. Some, for instance, maintain houses in which young women pretend to work as seamstresses; others maintain groups of young women who pretend to beg, but who are really prostitutes (72). Many young women become lost, she maintains, because of the bad “mothers” who rule such houses. Insisting once more on extending the *galera* metaphor, she avers: “que mejor se podían llamar madrastras y echar a remar su vida en esta Galera” (77) (they would be more accurately called stepmothers and should spend their lives rowing in this *Galera*). Borrowing and re-orienting the framework of (distorted) maternity, and then linking it to the language of punishment tied to *galeras*, Madre Magdalena makes a strong case for fighting what she defines as evil.

The hegemonic ideology of the period, which held that society should be rigidly and hierarchically structured, and which permeates the language and conceptual framework of the *Razón*, is evident particularly in Sor Magdalena’s discussion of the young women destined for work as maid servants, a group she censures for subverting the social hierarchy: “Antiguamente, si entraba una doncella o moza a servir en alguna casa, no salía de ella si no era para casarse o para la sepultura; pero ahora apenas duran un mes y luego mudan otra casa” (73) (Traditionally, if a young girl entered into service in a house, she did not leave it except to marry or be buried upon death, but now they barely last one month and then they change houses). Not only that, but they are so daring as to expect more than their due: “y otras, ya que sirven, piden tantas condiciones, que más parece que entran para mandar que para servir” (73) (and others, who work as servants, ask for so many conditions, that it appears that they enter service more to give orders than to serve). Clearly, she notes, the cure for the disease is prevention: “conviene poner remedio eficaz . . . atajar el daño en sus principios” (74) (It would be useful to apply an efficacious remedy . . . cut off the damage at the beginning), by setting up houses for orphaned girls to learn skills to become maids and other kinds of servants. Here again, the remedy of gender-specific institutionalized forced labor is designated as the solution for overcoming perceived social problems.

The inmates of the *galera* should be ruled by five administrators: a male warden, married to a respectable woman, who live separately; and three women within, including a director, to oversee operations; a portress, who

guards the second door and the pantry; and a teacher, who will teach the prisoners prayer and doctrine (80). Officials in charge will need to govern firmly, attentive to every detail, with “*cien ojos, valor y gran pecho*” (80) (with a hundred eyes, courage, and a big heart). They will not only ensure that the institution runs smoothly and that each prisoner contributes what is expected of her, they will also administer punishment (appropriate to the transgression) when necessary. Those who blaspheme or swear, for instance, should have a gag placed in their mouths, and the most disruptive should be chained to their beds at night. Women who are returned to the prison will be branded on the back with the arms of the city of the *galera*; each time a woman returns, the penalty increases. Recidivists who return a fourth time will be hung at the door of the prison, “*para que las demás escarmienten y asesen*” (81) (so that the other women learn a lesson and behave). Nevertheless, the same administrators are expected to protect their charges. In fact, Sor Magdalena rails against tyrannical employers who mistreat their servants, recommending that the warden and his wife remain vigilant against such abuses (87).

In the prison, she argues, daily schedules should emphasize rigid discipline in routines, dress, food, work, and, in short, every aspect of daily life. The inmates will be held absolutely accountable for their behavior. Regarding prisoners’ dress, Madre Magdalena stipulates in absolutely clear terms that their clothing be so austere that no one might mistake them for anything but *arrepentidas*. Of course, the coarse cloth and modesty evokes nuns’ habits and marks those in the *galera* as in need of severe restriction and denial of comfort as part of their regimen.⁷ As Boyle notes, “In line with humanists of the period, the nun depicts women’s bodies as malleable sites of exemplarity and seeks to exploit that potential” (35). Upon entering, inmates’ clothing and jewelry should be taken, their heads shaved—“*como hacen a los forzados en las galeras*” (78) (as prisoners in the galleys are required to do). They should be dressed in the roughest possible clothing, a uniform of sorts (78–79). And, their original clothing (in which they entered the *galera*) should be sold when they leave, in order to buy “decent” clothing for service work. Sor Magdalena suggests, though, that the prison should supplement the amount if needed. In order to reinforce the theme of deprivation and sacrifice, prisoners’ food should reflect the same deficiencies as their dress: dark bread, preferably a “*bizcocho*” (dry cake) similar to what male *galeotes* (prisoners in galleys) eat; their diet should consist of a slice of cheese or a turnip; and a bowl of collard greens or turnips in which to moisten the bread; along with a small and poorly cooked slice of beef one day a week.

As for daily routines, she harps on the need for hard work, with long hours. The women should toil constantly, and not be allowed to sleep until they have finished their quota, in order to help pay the expenses of the house:

“Nunca han de estar ni un solo punto ociosas; y así, han de tener tarea en su labor y su pena, si no la acabaren, y han de velar hasta acabarla, porque con su labor y trabajo han de ayudar para los gastos de la Galera” (79) (They should never be at all at leisure; and they should always be busy working, and be punished if they don’t finish the work, and they must remain awake working until they finish their quota, because their work should help to pay the expenses of the *Galera*). The emphasis on hard labor as an antidote to sinful behavior reflects the nun-administrator’s view of women as susceptible to temptation, in line with dogma and belief.

Throughout, the conflation of *rigor* (harshness) and *misericordia* (mercy) remains. In the second chapter, “De la forma y traza de esta Galera,” the author contends that “no tener piedad . . . es más caridad y misericordia” (80) (not having pity . . . is more charity and mercy). In the last section, “En que se pone una exhortación a los Jueces y Gobernadores de la República” (In which there is an exhortation to the judges and governors of the realm), she repeats: “[L]o que conviene es rigor y más rigor” (93) (what is necessary is severity and more severity) and “por grande que sea el rigor que se usa en esta Galera, no se ha de entender que es contra la caridad y misericordia” (94) (as much harshness as is used in this *Galera*, it is not to be understood that it is against charity and mercy). Again availing herself of medical analogies, Madre Magdalena argues that applying harsh rule is the only way to cure the wound: “Yo, absolutamente, no quiero el rigor; pero, supuesta la herida, es menester cura que duela” (94) (I absolutely do not want severity, but given the wound, a cure that hurts is necessary). Part 4, “De los provechos que de esta Galera se siguen” (Of the benefits accrued from this *galera*) elaborates the benefits of her approach, both for the target population of women in need of correction and for Spain. The *galeras* are essential, she believes, “para desterrar de la república la ociosidad y maldad de estas mujeres” (80) (in order to rid the nation of the laziness and evil of these women). But she insists that *rigor* is not cruelty. In fact, nothing should be done in the *galera* that is “contra la caridad y justicia” (86) (against charity and justice).

Madre Magdalena offers a sweeping vision of national public health reform resulting from the construction of *galeras* in all cities. Great social benefits will accrue, including prevention of many sins against God; banishment of laziness; prevention of men’s damnation; reformation of the service work of governesses, maids of honor, and maidservants; reduction in the number of married men’s affairs; greater efficiency in carrying out justice; just punishment of incarcerated women; women’s greater desire to be virtuous; and the societal ability to use scarce economic resources for truly needy persons (90–92). Addressing gender specificity insofar as it begins with, but projects beyond the commonplace of blaming women as Eve’s daughters, the proposed

galera offers a model of an institution intentionally designed to address perceived women's (and societal) needs. The apparent paradox, of a woman who chose (religious) enclosure choosing to support the forceful confinement of other women as a means of both educating and punishing them, is unraveled with unusual clarity in this treatise.

NOTES

1. Magdalena de San Jerónimo's treatise is referred to herein as *Razón*. All citations are this document, as it appears in Isabel Barbeito Carneiro's edition, *Cárceles y mujeres en el siglo XVII*, 61–95; they will be cited with the page number in parentheses. All translations into English are mine.
2. Indeed, she is called “fundadora de la casa de Probación de Valladolid” (founder of the Probationary House of Valladolid) on the frontispiece of the 1608 edition of *Razón*.
3. For an overview of Carvajal's life and work, see Cruz.
4. Ana de Jesús (1545–1621), one of Teresa of Ávila's favored spiritual daughters, contributed to the continued expansion of the Order after the Saint's death, founding Discalced Carmelite convents in Granada and Madrid, and subsequently in France and Brussels.
5. For a summary of how syphilis was viewed and spread in early modern Spain, see Fernández Sobremazas 6.
6. She also insists that the prison chaplain not speak with his charges.
7. See Pérez Baltasar, “El castigo” for a discussion of the relationship between the dress and routines in women's *recogimientos* and those of the convent.

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