Digital visionary women: introducing the “Catalogue of Living Saints”

Pablo Acosta-García and Rebeca Sanmartín Bastida

ABSTRACT
This article introduces the “Catalogue of Living Saints,” a wiki catalogue that provides knowledge about the lives of Castilian charismatic women, prior to Teresa of Ávila (d. 1582), who acquired reputations for holiness in their own times. The lives of these “holy” women show great contact between court and convent, and they contribute to better understanding the history of women and their subsequent impact on society. The collected lives appeared in a diversity of sources: manuscripts of the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries, including conventual books and compendia containing lives of saints, handwritten and printed chronicles of religious orders in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Castile, and other works. Thus, the Catalogue recovers several texts that have never been printed before and that in most cases were never edited independently. Furthermore, it integrates the development of a database in order to understand the different proposed hagiographical models and their performative shape and spatial distribution of power. Additionally, this article discusses how gathering, editing, and reading the lives of these women via an open-access virtual tool creates a new hermeneutical framework regarding the materiality of the original codices and printed volumes. Finally, it proposes mitigation measures in the near future to bring contemporary reading practices (and interpretation) closer to historical ones.

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Introduction

The Catalogue of Living Saints (hereafter Catalogue) is a wiki that collects a corpus of lives of Castilian women, prior to Teresa of Ávila (d. 1582), who acquired reputations for holiness and were influential in religious life as well as in the politics of their time. These social and religious leaders lived between 1400 and 1550. The term living saint...
(originally, in Italian, *santa viva*) was coined by Gabriella Zarri for a similar female paradigm in Italy and has become a technical term to identify both a religious modus vivendi and feminine models of sanctity present all around Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The lives collected in the wiki appeared originally in a variety of sources: manuscripts of the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries, both handwritten and printed chronicles of religious orders in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Castile, and conventual books or compendia containing lives of saints (such as *flos sanctorum*), among others. Thus, the Catalogue recovers and gives new life to an extensive number of texts that were either never printed or edited independently.

The current lack of knowledge about these figures owes much to issues related to gender and the literary canon, intensified by two significant historical processes: on one hand, the cloistering initiated at the beginning of the sixteenth century, which was an important result of different religious reforms in Castile imposing regulated and controlled ways of life for religious women; on the other hand, the intensified surveillance caused by the Counter-Reformation, especially the persecution of religious movements – such as the *alumbrados* – perceived as heterodox. Although most of the texts kept in the Catalogue have been out of circulation for centuries, this fertile literary field connects the time of Teresa of Ávila and the Counter-Reformation with a medieval milieu. Furthermore, some living saints were themselves authors of texts, as certain lives listed in the Catalogue indicate: even if many writings authored by these women have disappeared – those of María de Ajofrín and María de Toledo, for example – we still have some documents, letters, and revelations, as is the case of María de Santo Domingo (the *Book of Prayer and the Revelations*) and Juana de la Cruz (the revelations in her lives and the *Book of Conhorte*). In short, the edition of these women’s lives allows us to study the construction and evolution of a set of hagiographical models as well as to analyze European influences on these Castilian hagiographies, thereby opening lines of interdisciplinary study.

In the first section of this article, we explain the context in which the Catalogue was envisioned. We outline the state of the art on its main topic, female mysticism in the Iberian Peninsula, highlighting the presence of understudied religious women before Teresa of Ávila and the difficulties of gaining access to certain sources before the creation of our wiki. In the second section, we deal with the wiki as a virtual platform for collecting and editing pre-modern texts, examining its pros and cons. In the third, we explore from a theoretical point of view how users of the new digital format experience the materiality of the original textual artifacts. Finally, in the fourth section, we consider some future challenges of the Catalogue.

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2Zarri, “Le sante vive,” and *Le sante vive: Cultura*. A recent issue of the *Archivio Italiano per la Storia della Pietà* in honor of Zarri collects articles on female European living saints: for an overview of the Castilian cases, see Acosta-García, “En viva sangre bañadas.” In the Catalogue, as some leading religious women of the period were not explicitly involved in mystical phenomena according to the sources, the term *living saint* has been applied extensively rather than restrictively. The Marie Skłodowska-Curie project developed by Acosta-García (Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, H2020-MSCA-IF-2018) seeks, among other objectives, to evaluate materially the extent to which the works of European women mystics were circulating in Castile from the thirteenth through fifteenth centuries and beyond.

3On the cloistering processes, see Muñoz Fernández, *Beatas y santas neocastellanas*, 30–31, and “Iberian Women in Religion;” Graña Cid, “Mujeres y educación;” Braguier, *Servantes de Dios*, 363–84. On the Dominican case, see Pérez Vidal, “La reforma de los monasterios.”

4On the *alumbrados* heresy, see Márquez, *Los alumbrados*.

5On the European models of influence in Castile, see Acosta-García, “Santas y marcadas” (for Mechthild von Hackebron and Angela da Foligno), and “On Manuscripts” (for Caterina da Siena).
The Catalogue’s background

The idea of creating this Catalogue resulted from an initial project funded by the Spanish government, *The Construction of Female Sanctity and Visionary Discourse (15th–17th Centuries): Analysis and Recovery of Conventual Literature* (2013–15). This project sought to confront the still widespread belief that Teresa of Ávila was the founder of female mystical literature in the Iberian Peninsula.6 The pioneering works of Marcel Bataillon (*Erasmo y España*) and Pedro Sainz Rodríguez (*La siembra mística*) were essential to changing the vision of Teresa as a founder of a novel form of literature in the Iberian Peninsula disconnected from the European feminine tradition.7

As a natural development of the recent renewed interest in medieval women mystics in various European contexts, the project investigated medieval European visionary women to deepen previous paradigms of feminine holiness, among other objectives.8 Despite the new avenues of understanding opened by the groundbreaking works of Ronald E. Surtz9 and explored by very significant studies like those of Ángela Muñoz Fernández, María del Mar Graña Cid, and others on the Castilian saintly *beatas*, few analyses had been devoted to framing the Iberian female visionary and literary phenomenon in Europe before Teresa, nor to the results of the wider medieval European influence on her life and work.10 This need to deepen the history of female spirituality through the study of the revelations and, especially, of the lives of the Iberian *beatas*, was one of the main aims of this project, which sought to demonstrate that Teresa of Ávila emerged from a fertile field with a clearly European base that considered writing one of its defining features.

Adopting a methodology that also considered revelations from a performative perspective, the idea was to better understand the construction of Iberian feminine holiness as it was conditioned by both the Reformation and Counter-Reformation.11 This research allowed claims to be made for the immense social significance of texts that deserved a place in the literary canon because they enjoyed wide circulation at the time and had a real impact on a number of influential groups.12

This project was followed by a second (2016–2019) – *The Emergence of Female Spiritual Authority in Castile* – also funded by the Spanish government and by European

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6This assumption can be found even in the excellent study by Sebastián Mediavilla in his edition of her *Libro de la vida* (397–512).

7This line of interpretation has been developed from a genre and performative perspective by, for example, Giles, “The Discourse of Ecstasy,” and “Spanish Visionary Women;” Graña Cid, “¿Una memoria femenina;?” and Sanmartín Bastida, *La representación de las místicas*. In recent years the wider picture regarding a shared background in feminine Castilian spirituality has become more accepted; see, for instance, McGinn, *Mysticism in the Golden Age*. For the dissemination of late medieval feminine mystics’ texts in Spanish-speaking scholarship, Cirlot and Garí, *La mirada interior*, is essential.

8The bibliography on religious women from the work of Grundmann, *Religious Movements* (1935) until the present day is overwhelming. On women mystics, see the deeply influential writings of Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, and *Fragmentation and Redemption*; and Hamburger, *Nuns as Artists*, and *The Visual and the Visionary*.

9Surtz, *The Guitar of God*, and *Writing Women*.

10For an essential historical background of the Castilian *mulieres religiosae* that takes into account Castilian charismatic women, see Muñoz Fernández, *Mujer y experiencia religiosa, Beatas y santas neocastellanas*, and “Iberian Women in Religion;” Graña Cid, *Religiosas y ciudades, “Encarnar la palabra,”* and “Las profetisas;” Braguier, *Servantes de Dios*; Cortés Timoner, *Sor María y Sor Juana*.

11On gender, performance, and Castilian visionary women, see Sanmartín Bastida, “Sobre las categorías;” for a queer perspective, see Boon, “At the Limits.”

12The most famous case is the relationship of the Catholic Monarchs’ court with certain visionary *beatas*, including the defense and promotion of individuals such as María de Santo Domingo and Juana de la Cruz by Cardinal Cisneros; see Acosta-García, “Santas y marcadas.”
funds (FEDER). The Catalogue was envisioned in this context, as we tried to analyze spiritual authority in the environment of Castilian convents and beaterios from the beginning of the fifteenth century until the middle of the sixteenth. Our main purpose was to investigate how women’s religious discourse was used to gain access to the public sphere in the late Middle Ages. In this regard, there were still large gaps in our knowledge of this period, which seemed to be crucial because of the modalities of female spiritual authority that served as a starting point for developments in the following century. Over those years, the interrelation of courtly politics and religious life helped to create discursive styles and textual communities that empowered women in a very distinctive way.13

In this project, we started to work from the fact that the presence of women who were described to have had visionary, prophetic, and ecstatic qualities experienced a growth in Castile especially between 1450 and 1550. Although there is evidence of the existence of the beaterios almost two centuries before, their heyday was around the turn of the sixteenth century.14 Thereafter, most beaterios were dissolved or reconverted into convents and, from 1550 onwards, the Carmelite reform and the writings of Teresa de Ávila changed the general shape of female holiness. This led us to examine a pattern of women’s spirituality where these supernatural phenomena were essential to the relationship with the court, shaping the movement of Castilian living saints and allowing these holy women to enjoy prestige until the times of Teresa of Ávila. This empowerment relied on the court and on noble figures – as in the case of the relationship between María de Santo Domingo and the Duke of Alba – within the context of Cardinal Cisneros’s reform of religious life.15 Even though today most beatas are quite unknown outside the scope of church history, in their own times these holy women enjoyed social and political leadership and received a great deal of veneration.

Through the edition of the lives of these women with reputation for sanctity (many of them visionaries), the Catalogue was envisioned to constitute an essential tool to explain transformations of hagiographical models first developed in Italy and later transplanted to Castile (see Supplemental data).

A virtual infrastructure

After a careful selection of narratives, the output of the Catalogue aims to be a collection of interconnected texts in an open-access format. Nevertheless, we are aware that a wiki could imply some disadvantages, the most important of which is the general perception of wiki pages as being unscientific (with Wikipedia as the major example). In addition, from the perspective of the hosted information, the wiki model seemed to be less

13In fact, in order to study a wide landscape of feminine influence this project, directed, as the previous one, by Rebeca Sanmartín, was coordinated with a counterpart directed by María Morrás, Power, Spirituality, and Gender (Castile: 1400–1550): The Emergence of Female Authority in Courts and Convents, developed at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona, which focused on women’s religious power in the court.
14Muñoz Fernández, Beatas y santas neocastellanas, 21, locates the first communities of beatas at the beginning of the fourteenth century. Braguier, Servantes de Dieu, 71–111, gives a complete chronological and geographical landscape of the foundations. For the rise of Castilian mysticism in the fifteenth century, see Bilinkoff, “A Peasant Visionary,” 37–39.
15Bilinkoff, “A Spanish Prophetess,” was the first to underline this connection. See also Bilinkoff, “Charisma and Controversy;” Sanmartín Bastida, “Lecturas y mecenazgo espiritual.” On Cisneros’s reform, see García Oro, Cisneros y la reforma, 171–72; Bataillon, Erasmo y España, 1–71. On the relationship of María de Santo Domingo with the Dominican reform, see Surtz, Writing Women, 85–103; Beltrán de Heredia, Historia de la reforma.
stable than other digital platforms. However, we hold that choosing this format gives some advantages.

The Catalogue has been hosted as a wiki page on the website initially created to promote the results of our second project. From the beginning, we aimed to provide a virtual infrastructure that enabled the development of an open-access platform, and indeed, this wiki provides easy access to knowledge not only for an academic community (as in the case of scholarly journals) but also to the whole digital society. In fact, we are proposing here a tool to reach an audience with different levels of interest, whether in gender, religion, literature, or the history of Castile. The wiki-based format widens the possibility of reading for a lay audience and thus encourages awareness of a related set of religious leaders in order to study the empowerment of women in the period in question. Due to the success of Wikipedia, many users are already familiar with its format and layout, which facilitates the navigation and consultation of our Catalogue.

However, the choice of developing the platform using a wiki-based technology raised an initial contradiction: a wiki is, by definition, a collaborative tool in which any user is invited to participate. From the perspective of the dissemination of a largely ignored historical corpus of documents by or about women, direct access to the sources was a very attractive feature, but it raised an essential philological problem: clearly, any edition of a medieval or modern text requires skills gained by training and, very often, a high degree of expertise. Accordingly, we established a protocol to safeguard the consistent edition of texts. In the first place, we secured the published contents in the wiki by monitoring editions from the beginning to the final upload to the platform; this means that the edited text is controlled from writing until publication by members of the team, after which the text is not editable by external users. This allowed us to modify the standard working procedures of a wiki – in which every user can freely edit the contents of the platform – and, ultimately, to change the perception of the wiki to one that is reliable from a philological point of view and for its use in the creation of a scholarly catalogue.

On the other hand, from the perspective of transference of knowledge, the wiki format acquires new virtues, as it opens possibilities for the recovery of unpublished texts, which is the case with those contained in unique manuscripts or rare early printed books. This was important mainly because some texts needed urgent publication to allow quick dissemination, such as the early versions of the lives of María de Ajofrín and Juana de la Cruz (both in manuscripts of the Royal Library of El Escorial), of which only fragments or partial translations had previously appeared in research articles or specialized books. In this respect, the Catalogue shares the vocation of all wikis of being an instrument in constant (and, in our case, controlled) renewal: every time a textual modification is introduced by a member of the team, it is duly indicated and digitally registered, specifying the month and year in which the amendment or the new information was added. From the point of view of using the information, the Catalogue has a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) public

16http://visionarias.es/ (accessed 29 July 2020). On this website are links to the Catalogue, research team, news, conferences, publications, etc.
17For a description of the work and objectives of a wiki-based website, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wiki (accessed 29 July 2020).
18Brabanzon, “The Google Effect.”
19http://catalogodesantasvivas.visionarias.es/index.php/Especial:CambiosRecientes (accessed 29 July 2020).
license, its logo has been registered by the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, and an ISSN has been assigned to it by the National Library of Spain. All of these measures impose conditions of use when quoting from this source, as indicated on the site.

Concerning usability, we have designed the interface to be as user-friendly as possible: lives have been distributed through religious orders, we have attributed “categories” to places of birth and death, the Catalogue’s information is always easily reachable for the user, and the edited texts are cross-referenced – as in any other wiki – through hyper-links (e.g., a user can access the life of María de Ajofrín or Teresa de Guevara when these women are mentioned in Aldonza Carrillo’s narrative). Users can also search for any term they consider key by employing the search box at the top right of the main page. As well as conferring these advantages, the wiki format also allows the employment of online tools for analyzing texts, such as Voyant Tools to study the pragmatics of lexicology.

As mentioned above, highlighting the status of the religious women in their own times as sante vive (i.e., using a gendered political dimension) was more important for us than separating them by the religious orders to which they pertained, although this is a useful sub-descriptor for internal classification. In fact, the restrictive view by which the traditional historiographical focus has been placed on just a single order (generally through the process of selection carried out by the chroniclers of the orders) has been the main reason for perceiving the leadership of each of these women as a fragmentary, non-cohesive phenomenon: this is precisely what we want to avoid. The editorial choice of gathering the lives of these women from very different sources was based on highlighting these texts by both isolating them and recontextualizing them within a network of figures that allows new connections around the concept of santa viva. We believe that in times when open-access and ambitious digitization projects create the overwhelming sense of a real “superabundance” of materials – in which a massive, and at the same time fragmentary, landscape of virtual objects is available via the internet – projects such as ours, which establish a limited and coherent virtual corpus, are more necessary than ever. By recovering these lives in a virtual platform and by establishing solid relationships between them, we are creating, ordering, and offering to the public an understandable, readable, and, in sum, manageable image of the past in which the role of women is highlighted.

In this respect, to establish an emerging historical perspective, our intention is to create a virtual atlas of the living saints’ Iberian mobility in the near future. The virtual atlas and the development of the database are among the objectives of a third project, which has just been granted funding by the Spanish government. We aim here to geolocalize the movements of these women to establish geographic networks of action as well as social and textual groups, and to investigate the political, economic,

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20 For details on this international public license, see https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/ (accessed 19 September 2020). The ISSN given by the National Library of Spain is important for the legal recognition of the Catalogue not only as a repository of images and texts but also as a digital publication of edited texts with copyright restrictions.

21 http://catalogodesantasvivas.visionarias.es/index.php/Condiciones_de_uso (accessed 29 July 2020).

22 http://catalogodesantasvivas.visionarias.es/index.php/Aldonza_Carrillo (accessed 29 July 2020).

23 See Duval, “Pour une relecture.”

24 The term “superabundance” in relation to the current massive accessibility of digitized objects is used by Treharne, “Seeing and Being Seen.”

25 See note 1.
and religious implications of the studied phenomena. This will allow us to conceptualize and visualize this network of power and intellectual relationships from a completely different perspective.

From the point of view of the selection of the textual corpus, the introduction of the female living saints in the wiki has followed a staggered approach: it began with manuscript sources and a printed chronicle from the Franciscans, continued with Hieronymite chronicles, and is now expanding to those of the Dominicans. Regarding the criteria for editing printed lives, texts are always modernized, and adapted to current orthographic and syntactical rules, although respecting the other peculiarities of the historical writing style. Regarding other conventual documents such as letters, we have not taken them into account because generally they do not provide us with bio-hagiographical narratives. Due to the specificities of each source, different criteria have been applied in the case of manuscripts, whose edition follows more conservative rules that seek to facilitate a textual analysis that is enriching for the researcher. In these cases, we consider the existence of a copyist, the copyist’s milieu, and the condition of a manuscript as a unique witness. Since printed lives have a higher degree of modernization in our editions, they are more accessible to non-specialized readers.

**Text and materiality**

We originally decided to adopt a traditional philological approach, based on the aforementioned transcription and publication, for quick dissemination of writings by or about Castilian *sante vive*. In this respect, this project has always tried to maintain the difficult balance between rapid, direct access and circulation to the general public on the one hand, and a critical edition useful to scholars on the other. In practice, since 2019, this phase of editing and dissemination has meant publishing virtual products, which implies a very specific experience of the texts by users. Editorial decision-making has tended to promote texts as purely intellectual entities. The dichotomy between text and textual artifact, recently emphasized by Elaine Treharne and Claude Willan, is conventionally solved in philology by reducing the complex materiality of a codex to the polished textual edition to be printed on paper (or virtually, as in our case). That is to say, from a perspective that understands the text as inseparable from the textual artifact in a wider archaeological sense, the lives have been edited by untying them from their inherent material features. As mentioned above, the Catalogue uses a disparate set of sources both from material and generic points of view. This is obvious to the skilled reader who takes a look at the reference of the sources that accompany each of the lives: women’s lives could be part of miscellanies, such as *flos sanctorum*,

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26The CLAUSTRA project, funded by MICINN (2008–2010 and 2011–2013, HAR2008-02426 and HAR2011-25127), Institut Català de les Dones (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2010–2011), and Facultad de Geografía e Historia (University of Barcelona), was a pioneering project on the geolocalization of Iberian spirituality. See http://www.ub.edu/claustra/cat (accessed 29 July 2021).

27http://catalogodesantasvivas.visionarias.es/index.php/Criterios_de_edición_de_las_vidas_impresas (accessed 29 July 2020).

28“... the idea of text is abstract, but our means of perceiving it is always physical and concrete—what we call technological, rooted in praxis and technē,” Treharne and Willan, *Text Technologies*, 2.

29The expression “archaeology of the manuscript” has been taken from Maniaci, *Archeologia del manoscritto*.

30With *flos sanctorum* we are making reference to very popular hagiographical compilations disseminated from the late Middle Ages through the Early Modern Period.
chronicles of the religious orders, administrative documents, or even printed histories of famous cities. Two possible effects may result from this operation of detachment: the non-expert reader may gain an inaccurate impression of the edited sources as being homogeneous, while scholars working with the texts will perceive the need to reconstruct the material context.

This poses an essential interpretative problem that affects the edited manuscripts in particular. As has been widely discussed by different voices since the advent of New Philology, the search for the archetypal version of texts and/or their presentation as mere “rational products of philological endeavor” (that is to say, as detached texts) is, at the very least, theoretically problematic when working with medieval and Early Modern literature.31 In fact, when extracting a text from the original medium, the editor is blurring the reader’s access to the original set of historical interactions of that specific artifact in its own manuscript or printed culture. That implies a perception that steps away from the raison d’être of the textual object, obscuring its intentionality and functionality in its original context. To provide an example valid for the case of manuscripts, Nichols asserted in a well-known introduction written for a special issue of Speculum around thirty years ago:

It is evident that philological practices that have treated the manuscript from the perspective of text and language alone have seriously neglected the important supplements that were part and parcel of medieval text production: visual images and annotation of various forms (rubrics, “captions,” glosses, and interpolations).32

Of course, all the questions related to annotation would help us to clarify, at least, the position of the volume in the history of reading and thence to give it a diachronic dimension. Additionally, we are aware that there is a long list of features that only direct examination could supply: very common phenomena such as reordering (as in re-bindings), recombination (e.g., a devotional text merged with a pasted-in image), or addition (e.g. inserted folia or quires) would give more information about the life of the manuscript as a “process” and ideas about its historical function(s) in a more explicit contextual interaction with the reader.33

In their developing state, the texts of the Catalogue are isolated elements from a network of interdependent material connections. This creates a kind of paradoxical hermeneutical gap. We call it paradoxical because if we want to make the text legible and approachable not only to scholars but also to the public, we need to make some concessions. However, we should not underestimate the possibilities of a virtual tool to overcome existing issues.

In the first place, the biggest advantage of a digital edition over a traditional paper one is that it has a malleable and open character. As noted above, the whole procedure, from allocation of tasks to the final uploading to the website of the edited text, is a supervised process; this presents a stable final product that nonetheless retains the opportunity for progressive improvement. Secondly, although lives have been edited by untying them from their original material features, we are able to create new contexts that link them more to the present, hoping in this way to engage the general reader, for instance,

31Nichols, “Philology in a Manuscript Culture,” 3. See also Wenzel, “Reflections on (New) Philology;” Illich, In the Vineyard.
32Nichols, “On the Sociology,” 47.
33Johnston and Van Dussen, “Introduction,” 4–6.
through the illustrations exclusively designed for the wiki, a visual resource through which we highlight the feminine authorship in the illustration of each entry, even though no records of their appearance have generally remained. But most important of all, the specificity of the virtual medium gives us the possibility not only of updating texts (mostly revisions) but also of upgrading them. As we recognize that the material aspects need to be addressed in the near future, we want to confront the question of how to provide digital access not only to the narratives of the holy women, but also to metadata, and to do this within the wiki itself.

We need to remember here that the corpus of the Catalogue consists of texts of a widely varied nature and that we are dealing not only with pre-modern manuscripts but also with printed volumes. In our third project, we have created a series of measures to improve the approach to the materiality of each of the edited sources. These include the uploading of a codicological introduction to each of the lives, with a file including the codex/printed book’s metadata, and also a new section of description of sources and bibliography (with links to the database BIESES in the case of women writers), which is currently being implemented by Acosta-García. We are thus starting to link the virtual catalogues of the institutions that hold the objects, trying to provide high-definition images of the manuscripts or printed books when possible, and uploading images of manuscripts photographed by us or digitizations provided by libraries, after acquiring the necessary authorizations. This will provide the specialized reader with a material framework to orientate the hermeneutics of the text, and will help to combine popularization of research and solid historical bases through showing in each writing both modern illustrations and digitized images of the documents. Through these transformations, the Catalogue aims not only to correct poor textual approaches but also to contribute to the knowledge of archival and library collections in Spain, allowing for the national and international dissemination of bibliographical and documentary products containing cultural heritage. In this respect, the wiki format sends a message of accessibility to a wide non-academic audience while its online versatility permits the creation of an interface to show the fluidity of narratives, without hierarchizing them. All versions of all texts are equally important.

Nevertheless, we do not deny that, even with these improvements, collecting a corpus of Castilian lives of women via a wiki tool creates a new relationship between the open-access digitized materials and their associated material objects. It is useful to reflect on the change from the manuscript/printed nature of a text held in one’s hands to the experience of online viewing: this is a crucial metamorphosis in which the interface can modify the contents and their reception. Furthermore, we do not forget that first identifying and then choosing which lives to edit is inevitably a decision of the editor of the wiki (and is therefore a reflection of our conscious understanding of the female model of the living saint) yet it also obeys an ideology of the past as the chroniclers made their own choices: for example, since the second half of the sixteenth century, the Dominicans decided not to include María de Santo Domingo as a saint in the chronicles of the order. Thus, the multiple layers of selection and meaning (marked by the choices of the

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34 http://catalogodesantasvivas.visionarias.es/index.php/Contexto_material_del_manuscrito_Razón_y_Bezerro (accessed 29 April 2021). BIESES (Bibliografía de Escritoras Españolas) is an online database which aims to compile and systematize the sources for the study of Iberian women writers. See https://www.bieses.net/ (accessed 9 September 2021).
wiki editors, confessors, copyists, and chroniclers) create the ultimate transmission of the message via the Catalogue and shape the hagiography’s effects on its audience, whether in the past or present. Even if it were possible to identify and leave aside the ideology of each voice that transmits the life and the expressions of self-awareness of the particular author and their beliefs about how their language is received, the extant contents of the narrative of the living saint will escape “historicity” and “objectivity” because they are the interwoven product of various interests.

The Catalogue’s immediate future

In its three years of existence, the Catalogue has had almost 1500 visits, which can be adduced as evidence of its impact. The reason for these consultations may be related to the gender focus of the tool, at a time when society is more than ever demanding the recognition of the role of individual women and women’s communities of the past. As the Catalogue is constructed from different sources, it also offers the reader a complex overview of the changing characteristics of the textual world from the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries. In this way one can measure the different voices and hierarchies, the oral or written origin of the hagiographical narrative, and – most importantly – the support or abandonment of a certain female model by ecclesiastical authorities. Indeed, the Catalogue allows enriching comparisons between different versions of hagiographies to establish basic sources, rewritings, changes in the paradigms of sanctity, and influences. In this respect, besides the improvements mentioned above, we plan to add two sections to the Catalogue in this third project: an introduction to each life, in order to contextualize the historical characters that accompany the women, and a bibliography of each living saint and the life of the author of the narrative (if known).

Finally, we are now developing a database linked to the Catalogue that is based on the analysis of rhetoric and semantics through the descriptions of the performances present in every life. As the same lives are narrated before and after the Council of Trent in different ways (e.g., the miraculous is diminished in later narratives), the database shows traits, gestures, and actions that are censored or encouraged at different times. The database thus offers classified items under different headings about the actions carried out by the living saints in the collected narratives, and it includes a list of related categories to organize the files. Its conceptual design was created from the analysis of the manuscript lives of María de Ajofrín and Juana de la Cruz, the most extensive texts in the set, and it is structured around categories – saint, work, and gesturality – taking into account emotions, somatic manifestations, speeches, spaces, objects, and bodily disciplines. Places, as we have stated, will soon be geolocated in virtual maps. So, as we are working with visionaries’ bodies, the database deals with materiality and movement. This digital tool thus complements the analysis completed in our first two projects, offering more possibilities for theoretical and methodological reflections on the narration of

35For an exposition of similar ideas, see Brown, “Y pasó por mí.”
36Following this line of enquiry, we are editing different versions of post-Tridentine flores sanctorum, as in the case of Alonso de Villegas’ Addicion a la Tercera Parte del Flos sanctorum, fols. 63v–64r, whose narration includes some of our living saints inside a group of santos extravagantes. See also Redondo, “La reconstrucción del santo.”
37http://basededatos.visionarias.es/ (accessed 29 July 2020).
the body in the accounts of these lives through the possibility of conceptualizing movements in a database structure. After studying the remaining lives that make up the corpus, the design of the database will be reviewed and completed, and new research carried out by some members of the present project will be based on the structured data of the database. We hope that this tool will arouse the interest of scholars engaged with religious performance and power, as it helps to find information about gestures related to ideas, characters, and hierarchies, once again reinforcing the capacity of these newly edited texts to bring us a fresh understanding of the role played by these charismatic women in their historical context.

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Notes on contributors

Pablo Acosta-García is currently a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellow at the Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf (Germany), where he is developing the project Late Medieval Visionary Women’s Impact in Early Modern Castilian Spiritual Tradition (Grant Agreement 842094). In his PhD thesis he analyzed the devotional culture of Marguerite Porete’s Mirror of Simple Souls. Additionally, he has edited the marginalia of its manuscript tradition (Sacris Erudiri, 2017). He has published an annotated Spanish translation of Angela da Foligno’s Memoriale (Siruela, 2014) and has co-edited Touching. Devotional Practices and Visionary Experiences in the Late Middle Ages (Palgrave McMillan, 2019). Currently he is working on a monograph, Liturgy and Revelation in the Book of the Conhorte by the Abbess Juana de la Cruz (1481–1534), to be published by Brill. He has taught at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra and the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (Spain), and has been a visiting professor at the Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf (Germany).

Rebeca Sanmartín Bastida is Full Professor of Spanish Literature at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid. Previously she worked at the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas in Madrid (1996–2004) and at the University of Manchester (2001–2003). Her research encompasses wide-ranging chronologies, although she favors especially the fifteenth, sixteenth, and nineteenth centuries. She has published widely on Spanish visionary women, including editions of María de Santo Domingo’s Revelaciones (with María Luengo Balbás, Queen Mary University, 2014) and her Libro de la oración (with María Victoria Curto Hernández, Iberoamericana, 2019), and the monographs La representación de las místicas (Real Sociedad Menéndez Pelayo, 2012) and La comida visionaria (CCCP, 2015). Sanmartín has been a Visiting Professor and Researcher at Queen Mary University, London (2008), Nottingham (2014), Trento (2016), and the Instituto de Estudos Medievais, Universidade Nova Lisboa (2020).

ORCID

Pablo Acosta-García http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3113-6050
Rebeca Sanmartín Bastida http://orcid.org/0000-0003-4720-2446
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