“The Greatest Woman in History since the Mother of God”:
Global Catholic Community in Contemporary Efforts to Canonize Isabel of Castile

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Dedication

Hail Mary, Full of Grace...

For the women who have filled my life with joy.

For Kaziah.

And for my mother.

Who taught me to call to women in times of struggle.

Who taught me how infinitely feet can walk, arms can hold, and hearts can open.

Who gave me my first book.

Who gave me my first words of prayer.

Who gave me the gift of these four years.

ILYA
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Apartment 38. There is not another family I would rather have been pulled into.
This paper emerges from a lacuna in the historiography of Isabel of Castile. Numerous studies explore the rituals, art works, and language employed by Isabel’s medieval supporters, by the Queen’s imperial grandson, by nineteenth century historians, and by Franco’s regime in mid-nineteenth-century Spain, with the aim of elevating Isabel to mythic status. Isabel’s pending saintly status, however, has received far less scholarly attention. Exploring a contemporary website (c. 2010) and magazine (1996-2010) dedicated to the cause of Isabel’s canonization, media I refer to collectively as Isabel, I seek to shed light on recent appropriations of the multivalent figure of Isabel. I argue that Isabel’s historic relationship to gendered discourses of bodily integrity versus bodily corruption; her reputation as a crusader and converter in the Reconquista of Iberia; and her signification as unifier of Spain and mother of the Americas are valences Isabel recycles at the service of its vision of ‘global Christendom.’ Isabel of Castile’s body becomes a metonym for one, indivisible Catholic Church and one, indivisible transnational family of humanity. Yet Isabel’s effort to produce an all-encompassing Catholicization of the world most prominently serves to demonstrate the factions within the Catholic Church and the impossibility of such a project of world unification. In this way, the call for canonization does not concern the connections between heaven and earth, alone, but also calls into question the politics of the material world.
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I. INTRODUCTION: ISABEL AND OPRAH

Flanked by an image of Queen Isabel on the left and an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe on the right, the homepage banner of QueenIsabel.org queries: “Queen Isabel the Catholic The greatest woman in history since the Mother of God?” (Fig. 1.) On one side, the Virgin Mary, in her mestiza, post-Columbian Meso-American incarnation. On the other, the medieval Iberian Queen who sponsored Columbus’s voyages and the Catholicization of the Americas. In between, in the generative space of the question, a blended bricolage of heaven and earth, Spain and America, medieval and modern day. And we web voyeurs are compelled to enter the space. To contemplate as readers the question of ‘greatest woman in history,’ we must imagine an unruptured, millennia-and-continent-spanning ‘history’ in which both the Mother of God and the patron of Columbus can be said to exist.

The content of the web 1.0 Queen Isabel site reproduces this kind of narrative melding ad infinitum. Its images, copyright statement, links (to the Vatican; to the Daughters of Isabella), a timeline (“Of the Life of the Servant of God the Queen Isabel”), essays (“Isabel—Protector of the Jews”; “Why Apologize for the Spanish Inquisition”), and prayers (Almighty Father, in Your infinite goodness You made Queen Isabel the Catholic, a model for young ladies, wives, mothers, women leaders and government rulers...Grant us the grace to see Your infinite majesty glorified in her prompt canonization...”) play an unceasing refrain of the unity of Isabel, divine grace, and global history. Highly-charged, eye-catching words buzz through the static display of the pages: Inquisition, Black Legend, Jews, Apologize, Saint, Crusader. We are reminded that Isabel is inquisitor, conqueror, converter: reputed foe of Jews and Muslims (though we are told

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1 “Queen Isabel the Catholic,” Queenisabel.org, http://www.queenisabel.org/index.html. All subsequent references to QueenIsabel.org will be cited only by the title of the webpage and the title of the website. All web pages last accessed April 8, 2016.
2 See “Links”; “About Queen Isabel”; and “Canonisation” pages of QueenIsabel.org.
this is a libelous fable created by Protestants and other anti-Catholics). Centuries-old conversational tensions are evident in the way the words combat, presume, provoke. What really happened? Whose historiography is it anyway? We read “All rights reserved” in the copyright on each page, but we do not know to whom the rights are reserved. We do not know who curates this conversation. Although the authors are occasionally identified, their names are severed from most biographical context. For instance, we see in bylines, the very reverend Father Alphonsus Maria Duran; Warren H. Carroll, PhD; and Archduchess Alexandra von Habsburg, “daughter of H.I.R.H. Archduke Carl-Ludwig of Austria (son of Blessed Emperor Charles I of Austria and Empress Zita)...[and] H.I.R.H. Archduchess Yolande of Austria, born Princess de Ligne in Belgium.” Yet the author’s names are accompanied only by ecclesiastical, aristocratic, and scholarly markers of authority. There is thus little information about the authors, and even less differentiation among their writing styles and themes. The authors, both as extratextual individuals and as individual producers of text, merge together into the Authorial Voice of QueenIsabel.org.

Concentrated efforts to parse the voice, the individuals wielding it—the mouthpieces and the minds—and the desires for which it speaks reveal that QueenIsabel.org is the web space of the Comité Internacional para La Canonización de Isabel la Cátolica [the International Committee for the Canonization of Isabel the Catholic]. The committee has branches in Madrid (Spain), Avila (Spain), Chicago (IL, USA), Nogales (AZ, USA), and Ponce (Puerto Rico), and Rome (Italy). The president of this organization is Luis Cardinal Aponte Martinez, Archbishop

3“Queen Isabel and the Jews”; “Isabel of Spain, the Catholic Queen”; “Isabel the Catholic, Faithful Daughter of the Church,” of QueenIsabel.org.
of San Juan, Puerto Rico. And its purpose is agitation for the beatification and eventual canonization of Isabel of Castile.4

Regional sections of the Catholic Church have been considering the medieval Queen for sainthood since 1958, when the Archbishop of Valladolid (Spain), encouraged by the Francoist regime, including Franco’s Minister of Education, initiated an investigation into her life and works.5 The sponsorship of canonization complimented Francisco Franco’s broader policies of ultra-conservative re-Catholicization of Spain, especially as they related to the strict enforcement of traditional, pre-Republic gender roles for men and women. Isabel’s portrayal as a docile, loving wife and mother and as devout Catholic Queen served these aims well, and the Castilian Queen was used in schoolrooms and public streets as an emblem of the new Fascist, Spanish nation. In 1972, the investigation into Isabel’s candidacy for sainthood reached the level of the Holy See, and an official examination conducted by the Sacred Congregation for the Cause of the Saints has been underway ever since.6 The International Committee for the Canonization of Isabel the Catholic is the lay and clergy allied Catholic group financially, organizationally, and socially supporting these efforts: we may consider them the inheritors of the Valladolid efforts of the 1950s-1970s.

This information, while standard and useful from the standpoint of journalistic inquiry, is more or less irrelevant to my project. My work is not a sociological report of the International

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4QueenIsabel.org does not have a contact page or state webmaster in its copyright. A P.O. Box address in provided on the canonization page: “Comité Reina Isabel, P.O. Box 268237, Chicago, IL 60626-8237, U.S.A.” Some of the authors of the articles posted on the website, are noted, but no mention is made of whether or not they have an official affiliation with the website. For all other information, the reader must access the magazines housed in the “Magazine Archive” page; the first few pages of Isabel magazine contains names of people involved in the production of the magazine and, more broadly, in the effort to canonize Isabel.


6See “Canonization,” QueenIsabel.org, for basic summary of proceedings of Isabelline canonization attempts. Isabel’s title, Servant of God, designates that her life has merited a Vatican investigation into her candidacy for her sainthood.
Committee for the Canonization of Queen Isabel the Catholic, the producer of QueenIsabel.org. Rather, it is a close reading of QueenIsabel.org and, even more importantly, of Isabel magazine, the International Committee’s print publication, stored on QueenIsabel.org. Printed bi-monthly in Madrid from 1996-2010, it is the body of work animating the website with purpose. It is bilingual, printed sometimes split-page and sometimes section-by-section in Spanish and English. Isabel’s patronage of Columbus and early support for the Christian conversion of the inhabitants of the Americas adds particular significance to the dual English-Spanish character of the magazine. Spanish—inheritor of the Castilian of Isabel’s kingdom and the language of colonization in South and Central America—and English—the predominant language of the United States, the contemporary geopolitical power in the global South—are unified. It is a linguistic invocation of and harkening back to the Spanish Empire, the inception of which, according to the historiography of mid-twentieth century Spanish nationalism and of the Committee, was Isabel’s conquest of Granada.

PDF scans of all issues are entombed in the most substantial section of the website, the “Magazine Archive,” and the digital copies of the magazines, simply titled Isabel, are the quasi-tactile remains of the movement for Isabel’s canonization. No date is to be found anywhere on the website after the year 2010, the year of the website’ copyright and the last year of the magazine’s printing. The dates suggest that the website functions primarily to provide long-term, stable access to Isabel magazine and the Isabelline canonization movement, even as the committee’s activities waned. Moreover, the website does not invite interaction. We cannot sign in as users, we cannot comment, we cannot send in feedback through an automated email field. The website is not an end in of itself, but a self-conscious medium. It is a sepulchral archive for the literary corpus of Isabel, for Isabel herself, painted, sculpted written, printed, and digitized. It
exists to hold space, so that the body of the saint-in-waiting and the body of text are inseparable: we encounter Isabel through and at *Isabel* and vice versa. 

Through simultaneous centering and destabilization of media as mode and content, I aim to understand the spaces, times, and bodies—that is to say, imagined world—narratively established through contemporary advocacy for Queen Isabel’s canonization. In my approach, I follow Kathryn Lofton’s study of Oprah Winfrey, *O: the Gospel of an Icon*. While Isabel and Oprah are obviously very different figures, Lofton’s examination of Oprah as a heterogeneous and yet utterly synchronous collection of narratives, (femininity, capitalism, self-help) media (television show, magazine, girl’s academy, book club) that together produce and yet exceed the human woman and the lifestyle they sell, is a vital model for my treatment of the Catholic Queen. In her introduction, Lofton explains:

> From the start it should be clear: this Oprah is maybe not your Oprah. She is most likely nothing like the Oprah who hugs and helps and heals the world, one sympathizing smile at a time. For purposes of this work, the materiality of Oprah Winfrey—her body, her biography, and her singularity—is interesting only insofar as it documents and creates *Oprah*. Shifting from *her* to *it* is not easy, since Oprah is a professionally lovable sort of she. But this move is necessary if we are to know just what it is, exactly, that she sells. Because whatever Oprah is, it will be, in perpetuity, a product.7

Like Lofton, I find the ‘real’ person and structures of peripheral concern. *O* is the appellation Lofton ultimately uses to describe this composite, projected product of a person. While Lofton groups together and shifts away from Oprah Winfrey the person, professional, the personal narrative, under the term “materiality,” materiality, as combined magazine, website, committee, movement, intercessing saint, and deceased woman—altogether, *Isabel*—is the focus of my work. Pursuing *Isabel* across web constructed and scanned print pages, enables the detection of the tenacious and yet fragile Authorial Voice.

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The Authorial Voice of the text, of the website, of the Committee, of the Servant of God, of the Catholic Church, of God, are placed in a harmony so exquisite as to exceed the absurd and reach the sublime. It echoes through to us in the spare chambers of QueenIsabel.org and we web voyeurs are ushered into communion with it and its world. We may not email, we may not like, we may not comment, but we may observe and we may pray. “Pray to the Servant of God Isabel the Catholic and ask her intercession for your particular needs. When you obtain your favor, please inform us at: Comité Reina Isabel, P.O. Box 268237, Chicago, IL 60626-8237, U.S.A.” In the movement between reader and Authorial Voice, between desired ecclesiastical outcome (the Vatican canonizing Isabel) and unchanged ecclesiastical fact (the Vatican has not permitted Isabel’s case to reach a new stage since 1972), in the prayer, prayer objects and prayer subjects, and the prayer space constructed through Isabel, the impossibility, the fictitiousness, of a unified Isabel cosmology is revealed. The very unifying moves of the rhetoric and textual performance of Isabel reveal its fundamental, everlasting fractiousness: the body of Isabel, of the Catholic Church, of Christ cannot collapse into itself without breaking apart.

In order to explore Isabel’s fracturing moves toward unification, I highlight the roots of the gendered discourse of bodily integrity versus bodily corruption, which is so central to Isabel’s formulation (Section II). These roots are medieval and Iberian: they trace to Neo-Visigothic desires for the peninsular hegemony of a Spanish Catholic Kingdom and to Queen Isabel’s own fight to establish her sovereignty in Castile. With this background in place, I turn toward the literary corpus produced by and producing Isabel (Section III). Examining Isabel’s rhetoric of “global Christendom” and secularism, and the evidence the magazine provides in support of its conversion mission, I determine that Isabel functions as an imaginary community.

8 The double valence of the term “catholic” should be kept in mind each time it subsequently appears in this appear: “catholic” means the sectarian Christianity of the Roman Catholic Church, but also means “universal.”

9 “Canonization,” QueenIsabel.org.
of idealized extension and boundary-collapse. Yet Isabel’s very compulsion to wholeness exposes grave breaches of community and, indeed, disunity, within the Catholic Church (Section IV). Considering efforts to canonize Isabel of Castile through the Foucauldian lens of heterotopia and within the long history of contested sainthood, I argue that the Catholic Queen’s canonization functions for Isabel as a tool of reorientation. The magazine’s genderings of Isabel among multiple, traditionally Catholic but conflicting, axes of femininity is essential to its project of reorientation (Section V). This discursive switch allows Isabel to claim its movement as central and essentially Catholic, despite its regionalized, Spanish origins, and to displace the Vatican apparatus as corrupted and peripheral (Section VI).

II. BODY, NATION, COSMOS: AN HISTORICAL GROUNDING

Before understanding Isabel, we must first thread our way back through the long lineage of relationships and identities centered on the Castilian Queen. This is because, while specific to contemporary society, Isabel’s mobilization of the Isabelline myth is not new. We must reach back to her own lifetime, 1451-1504, when this process of mythologization began as a critical element of her reign and as a response to the instability of the late medieval Castilian throne. Indeed, the figure of Isabel, the “Queen of Spain,” referred to by QueenIsabel.org must itself be seen as a construction of sovereignty developed in the face of significant political contestation during the fifteenth-century. When Isabel’s father King Juan II of Castile died in 1454, he left Enrique IV, Isabel’s older, half-brother, as his appointed successor, with Isabel’s younger, full-brother Alfonso as second in the line of inheritance, and Isabel as third in the line of inheritance. Enrique’s wife bore him a daughter, Juana, in 1475, threatening the order of succession established by Juan II. Though pressure from the Castilian nobility forced Enrique to affirm
Alfonso as his heir, Alfonso rebelled in the 1460s, and civil war broke out in Castile. Alfonso died in 1468 in the midst of war. Following Alfonso’s death, Isabel signed the Treaty of the Bulls of Guisando, which temporarily ended the war and gave Isabel official status as the heir apparent. Isabel’s marriage to Fernando of Aragon\textsuperscript{10} in 1469 renewed political tensions and Enrique again considered Juana his heir. After Enrique’s death in 1474, the battle for Castile resumed in full force, with Juana and her husband, King Alfonso V of Portugal, warring against Isabel and her husband, Fernando of Aragon. During this period of uncertainty, and throughout her reign, Isabel, her political supporters, and her commissioned historiographers crafted an image of Isabel intended to legitimize her bid to rule in Castile.\textsuperscript{11}

Integral to this project of legitimization was a gendered body politics: the elevation of Isabel as the embodiment of morality and the carrier of royal Castilian blood, and Juana as the product of immorality and foreign blood. In analyzing the writings of Isabel’s court chroniclers Fernando de Pulgar, Alonso de Palencia, and Juan de Flores, contemporary historian Barbara F. Weissberger found repeated reference to Isabel as “‘legitimate daughter’ [hija legitima],” and “‘perfect wife’ [perfecta casada].”\textsuperscript{12} These characterizations of Isabel are juxtaposed with insinuations “about Enrique IV’s rumored homosexuality, his putative inability to control the sexual appetites of his wife, Juana de Portugal, and the resulting (alleged) illegitimacy of their daughter, snidely dubbed Juana la Beltraneja.”\textsuperscript{13} The nickname insultingly implied Juana was the daughter of court nobleman Beltran de la Cueva, rather than the king. Isabel, as the uncontested

\textsuperscript{10}Isabel married without the permission of Enrique, in defiance of the terms of the treaty, and thwarted Enrique’s attempts to marry her to his brother-in-law, the King of Portugal, and his later attempt to marry her to one of his courtiers, Don Pedro Girón Acuña Pacheco. Both of the marriages arranged by Enrique would have effectively removed Isabel from the political stage in Castile.


\textsuperscript{13}Ibid.
daughter of King Juan II, the “hija legitima,” was the foil to the possibly illegitimate Juana, who, if not the blood daughter of Enrique, was not true Castilian royalty. As a dutiful, faithful spouse, the “perfecta casada,” Isabel foiled multiple parties. She was the antithesis of Juana’s mother, Juana of Portugal, who had an affair and became pregnant by another man while married to Enrique. She was the opposite of Enrique: Isabel’s fertility and fidelity within marriage made her an ideal wife, while King Enrique IV, who fathered no sons and was cuckolded by his wife, failed as a husband. And, unlike her niece, Isabel remained essentially Castilian despite her married status to an Aragonese prince. Juana, on the other hand, through her marriage to King Alfonso V, cemented both her association with a foreign land, Portugal, and with her mother’s family (Alfonso was Juana’s maternal uncle). Isabel’s perceived bodily integrity—as a truly royal Castilian from birth and as a virtuously married woman—neatly separated her from Juana, the perceived offspring of failed masculinity (Enrique—or his shameful substitute, Beltran de la Cueva) and sinful femininity (Juana of Portugal). In the royal chronicles, bodies and blood were transformed into textual fodder for the writing of royal Castilian legitimacy.

The mythologization of Isabel as a body of power continued even after Juana’s claim to the Castilian throne ceased to be a threat, and it took on a cosmological scale, particularly in the context of Isabel and Fernando’s efforts to unify Spain. Through the 1480s and 1490s, Isabel’s regal body became not only an emblem of Castile, but also a visible sign of the resurrection of a Christian Spain. Key to understanding this imagining of Isabel is the la Cava myth, a narrative of

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14 Isabel’s retention of power in and titular attachment to Castile was legally established. It explains her evasion of an eclipsing of her Castilian identity by her alliance to Aragon. The “‘marriage contract [capitulaciones matrimoniales]’” signed by Fernando and Isabel in 1469 “placed serious limitations on the future king’s governance powers in Castile. It prohibited him from granting mercedes and lordships or appointing officials in Castile without Isabel’s approval, and it stipulated that he was not to take Isabel or any of their children out of the kingdom.” Weissberger, Isabel Rules, 43.
the conquest of Spain by Umayyad Muslims in the eighth century.15 The myth promulgates a sovereign, Christian Visigothic kingdom spread throughout Iberia in the early centuries A.D.16 The godly Visigothic kingdom was doomed when the North African nobleman Count Julian sent his daughter, called la Cava to King Rodrigo’s court in Toledo.17 Depending on the version of the story, the already-married King Rodrigo was seduced by and/or forced himself on la Cava while she was at court.18 Outraged (or in a semblance of outrage, again depending on the story), Count Julian helped the Muslim Umayyads of North Africa invade Spain.19 By Isabel’s time, the myth was part of popular literary and elite historiographical culture.20

The myth of la Cava has obvious similarities to the Biblical 2 Samuel narrative of David and Bathsheba and the Genesis narrative of Adam and Eve’s expulsion from Eden: a woman and the sins of the body—lust, adultery, fornication—caused the destruction of a people.21 Yet according to the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus Christ descended from David and Bathsheba.22 And although punished because of the disobedience of Eve, humanity was renewed by Mary’s submission to God’s will.23 In the mapping of the religio-mythological to the geopolitical, Isabel offered the potential for Spain’s redemption (the expulsion of the perceived foreigners to Iberia,

17Ibid., 21-23.
18Ibid.
19Ibid.
20Traces of the myth may be located in writings as early as the mid-eighth century missives of St. Boniface and the Cronica mozarabe de 754. It also present in the royally commissioned, ninth-century Cronica de Alfonso III. See: Ibid., 38-41. Later king’s chronicles, both by/for Christians and by Muslims, elaborate on the story until it is a fundamental elemental of what Grieve calls “the origin myth” of Spain (54). Grieve provides a full explication of the various sources for the myth and literary intertexts throughout The Eve of Spain. See especially 38-41 and 52-54. An explanation of the name “la Cava” and its meaning over time can be found 25-26.
21Ibid., 25; 33.
22My understanding of medieval and early modern Christian exegesis of the David and Bathsheba narrative is informed by my participation in Steven Levine’s class on David and Bathsheba, HARTB650, given at Bryn Mawr College fall 2015.
Muslims,) and reconstruction.\textsuperscript{24} Scholars Barbara F. Weissberger, in \textit{Isabel Rules}, and Patricia C. Grieve, in \textit{The Eve of Spain}, provide thorough illustrations of the redemptive imaginings of Isabel, both those current in her court and those spread after her death. Their work is instrumental for my perception and interpretation of the way Isabel’s traditionally salvific mythology is reframed and put to new uses in the \textit{Isabel} website and magazine.

A brief outline of the neo-Visigothic schema integral to representations of Isabel as an archetypical savior: First, the house of Trastamara, the line of Isabel’s father Juan II, claimed its bloodline to be that of the Visigothic house of King Rodrigo.\textsuperscript{25} Isabel, undisputedly her father’s daughter, was thus the blood heir of the earlier Christian, assumed to be rightful, rulers of Iberia.\textsuperscript{26} Of utmost importance, her assumed divine appointment to the throne combined with the practical might of Fernando’s army, which enabled the expansionist campaigns of the Castilian and Aragonese kingdoms.\textsuperscript{27} Her alliance with Fernando is another instance illustrating the paramountcy of Isabel’s body to the creation of a Spanish nation. Her legal consignment of her physical self to an appropriate spouse, Fernando, ensured Castile’s (and, later, Spain’s) martial strength; her body was exchanged for the loyalty of Fernando’s military force. It enabled her to become mother of Castile’s princes. She also presided over a ‘cleansing’ of the Spanish body politic and religious, through the capture of Granada and through the expulsion, forced conversion, and persecution of Jews and Muslims. She centralized the power in the monarchy and reformed the Castilian judiciary system. Her political acts complimented her court chroniclers’ and poets’ representations of the growth of the Christian kingdoms under her reign.

\textsuperscript{24}See Weissberger, \textit{Isabel Rules}, 96; Grieve, \textit{On the Eve of Spain}, 53-54.  
\textsuperscript{25}Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{26}Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{27}Weissberger, \textit{Isabel Rules}, 49.
as a reinstatement of a mythic Christian past. Barbara Weissberger summarizes this rhetorical move:

These intertwined acts of rape—of the virginal body of the maiden [la Cava] and of the virile body of Hispania—infect the reconstitutive rhetoric of neo-Gothic political discourse addressed to and promoted by Isabel. The insistent calls for the queen to “repair,” “restore,” “reform,” “recover,” “recuperate” [reparar, restaurar, reformar, recobrar, recuperar] are contained in the overarching concept of reconquista, the defining domestic goal of the Catholic Monarchs and springboard of the sixteenth-century imperialist expansionism realized by their grandson, Carlos V.”

Careful symbolic alignment of Isabel with the Virgin Mary, Queen of Heaven and with other virginal, martyred saints placed Isabel in even firmer opposition to la Cava. Her body, unlike the body of la Cava, and unlike the average female body as imagined in medieval philosophical, theological, and medical theories, was not a source of danger, but of salvation. Isabel was perceived as the locus for the resurrection of a lost Spain: the mother of a reborn Spain.

III. LITERARY CORPUS, GLOBAL COMMUNITY

Strategic fifteenth-century narratives of Isabel as an exceptional body, a body that births Spain, are recycled in the mythologizing project undertaken by Isabel. The magazine and website’s themes of global Church and global community, of eschatological transformation of the material world through a holy body, of state and divine authority in harmony, are ideas prominent in the fifteenth-century mythologization of Isabel’s reign. They manifest clearly in the recurring magazine section, “Favours,” which includes side-by-side English and Spanish stories of success yielded through prayers for Isabel’s intercession.

28 Ibid., 115.
29 Ibid, 105.
31 Weissberger, Isabel Rules, 91; 116-118.
These short miracle narratives draw far flung individuals into a community of devotees: an Indian man whose back pain ceased in 2003; an Iberian Muslim military leader who converted to Christianity in the 15th-century; a woman whose financial debt was resolved in 2005; and an Italian woman who died at peace with God after consecrating her life in 1997 are brought into relation with one another. The geographical and temporal boundaries between these people are dissolved by Isabel’s multi-form works of healing and by the flattening, encompassing space-time of Isabel magazine. Moreover, this process brings not only the healed into communion and with another, but with the readers. The favour stories become a medium for new links of solidarity and parity. Isabel invites readers to join the healed Isabelline devotees in their celebration and in their imprecations. Under the “Favours” section, a sample prayer is included for the reader’s convenience: “…Grant us the grace to see Your Infinite Majesty glorified in her prompt canonization and through her intercession (ask for your particular needs) that we ask of You in this Present need through Christ our Lord. Amen…”32 Encounter with Isabel, whether in the flesh in the Middle Ages or through prayer in the early 2000s, is the unifying, fill-in-the-blank, creative force behind an imagined global collective. Isabel produces and preserves the community in print and digital: Isabel transforms wounded social, spiritual, and physical bodies into a singular body of Christ. This communal social and spiritual body is then made into a body of text by the advocates for Isabel’s canonization. The advocates, in turn, are part of a movement seeking to sacralize Isabel’s physical body and affirm her transcendence of death and sin.

Isabel’s reputation as a healer of bodies physical (the ailing back), social (the debt being not only an economic issue but a stigmatized, marginalizing burden), and spiritual (conversion and consecration) resonates with her fifteenth-century image. As the foil to her predecessor

Enrique, her rival Juana, and her mythological opposites, Eve and la Cava, Isabel served as a rectifying, renewing power in the Spain she forged. Her healing of the Spanish body, in the Neo-[visi]gothic imagination, may be seen as the prefiguration of her healing of her later devotees. *Isabel* clearly posits such a link, and the website and magazine’s description of Isabel’s reign echoes the tone of salvation used by her earlier mythologies. The website’s texts combine reflections on unification and empire-building with a sense of moral purging:

In anyone’s eyes, Queen Isabel would be considered great just by the fact that, with great prudence, justice and fortitude, she joined together 27 separate kingdoms into one strongly united Spain. It is a striking example of how a truly Christian leader can elevate a people from a state of extreme prostration to become a world power. Before Isabel’s reign, it was often not safe to walk or travel in cities or through the countryside. Many people were victimized by rampant violence, and there was terrible corruption among civil leaders. In a short time, all this changed with Queen Isabel.33

Isabel not only brought order to the kingdom of Castile and planted the seeds for the establishment of a Christian, Spanish empire, she also, the website suggests, had a transformative effect on individual bodies:

Isabel led her army to the liberation of Granada, the last part of Spain still held by the alien Moorish conquerors. Her effect on her soldiers was like that of Saint Joan of Arc. Their customary profane swearing ceased; they knelt in the field for Mass, and received spiritual counsel from the friars. Isabel visited the sick and wounded, sometimes dressing their wounds with her own hands.34

Her ability to effect miracles in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries functions as a magnification of the power she exerted in her own lifetime. Paradoxically, her disembodiment—death and removal to heaven—enables her to act even more potently than when she was reigning in Castile: she is not limited by the geographical and temporal boundaries of the living. She not

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33Luis, Cardinal Aponte Martinez, “Isabel the Catholic—ready to shed her blood for the Church of Rome,” *QueenIsabel.org.*
34Warren H. Carroll, “Isabel of Spain, the Catholic Queen,” *QueenIsabel.org.*
only unified allegedly unified Spain in her lifetime, but, as a miracle worker, unifies all who seek her intercession.35

The importance of Isabel as a globalizing, unifying figure is explicitly proclaimed in the sidebar text of the Isabel magazine archive page. Titled “Building a Global Christendom,” it begins with a scriptural quote from John 12:24: “Unless a grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies it will bear much fruit.” The text continues, asking:

Does God plan to rebuild Christendom, globally? Is the Holy Spirit inspiring hearts around the world so that the Christendom that went to ground in the sixteenth century may emerge again in a new form? Jesus rose from death with superabundant life. The life He gives to His Church so like Him, despite all attacks, the Church cannot be destroyed. Christendom is where the ultimate sovereignty of Jesus Christ as God the Son and Redeemer is explicitly recognized and celebrated by the secular authorities. Exactly what form a global Christendom may take we do not know, but we can be absolutely sure of vital principles which have been present in the Church from her earliest days...36

The text creates a subtle parallel between Jesus’ resurrection and Isabel’s sainthood.37 In stating that “Christendom...went to ground in the sixteenth-century,” the text implies that Isabel’s death (in 1504) also meant the death of a global (ie: Spain and its colonies) Christian kingdom. The mortality of her body was a loss for the entire Body of Christ. Christ’s death (the demise of the material body of Christ) likewise was an occasion of mourning for his apostles, the first members of the Body of Christ. Through the ritual of the Eucharist and annual celebrations of the Passion, Jesus’ death has continued to be a cause of bereavement among Catholic Christians, contemporary members of the imagined Body of Christ. But “Jesus rose from death with

35By the time of Isabel magazine’s publication in 1996, requirements for sainthood included two Vatican-verified miracles, or martyr status. Miracles have taken a medicalized turn in the last few centuries: healings of physical ailments that occurred quickly, decisively, and in the presence of an available-for-testimony firsthand witness and with medical professionals’ documentation are preferred phenomena for submission to Rome’s miracle investigation process. See Bill Briggs, “What is a Miracle?”, Huffington Post, May 25, 2011, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bill-briggs/what-is-a-miracle_b_810328.html and Leslie Scanlon, “The Mystery Behind a Miracle,” Catholic Digest 74, no. 6 (2009): 12.

36“Magazine Archive,” Queenisabel.org.
37Here I use “sainthood” as a convenient shorthand to refer to the characteristics and works Isabel cites as evidence of her merit.”
superabundant life”; his death is an essential element of his power as “Redeemer.” Likewise, the
text implies, Isabel’s death can be a source of redemption for the Body of Christ. The Biblical
verses evoke sacrifice, even martyrdom, and corporate life from individual death. The fallen
seeds are much like Isabel’s posthumous works: her assumed position in heaven,38 the product of
her death, and the intercessory power it provides her nourishes the ‘global Christendom’
imaginary.

Definitive of the magazine’s idea of ‘global Christendom’ is a particular understanding of
secularism: “Christendom is where the ultimate sovereignty of Jesus Christ as God the Son and
Redeemer is explicitly recognized and celebrated by the secular authorities.”39 In this vision of
globalized community, secular governance would not call for an areligious government or one
that idealizes a separation between spheres of religion and politics. It would instead involve a lay
authority acting in accordance with the ecclesiastical edicts of the Catholic Church and the divine
will of Christ. Simultaneously, it would require a Church invested in contemporary political
issues. The public, governmental sphere must function as a field for the enactment of the global
Christendom.

Useful for the contextualization of this formulation of secularism is Jose Casanova’s
examination of the Catholic Church’s trajectory toward an active, moral-modeling role in
modern history. Pre-Vatican II, dominant Catholic doctrine on the Kingdom of God was rooted
in canonical interpretations of St. Jerome’s and St. Augustine’s imaginings of the Kingdom of
God as without and yet throughout time, on a temporal and spatial plane parallel to that of
earthly human experience (the *seculaeum*).40 The dissolution of the papal states (1870), the

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38 Official conferral of sainthood in the Catholic Church is tantamount to a declaration of confidence that a person
has entered heaven after their death.
39 Ibid.
40 Ibid.
League of Nations era papacy of Benedict XV (1914-1922) and the United Nations papacy of John XXIII (1958-1963), as well as the proclamation of Vatican II (1962-1965), are significant turns in the Church’s movement toward an official “embrace of the *saeculum*” and intervention in secular conceptualizations of modernity.\(^{41}\) For the Church, this “entails the acceptance of the principle of historicity, the continuous revelation of God’s plan of salvation in and through history, and thus the church’s obligation to discern prophetically ‘the signs of the times’”\(^{42}\) This ‘obligation’ means that, in turn, “action on behalf of peace and justice and participation in the transformation of the world will become...a constitutive dimension of the church’s divine mission.”\(^{43}\)

Casanova’s usage of the phrase “‘Signs of the times’” is a direct reference to Pope Paul VI’s December 7, 1965 Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. Full of Augustinian language,\(^{44}\) the letter explicitly affirms the relationship of the Kingdom of God and the *saeculum*: “That the earthly and the heavenly city penetrate each other is a fact...” Because of this interrelationship, Paul VI writes that the Church “must therefore recognize and understand the world in which we live, its explanations, its longings, and its often dramatic characteristics.”\(^{45}\) This world is historically contingent and ever changing: “The human race is involved in a new stage of history...Never has the human race enjoyed such an abundance of wealth, resources and economic power, and yet a huge proportion of the world’s citizens are still

\(^{41}\)Ibid., 432-433.  
\(^{42}\)Ibid., 420.  
\(^{43}\)Ibid.  
tormented by hunger and poverty, while countless numbers suffer from total illiteracy.”

Liberty of thought, the Pope cautions, is no less a double-edged sword than the proliferation of material goods: “Never before has man had so keen an understanding of freedom, yet at the same time new forms of social and psychological slavery make their appearance...New and more efficient media of social communication are contributing to the knowledge of events...They are giving the swiftest and widest possible circulation to styles of thought and feeling.”

It is in this temporal, spatial swirling chasm of choice, and paradoxical proximity and distance among people and institutions that the Pope assures his flock Catholicism finds renewed relevance. The contemporary world needs the Catholic Church. In the culminating mission statement of the letter, Paul IV contends:

Christ, to be sure, gave His Church no proper mission in the political, economic or social order. The purpose which He set before her is a religious one. But out of this religious mission itself come a function, a light and an energy which can serve to structure and consolidate the human community according to the divine law. As a matter of fact, when circumstances of time and place produce the need, she can and indeed should initiate activities on behalf of all men...Moreover, since in virtue of her mission and nature she is bound to no particular form of human culture, nor to any political, economic or social system, the Church by her very universality can be a very close bond between diverse human communities and nations, provided these trust her and truly acknowledge her right to true freedom in fulfilling her mission.

The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World thus emblematizes the Catholic, twentieth-century discourses on secularism, activism, globalism and modernity, Casanova highlights. Yet these mission moves are not limited to the Vatican. Casanova emphasizes that the twentieth century signals “an amazing resurgence of the transnational dimensions of medieval Catholicism which for centuries had been recessive or dormant: not only papal supremacy and the centralization of the church’s government...but also transnational

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46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
religious cadres, transnational religious movements...and transnational centers of pilgrimage and international encounters.”

*Isabel* magazine is precisely this combination of “transnational religious cadre,” “transnational religious movement,” and “transnational center of pilgrimage and international encounter.” It fuses together the lay mobilizing spirit of twentieth-century devotional movements with the decades old effort for the canonization of Isabel of Castile. And it uses these human and material resource networks to produce new, literary space for the performance of Catholic community. Moreover, *Isabel* claims the dual temporal identities Casanova refers to as the modern “resurgence of the transnational dimensions of medieval Catholicism.” The organization specifically calls upon a narrative of 15th century governance to redefine the terms of political order in contemporary society. Their appropriation of Isabel of Castile and medieval Augustinian secularism is a response to what the *Isabel* website’s homepage terms “a global crisis in public life, a murderous struggle over the proper relations between Church and State, between faith and politics.”

Isabel’s reign, as imagined by these devotees, provides an ideal contemporary model for constructing the social order of ‘global Christendom’: “She proves that a sovereign can live the Catholic faith to the full, and that it is precisely this combination—capable and courageous leaders who believe in a God of love—which draws the greatest blessings on mankind, bringing

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49 Casanova, 433-434.
51 [Homepage], QueenIsabel.org, http://www.queenisabel.org/
peace, order and lasting prosperity ensured.”52 It is difficult to imagine a queen associated with military campaigns and inquisitions as a defender of peace and harbinger of security. Yet the distribution of power, the complementarity of Catholicism and politics, in her kingdom is marked as the path to harmony and an end to violence. While described as a distributor of power and a reformer, Isabel is not depicted as the source or highest executor of power. Her laudable role is that of a lodestone. Her authority as sovereign during her lifetime and her posthumous abilities to heal and evangelize as saint-in-waiting are gifts of God, nourished by her submission to the Church. Through her God-given, Church-cultivated authority and capabilities, she pulls others into a divinely blessed order:

One thing that is very clear in the life of Queen Isabel is her resolve not to begin any important undertaking without first having the clear approval of the Holy Father53...When Isabel was sworn in as Queen of Castile, she vowed, with her hand on the Bible, to be obedient to the commandments of Holy Church, to honor her prelates and ministers, and to defend the Church with all her strength...Her reforms of Church and State worked marvelously, resulting in many good fruits: unity in the kingdom;...the establishment of a stable peace and the restoration of justice; exemplary clergy and religious orders; a unified front against the enemies of the Faith; and the promotion and defense of morality. These are the elements which form the basis of good government. How many of today’s world leaders could learn from her example of how to govern without compromising one’s Faith or violating one’s conscience?54

The reifying cosmology developed by the website posits God, then the Catholic Church (headed by the Pope), then government leaders (such as Isabel), and then ordinary lay people as the units of a pyramidal hierarchy. Sanctified society, the kind the magazine's vision of Isabelline order promotes, requires a clear chain of subordination. A ‘global Christendom’ would thus entail a dissolution of the divisions seen to define global society since “Christendom...went to ground in the sixteenth century.”55 A future global imaginary, messianically commenced, would be a

52Ibid.
53[Eventual footnote here on complicated historical relationship Isabel had to the pope]
54Cardinal Aponte Martinez, “Isabel the Catholic,” QueenIsabel.org.
55Ibid.
second coming of the imaginary of Isabelline Spain: totalizing in its scope and monolithic in its vision of and submission to authority.

‘Global Christendom’ for Isabel is thus a Catholic Christendom as idealized and enacted in the Middle Ages. The passage describes the Catholic Church as an integral institution, unspoiled and undivided, though interred, through the centuries. It is the uncorrupted Body of Christ. Isabel’s perceived allegiance and obedience to that body throughout her lifetime makes her mythologized body metonymic: Saint Isabel is the Body of Christ. That collapsing is an epistemological conversion: the website itself, in spreading the ‘truth’ about Isabel is performing a missionary activity. Isabel’s body, though interred in a tomb in Granada, continues to be a life-source for the forging of collectivities. The Catholic Monarch, though physiologically alive only 1492-1504, very much lives through the present day for the community of Isabel.

It is her example and her intercession which animates the work Isabel’s devotees are beginning for the inauguration this Isabelline ‘global Christendom.’ In chronicling this work, Isabel magazine takes on an evangelical role: not only archiving devotees’ activities (past-oriented), but reverberating the events through the community of readers, and by discursive extension, through the entirety of the Catholic world (future-oriented). For instance, in an interview in the second issue of Isabel magazine (1996), John Paul Paine expounds on his campaign for the establishment of Queen Isabella Day in the United States, to be set for April 22, in honor of her day of birth.56 His description of the 1996 birthday commemoration ceremony in Washington D.C. has a triumphant tone. “Trumpet fanfare,” “VIP”s and “presidential contenders” are terms that elevate the wreath-laying commemoration of Isabel to a grand political, American event. Representatives of the United States government (here, the State)

recognize Isabel’s exceptional character, an exceptionalism Paine sees in her role in the “discovery and evangelization of the Americas”:

This being the 1996 Presidential Election Year, I've invited all major U.S. Presidential Contenders including President Bill Clinton who proclaimed Queen Isabella Day in Arkansas while he was governor, to address this year's commemoration in Washington on April 22 her 545th birthday...A group of VIP's headed by the Honorable Anna O'Brien, Chief of Protocol at the OAS, will escort the national birthday wreath to the foot of Isabel's statue...Numerous VIP's will read Isabella Proclamations with trumpet fanfare. Dr. Raymond Doyle, Ph.D. of New York will lead-off in reading Tributes....

A merging of the ‘secular’ State and the Catholic Church occurs through the mediation of the memorialized Isabel. It is a ceremonial, even ritual, production of the ‘global Christendom’, which Isabel magazine elevates to a ‘triumph’ not only for John Paul Paine, for Isabel devotees, or for Isabel magazine readers, but for the entirety of humanity, encompassed by the ‘global Christendom.’

This conversion of the material world to the global Christendom, or location of the power of God, channeled through Isabel, in the seculaeum is evident in other magazine articles, as well. In the “Current Events” section of Isabel 25 (2000), there appears a list of Spanish, American, and International “Groups Pro Isabel.” Among the groups are “Group of Ladies, in Corpus Christi, TX [USA.]” “CTC Political Party [Spain.]” and “Daughters of Isabel, Catholic, religious and social group in the Americas and the Philippines.” The “Editor’s Note” asks of the reader: “If you know of any other groups that are in favor of Isabel the Catholic, let us know so that we can unite all the efforts for the canonization of Isabel the Catholic.” The list of ‘groups pro Isabel’ and their geographic location creates a cartographic sense of the spread, diversity, and strength of Isabel devotion. The world is articulated through Isabel. This effect is amplified in the list that appears on the same page, “Cities That Have Monuments or Streets Dedicated to

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Isabel the Catholic."\textsuperscript{58} Squares, streets, paintings, and statues are among the likenesses of Isabel noted in Spain and the Americas. Rather than listing the likenesses by title or description, however, \textit{Isabel} includes the general type of image and the city in which the image can be found (fig. 3). This approach, coupled with the title of the list and its placement next to the ‘groups pro Isabel,’ effectively suggests that entire cities—spaces and communities—are ‘pro Isabel.’ Isabel, even in statue form, is a conquering, converting global force.

\textit{Isabel}’s appeal to scholarly objectivity is another performative instantiation of this type of world-converting, globalizing secularism. It is an example of the magazine’s function as a site not only for recording or foreseeing, but also for initiating, the ‘global Christendom.’ Throughout its articles, it fastidiously incorporates non-ecclesiastical sources and emphasizes their impartiality. “Columbus’ Queen a Saint?” states:

One of the main arguments made by Isabel’s detractors is that she established the notorious Spanish Inquisition. But now even mainstream historians are calling its ‘notorious’ nature a thing of myth. ‘Historians are discovering that the common notion of the Spanish Inquisition...as some horrible, fanatical, all encompassing bloodthirsty monster could not be further from the truth,’ reported The Myth of the Spanish Inquisition, a 1994 BBC documentary...Professor Stephen Haliczer of Northern University of Illinois notes in the documentary....‘I found instances of prisoners in secular criminal courts blaspheming in order to get into the Inquisition prison.’\textsuperscript{59}

“Mainstream historians,” the BBC, “documentary,” and Northern University of Illinois all function as signals of trustworthy authority, an authority that speaks to nonbelievers and the faithful alike. QueenIsabel.org makes a narrative claim for objective reality: the power of Isabel is not relegated to the Church as a separate entity with its own worldviews and truths. Isabel and her works are understandable through secular methods of historical inquiry, when they are attuned to deeper reality the Church perceives.

\textsuperscript{58}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{59}Andrew Walther, “Columbus’ Queen a Saint,” QueenIsabel.org.
Yet history is not only at the service of Isabel’s legacy, as a chronicling device and evidentiary source for her saintliness. Isabel’s legacy is also presented as the engine of history’s progress. “Mexico City-2009” in issue 64 of Isabel magazine60 is one example of the narrativization of Isabel as historical catalyst for the ‘global Christendom’ telos. The “News” article, which opens with a report that the next World Meeting Families will occur in Mexico City in 2009, cites Isabel as the evangelizer of the Americas and of Mexico in particular. Although the magazine piece acknowledges that Isabel’s death preceded the Spanish conquest of Mexico, it credits her with Mexico’s Catholicization: “…The holy reform of the Church in Spain begun by Queen Isabel meant the strongest of earthly starts for the Catholic Faith in Mexico, and when this received a heavenly blessing from Our Lady of Guadalupe the result was five million converts almost overnight.”61 Moreover, in the very next sentence, the article implies that Isabel’s prayers during her lifetime in Spain led to the apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe roughly twenty years later in Castile: “During her lifetime Isabel had spent many weeks in prayer at the shrine to Our Lady located in Guadalupe, Spain, as had Christopher Columbus.”62 Placing aside the (multiple and strenuous) academic historian of religion’s objections to the claims of ‘overnight’ conversion, the discursive move of temporality and causation is revealing. All the more so in the article’s context of continued global Catholic gatherings of the type Casanova describes: in its news of the World Meeting of Families, an international Catholic gathering; a gathering moreover arranged by the Church, metonymically Rome, and taking place in Mexico City, a composite of contemporary Republic, past colonial outpost, ancient indigenous empire; printed in a bi-lingual Spanish, English magazine. The magazine suggests Isabel connects Mexico and Spain, and weaves a centuries-old network of Catholics; she moves history, in ways

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60 “Mexico City-2009”, Isabel 64 (September/October 2006): 7.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
that resonate into the present, not only for the Church but for nation-states (Mexico’s traditional, if troubled, identity as Catholic). Through her body-image-story in the magazine, the governmental secular and the Church saintly become one and the same, part of the globalized, division-collapsing body-image of Isabel cum Church cum world cum Christ.

IV. THE PARADOX OF PART AND WHOLE: READING A CONTESTED SAINTHOOD

There are fractures in this resuscitated Isabelline body. Tensions within the Church are evident in the very nature of contemporary advocacy for Isabel’s canonization: the process for Isabel’s canonization began in 1958 and the community of QueenIsabel.org ardently believes her to be worthy of sainthood, but the Vatican has yet to recognize Isabel as venerable (“Blessed”), let alone as a saint. The website’s 2010 copyright disclaimer (fig. 2) strongly refutes any implication that the canonization movement signifies a fissuring from the whole (“cult” vs. “Church”):

In conformity with the decrees of Pope Urban VIII, we declare that in no way is this site intended to anticipate the ecclesiastical authority, and does not have the purpose of any public cult. On employing here the words: sanctity, saint, heroic virtues and other similar words, we do not claim to give them any other significance than that conceded them by common language, and far less to anticipate the judgment of the holy Church to which we filially submit the contents of these pages.\(^{63}\)

Paradoxically, the website’s copyright is a rhetorical, auto-recognition of the dissent its activities may be seen to constitute. This paradox is replicated in Isabel magazine, in the presence of a “nihil obstat” imprimatur in the beginning pages of each issue. Nihil obstat translates to “‘there is nothing standing in the way,’” and is an approval by an ecclesiastically empowered censor, stating that a written work contains nothing that might “be harmful to the faith or morals of the

\(^{63}\) [Homepage], QueenIsabel.org, http://www.queenisabel.org/
Christian [Catholic] faithful.”\textsuperscript{64} Thus, while the imprimatur officially states the work is not heretical or in any way objectionable, the imprimatur also functions to signal the potential threat the work may pose. The publication's acceptability is contingent, the relationship between the publication’s creators and the Church they professes is tenuous, even, and the publication is under surveillance. The International Committee for the Canonization of Isabel’s need to emphasize its ‘filial submission’ to the Church signals the fragility of the legitimacy of Isabel’s claim that its principle mission is to build up a unified, global Catholic Christendom through advocacy for the medieval Queen’s canonization. The carefully ambiguous positioning of the Isabel canonization movement as both within and apart from the imagined whole of the Catholic Church hearkens back to the long history of canonization as a field for the contestation of authority and identity in the Roman Catholic Church. Saints act not only as a link between heaven and earth, but potentially also as a wedge between local parishes and the Holy See. The mention of Urban VIII in QueenIsabel.org’s copyright and the inclusion of the nihil obstat in Isabel magazine symbolizes and reproduces the significance of a centuries old struggle between elite Vatican officials and lay and local clergy, and of the weight that Urban VIII’s decrees continue to carry.

As early as the Council of Carthage in the fourth century CE, Church officials voiced concerns over the community’s veneration of undeserving members, or “false martyrs.”\textsuperscript{65} Such objections to various saint and martyr devotions continued among elites in ecclesiastical structures throughout the tenth and eleventh centuries, often at the diocesan level. Papal interventions into canonization issues strengthened during the thirteenth century, when Innocent

IV (Pope 1243-1254) made a case for the Pope’s absolute right to declare or reserve sainthood in his 1243 decreals.66 Innocent IV reasoned that “the pope alone can canonize saints...because a saint is someone proposed for the adoration of all faithful and no one has jurisdiction over all save the pope.”67 Innocent IV emphasized that while “We do not deny that people are at liberty to ask for the intercession of any dead person whom they believe to have been a good man, but they may not perform a solemn office or make a solemn prayer in his honour.”68 Innocent IV’s distinction between intercessory prayers to “any good man” and to “saints” is vital for understanding later and more commanding formulations of acceptable versus scandalous devotion, namely those promulgated by Urban VIII (Pope 1623-1644), which are referred to specifically by the Isabel website.

The decrees of Pope Urban VIII are considered by church historians one of the most important turning points in the progression toward the present day process of canonization, which is defined by centralized Vatican oversight of declarations of sainthood. Urban VIII first issued the decrees in 1625 and republished them in 1634 as part of his apostolic letter, “Caelestis Hierusalem Cives.”69 The document explicitly prohibited public displays of religious devotion (usually glossed, in Catholic ecclesiastical tradition, as a feast day mass) to anyone who had not been granted the title of blessed or saint from Rome.70 Moreover, the decrees banned the printing and promotion of narratives about such an un-canonized person’s miraculous works, unless they were granted a nihil obstat and/or Vatican approval.71 Following the Counter Reformation, this

66 Ibid.
67 Eric Waldrum Kemp, Canonization and Authority in the Western Church, (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), 108).
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid., 144.
70 Ibid., 145.
Poje 28
decree and its generally successful reservation of the powers of canonization to the Pope points
to the issue of canonization not only as one of the relationship between the divine and the human,
through saintly mediators, but as one of the relationship between local and centralized Catholic
communities, and thus, as an issue of the fundamental conceptualization and political functioning
of the Church.

The stakes of such Papal control and the line between acceptable and heretical devotion
are high. According to *The New Laws for the Causes of Saint*, published in 1983 by the Vatican
Congregation for the Causes of Saints: “Before the inquiry is concluded, the Bishop or his
delegate is to inspect carefully the tomb of the Servant of God, the room in which he lived or
died and, if there be any, other places where someone can display signs of cult in his honor. He is
also to make a declaration on the observance of the decrees of Urban VIII regarding the absence
of cult.” Evidence of such a cult in the case of any candidate would render the possibility of
legitimized sainthood null, save for in some extraordinary circumstances, in which an
“immemorial cultus” is declared. An immemorial cultus is validated when it is “proved that an
immemorial public veneration (at least for 100 years before the promulgation, in 1640, of the
decrees of Urban VIII) has been paid the servant of God.” For these cases, miracles are not
requirements of sainthood and the public veneration is not an impediment. The International
Committee for the Canonization of Isabel does not indicate anywhere on its website or in *Isabel*
magazine that a declaration of “immemorial cultus” is its aim. Yet Isabel’s recycling of historical
mythologies of the Catholic Queen, its citations of various quotes made through the ages about

72 The Vatican Congregation for the Cause of Saints, “Section 28”, *The New Laws for the Causes of Saints*,
http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/csaints
73 Ibid.
76 Poole, CLAH 2005 Luncheon Address, 2.
Isabel’s exceptional character and holiness, and its refraining call for recognition of Isabel’s “fame of sanctity” certainly would not hurt such an effort. Regardless, as such a cult has not been declared, Isabel is liable to censure from the Vatican. It must explicitly demarcate the limitations of its non-Vatican authority to suggest sainthood, while simultaneously cultivating the image of sainthood for Isabel.

Thus, Isabel’s promotion of an image of the whole, singular Body of Christ—Body of Christ as the Roman Catholic Church, as Isabel—reveals the synthesizing and synthetic character of that union of images. Advocacy for Isabel’s canonization, while utilizing a rhetoric of unity and synonymy in a communal Body, in fact highlights the composite, unresolvably heterogeneous, nature of such creations. It points to the double valence of Isabel: it is both outsider and insider to the Catholic Church; it seeks to strengthen the whole by pushing the agenda of a part. The Body promoted in QueenIsabel.org is an imagined community, extending far beyond those with official affiliation or devotion to Isabel’s ‘cause.’ It is constituted not only by the International Committee of the Cause for Queen Isabel, various writers of the magazine’s articles, and subscribers, but also by those pulled into the cause by QueenIsabel.org. The imagined community extends from government officials who declare Queen Isabel Days (such as Bill Clinton, while governor of Arkansas) to nineteenth-century authors of books quoted by QueenIsabel.org, from the Catholic Queen herself to Mary, Joan of Arc, and Jesus, the figures on whom she is modeled in the Isabel narrative. While marking itself as part of the Roman Catholic Church (led by clergy, for instance, and ‘filially submitting’ to the higher ecclesiastical order of authority), through the Body and ‘global Christendom’ discourse, QueenIsabel.org performs not as part but as whole. As the whole, it is the center of a newly universalized, newly modernized, newly reformed Church, as opposed to a minoritarian, cultish periphery.
As magazine and website combined, *Isabel* holds space for this redefining of center and periphery. Instead of considering the overarching, global Christendom vision and the digital and literary spaces of QueenIsabel.org as utopic, I consider them heterotopic. In his Preface to *The Order of Things*, Foucault distinguishes heterotopias from utopias:

*Utopias* afford consolation; although they have no real locality there is nevertheless a fantastic, untroubled region in which they are able to unfold; they open up cities with vast avenues, superbly planted gardens, countries where life is easy, even though the road to them is chimerical. *Heterotopias* are disturbing, probably because they secretly undermine language, because they make it impossible to name this *and* that, because they shatter or tangle common names, because they destroy ‘syntax’ in advance, and not only the syntax with which we construct sentences but also that less apparent syntax which causes words and things (next to and also opposite one another) to ‘hold together.’

Utopia, as I interpret the ever-elusive Foucault, is that which produces the whole Body: the linear, the ordered, and the unified. Heterotopia is its Frankensteinian cousin: the seams and patches of the Body are more prominent than the illusion of wholeness; and the birth, life, and death of the Body are so convoluted as to produce a temporality and a narrative web that is far more rhizomatic than linear. Understanding *Isabel* as heterotopic permits an investigation of its imagined community as a grouping always in flux and at the point of dissolution, as a community defined by fragmentation, contention, and uneasy alliance. Every social group and imagined community faces the impossible of producing an absolutely reified, homogenized entity. Yet the self-conscious attempts of *Isabel* to cite the prior existence and power of such an entity, from divine time immemorial, while simultaneously bemoaning the “going to ground” of such an entity and promising to resurrect the entity, in its own image, makes a heterotopic lens for the magazine and website particularly useful. The attention to the heterotopic elements of *Isabel*’s mythologies, the layering of narratives and images that do not quite align and the

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78 A concept I draw from Deleuze and Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*.
layering that instead leave traces of the impossibility of the bricolage at hand, enables a deeper understanding of the *why* of Isabel as the named figure for this Body. In particular, the website and magazine’s variegated genderings of Isabel is an opportunity to understand what Isabel, as historic Queen and candidate for sainthood, offers to the global Christendom cause. In assessing Isabel of Castile’s merit for sainthood, *Isabel* attempts to place Isabel along traditional axes of female sainthood qualification: virginity, martyrdom, and nunhood, while upholding her as a model for contemporary lay women, and recognizing her actual past as mother and wife.

V. GENDERING BODIES HOLY: FEMININITY AND DISCORD WITHIN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

One of the most glaring paradoxes of *Isabel*’s differing portrayals of Isabel of Castile is the simultaneous presentation of her as a sort of martyr/virgin/nun *and* as a queen/mother/wife.

“The Piety of Isabel,” an article in issue 56 of *Isabel*, explicitly characterizes her as nun-like: “[Isabel’s] Italian chaplain, the humanist Lucio Marineo Siculo, says of her that she heard mass daily and prayed at the canonical hours, as if she were a nun, despite the many governmental matters she was obliged to day and night...”(8) 79 The magazine does not note any conflict between the image of Isabel devotedly praying matins and vespers in a chapel and the image of Isabel as a traveling warrior, a contrasting characterization featured in an earlier issue of *Isabel*. An article in issue 28, republished from *The Herald of Mexico*, titled “Isabel the Catholic Queen, Wife and Mother: ‘Woman’ in All Languages,” states: “Isabel was a queen who, when wartime circumstances required it, knew how to don her amour, fasten her sword to her belt and visit her soldiers on the battlefield. Perhaps that is why a historian compared her to St. Joan of Arc.”80 The author of the article does not go so far as to claim that Isabel was like St. Joan of Arc.

displacement of that claim onto (the noticeably vague) “a historian” points back to the anxieties evident in the copyright disclaimer of QueenIsabel.org. The usage of “a historian” implies an objective, scholarly assessment of Isabel’s life, as opposed to a cultish, inappropriate elevation of a lay Queen to the status of a recognized saint,\(^8^1\) while maintaining the implication that if Joan of Arc was worthy of sainthood, so too is Isabel.

In addition to the images of Isabel as a prayerful nun, evangelizer, and as a warrior crusader, Isabel also provides for an attempted construction of the medieval Queen as a martyr—or at least, would-be martyr. The article, “A Humble Daughter of the Church, A Model for Contemporary Catholics,” in issue 56 (2005, the same issue containing “The Piety of Isabel”) states that at the end of her life, Isabel made a profession of faith in the Catholic Church, “believing and confessing firmly all that the Holy Catholic Church of Rome holds, believes and confesses, and preaches.”\(^8^2\) The article highlights her “personal addition to the formal profession”: “She declares that she is ready and willing to die for the Catholic faith and would consider martyrdom a great favor...”\(^8^3\) Although she is not an avowed martyr or virgin, like Joan of Arc, or other famous women saints (Agnes, Catherine of Alexandria, or Cecilia), “A Humble Daughter” suggests that Isabel would have been a martyr, had she been called to die in defense of her Catholic faith. Instead, as a Queen and commander of armies (according to Isabel magazine), she ruled in such a way that she defended and spread Catholicism: a duty, the magazine implies, Isabel performed while remaining within the conventions of virgin martyr and nun rules, perhaps even fulfilling those ideal roles to an unprecedented degree. She is non-martyr, non-virgin, non-nun, while also supramartyr, supravirgin, and supranun.

\(^8^1\) The Roman Catholic Church beatified Joan of Arc in 1909 and canonized her in 1920.
\(^8^3\) Ibid.
Indeed, the magazine uses another figure, that of Teresa of Avila (1515-1582), to further the suggestion of Isabel’s exceptional status and merit for canonization. The article “Isabel and Teresa, Women of Castile,” in issue 14 (1998), asks:

What would Teresa have done as queen half a century earlier, and Isabel as a nun half a century later? One can imagine...Strong spirits, exquisitely sensitive to capture every detail, every person, and to take control of any situation with ample vision....With an exception tenderness and ability of comprehension and compassion, but without letting the insidious opposition of men subdue them, because they have put their trust in God....Gifted with a great ability for governance and influence not only on the people close to them in space and time, but with an almost borderless, universal power of expansion. That is the way I see Isabel and, of course, especially Teresa whom we know better from within, as she has told us everything. But Isabel resembles her in many ways.84

Teresa and Isabel, despite living in different times and having extremely different life paths, are seen as near doppelgangers, of the same ‘spirit.’ Both can transcend boundaries of space and time with their “almost borderless, universal powers of expansion” as servants of God. Isabel’s literal expansionist acts—the beginnings of centralization of a Spanish nation, the beginnings of the Spanish empire in the Americas, the beginnings of Catholic evangelization in Northern hemisphere—are not explicitly invoked by this article. Instead, they seem to be a precursor to her abilities to spread the global Christendom through her posthumous favours and fame, as Teresa of Avila does.

The article selects as a main point of parity between Teresa and Isabel their resistance to “the insidious opposition of men” who would “subdue them” if they had not “put their trust in God.” Isabel’s trials with the nobles of Castile and with her brother Enrique IV prior to his death and her coronation in Castile, especially regarding a number of politically disempowering marriages proposals he submitted her to, have been a part of Isabelline mythology since her own

Yet the article does not mention these “insidious men” or any particular men in Teresa of Avila’s life. The line about men instead sets off a strange, refraining note of discord in QueenIsabel.org’s narratives about Isabel as an ideal wife, the obvious man of influence in Isabel’s life being her husband Fernando.

Elsewhere in the magazine, although her husband is depicted as insecure and philandering, her fidelity and subordination to him is emphasized. This is communicated most clearly in the republished article from the *The Herald of Mexico*, in issue 28 (2000):

A woman who, as every wife in love, knew how to endure suffering like no one else due to her husband Ferdinand's infidelities, that reached the extreme of fathering four children with a few other women. Nevertheless, in this also, Queen Isabel gave an example of a noble soul: There was nothing of a scandalist, much less a pretense of divorce under the euphemism of a marriage annulment, nor did she use her husband's affairs as a pretext for her to do the same...What an example she gives, with her attitude, to many wives of our day, who despairing over the weaknesses of their husbands, do nothing more than worsen the problem. In Dona Isabel, her love and loyalty toward Don Ferdinand were superimposed over every other sentiment in such a way as to arrange that her remains would forever rest beside her husband's. United in life, united after death.86

Isabel is to be lauded for her “love” and “loyalty,” evidenced by her presumed sexual chastity, continuance of her marriage, and desire to be buried with her husband. These are both exceptional (“noble”) qualities and exemplary: women today, the article emphasizes, would do well to channel the virtues and model the behavior of Isabel. And the article speaks to Isabel’s fame of sanctity as well as to early twenty-first century concerns about the stability of marital relationships and the global liberalization of state divorce laws, concerns prominent within conservative sectors of the Catholic Church.87 It is an echo of the marital relationship described

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85 Refer to details provided in Part. II., footnote 9.
in the editorial of Issue 15 (1998), an article reprinted from “Isabela la Catolica Servant of God by a Discalced Carmelite”:

History gives us a perfect example of her wisdom as a wife. That same wisdom makes her a practical example for wives today. She began by lovingly conquering her husband, who could have been a fountain of discord... ‘I will only be Queen where you are King; the vassals know that you are master of me and of my things…’, phrases from the Chronicle of Colmenares. Hearing her, Don Ferdinand, overjoyed, answered: ‘You deserve to govern not only in Castile, but in the whole world.’ Since then the ‘Tanto monta, monta tanto, Isabel como Fernando’ (so mounts, mounts so, Isabel as Ferdinand), was not one more formula, it was a precious reality that with the yoke and the arrows has a profound meaning...”

The articles do not point to any particular characteristic of Fernando’s that makes him deserving of Isabel’s forgiveness or subordination. Instead, the articles characterize Isabel’s unswerving devotion to her husband as both evidence of her own extraordinary, “noble spirit” and “wisdom” (as opposed to, for instance, evidence of the legal and social mores prohibiting divorce in late medieval Iberia or the economic and political imperatives behind an allied Castile and Aragon) and as obligatory for and replicable by all would-be virtuous Catholic women. The famed yoke and arrows insignia of Isabel and Fernando’s reign becomes a visual symbol for the ideal unity between all husbands and wives throughout time, into the present. The magazine thus maintains a series of tensions between Isabel as independent, powerful, supra/superwoman and as role model of spousal docility for all lay Catholic women. Her life is singular and yet universalizable.

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89 The yoke and arrow’s fascist connotations—they were part of Franco’s national emblem—are not rendered explicit. They are evident only in Isabel’s promotion of the gendered roles and household formation essential to Franco’s social agenda in mid-twentieth century Spain.
VI. CONCLUSION: OR, WHAT ABORTION HAS TO DO WITH THE INQUISITION

While the tensions surrounding Isabel of Castile’s characterizations are not difficult to locate in the discourses of Isabel, the reason for them is less obvious. I suggest that the slippages besetting a canonical characterization of Isabel as woman saint, as suprawoman, and as everywoman, may be interpreted as slippages within QueenIsabel.org’s own relationship to the Catholic Church and to the global, secular world it seeks to recast. While QueenIsabel.org avers its ‘filial submission’ in its copyright disclaimer, includes a seal of non-censurability (nihil obstat) on the first page of each issue of Isabel magazine, and purports that, like Isabel herself, it is interested primarily in the flourishing of the Body of Christ/the Roman Catholic Church/the global Christendom, QueenIsabel.org discursively marks itself as the seed and center of this Church.

Isabel’s life and marriage to Fernando become allegories for the allegiance of QueenIsabel.org to the Catholic Church. Although the Catholic Church is not, because of any of its own actions, deserving of the continued efforts of QueenIsabel.org to remain the nominal authority of the global Christendom, God’s cosmological ordering requires Isabel devotees to remain within the Church. Through the propagation of Isabelline devotion and the moral lines QueenIsabel.org tows on contemporary issues such as the division between Church and State in European and American society and on household order, QueenIsabel.org performs a ‘loving conquering’ and redefining of the Catholic Church. Isabel subtly casts doubt upon the parts of the Church that do not recognize the Catholic Queen as a saint (ie: Vatican officials).

An article on abortion provides a curious insight into the suspicion of betrayal and corruption within the Church that pervades Isabel. Titled, “Isabel the Catholic: A Model of True Feminism. An Answer for Our Time,” in issue 15 (1998), the article begins by positing “modern
radical feminist” support for abortion as the “most serious problem of the world today.” It then draws on Isabel’s actions as Queen of Castile and conqueror of Granada as a model for addressing this contemporary crisis Catholics find themselves facing:

In her time Isabel knew her enemies well. She had been able to quietly observe from an early age how the ‘conversos’ operated inside the Church. This information provided her with an effective plan of action. The other great challenge she had to do with was the powerful Moslem invaders that threatened Christianity in Spain. Her finesse and skill led to the final victory in Granada. We need to follow her example and analyze our adversaries. Who are they and how do they operate? The culture of death is run primarily by the population controllers...They promote their false concepts in public schools, in the media and at UN conventions...The radical twentieth century feminists is a group that is dying out. In the springtime of the Millennium, let us transform the culture of death they are leaving behind by honoring the memory and promoting the cause of the great defender of human life and the rights of men and of women, Isabel the Catholic.

The passage appropriates medieval Catholic, anti-semitic and Islamophobic discourses and applies them to the current day. ‘Conversos operated inside the Church’ conjures the centuries-old European, and, particularly, the Spanish, image of secret Jews working underhandedly to destroy Christians (glossed here as Spaniards, in the time of Isabel’s reign), while publicly avowing their faithfulness to the Church. “Muslim invaders threatened Christianity in Spain” echoes the neo-Visigothic concerns of penetration by foreign (read: outsider, unassimilated) influence. Public schools, media productions, and United Nations conventions are the new battlefields; the spread of a ‘culture’ by ‘population controllers’ is the new threat of death. Isabel of Castile’s fifteenth-century ‘plan of action’—military conquest, and forced conversions, inquisitions, and exiling of Jews, Muslims, and suspected ‘secret Jews’—is recommended in this article as a model for the purgation of the world of ‘radical twentieth century feminists.’ A purified twenty-first century, the article promises, will grow from ‘the springtime of the Millennium,’ if the fight for Isabel’s canonization continues.

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91 Ibid.
The global Christendom *Isabel* envisions is therefore conditional. While divinely guided, it is initiated through active work on the part of the faithful. Eradication, through expulsion or conversion, of dissident elements within the Church and within the wider global community (the United Nations, for instance) is a requisite step for the instigation of a new secularism, a renewed Catholicism. *Isabel* takes up the mantel of the vanguard of evangelization, service, and worship in contemporary society for itself. While averring the singularity and unity of the Catholic Church, it suggests that lay and clergy elements within the rest of the Roman Catholic Church are not pure or faithful enough to the mission of Christ to bring the Kingdom of God to fruition in the temporal world. The resurrection of historic Isabelline myths is a devotional bid for the reconstruction of her body as saintly; but, far more importantly, it is a political point of leverage for the re-signification and reformation of global Catholicism in the modern world.
As laid out in the Introduction, the purpose of this paper is not a biographical study of the producers of a magazine and website, but a cultural investigation into the production of an imagined religious community via text and digital space. Authorship has thus been given minimal attention. A note of explanation of the personage of one frequent author and board member of *Isabel* is, however, called for. The last issue of *Isabel* magazine presented in the QueenIsabel.org “Magazine Archive” was printed in 2010. This is the same year as the copyright date posted on QueenIsabel.org webpages. Furthermore, it is the last date to be found anywhere on the website. No explanation is given as to the apparent time-freeze of the magazine and website at this year.

I suspect that Alonso Maria Duran, M.J. [Miles Jesu] is the key. Issuer of the “nihil obstat” statement in every issue of *Isabel* and author of several magazine and web articles, Duran seems to have been a significant person for the canonization movement. Born in Spain, he founded a Catholic lay, consecrated life house, Miles Jesu, in Phoenix, Arizona in 1964. By 2007, the Vatican forcibly removed him from the house, because of “serious mental and physical health problems,” “erratic behaviors,” “inappropriate exercise of authority,” and the “mistaken sense of allegiance and obedience instilled in the membership.”92 The investigation into Duran and Miles Jesu likely prevented him from continuing work with *Isabel*; his departure or the taint of his association may have destroyed the organization supporting the production of the magazine. The website may even have been developed as a holding place for the movement, with the knowledge that the printing and circulation of new issues would be impossible.

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APPENDIX

Fig. 1. Homepage banner of QueenIsabel.org. Isabel on left, Our Lady of Guadalupe on right.
The Vatican recognizes Queen Isabel as a Servant of God. Every day we pray that God's infinite majesty may be glorified in her prompt canonization. We pray also through Isabel's intercession for justice, compassion, peace and for all those goods which God in His everlasting love seems to pour out upon humanity, His children.

These is today a global crisis in public life, a murderous struggle over the proper relation between Church and State, between faith and politics. Although she had enemies, Queen Isabel was admired by her people and admired around the world. She proves that a sovereign can live the Catholic faith to the full, and that it is precisely this combination—capable and courageous leaders who believe in a God of love—which draws the greatest blessings on mankind, bringing peace, order and lasting prosperity.

Fig. 2. Copyright statement on QueenIsabel.org.
CURRENT EVENTS

GROUPS PRO ISABEL

Editor's note: We do not take any stand in favor or against these groups, we only mention those who are in favor of Queen Isabel. If you know of other groups that are in favor of Isabel the Catholic, let us know so that we can unite all the efforts for the canonization of Isabel the Catholic.

SPAIN:
- Knights and Ladies of the Hispanidad
- Knights and Ladies of Isabel
- La Nación, newspaper
- Unión Seglar de Navarra, association
- C. T. C. Political Party
- CESPE-Editorial F.N., Publisher
- Organization of Social Studies

THE AMERICAS:
- National Committee for the celebration of Queen Isabella Day, in the USA
- Club 'Español' in the USA
- Group of ladies, in Corpus Christi, TX

INTERNATIONAL:
- International Committee for the Canonization of Isabel the Catholic; around the world
- Conceptionist Franciscan Nuns, religious order, in Spain and the Americas
- Tradition, Family and Property, Catholic, religious and social group, in the Americas and Europe
- Daughters of Isabel, Catholic, religious and social group, in the Americas and the Philippines

CITIES THAT HAVE MONUMENTS OR STREETS DEDICATED TO ISABEL THE CATHOLIC

Editors note: If you know of any other places that have statues, paintings or streets dedicated to Queen Isabel the Catholic, let us know so that we can obtain information about them for publication.

SPAIN (statues)
- Madrid
- Granada
- Toledo
- Valencia
- Cerro de los Angeles
- Valladolid
- Modesta del Campo
- Madrigal de la Algas Torres
- Salamanca, façade of the University

SPAIN (paintings)
- Madrid
- Píndora
- Toro
- Madrigal de las Almas Torres
- Modesta del Campo
- Segovia

USA (statues)
- Washington D.C.
- Sacramento, CA
- Ponce, PR

CENTRAL AMERICA (statues)
- México City

SOUTH AMERICA (statues)
- Chile
- Cuenca, Argentina
- Buenos Aires, Argentina

SOUTH AMERICA (paintings)
- Quito, Ecuador
- Oeyga, Colombia
- Medellín, Colombia
- Somosó, Bolivia
- Caracas, Venezuela

SPAIN (streets and squares)
- Albacete
- Santander
- Valencia
- Alcúzar
- Gerona
- Zaragoza
- Oviedo

USA (streets)
- Phoenix, AZ

Madrid
- Cádiz
- Leganés
- Orense
- Málaga
- Posteveda
- Palencia
- Huelva
- Avilés
- Sevilla
- Valladolid

Fig. 3. Page 3 of Issue 25 of Isabel (2000).
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