

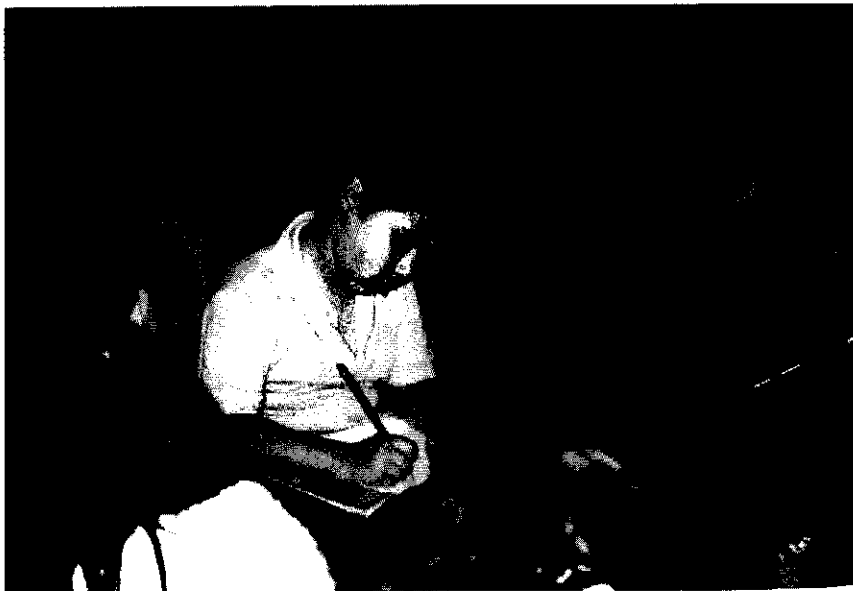
Literacy and Religion: Reading, Writing, and Gender Among Mexican Women in Chicago'

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Literacy has been linked often with religion, that is, with what have been called "world" religions or "ethical" religions (Goody, 1986). In contrast to religion in traditional societies, world religions generally show a missionary impulse (Parrinder, 1971). In traditional societies, religion is local and so interwoven with other aspects of the society that it is particular to that society and thus restricted to the people of that society. World religions, in contrast, travel over time and space, advocating what they deem to be a universal set of beliefs. Incorporating people into these religions usually involves literacy, especially for the three world religions that emerged from the Middle East: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

These three religions, like other world religions, rely on written traditions, rather than solely oral ones, but they also focus on a single book that is held sacred. Thus they often are referred to as religions of the book. Conversion to and membership in these religions involves literacy abilities. Christian missionary efforts, for example, include devising alphabets for languages that have no writing system, teaching the new literacy, and translating the Christian Bible into the newly written language. Rapid literacy development has occurred in some countries (particularly Protestant



Writing and reading during Catechism class in family home on Saturday morning.
Photographs by Marcia Farr.

countries) because of religious pressures. Mass literacy was achieved rather quickly in Sweden, for example, as the result of a campaign promoted by the Church Law of 1686:

This reading campaign was forced through almost completely without the aid of proper schools. The responsibility for teaching children to read was ultimately placed on the parents. The social pressure was enormous. Everybody in the household and in the village gathered once a year to take examinations in reading and knowledge of the Bible. The adult who failed these examinations was excluded from both communion and marriage. (Johansson, 1981, p. 152)

Practicing the religions of the book also frequently involves literacy abilities. Reading often supplements memorized prayers and is used in a variety of ways to enrich the religious experience, both during and outside religious services. Members may use writing as well for organizing activities within the congregation, for producing pamphlets urging others to convert (Markelis, personal communication, 1994), or for composing prayers to be used in services or in other religious meetings.

Thus religion has promoted literacy, and literacy has promoted religion. To be more precise, specific religions have promoted specific literacies and, conversely, specific literacies have promoted specific religions. For example, Christianity has promoted and has been promoted by literacies based on the Roman alphabet, and Islam has promoted and has been promoted by literacies based on the Arabic writing system. Yet although literacy has become virtually inseparable from religion (i.e., world religions) in modern times, the oral traditions that sustained preliterate religions have not disappeared, even in the religions of the book. Much of the practice of these literacy-based religions centrally involves oral processes and traditions. Some oral performances are based on written materials (e.g., in the Christian church service, the reading aloud of the gospel), but other oral performances are strictly oral (e.g., in Quaker services, the spontaneous sharing of thoughts aloud). Moreover, congregations vary culturally in the extent to which oral and literate traditions are valorized.

Moss (2003), for example, studied three middle-class African American congregations that highly valued spontaneity and orality in the performed sermons of their ministers, but that differed in the extent to which the ministers (all highly educated) used literacy in preparing their sermons beforehand. One minister (called a "nonmanuscript" minister) thought about his sermon only for several days beforehand, expecting to be in-

spired by the word of God during the service, which he unfailingly was. A second minister prepared sketchy notes for his sermon beforehand and delivered a sermon also inspired by the word of God. The third minister (called a "manuscript" minister) actually wrote out his entire sermon verbatim several days before performing it. His performance, however, was equally inspired by the word of God, and it was replete with the skillful use of oral features (e.g., repetition, parallelism, and personal testimony). Whether written beforehand or not, the sermons of all three ministers were considered excellent by the members of their congregations, and two of the ministers (the "manuscript" and the "nonmanuscript" ministers) were widely known regionally in religious and political circles. In addition, the "manuscript" minister had appeared on the local PBS television station in a documentary that included his sermons. All three ministers, then, met the culturally based expectations of their congregations in performing (seemingly) spontaneous, orally skilled sermons, whether or not literacy was used in their preparation.

Such valorizing of orality, which, of course, is not limited to African American congregations, can be seen as symbolic of the religious "spirit." In this view, literacy symbolizes the "letter," whereas orality symbolizes the "spirit." Thus, although literacy has been intricately connected to religion for many centuries, some practitioners still greatly appreciate St. Paul's comment in the Christian New Testament that his second epistle to the Corinthians was "written not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God, ... for the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life." The history of Christianity details many conflicts between the "letter" and the "spirit" of the law. The tension underlying these conflicts, in fact, has generated not only dissension, but also subsequent differentiation into separate sects.

Conflicts between the letter and the spirit, however, although in impetus representative of literacy and orality, actually have drawn on these two channels of language in more complex ways. The complexity is related to a conflict inherent in the way literacy is used in missionary Christianity. As the religion and its written traditions are proselytized, knowledge that was previously available only to the literate clergy is democratized among church members:

This [is] manifest in the missionaries' proclamation that God has offered a way to salvation for all, that the divine message is written down in the Bible which contains the truth—final, complete and available to everybody. But such a position also entails a democratizing element that inevitably

challenges any clerical meritocracy that tries to establish itself as the custodian of the truth and supervise a correct interpretation of the scripture. (Probst, 1993, p. 213)

With increasing literacy and religious knowledge, then, church members realize that they can study the Bible themselves, and that they therefore are authorized (literally, they can become "authors") to challenge church leaders. Therefore, the tension between the letter and the spirit, or what is in part a tension between literacy and orality, has a political dimension as well. Throughout history, literacy has been associated with authority and power. Within the domain of the church, the authority of literate clergy has been vested in their ability to read and interpret the scriptures (literally the written doctrine) that define the standards according to which people are expected to live. Rebellions against this authority and power have emphasized spiritual renewal and the simple faith of ordinary people, as opposed to the "empty book learning" of the more highly literate church leaders (Peel, 1968), and yet they also have claimed authority via literacy for rebel leaders as well. That is, although based on a "return" to oral traditions and spirit, such rebellions also have used literacy for their own purposes.

One example of this can be seen in the Aladura movement among the Yoruba in western Nigeria during the first decades of the 20th century (Probst, 1993). Missionaries to this area promoted both Christianity and literacy, with the result that a large number of indigenous Yoruba acquired enough literacy to fill an expanding number of clerical positions in British colonial government agencies. Apparently, the Yoruba quickly associated the power of writing with the political and economic superiority of Christianity (and Islam as well), but eventually were disappointed to realize that the power of literacy did not give them full access to all the power held by the colonialists.

One particular convert to Christianity, who was educated in mission schools, Joseph Oshitelu, formed the Aladura sect (aladura in Yoruba means "one who prays") that broke away from the missionary church. Oshitelu claimed his authority as a prophet was based on visions that came to him in a dream. These visions, significantly, included a new writing system similar in appearance to Arabic. The authority of such prophets historically has relied on their ability to interpret the "unwritten words of God" that were revealed to them in visions (Probst, 1993, p. 213). To the traditionally oral culture of the Yoruba, such prophets had great appeal. Oshitelu, however, did not rely only on such a valorizing of oral traditions

and spirit, but claimed the authority of writing as well by transcribing his visions of the new script into massive notebooks. Thus the new sect (now the Church of the Lord) was syncretic in that it combined old traditions with new, literacy with orality, the letter with the spirit.

Syncretism, of course, refers to the process in which elements from different cultures are combined into a new system. Mexican Catholicism, for example, is said to be highly syncretic, having combined elements from indigenous Mexican cultures with Spanish Catholicism. In Mexico, however, some of the indigenous cultures were literate (e.g., both Mayans and Aztecs), unlike the Yoruba in the case just described. The Spaniards clearly enhanced their colonization of indigenous Mexicans, and certainly gained more converts to Catholicism, by allowing the blending of Indian and Spanish elements into a new culture and religion. The Catholicism that resulted from this blending incorporated oral traditions from both cultures (e.g., Indian ceremonial dates celebrated with Christian symbols), but attempted to destroy completely the literate traditions of the Indians. Clerics burned more than 400,000 manuscripts, believing that the written words would be too powerful in supporting the religious beliefs of the Aztecs (Vigil, 1984). Some book burning also occurred among Europeans who were competing for their version of Christianity, primarily Catholics against Protestants.

Thus the old literacy was destroyed and a new literacy put in its place. Many Spanish priests learned the indigenous languages of Mexico and worked to convert people solely in their native languages, both orally and with books written in indigenous languages with the Spanish alphabet. Many clerics taught the liturgy and catechism in native Mexican languages to further understanding of the doctrine. Acceptance of Christianity was further hastened by the Church's sanctioning of the vision seen by a recent convert, Juan Diego, who "reported that he had seen the embodiment of the Virgin Mary in a saintly, brown-skinned apparition" at a holy site formerly dedicated to the Aztec goddess Tonantzin (Vigil, 1984). Thus the Patron Saint of Mexico, the Virgin of Guadalupe, was established. The Virgin is a central symbol of the syncretic nature of Mexican Catholicism, and many churches in Chicago that serve Mexican congregations now include a shrine to the Virgin of Guadalupe.

With this background, we can see that Mexican Catholicism combines indigenous elements with Spanish ones, and that it combines as well the letter and the spirit, literacy and orality. In what follows, I discuss oral and literate religious practices within a transnational social network of Mexican

families based primarily in Chicago. I focus in particular on one woman, the eldest of the first generation to migrate to Chicago from their rural village in Michoacán. This woman, here called Doña C., is active in the Charismatic Renovation, a movement within Catholicism that involves much literacy activity yet also valorizes the spirit as expressed through orality.

LITERACY AND ORALITY WITHIN ONE SOCIAL NETWORK OF MEXICAN FAMILIES IN CHICAGO

For more than a decade I was a participant observer in the transnational lives of this social network of Mexican families in Chicago and in their village-of-origin (a *rancho*) in the state of Michoacán, Mexico. People from this and other *ranchos* in the region are small landowners with at least some livestock, and they have used money earned in Chicago to, among other things, buy more land on which to plant avocados back in their *rancho*. The first network members to migrate to Chicago came to work in railroad construction, which still is one of the primary occupations of the men, 40 years ago. During that time, more family members came to Chicago, first men, then wives and children, then single women. Many of them now own houses in Chicago, in the neighborhoods of Pilsen, Little Village, and, more recently, further south in McKinley Park, Marquette Park, Back of the Yards, and Gage Park. Many also own houses back in the *rancho* in Mexico, and travel by various people between the *rancho* and Chicago is very frequent.

This tightly knit network of families lives, works, and socializes together. It could be said, especially with regard to the adults, that they form the fabric of each other's lives. Such close ties are characteristic of many immigrant groups, but they are particularly important for Mexicans because of their system of *compadrazgo* (literally coparenting) in which each child has three sets of godparents, and because of the importance to them of *la familia*, which is the extended, not the immediate, nuclear family. Such networks sustain members physically, economically, and emotionally.

The research I conducted was ethnographic. Thus I gathered data through participant observation over the long term, and I attempted to understand meaning from the point of view of various family members. My focus in this research was on the uses of language in context, not abstracted from the settings, participants, or sociocultural processes with which they co-occur. These types of understandings, of course, require the careful nurturing of human relationships, and I have been very fortunate,

as an outsider, to have been accepted and included so regularly in network activities.

One aspect of this research has included the description of literacy practices among the adults in these families across the domains of their lives. These literacy practices involve both reading and writing, in both Spanish and English, in a variety of contexts. I have described these practices in five domains: the church, the state and law, commerce, family and home, and education (Farr, 1994a, 1994b). The religious domain is unique among the five in that it is the only domain in which Spanish rather than English literacy predominates, and it is the only domain in which primarily text-level literacy occurs (e.g., the reading of books and magazines rather than institutional forms).

The women in these families generally are more involved with the church than the men, and some of the women read religious materials more than anything else. *Rancheros* (small property owners) from Michoacán, like those from other western Mexican states, are regarded as conservative and intensely Catholic, and these families fit well within these perceptions. During the revolution of 1910, in fact, *rancheros* in western Mexican states supported the *cristero* movement that fought against the revolutionaries, whom they saw as anti-Christ and who were attempting to close some churches (Jacobs, 1982; Meyer, 1976). The churches did not remain closed, and Catholicism is a central part of these families' lives, both in the *rancho* and in Chicago. Catechism (*doctrina*) was held in one family's home on Saturday mornings, and religious holidays are celebrated within homes as well. Around Christmas in particular, families host *Posada* visits by other church members, and they organize home ceremonies in which the infant Jesus is laid to rest in a manger (*el asentamiento*), and in which he is taken up again and put away for another year (*el levantamiento*). All these activities involve literacy, always in Spanish.

One woman in particular (Doña C.) is regarded as the most religious person in the network. Like the others, she was a practicing Catholic in Mexico and after moving to Chicago. Her religious activity increased dramatically, however, when she joined the Catholic Charismatic Renovation in Chicago. Along with being the most religious person in the network, she is correspondingly the most active reader and writer among the adult women. She says that at first she was reluctant to join this group, feeling that it was not really Catholic, although it met in a Catholic church:²

No fue fácil a mí entrar en la Renovación. Porque yo siempre he sido católica y, y siempre este—yo no he querido nunca cambiar. Pero tampoco quería, quería oír—tenía miedo. No tenía principio, no estaba preparada. Y no quería que nadie me hablara de otras sectas. Tal vez, inconscientemente por ese miedo, verdad, de que no sabía responder, no sabía—no, no tenía preparación. Pero una amiga mía me empezó a, a decir que, que por qué no iba al círculo de oración. Pero yo le decía, “Esto es diferente esto no, no es católico, esto será—quién sabe qué religión será.” Aunque me tenía esa duda de que estaba en la iglesia católica—

[It] was not easy for me to enter the Renovation because I have always been Catholic and, and always um—I have never wanted to change. But I also didn't want, want to hear—I was scared. I didn't have the foundation, I wasn't prepared.³ And I didn't want anyone to tell me about other sects. Perhaps, unconsciously because of that fear, right, of not knowing how to respond, I didn't know—I wasn't prepared. But a friend of mine started asking me why I didn't go to the prayer circle. But I would tell her, “This is different, this isn't, isn't Catholic, this is—who knows what religion it is.” Even though I had that doubt that it was [held] in a Catholic church.

Later, however, when events in Doña C.'s domestic life were causing her almost unbearable stress, she consented to go to a prayer meeting in a friend's home. From then on, she was impressed with the power of the Holy Spirit to heal and the sense of community that this entailed:

Eso es lo bonito de nuestra religión, que nuestro Señor no, no hace—no actúa El solo sino nos—nos necesita a nosotros. Nos necesita no para El sino para nosotros mismos. Por ejemplo, El no viene a perdonar los pecados por una confesión directamente y tú te confiesas directamente con El, pero usa sus sacerdotes para que tú te confieses y ellos te perdonen. Entonces así nos va usando, usa nuestras manos para reemplazar las de El y ponerlas en los enfermos. Eso es lo bonito y eso es lo que uno—lo llena decir “Soy un instrumento del Señor.” Pero con humildad tiene que pedir uno esto.

That is the beauty of our religion, that our Lord doesn't—he doesn't act alone but rather—he needs us. He needs us not for him, but rather for ourselves. For example, he doesn't come to forgive sins because of a direct confession, and you confess directly to him, but he uses his priests so that you can confess and they forgive you. So then, that is how he uses us, he uses our hands to replace his and place them on the sick. That is the beauty and that is what one—what fills one to say “I am an instrument of the Lord.” But one has to ask for this humbly.

This movement is reminiscent of Protestant fundamentalist sects because of its Pentecostal character, especially in its stress on communicating directly with God through the scriptures rather than solely through intermediaries in the church. This emphasis contrasts with that of the traditional Catholic Church, in which only the clergy were highly literate, and in which priests interpreted scripture for the laity. Catholic Charismatics, like members of similar Protestant movements, believe one can interpret the authority of the Bible oneself: One can read and comprehend it oneself. Moreover, one can appeal, through prayer, directly to God to be filled with the Holy Spirit. In Catholicism, of course, the church also is vested with authority, and Doña C. has commented about this hierarchy and how it provides a person with someone to turn to for help. She has reflected on the fact that although some priests are very understanding of this movement, others are not, dismissing it as “crazy.” She seems, then, to have struck a delicate balance between respecting the church hierarchy as authoritative and claiming that authority for herself through her reading and reflection. In addition to the reading of scripture and a variety of other published religious books, she writes prayers in advance of her weekly prayer circle that often take the form of letters addressed to God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit (Guerra & Farr, 2002).

Literacy, in fact, seems to have been an important part of her experience from childhood on. Although she attended school only until the third grade (higher grades were not available in the *rancho* at that time), she liked to read as a child. She says:

Desde niña me gustó mucho leer. Yo cogía cualquier periódico, cualquier pedazo de papel que trajera letras, yo lo leía. Yo leía revistas de amor, leía cual—revistas baratas. Todo lo que—todo lo que caía a mis manos, como te dije, yo lo leía. Pero hubo una revista que a mí me impactó. Se llama Selecciones. Porque esas Selecciones traen mucha enseñanza. Ya no era la, la novelita de amor que, que tiene el mismo desenlace, la misma porquería. Sino ya venía algo más, más fuerte, más, más—una enseñanza mejor.

Since I was a child I really liked to read. I would pick up any newspaper, any piece of paper that had letters, I would read. I would read romance magazines, I read what—inexpensive magazines. Everything that—everything that fell into my hands, as I told you, I would read. But there was a magazine that made an impact on me. It's called *Selections*. Because those *Selections* have a lot of teachings [in them]. It was no longer the, the same little romance novel that, that had the same climax, the same garbage. But rather there was something more, something stronger, more, more—a better teaching.

A significant literacy event in her childhood also involved her mother's leadership. As she explains it:

Este, nosotros todo el tiempo fuimos, este, católicos, verdad. Y entonces cuando yo era niña, mi mamá me llevaba a misa y la misa era en Latín. Entonces no se sabía nada lo que la—solamente la persona que sabía Latín sabía lo [que] estaba diciendo el padre, verdad. La demás gente no. Pero mi Mamá fue una persona muy precavida; fue una persona con mucha sabiduría. Ella compró un misal en, en Español. Entonces toda la gente estaba en misa, pero mi Mamá y yo estábamos leyendo. Entonces ... o sea, desde entonces ya—sabíamos lo que decía la misa.

Um, we were always, um, Catholics, right. So when I was a girl, my mother would take me to mass and mass was in Latin. So nothing was known about what the—only the people who knew Latin knew what the priest was saying, right. The rest of the people didn't. But my mother was a very prudent person; she was a person with much wisdom. She bought a missal book in, in Spanish. So then, all the people were [listening] in mass, but my mother and I were reading. So then ... that is, since then, we knew what was being said in mass.

In retrospect, this could be seen as laying the foundation for Doña C.'s later joining of the Charismatic Renovation. Her mother had taken the first step to understanding the scripture, here the mass, for herself and for her young daughter. That act of assertion left its imprint on Doña C. It was replicated later when her family was the first to buy a Bible when they became available for 25 pesos.

Currently, her uses of reading and writing, although almost entirely religious, strike some interesting parallels with academic literacy. She believes that *la literatura te enseña* (literature teaches you) and that *hay libros que te llenan* (there are books that fill you). There are times, she says, "*Que me meto en un libro y no quiero dejarlo*" ("that I get into a book and don't want to leave it"), particularly when it enables her to feel as though she is "*caminando con El en ese momento. Estás viviendo en El, estás, te—parece que tú estás viviendo en ese tiempo en que, en que El vino*" (walking with him [Jesus] at that moment. You are living in him, you are, you—it seems as if you are living in that time in which, in which he came). Doña C. clearly distinguishes between books according to how well they are written, recognizing those that are *bien narrado* (well narrated), that pull the reader into them, make the writing as alive as the life one is living now. She maintains that some of the Bible even is not *bien narrado* because some parts really are simply written versions of what

some people experienced. Some of the writers were actually quite *rústicos* (rustic) and perhaps uneducated:

Cada uno fue formando, según se les vino a la, a la mente, a la cabeza, dejar escrito lo que ellos vieron, testigos de lo que ellos fueron testigos. Pero no con una—ellos no se preocuparon de que el mundo fuera a pensar—por ejemplo, no, no, este, no pusieron su niñez de Cristo, no la pusieron.

Each of them went forming, according to what came to, to mind, into their head, leaving written accounts of what they saw, witnesses of what they witnessed. But not with a—they didn't worry that the world would wonder—for example, they didn't um, they didn't write down Christ's childhood, they didn't write about it.

Thus Doña C. distinguishes between writing crafted for the reader and that which is simply a written account of experience. This parallels the value network members place on well-crafted oral language that is artfully articulated for audience appeal (Farr, 1993). Such interweaving of orality and literacy belies the dichotomy suggested by some scholars.

Doña C.'s understanding of the writing of the Bible also suggests an awareness of the "historicity" of the text, an awareness that also is evident in her comments about the languages and dialects in which various versions of the Bible were written. This sense of a different time and place in which the text was created also is emphasized when she asserts that "*la Biblia se puede leer fácilmente pero no se puede entender fácilmente*" (the Bible can be read easily, but it can't be understood easily), and that the Bible is not to be taken literally. Moreover, it indicates a certain sophistication about literature.

Commenting on how expensive one of her books was (50,000 [old] pesos in Mexico), Doña C. stresses that such books are well worth it when one likes them. This particular book, she says, "*tiene mucho de ... política*" (it has a lot of politics), "*la política en la que se desarrolló Cristo en aquellos tiempos*" (the politics in which Christ was involved in those times), including information about the laws and how they were interpreted, and how they were used to imprison and crucify Jesus. This interest in politics indicates that Doña C.'s religious reading is not simply a noncritical, passive process. In fact, she applies what she learns from her books to current politics as well. (In the following transcription, accents on four verbs follow Doña C.'s own rural dialect usage rather than standard Spanish; these are marked with asterisks.) Discussing the story of Moses, Doña C. says:

El, él era hebreo, y los egipcios no querían la raza hebrea porque los hebreos estaban multiplicándose rápidamente. Tenían miedo que les quitaran el, el poder. Es lo mismo que en Estados Unidos está pasando. Si uno analiza las cosas, es lo mismo. Estados Unidos tiene miedo que los hispanos gánemos este país, destruyamos* su, su, su raza. Porque la raza de, de, del mero mero es an—anglosajón, es poca. Pero este país está—está mezclado con muchas razas. Y la que más ha crecido, la raza morena y la raza hispana. Entonces, ellos tienen miedo que nosotros al—a lo largo de la historia, quite—los destrónemos*, los los quitémos* del poder. ¿Me entiendes? Eso mismo tenía—ese mismo—esa misma historia pasó en Egipto.*

He, he was Hebrew, and the Egyptians didn't like the Hebrew race because the Hebrews were growing rapidly. They were afraid that [the Hebrews] would take the, the power away from them. It's the same thing that is going on in the United States. If one analyzes things, it is the same thing. The United States is scared that we Hispanics will win this country, destroying their, their, their race. Because the race of the, of the, of the true Anglo-Saxon is few. But this country is, is mixed with many races. And the ones that have grown most are the Black and the Hispanic races. So then, they are afraid that we, in the long run of history, we dethrone them, we take power away from them. Do you understand me? That was the same thing—that very thing—that same story happened in Egypt.

Thus Doña C. uses what in academia is called "critical thinking": Drawing on historical sources, she analyzes a contemporary political situation through analogy. Although people certainly exercise such critical thinking with and without literacy, it seems that for Doña C., her activities within the Charismatic Renovation have stimulated both her literacy and her analytic thinking.

In addition to emphasizing literacy, however, the Charismatic Renovation emphasizes the personal experiencing of spirituality and community, contexts in which orality is highly valued. Doña C. refers to the precolonial and pre-Christian religions of Mexico as highly spiritual, claiming that Mexicans are more open to spirituality than some other people. She also has referred to the writings of the Spanish Saint, Teresa de Avila, who is considered to be one of Catholicism's great experts on spirituality and mysticism. Prayer meetings and other religious classes she attends emphasize self-expression. This focus on orality is particularly evident when someone "speaks in tongues."

Pagels (1979) associated the spiritualism of the gnostics with feminism, and women in these families also connect women with spiritualism, in ways that are compatible with the traditional Mexican view of woman as

the spiritual center of the family. As a gender role, this sometimes requires suffering and sacrifice on the part of the mother, but it also includes clear authority and power within the domestic and religious domains. In the Charismatic Renovation, spiritualism is associated directly with power. Through prayer, one asks to be filled by the Holy Spirit to bring peace to one's soul and to empower one to heal others through the laying on of hands. This power is deemed to be so forceful that it is sometimes frightening, but it is also deemed to be effective. In Doña C.'s words:

Pero hay un, un momento que viene un descanso en el espíritu.... En nuestras reuniones, en nuestras ora—círculo de oración, sucede, pero mucha gente no las comprende. O sea el—cuando te ponen las manos y tú estas en el posición, el Espíritu Santo viene y te descansa. Como que toma todo tu, tu, tu ser. Y lo transforma en, en, en paz.

But there is a, a moment when a rest comes to the soul.... In our reunions, in our pra—prayer circle, it happens, but many people don't understand it. In other words the—when they place the hands on you and you are in the position, the Holy Spirit comes and lets you rest. As if it takes all your, your, your being. And it transforms it into, into, into peace.

Thus the power of the Holy Spirit is used for healing, and the charismatics, filled with this power, heal others in the community. To Doña C., the beauty of her religion is the communal nature of this healing, that she herself can be an instrument of God's work. Rather than relying only on the church hierarchy, she herself can fully participate in such transformative, powerful processes.

With such power democratized within the church, with the ability to communicate with God and the Holy Spirit directly, there should be less need for the saints to intercede on one's behalf with God the Father. Nevertheless, Doña C. insists on inserting the Virgin of Guadalupe into the readings she prepares for church meetings. According to her,

Por ejemplo, se está diciendo que en la renovación se habla muy poco de la santísima Virgen.... Y la gente se, se, se siente mal porque uno de católico ama mucho la santísima Virgen, verdad. Y no la quiere dejar uno hacer a un lado. Aunque en verdad, la santísima Virgen fue la esclava del Señor, fue—ella en su, en su ser, siempre estuvo como oculta, como, como no ocupando un primer lugar. Ella siempre estuvo en un, en un segundo plano. Pero ella es muy importante en, en nuestra iglesia, es importantísima. Entonces yo trato de sacar, casi siempre, siempre, las lecturas, las prédicas que yo llevo, yo siempre trato de meter a la santísima Virgen. Para para que

