even more central and vaunted position as a universal art than even Prosperetti estimates.

Readers may find themselves wishing that Prosperetti had sustained the high level of detailed descriptions of paintings that we find in chapter one. Where she does give details further on, she does so to great effect, continuing to show us things we had not seen (let alone considered), linking Jan's landscapes to their world of ideas in fresh, but never far-fetched ways. Perhaps in some cases, Prosperetti had to grapple with the amount of description she should include because of an insufficient number of reproductions. Several of her discussions mention paintings that do not appear in the book. Several more describe details that we simply cannot see in the book's tiny black and white figures. All in all, however, this is not a prohibitive problem.

This book is a monumental achievement for our understanding of Jan Brueghel the Elder, a crucial phase in the development of landscape, and the nature of the Neo-Stoic desire for landscape images that impart wisdom. Though Prosperetti does not come right out and say it at any point in her book, one of the more important outcomes of her observations is a reminder that the historiographic invention of the early modern Netherlands as a paradigm of modernity should not include the perception of a rift between intellectual rigor and spirituality. Jan Brueghel's audience was both highly educated and spiritually inclined. Prosperetti shows us that in their eyes, his landscapes portrayed the universe of things we can see with great care for all of its particular manifestations according to God's order.

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Małgorzata Oleszkiewicz-Peralba, *The Black Madonna in Latin America and Europe: Tradition and Transformation*, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2007

Reviewed by Delia Cosentino

Popular devotion to the Virgin of Guadalupe among Mexican Catholics in the United States today is rooted not only in her status as a religious emblem, but also in her function as an ethnic and national symbol that effectively links transnational families to their ancestral homeland. For many devotees on both sides of the border, the miraculous appearance of the Virgin Mary before the Nahua neophyte Juan Diego in 1531 at the putative

spot of an earlier Aztec goddess seems to affirm the power of native reverence in the face of Western hegemony—whether in the form of the sixteenth-century Spanish Conquest or with the rise of the US as a global superpower. But Guadalupe's symbolism is more complicated than the original legend suggests, and her story, not surprisingly, has changed over time. Across the centuries, different groups have deployed her image in a land first dominated by indigenous civilizations, where European traditions made increasing inroads through colonialism, and ultimately in the modern nation state of Mexico, everyday more entwined with its (whiter, less Catholic) neighbor to the North. The racial politics of the Guadalupe tradition is one major complicating factor, since troubling questions loom about the control of the image and its narrative over time, even as this Virgin's loving nickname as "la morenita," or "the little dark one" suggests an inherent affinity with indigenous and mestizo populations of Greater Mexico. The olive-toned Guadalupe and her presumptive associations are surely what place this particular tradition at the center of the culturally rich but fairly problematic book under review here, where such racial politics remain largely unaddressed.

The Black Madonna in Latin America and Europe is an enormously wide-ranging comparative analysis of what the author describes as the "Great Mother Goddess figure" and her manifestations in various forms, but especially as a dark-skinned Virgin Mary in places where Catholicism has overlaid pagan traditions. Małgorzata Oleszkiewicz-Peralba, a scholar of Latin American Literary and Cultural Studies, is interested in the ways that this so-called 'Black Madonna' functions as a "syncretic" symbol "of matriarchal beliefs, religious practices, and feelings of national identity" (1). She is interested in the "curious iconographic transformations" of this figure over time and states that manifestations of this symbol have offered "resistance against oppression" and "often conflict with the official control of church and state" (9). The book's four chapters basically correspond to each of four distinct cultural areas where she says such hybrid feminine figures have reigned: Our Lady of Częstochowa in Poland, Guadalupe in Mexico, Iemanjá in Brazil and a 'subversive' Guadalupe in the postmodern American Southwest. But the boundaries of the study are even broader still, as each section includes abundant references to additional global traditions, such as related symbolism in Russia, Haiti, and Babylon, and among diverse cultural groups like—again, just for example—the Classic Maya, Catalonians, and Afro-Cubans.

The author surveys evidence of the "concept of an all-encompassing Great Mother Goddess" from Neolithic Asia and Europe, and her transformation through the spread of culture, whether (for instance) through the movement of Indo-European warriors in the second millennium BCE, with the rise of the Roman Empire, upon the European invasion of the Americas, and the Africanization of the Caribbean. She thereby swiftly

brings the reader up through the ancient and medieval past in Europe, and into the modern world where cross-cultural exchange becomes accelerated and the transatlantic world takes shape. By focusing the first chapter on the European example of Poland, the author is able to suggest some of the complexity of Christianity before it ever wends its way to the Americas; she is also poised to draw comparisons between pagan foundations on both sides of the Atlantic, which we are left to assume basically explains the blackness of the chosen Madonnas. While the author is correct that the specific combination of figures and places have not been addressed together before, no significant revelations about any of them seem to come to light as a result of the juxtapositions. This is due at least in part to the broad geographic and temporal boundaries of the study which offer little opportunity to scratch very deep to some of the more compelling questions. Meanwhile, many of the fundamental theoretical and historical sources that one might expect to see in a study of this subject matter remain oddly unmentioned.

In fact, the book tends to feel more personal than scholarly, with some of the most significant content—and contribution—revolving around modern and contemporary material, based largely on the author's own life experiences, fieldwork and photography in an impressive array of geographic settings. The polyglot Oleszkiewicz-Peralba offers observations collected from her childhood and adult experiences in her native Poland, from both familial and independent sojourns in South America, and from research trips throughout Mexico, Cuba, and the United States. This often lends the text an intimate feel and makes it eminently readable; the author's engagement with religious and symbolic practice is most tangible in her discussion of what she calls Afro-Indo-European syncretism in Brazil, where she participated in Candomblé and other ceremonies, befriending practitioners over the course of several visits. Her observations on the rich and tangled relationship between Catholicism and the African òrìṣà resonate with other, more in-depth ethnological and art historical studies of religious tradition in the greater Caribbean, such as the recent traveling exhibition *Mami Wata: Arts for Water Spirits in Africa and Its Diasporas* (Museum of African Art, Washington DC 2009). Like that show, Oleszkiewicz-Peralba's work is lavishly illustrated, with much of the author's movement through time and space paralleled visually with the more than a hundred half-tone images found throughout, as well as with fifteen color plates. Not surprisingly, however, the book's broad scope means that the images are often decontextualized. Most art historians would wish to ask more probing questions about who specifically made, witnessed, deployed, or otherwise manipulated the illustrated works.

The book is clearly indebted to the theoretical approach and actual work of psychologist Carl Jung, whose concepts of archetypal symbolism and the collective unconscious clearly inform *The Black Madonna*.

Strangely, Oleszkiewicz-Peralba never mentions Jung, even though she uses his principles to unite discussions of, for instance, Tree of Life symbolism in contemporary Lithuania, from ancient Western Europe and Mexico, in timeless diagrams "among the Arabs," and so forth (75). These trees are meant to demonstrate how images can be layered with powerful meaning. By similar loose association of text and image, including an undated, untitled "paper cutout" from the author's own collection said to represent the Polish folk witch Baba juxtaposed with a tree—featured both on the cover of the book and in its first chapter (Fig. 28)—the symbolism of the already universal and primordial Black Madonna becomes still more multivalent. Oleszkiewicz-Peralba writes, "there is a tendency toward retention of ancient archetypical figures in the collective subconscious..." (19). Armed with this perspective, she is justified in her free associations, and also lays plain her reliance on Jungian language.

But Jung also established the idea of the feminine archetype as an explanation for what he saw as a global phenomenon of mother worship, and he has long ago been critiqued for its generalizations. Curiously, Oleszkiewicz-Peralba does make reference to the work of Jung's protégé Eric Neumann who extended his mentor's theories and subject matter in his own book *The Great Mother* (1955). Almost thirty years ago, James J. Preston specifically critiqued both Jung and Neumann's "semimystical interpretations" of the feminine archetype, observing how "intuitive insights about mother symbolism" are weakened by the treatment of "symbols as though they were floating, disconnected, entities separated from sociocultural realities."[1] In many ways, Oleszkiewicz-Peralba opens herself to these exact criticisms, as she collapses time and severs symbols from their specific historical contexts in order to serve her theme, as she does when she draws a direct formal connection between "the sacred pubic triangle" of a 300,000 year old prehistoric goddess, the conical dressed statues of the several Baroque Spanish Virgins, and a three-point diagram of the Holy Trinity in a twentieth-century print (21-22). These tenuous elisions manage to undercut the specific historical variables that give the very real Black Madonnas their clear power.

To return to the case of Guadalupe, who, after all, is the subject of a full half (two of the four chapters) of Oleszkiewicz-Peralba's book, the historical variables are indeed critical for understanding the significance of the Mexican Virgin at any particular moment in time—whether at her formative stage in sixteenth-century Central Mexico, or in the twenty-first-century "postmodern" context responsible for, for example, "T-shirt with the Virgin of Guadalupe and a lowrider car" photographed by the author in a San Francisco store window in 2002. It is noteworthy, in fact, that the Guadalupe

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[1] James J. Preston, "Conclusion: New Perspectives on Mother Worship" in *Mother Worship: Theme and Variations*, James J. Preston, ed., Chapel Hill, 1982, 328.

material in her book is largely based not on her own scholarly research, but rather often on secondary sources, including some of dubious repute. Left uncritically assessed, most obviously, is the abundant evidence regarding the control of the narrative and image over the course of the long and painful colonial period, largely by the light-skinned Creoles (American-born Europeans) who dominated the church and state; the author never fully acknowledges Guadalupe's clear conquest associations, which would seem important to reconcile against her aforementioned assertion that such hybrid manifestations have offered "resistance against oppression" and "often conflict with the official control of church and state." Instead, she mixes contemporary political perspectives with cherry-picked historical material to promote a natural history of Guadalupe as a powerful figure that has always united all Mexicans, regardless of race, class and politics.

This is one of a number of places in the book where the author might have directly tackled the question of race and its implications and in this way probed more dramatically the power—beneficial, dangerous, and/or perhaps subversive—of the Black Madonna phenomenon in her chosen geographic contexts. Oleszkiewicz-Peralba could have supported her assertion of "resistance" with Jeanette Peterson's suggestion that, at the moment of its making, perhaps "the Mexican image was independently adapted and adopted by the native artist [the painter Marcos Cipac (de Aquino)] who, "for reasons of self-identification," chose dark skin and hair for the original *tilma* painting in order to "[co-opt] the European madonna image by converting other into self."[2] But perhaps the author was loathe to also acknowledge Peterson's alternate proposal that in its formative moment "a racially corrected Virgin Mary might have been envisioned [by the Archbishop] as a way to lure the indigenous constituency." There is ample evidence that the skin color of many sacred images have been subject to manipulation. For instance, Poland's Częstochowa was likely darkened in the nineteenth century, while a twentieth-century version that rendered her even darker attracted a million and a half visitors. Meanwhile, her shrine in Doylestown, Pennsylvania provides a lighter skin rendition for her American audience.[3] This is where an analysis of the Black Madonna through the unpacking of specific historical and geographic variables might reveal fascinating insights into not simply religious but also political and economic motivations.

A most intriguing contemporary situation in conjunction with the Guadalupe phenomenon has recently highlighted the complexity of the racial tensions surrounding the Mexican symbol. When Juan Diego was

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[2] Jeanette Peterson, "Creating the Virgin of Guadalupe: The Cloth, the Artist, and Sources in Sixteenth-Century New Spain." *The Americas* LXI/4, 2005, 609-610.

[3] Leonard W. Moss and Stephen C. Cappannari, "In Quest of the Black Virgin: She Is Black Because She is Black" in Preston, ed., 57-58.

being readied for canonization in 2002, the official portrait adopted by the church pictured a light-skinned, bearded man. This was a far cry from the *tilma*-wearing Nahua convert to whom "la morenita" appeared, which popular sentiment expects as part of an affirmational devotion. Quoted in a Texas newspaper, a Catholic man of indigenous Mixtec extraction called the church "racist" and expressed his disappointment at the emerging image of the new saint saying, "I feel the church is making fun of us and toying with our faith. This is not the Juan Diego we know from our churches. This is someone else who is totally different" ("Juan Diego's Makeover Causes a Stir," *Dallas Morning News*, March 8, 2002). In the same article, Bernardo Barranco, a dissident Catholic journalist and radio commentator in Mexico, concludes that the church "doesn't know how to work with [the indigenous world] pastorally." In a country that is ten percent indigenous and eighty percent mixed-race, but where most faces on television and in advertising are white, it is hard to disagree with the American working in Mexico who is quoted as blaming the controversy on the fact that there, as elsewhere, race remains "an undigested lump."

Were Oleszkiewicz-Peralba to juxtapose her discussion of the contemporary manifestation of Guadalupe in the American Southwest with the Juan Diego controversies, we might have gotten a glimpse of how deeply racial issues truly lurk behind that Dark Madonna—especially as her counterpart in the foundational narrative becomes white-washed and many of her devotees move north of the border. Such an analysis would be welcomed as it would likely demonstrate some of the contradictory impulses inspired by differences in skin color. But that uncomfortable lump is not seriously digested in *The Black Madonna*, which nonetheless may find great popular appeal for its suggestive title, its cross-cultural approach, and mostly its rich survey of syncretic mother goddess figures that the author shows to stretch from Europe to Mexico and through the Caribbean, and from South America, back north to the United States.

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