



**MERCENARY MILK, PERNICIOUS  
NURSEMAIDS, HEEDLESS MOTHERS:  
ANTI-WET NURSE RHETORIC IN THE  
SATIRICAL ORDENANZAS DEL  
BARATILLO DE MEXICO (1734)**

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The practice of nursing another's infant, either in charity or for payment, has played an important role in diverse societies across the globe for centuries. Historically, wet nursing has often been perceived by working-class or peasant women and their families as a well-paid occupation, especially when compared with the income earned by women in other jobs, such as washers, maids, cooks, or farmhands (Fildes 36; Meléndez 161; Sarasúa 176-178; Goodman 27-32). A position as a wet nurse often afforded poor or single women a source of steady income and a chance for social mobility, particularly in countries such as Spain where as early as the thirteenth century, nursing children until the age of three was required by law (Twinam 160). Beginning in the sixteenth century, the long-established Spanish practice of hiring peasant women to nurse the infants of wealthier couples (oftentimes by taking the infants to live in rural villages for the first years of their lives) was transferred to the New World and adapted to Spanish-American realities and households by the peninsular Spanish and Spanish-American creole (*criollo*) families living in the New World (Rosas Lauro 323).<sup>1</sup>

This article explores the ways in which the eighteenth-century Mexican satire, *Ordenanzas del baratillo de Mexico* (1734) by Pedro Anselmo Creslos Jache rails against the creole practice of hiring wet nurses to provide sustenance to their infants.<sup>2</sup> Colonial-era satirical writers —both peninsular and creole— drew on the

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<sup>1</sup> The first appearance of the word *criollo* in reference to a person of Spanish origin who had been born and raised in the New World, seems to have occurred in 1563 in a letter that Francisco Marroquín, the first bishop of Guatemala, wrote to King Felipe II of Spain (Lavallé 15). Bernard Lavallé explains that throughout the colonial period the term was used almost exclusively in the Americas since in Spain, the word *indiano* was used both to designate those of Spanish origin born in the Indies (*los criollos*) and to refer to Spaniards who had travelled to the New World to seek their fortune (Lavallé 15-16).

<sup>2</sup> Anti-wet nurse rhetoric was also widely disseminated in the Viceroyalty of Peru. For example, the series of satirical letters published in the influential Lima-based newspapers *Mercurio Peruano* and *Seminario Crítico* in 1791 depicted the viceregal capital of Lima as a chaotic, dirty, ill-organized urban space populated by unenlightened creoles and vulgar popular classes who bore the responsibility for having upended rational, domestic

anti-wet nurse opprobriums contained within the widely circulated writings of authors such as Fray Luis de León and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in order to craft their anti-wet nurse discourses. Peninsular writers railed against the practice of wet nursing in order to advance the argument that throughout Spanish America, one encounters hordes of effeminate and infantile creoles, incapable of governing themselves as fully rational adults, given that their constitution has been weakened by the inferior quality milk offered to them by their low-caste nursemaids. Creole satirists also turned a critical eye to New World child-rearing practices, questioning whether or not the employment of wet nurses might inhibit the development of creole children into capable, self-assertive, rational adults and indicting colonial child-rearing practices as contributing to images of creoles—at home and in Europe—as cowardly and politically stunted. As Julie Greer Johnson points out in her study of Spanish-American satires, more so than many other literary genres, satirical writings “capture the mounting turbulence” within colonial Spanish-American societies, “revealing irreconcilable differences between Spain and its possessions” (xvii). Indeed, satirical critiques of wet nurses and the parents who hire them, such as those contained within *Ordenanzas*, reveal the increasing tensions in creole/peninsular relations in eighteenth-century colonial Mexico, as well as creole aspirations to reform child-rearing practices in the hopes of creating a new generation of robust, able-bodied, and courageous leaders.<sup>3</sup> The critique of creole child-rearing practices contained in *Ordenanzas* serves as a defense of the Empire and a celebration of Spanish superiority, while also revealing an intense mistrust of creoles’ increasingly close-knit relationships with indigenous, black, and mixed-raced individuals in the New World.

### Anti-Wet Nursing Legislation in the New World

On the Iberian Peninsula, even as early as the thirteenth century, texts such as the Castilian statutory code *Siete Partidas* discuss and even attempt to legislate the quality and characteristics of women serving as wet nurses.<sup>4</sup> Within the New

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hierarchies (Meléndez 163-69; Premo "Misunderstood" and *Children of the Father King* 169-75; Rosas Lauro).

<sup>3</sup> More than eighty years later, in the well-known text *El Periquillo Sarniento*—which is widely considered to be the first Spanish American novel—the Mexican author Joaquín Fernández de Lizardi also censures creole child raising conventions. In *El Periquillo*, Lizardi reveals an Enlightenment-inspired protonationalistic sentiment in which he seeks to use the text as a tool for improving family dynamics as a path towards the betterment of the larger Mexican society.

<sup>4</sup> The *Siete Partidas*—compiled during the reign of Alfonso X of Castile (1252-1284)—exhorted the public to seek healthy, well-bred “amas” from good families (Partida 2, tit. 7, law III). As early as 1258, the courts of Valladolid passed a law which prohibited Muslim and Jewish women from serving as the wet nurses for Christian children and throughout medieval Europe, papal and royal decrees sought to prevent wet nurses from suckling infants of a different faith (Fildes 39-42). Within the New World context, Brewer-García

World context beginning around 1770 —several decades after *Ordenanzas* was written— the Spanish crown began to implement a series of edicts which, among other legislation aimed at its child subjects, gave royal courts increased jurisdiction over domestic matters, while establishing policies for wet nursing practices and the care of foundlings (Premo, "Misunderstood" 232). Indeed, in 1794, the Spanish Bourbon king Carlos IV issued a royal decree or Real cédula which explicitly addressed the dangers he felt were inherent to the use of wet nurses to suckle infants (Premo, "Misunderstood" 240). This decree was part of Spain's official program of initiatives known as the Bourbon Reforms, which were carried out in the eighteenth-century and which sought —largely unsuccessfully— to improve imperial administration and economic output through an increase in centralization, efficiency, and secularization (Brading 467-479; Fisher; Stein and Stein). Various aspects of the Bourbon social reforms of enlightened absolutism also focused on social policies aimed at limiting the influence exerted by non-white women over Spanish and creole children, while underscoring the importance of the role of maternal milk in reducing child mortality and thus increasing the population of loyal, hygienic, and healthy subjects (Premo "Misunderstood" 233; Meléndez 168; Twinam 173). Moreover, king Charles IV feared that the common practice of allowing creole and peninsular children to live in the countryside with their peasant nurses until the age of six or seven meant that, during this period, the children were “lost to the state” and consequently, not properly familiarized with their Iberian heritage (Premo "Misunderstood love" 240). Thus, like colonial-era satirists such as the author of *Ordenanzas*, the Spanish crown felt quite nervous about the perceived pernicious influence that wet nurses in the New World (overwhelmingly women of African or indigenous heritage) exerted over their infant charges.

### Anti-Wet Nursing Rhetoric in the Old World

*La perfecta casada* (1583) written by Fray Luis de León during the Spanish Golden Age, as well as Jean-Jacques Rousseau's Enlightenment-age treatise on child-rearing and early education, *Émile, ou De l'éducation* (1762), served as two of the most influential sources of inspiration regarding anti-wet nursing rhetoric for satirists writing about colonial Spanish-American societies. In *La perfecta casada*, the Christian humanist and moralist Luis de León argues that wet nurses' milk can cause a harmful imbalance between the body's four humors. He also insists that nothing in nature exists in vain —a version of the Aristotelian appeal to nature— in order to support his argument that mothers should nourish their infants with their own God-given milk. Although *Émile* was published almost two centuries after *La perfecta casada* and several decades after *Ordenanzas*, in *Émile*

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describes how sixteenth century Jesuit texts such as José de Acosta's *De procuranda indorum salute* argue that mestizos should not be eligible to hold elite ecclesiastical offices since the religious heresy of indigenous mothers could be passed to their infants through breast milk (371-372).

Rousseau also focuses his anti-wet nurse rhetoric on questions of morality, the importance of building strong, affective family ties, and the dangers which excessive amour-propre pose for virtuous human development.<sup>5</sup> Both writers construct their spirited attacks against the practice of hiring wet nurses around the tenet that the “unnaturalness” of wet nursing exposes infants to both moral and physical dangers. As we shall see, versions of this critique also emerge within anti-wet nursing satires such as *Ordenanzas*, written in and about colonial Spanish America.

The most popular of the prose works written by the poet, academic, Augustinian Friar, and theologian Fray Luis de León, *La perfecta casada* served as an instruction manual for newly married young women, became a popular wedding gift for young brides in Spain, and also circulated widely within creole circles throughout colonial Spanish America. Echoing the ideas of other Golden Age writers such as Juan Luis Vives (*De institutione feminae christianae*, 1524), Antonio de Guevara (*Relox de Príncipes*, 1539), and Pedro Luján (*Coloquios matrimoniales*, 1550), Fray Luis supports his argument that mothers must accept their “natural obligation” to nurse their young, by emphasizing the Aristotelian premise that everything in nature exists for a purpose (see also Rivera 208). In a chapter dedicated to enumerating the duties and obligations of a *perfect wife* to her husband and children, Fray Luis argues that since it is “natural” for a mother to love her children, and since loving them involves raising them and providing them with her milk, then any mother who chooses not to nurse her child concomitantly chooses not to love and raise them. Thus, the author asserts, a mother who does not nurse her child takes, in effect, the *unnatural* step of “disinheriting them” (León 1999:71, chapter XVII). This disinheritance, continues Fray Luis, is an act so savage and “unnatural” that the fiercest of wild animals fail to act in this way, since even “La braveza del león sufre con mansedumbre a sus cachorillos que importunamente le desjuguen las tetas.” (71). Moreover, Fray Luis argues, after giving birth a woman’s very own body “loudly declares” to her its desire to provide sustenance for her infant:

La naturaleza dentro de ella misma declara casi a voces su voluntad, enviando luego después del parto leche a los pechos. ¿Qué más clara señal esperamos de lo que Dios quiere, que ver lo que hace? Cuando les levanta a las mujeres los pechos, les manda que críen; engrosándoles los pezones, les avisa que han de ser madres; los rayos de la lecha que viene son como agujijones con que las despierta a que alleguen a sí lo que parieron. (León 71)

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<sup>5</sup> See Sussman (27-29) and Lange (50-56) for further discussion of Rousseau’s critiques of the practice of wet nursing.

Fray Luis concludes his fulmination against any woman's decision not to nurse her infant with a reproachful maxim: "Si les duele el criar, no paren; y, si les agrada el parir, crién también." (71).<sup>6</sup>

*La perfecta casada* also presents warnings about the moral dangers associated with wet nurses and their milk and Fray Luis presents moral directives aimed at mothers which are forceful and foreboding. Fray Luis and other Golden Age thinkers and theologians affirmed that a mother's milk provided not only the perfect nutritional sustenance for her child, but also served as a liquid conduit for the transfer of maternal values and morality into the body and soul of her offspring. Fray Luis asserts:

Porque con la leche... se bebe y convierte en substancia y como en naturaleza todo lo bueno y lo malo que hay en aquella de quien se recibe. Porque el cuerpo ternecico de un niño, y que salió como comenzado del vientre, la teta le acaba de hacer y formar. (170)

Continuing with this line of reasoning, Luis de León explains to his readers that if a mother abandons her infant to the care of a wet nurse she risks exposing her child to the vices of this mercenary nurse:

De arte que, si el ama es borracha, habemos de entender que el desdichadito beberá con la leche el amor del vino; si colérica, si tonta, si deshonesto, si de viles pensamientos y ánimo, como de ordinario lo son, será el niño lo mismo. (70)

Chapter XVII of *La perfecta casada* also introduces a belief commonly held in antiquity, and up until the nineteenth century, that "milk is blood" and thus an integral part of the body's humoral system (Fidles 9; Brewer-García 370-372; Earle 26-47). Thus, argues León, if a mother confers the care of her child to a wet nurse, she concomitantly renounces her motherhood and relegates her offspring to bastardy given that her children will have spent only nine months within their mother's womb, and a full twenty-four months at the breast of their nursemaid (70). This leads Fray Luis to conclude that in such cases:

...echando la cuenta bien, el ama es la madre, y la que le parió es peor que madrastra, pues enajena de sí a su hijo y hace borde lo que había nacido legítimo,

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<sup>6</sup> Similarly, the very first sentence of *Émile* also suggests the author's appeal to nature when Rousseau succinctly presents his argument that degradation and destruction results when ignorant humans fail to respect the infinite wisdom and perfection of an all-knowing Nature. Thus, Rousseau resolutely proclaims, "Everything is good as it leaves the hands of the Author of things; everything degenerates in the hands of man" (trans. Bloom 37). Like Fray Luis, Rousseau berates mothers who choose not to nurse their infants for having made an unnatural decision, while also arguing that the unnatural relation between a wet nurse and her infant charge generally results in neglect and unhealthy care (Rousseau 91).

y es causa que sea mal nacido el que pudiera ser noble; y comete en cierta manera un género de adulterio, poco menos feo y no menos dañoso que el ordinario. (70)<sup>7</sup>

Thus, in the eyes of the influential Fray Luis, a mother's commitment to nursing her child represents nothing short of her commitment to protecting and ensuring the virtuous social formation of her offspring.<sup>8</sup>

As we shall see, within the New World context, satirists such as Creslos Jache adapted and referenced elements of the anti-wet nursing arguments of Fray Luis for their own rhetorical purposes. Indeed, *Ordenanzas* references passages from *La perfecta casada* in order to suggest to readers familiar with the ideas of Fray Luis that if poor, uneducated, peasant nursemaids in Europe posed a threat to the moral, physical, and social health of upper-class infants, then surely the influence of indigenous, black, and mixed race wet nurses must be even more pernicious.

#### **Anti-Wet Nursing Rhetoric in *Ordenanzas del baratillo de Mexico* (1734)**

Although Lizardi's *El Periquillo* is by far the most well-known satiric novel of Mexican colonial-era customs, the 1734 manuscript *Ordenanzas del baratillo de Mexico* also provides an interesting, satirical portrayal of a colonial Mexico. *Ordenanzas* paints a dystopian view of an early eighteenth-century Mexico City where effete and incompetent creole husbands allow their selfish and vain wives to abandon their progeny to morally suspect, mixed-race wet nurses.<sup>9</sup> *Ordenanzas*

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<sup>7</sup> In this passage, Luis de León echoes the *Siete Partidas* (Partida 2, tit. 7, law III) in noting that the mother only carries the child in her womb for nine months, whilst the wet nurse feeds and nurtures the infant for much longer: “e por que el tiempo dessta criança, es mas luengo, que el dela madre: non puede ser que non reciba mucho del contenente e de las cosstumbres del ama” (*Siete Partidas*, Partida 2, tit. 7, law III).

<sup>8</sup> Similarly, Rousseau warns his readers throughout Book I of *Émile* that the damaging influences to which infants are subjected during the first stage of their lives often affects them throughout childhood and into adulthood. He asserts that this “first education” is both the most important and “belongs incontestably to women” who should realize the important responsibility entrusted to them. To mothers who would consign the care of their children to another woman, Rousseau offers this foreboding warning: “If the voice of blood is not strengthened by habit and care, it is extinguished in the first years, and the heart dies, so to speak, before being born. Here we are, from the first steps, outside of nature” (trans. Bloom 46-47; Rousseau 95).

<sup>9</sup> The complete title of the manuscript appears as *Ordenanzas del baratillo de Mexico Dadas por vía de exortación, o consejos por los Doctores de su universidad a sus discípulos*. My citations of the text are from the copy held in the Colección Antigua (ms. 292) at Mexico City's Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH). At least two other copies of the manuscript exist; one is held at the National Library in Madrid and the other at UCLA Charles E. Young Research Library. The only other published citations taken from the *Ordenanzas* manuscript (Katzew 56-61) are based on the copy held in Madrid which, according to Katzew, is signed and dated 1754 with a spelling for the author's name and a

portrays a chaotic and decadent colonial society and uses grotesque imagery, hyperbole, and depictions of particular societal types to offer readers a tour of a morally corrupt viceregal capital where “proper” hierarchies have been replaced by a vice-ridden, tumultuous society ruled by thieves, women, and mixed-race individuals. Signed by one Pedro Anselmo Creslos Jache —a name that the manuscript’s frontispiece identifies as an anagram for Don Joseph Carlos de Colmenares— the title *Ordenanzas* refers to colonial Mexico City’s secondhand goods market which was located in the city center in a corner of the Plaza Mayor and later moved to the Plaza del Volador (Haslip-Viera 40-41). Since the Baratillo or “thieves market” attracted a racially diverse clientele of poor, inter-city customers (as well as pickpockets and vagrants), and given that much of the used merchandise for sale at the market was presumed to be stolen, colonial officials repeatedly (and unsuccessfully) sought to dismantle the unsavory, chaotic bazaar (Haslip-Viera 40-41).

As Ilona Katzew points out in her book *Casta Painting: Images of Race in Eighteenth-Century Mexico*, the word *Ordenanzas* or “official decrees” used in the title of Creslo Jache’s satire creates an oxymoron given the impossibility of effectively regulating the chaotic Baratillo market, and since both the title and the format of the manuscript purportedly present a colonial document detailing lists of numbered ordinances aimed at regulating an official institution (56). Instead, the manuscript parodies other official, colonial decrees while satirizing and lambasting a variety of colonial Mexican social and domestic practices, customs, and institutions. Moreover, the manuscript attempts to reveal the grave effects of what the author considers to be one of Mexico’s most pernicious customs — permitting different racial groups and social classes to mix freely on the streets, in the marketplace, in schools, and even within the family home.<sup>10</sup>

The *Ordenanzas* manuscript opens with a twenty-page letter penned by an author who claims to be a peninsular Spaniard with an intimate and detailed knowledge of the customs, climate, and people of Mexico. In this introductory letter the author wastes little time in delving into his mocking harangues against a perceived laziness, lasciviousness, filthiness, and general lack of moral character which, he asserts, characterizes the inhabitants of Mexico (and Mexico City in particular). Within the first pages of the manuscript, Creslos Jache begins to describe the negative influences that the disorderly, dirty, and dangerous city he refers to as Sodom, inflicts on its inhabitants. In particular, he criticizes peninsular Spaniards and creoles (“criollos”) for failing to maintain a respectable distance between themselves and their children and other racial groups (namely “negros”, “mulatos”, and “indios”) that he considers inferior. The author expresses a

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complete title which differ slightly from the INAH manuscript. The UCLA online library catalogue indicates a date of 1734 for their copy of the *Ordenanzas* manuscript.

<sup>10</sup> See Greer Johnson (10-12) for a discussion of colonial satirists’ use of parody as a rhetorical tool for depicting conflict and anxiety within Spanish-American societies.

particular preoccupation with what he considers to be the dangerous child-rearing practices of the creole elite living in Mexico City. He describes creole children as “naturalmente flojos, y poco aplicados a la consideración”, a weakness which, he argues, is only exacerbated by the particularly “infernal creole ideal” of sending their children to school together with the children of “todas castas, y colores”.<sup>11</sup> Attending school with mulato and black classmates (“condiscípulos, mulatos, y negros”) Creslos Jache asserts, only teaches creole children “mil maldades, retobos y picardías... ..”.<sup>12</sup>

Yet Creslos Jache seems even more disturbed by what he perceives as the pernicious creole practice of encouraging racial and class mixing well before creole children reach school age. He alludes to classical notions of climatic (or geographical) determinism espoused by thinkers such as Hippocrates and Aristotle and applied to the New World context in the works of seventeenth century Spanish humanists such as Juan de la Puente, Bernadino de Sahagún, Gregorio García and later by Enlightenment writers (Brading 196-198, 297-298). The author of *Ordenanzas* describes how the warm Mexican climate leads to a general slothfulness amongst its inhabitants and expresses incredulity when he discovers that creole husbands permit their lazy wives to remain inattentive to the needs of their children:

escusabanse estas de criar a sus hijos, con pretextos que nunca, les an faltado, faltan, ni faltaran, y las daban a chichiguas, ó Nodrizas, negras, ó Indias, conque añadiéndose al poderoso influjo del vientre el de la Leche, é inclinaciones, que se contraen, con ella, por las crianzas, fue ocurriendo la mala crianza, y costumbres...<sup>13</sup>

Creslos Jache’s anti-wet nursing diatribe blames spineless, creole husbands for permitting their wives and female relatives to contract out the nursing of their children to “mercenary” caretakers.<sup>14</sup> In effect, Creslos Jache’s personification of “Milk” in this passage serves as both a way to emphasize the liquid’s unique power to imbue infants with particular moral and physical qualities, while also indicting creole men as inept, irresponsible, and impotent household heads who are incapable of realizing the damaging long-term consequences (for both their children and their society) of such domestic mismanagement. Prefiguring

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<sup>11</sup> INAH Col. Antigua, ms. 292, f. 4v, ‘Ordenanzas del baratillo de Mexico’, signed Joseph Carlos de Calmenares (alias Don Pedro Anselmo Creslos Jache), 1734.

<sup>12</sup> INAH Col. Antigua, ms. 292, f. 4v, ‘Ordenanzas’, 1734.

<sup>13</sup> INAH Col. Antigua, ms. 292, f. 3r, ‘Ordenanzas’, 1734.

<sup>14</sup> An echo of this complaint appears many decades later in the first chapter of Lizardi’s *El Periquillo Sarmiento*, as the first-person narrator blames his father for indulging his wife’s desire to hire a chichigua.



Lizardi's satirical derision of creole laziness and excessively effete nature (and Rousseau's enjoinder to build children's strength by bathing them in ice-cold water), Creslos Jache's manuscript invokes the Greek myth of Salmacis; the nymph who tempts Hermaphrodite into her fountain, thereby exhausting, debilitating, and emasculating the son of Mercury and Venus. In *Ordenanzas*, Jache affirms that the children of Mexican creoles "are so effeminate, it is as if the water in which [the creoles] continually bathe their children were Salmacis' fountain".<sup>15</sup>

But if Creslos Jache ruthlessly mocks and attacks creole men for their weak and incompetent nature, he delivers an equally scathing indictment of their wives. Echoing Fray Luis de León (and using an argument which Lizardi would employ decades later in the first chapter of *El Periquillo Sarniento*), in *Ordenanzas* Creslos Jache goes so far as to state that mothers who choose not to nurse their own young cannot properly be called mothers: "Pues el procrearlos es por apetito, común a las bestias al parirlos sus Madres, por precisión, o rebentar, el alimentarlos lo hacen como qualquiera sabandija".<sup>16</sup> Later in the manuscript, Creslos Jache repeats Luis de León's anti-wet nurse rhetoric practically verbatim when he accuses non-nursing mothers of vainly "cuidando sus pechos" and ignoring the important fact that motherhood was their very reason for becoming a wife in the first place. He entreats these mothers to focus on the best interests of "los Hijos, que concebis el deliete, y parís la necesidad: Pues ... no es de apreciar pues para eso se casaron...".<sup>17</sup>

Given his caustic assessment of creole parents, it comes as little surprise that Creslos Jache characterizes creole children as whiny, undisciplined, and petulant. On the 28th folio of the manuscript the author of *Ordenanzas* shifts to the narrative perspective of a first person plural. Through the use of a collective "nosotros" voice of peninsular youths, he derides creole children as clumsy, whimpering, crybabies who, with their folded arms and closed fists, remain unprepared to explore independently the world around them. The narrative voice of these peninsular youths claims:

...antes de que sepamos pronunciar dición alguna.. si sucede caerse alguno de nosotros a la tierra... [nosotros los niños españoles] nos Reimos en lugar de llorar... [Por otros lado], A los niños de por allá que quando se caen, extienden las manecitas, y sin cesar lloran, y aun que les den alguna cosa, no la toman, ni

<sup>15</sup> "son tan afeminados, como sí el agua en que continuamente los bañan de niños fuese la de la fuente Salmacís" (INAH Col. Antigua, ms. 292, f. 5v, 'Ordenanzas', 1734).

<sup>16</sup> (INAH Col. Antigua, ms. 292, f. 4v, 'Ordenanzas', 1734).

<sup>17</sup> (INAH Col. Antigua, ms. 292, f. 32r-v, 'Ordenanzas', 1734). In chapter XVII of *La perfecta casada* Fray Luis beseeches his young female readers to realize, "Porque no ha de pensar la casada que el ser madre es engendrar y parir un hijo; que en lo primero siguió su deleite, y a lo segundo les forzó la necesidad natural.... y para cuyo fin se casó principalmente" (León 69).

callan asta que se les disminuie el dolor: Como también, que regularmente andan los niños con los brazos recogidos, y las manos cerradas, al contrario, que nosotros [los niños españoles], que los llevamos extendidos, y las manos abiertas, por si podemos cerrarlas con algo...."<sup>18</sup>

Indeed, in various sections of *Ordenanzas* wet nurses in particular and a “mala crianza” in general are blamed for raising creole children as whiny crybabies (“llorando con mañosos sollozos”) who, from a young age, learn to rob from stores by hiding merchandise in their mouths.<sup>19</sup> Invoking his favored satirical trope of grotesque hyperbole, the author concludes, “Si no cuidan la educación de sus hijos, las madres se convertirán en maestras de ladrones”.<sup>20</sup> Undoubtedly, the unstated implication of Creslos Jache’s derisive assessment of creole children and the way in which they are raised is that this younger generation of creoles is as ill-prepared as their parents for the responsibilities associated with self-government.

### **Grotesque Satirical Caricatures and Anti-racial Mixing Rhetoric in *Ordenanzas***

While Fray Luis de León’s tone in *La perfecta casada* remains, for the most part, avuncular in its dispersal of moral lessons and maxims and its critique of wet nursing, Creslo Jache’s references to wet nursing in *Ordenanzas* provide the author with an avenue for presenting alarming remonstrances and grotesque satirical caricatures and vignettes. Anti-wet nursing rhetoric in *Ordenanzas* also serves to underscore the narrator’s (and quite likely the author’s) extreme aversion to “the mixing of diverse [racial] castes” (“concurrancia de todas castas”) within colonial Mexican society. These passages of the text reveal to readers the entrenched racism of the epoch when so-called scientific theories of racial hierarchies and human taxonomies began to emerge and gain currency (Cañizares-Eguerra 208-210; Cope 4-6, 49-67; Katzew 56-58; Lewis 25-32; Lomnitz-Adler 262-281; Martínez “Language” 25-42 and *Genealogical Fictions* 161-170; Painter 72-90). For instance, Creslos Jache affirms that whilst “black” and “mulata” chichiguas are frequently careless nurses with little milk to offer their charges, they never forget to teach creole nurslings many reprehensible habits before the age of two and to instill in baby girls, dangerously loose morals. He even goes so far as to suggest that the wet nurses’ own loose morals place their vulnerable female charges on a path towards prostitution:

...ni se olviden [las chichiguas] de enseñarles a sus hijos, antes de los dos años de edad, a chupar el cigarro, o Puro, que es una grandísima gracia como amañ[n]ear 1 como si danzasen el Zapateado, con lo mas provocados

<sup>18</sup> (INAH Col. Antigua, ms. 292, f. 28r, ‘Ordenanzas’, 1734).

<sup>19</sup> (INAH Col. Antigua, ms. 292, f. 34v, ‘Ordenanzas’, 1734).

<sup>20</sup> (INAH Col. Antigua, ms. 292, f. 34r, ‘Ordenanzas’, 1734).

movimientos . . . en particular las niñas ...en efecto se esmeran por andar...como a Mercancía”.<sup>21</sup>

In colonial-era satirical works, grotesque depictions and caricatures often serve to present paradoxes and memorable juxtapositions while, as Greer Johnson points out, “sexual promiscuity is often used by satirists as an expedient leveler of idealistic aspirations...” (29; Lasarte lxi-lxiii). In this section of *Ordenanzas*, Creslos Jache seeks to emphasize the gravity of the risk posed by wet nurses when he presents the reader with the shocking juxtaposition of what a nursemaid should ideally provide her charge (pure, wholesome moral and physical nourishment and care) with a grotesque characterization of a nursemaid who teaches the young toddlers in her care to smoke cigars and market themselves as prostitutes.

One of Creslos Jache’s gravest worries involves the susceptibility of ill-educated, unrefined creole children to the anti-Spanish (“Gachupín”) discourses instilled in them when they pass from the pernicious hands of chichigua wet nurses into racially diverse primary school classrooms:

donde con el concurso de tantos generos de ruin se les impresionan y adquieren noticia de los vicios de todos (si antes no se les havia dado sus chichiguas y familiares) y con particularidad el odio a los Gachupines; para cuyo efecto singular se lo ex[h]orten los maestros... pues con esto se consigue el introducirles el odio aun a sus Padres”.<sup>22</sup>

As Katzew points out in her study of colonial Casta paintings, in eighteenth-century Mexico “social boundaries became increasingly blurred as a consequence of racial mixing and changes in the distribution of wealth” and it is within this unique sociohistorical context that the *Ordenanzas* manuscript “provides a fascinating glimpse into the mentality of the period regarding mixed-bloods and their purported negative effects on the Spanish body politic” (56). Indeed, the *Ordenanzas* satire attributes a wide-range of social, moral, and physical impediments suffered by creoles on their fraternization with other “castes”. According to Creslos Jache, as long as the selfish creole inhabitants of colonial Mexico refuse to dispense with the convenience and social capital associated with the employment of a wet nurse, lower caste *chichiguas* will continue to imbue their charges with loose morals and a weak physical constitution.

The author also accuses these nursemaids of seeking to instill in their nurslings a penchant for uncivilized food and drink, and most grotesquely, of attempting to alter their physical traits.<sup>23</sup> For example, Creslos Jache accuses

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<sup>21</sup> (INAH Col. Antigua, ms. 292, f. 32r, ‘Ordenanzas’, 1734).

<sup>22</sup> (INAH Col. Antigua, ms. 292, f. 33r, ‘Ordenanzas’, 1734).

<sup>23</sup> See Rosas Lauro for a study of similar prejudices and accusations leveled at black nursemaids in eighteenth century Lima (335-342).

“negra”, “mulata”, and “india” *chibiguas* of feeding their creole charges indigenous Mexican greens and vegetables such as *quelites*, *huauzontles*, and *romeritos*, as well as sliced and roasted poblano chiles (*rajas*), the warm, sweet corn drink *atole*, and the chocolate and cinnamon-flavored corn drink called *champurrado*. Although ostensibly, Creslos Jache finds these foods disdainful due to their mushy texture, it is their New World provenance which in all likelihood raises his suspicions. According to Creslos Jache, as a result of their consumption of these suspect victuals, creole infants become as gaunt, unhealthy, and toothless as their “mixed-race”, “black”, and “Indian” milk siblings:

Quilites, guanzontles, romeritos ... rajas, athole, champurrado y otros alimentos de igual substancia, con los que se hacen con el tiempo... flazidos ombres, alonganzador de viles (tanto que [se tornan] chupados, y sin dientes como los hermanos [de la leche]).<sup>24</sup>

Moreover, the author denounces “mercenary mothers” penchant for teaching their creole nurslings to smoke, “even though it is common knowledge that this damages the stomach, [and] is detrimental to one’s health and digestion”.<sup>25</sup> With this smoking habit, the author affirms, the children “imitate the negroes”, so that “all that is missing is that they blow smoke out their mouths in order to look like the Devil”.<sup>26</sup> Even more grotesque and indicative of the strongly racist sentiments of this satire, is the author’s description of how black wet nurses in particular, seek to manipulate the facial features of their charges: “Tampoco se descuidan en escarbar, con especial a las niñas, desde la mas tierna edad las narices, para que sean chatas”.<sup>27</sup> The above-cited selections from the 33rd folio of the *Ordenanzas* reveal the deep-seated social anxieties which characterized relations between Spaniards and creoles, black, indigenous, and mixed-race individuals living in late colonial Spanish America, while underscoring peninsular Spaniards’ fear that creoles increasingly shared more in common with “lower caste”, non-European inhabitants of the New World, than with their Iberian cousins.

### Conclusions

Unfortunately, it is not known whether or not *Ordenanzas* was ever put into circulation, or how its presumed audience of eighteenth-century creole and peninsular Spanish readers reacted to the at times grotesque imagery contained within the text. Nevertheless, the anti-wet nurse discourse and satirical

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<sup>24</sup> (INAH Col. Antigua, ms. 292, f. 33v, ‘Ordenanzas’, 1734).

<sup>25</sup> “aunque de esso es sabido el daño de estomago... perjudique a la salud, y digestión” (INAH Col. Antigua, ms. 292, f. 33v, ‘Ordenanzas’, 1734).

<sup>26</sup> por faltarles solo el echar humo por la boca para parecerse al Diablo” (INAH Col. Antigua, ms. 292, f. 33v, ‘Ordenanzas’, 1734).

<sup>27</sup> (INAH Col. Antigua, ms. 292, f. 33v, ‘Ordenanzas’, 1734).

representations contained within the manuscript serve as important windows into the highly fraught relationships between peninsular Spaniards and creoles within eighteenth-century Spanish-American society. As Greer Johnson has convincingly demonstrated, colonial Spanish-American satire often served as a “diagnostic tool” for identifying societal ills with the ultimate goal of affecting real sociopolitical change (156). Consequently, the intended purpose (or “ultimate goal”) of the anti-wet nurse rhetoric contained within colonial satires such as *Ordenanzas* would have been quite different, depending on the identity of a text’s (often anonymous) author. Thus, if we presume a peninsular identity for the author of *Ordenanzas*, then the text’s condemnation of New World wet nursing and child-rearing practices would seem to highlight peninsular Spaniards’ fears with regards to a new generation of creoles who shared more in common with their nursemaids and “milk siblings” than with their Iberian relatives and ancestors. On the other hand, if one were to posit a creole identity for the author, then the text’s accusations against mixed-race, black, and indigenous wet nurses take on a scornful, mocking tone aimed at simultaneously presenting and rebuking contemporary peninsular prejudices against creole child-rearing practices and social norms. I would argue, however, that the intensity of the disdain, together with the extremely scornful tone sustained throughout the manuscript, suggests that the author was a peninsular Spaniard who believed that the dissemination of his images of shockingly pernicious creole child-rearing practices would help to underscore the need for the strict regulation of domestic spaces and conventions in the New World. Following this interpretation then, *Ordenanzas* should be understood as a text which served as prefigurative propaganda in support of the kinds of changes which the Bourbon reform efforts sought to implement some four decades after *Ordenanzas* was written.

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