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**HEARTS IN THE HEARTH:
SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY WOMEN'S SONNETS
OF LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP IN SPAIN AND PORTUGAL**

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ABSTRACT

This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge about the realities of women's lives in the seventeenth-century Iberian peninsula, through a socio-historical interpretation of the poetic production of five women. One is Portuguese, Violante del Cielo, and four are Spaniards: Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza, Leonor de la Cueva y Silva, Marcia Belisarda and Catalina Clara Ramírez de Guzmán. All are from the educated upper or noble classes and their lives span some one hundred and forty years, from 1566 to 1693. The thesis focuses particularly on their sonnets of love and friendship, both secular and religious.

The sonnet was specifically chosen as the vehicle to study the ideas and concerns of literate, seventeenth-century women. As a difficult form of poetry requiring wit, artistry and education, sonnets enable a display of intellectual capabilities and offer opportunities for veiled criticism of contemporary systems of control. These women do not overtly rail against a system that offers them much in terms of social advancement and privilege. However, they do re-write our understanding of the Baroque by presenting their interests, pleasures and discontents from a feminine viewpoint.

This detailed, contextual study of women's works, set against the philosophical, religious and moral treatises that governed their age, enables a wider interpretation of women's thought and intentions in the Iberian peninsula than may hitherto have been acknowledged, particularly in terms of relationships of affection within the family. Collectively, their individual works display a determination to demonstrate women's intelligence and moral strength. Furthermore, it becomes clear that women living within a system that utilised biological determinism as proof that they were incapable of reason, strive in their works to show that they are both capable of reason and determined to demonstrate it as undeniable fact.

In loving memory of

BEN AND IRYN

Two hearts, one soul, one hearth

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INTRODUCTION: REWRITING THE BAROQUE

[N]othing is known about women before the eighteenth century.
... Here I am asking why women did not write poetry in the Elizabethan
age ... any woman born with a great gift in the sixteenth century
would certainly have gone crazed, shot herself, or ended her days in some
lonely cottage outside the village, half witch, half wizard, feared and mocked at.
(Woolf 45)

The question famously posed by Joan Kelly as to whether women had a Renaissance, can equally be applied to the history of women in Baroque Spain. By the very nature of the prescribed gender roles prevalent in Counter-Reformation Spain, women's history can not simply be assumed to be represented by the words and actions of men. Nevertheless, until the excellent scholarship of the last quarter century began to address the lacunae left by a historiography written within a masculine framework of reference, women did not have their own history.¹ New scholarship has, however, brought new pressures. In her discussion of gender and history, Joan Wallach Scott has observed that "women's history is characterized by extraordinary tensions: between practical politics and academic scholarship; between received disciplinary standards and interdisciplinary influences; between history's atheoretical stance and feminism's need for theory" (17). She goes on to note that because feminist historians write for varied audiences they can produce uneven and confusing arguments. These nevertheless lead to insights into the problems historians face in producing new knowledge about women (18).

The purpose of this study is to address some of the gaps in the study of both women's history and their artistic production, through a contextually based exploration of Spanish sonnets of love and friendship by five seventeenth-century women: Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza, Leonor de la Cueva y Silva, Marcia Belisarda,

¹ For the full content of Kelly's famous essay, see Joan Kelly-Gadol, "Did Women Have a Renaissance?," *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, ed. Claudia Koonz and Susan Stuart Renate Bridenthal, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977) 175-202.

Catalina Clara Ramírez de Guzmán and Violante del Cielo.² Two of the poets were nuns: Cielo, in the Monasterio de la Rosa, next to the court in Lisbon, and Belisarda in the Real Convento de la Concepción, in Toledo.³ Cueva and Catalina Clara lived in the secular world and spent their lives in important rural towns where their families were of some importance and status. Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza was, by any standards, extraordinary, her life and work characterized by a militant religious fervour and a desire for martyrdom, at odds with her privileged upbringing among the most influential members of society, including the court of Philip II.

In the course of the study I shall address the concerns raised by Gerda Lerner, that women have always been forced to prove to themselves and others that they are capable of full humanity and abstract thought. Lerner contends that this necessity has skewed the intellectual development of women as a group, as they have had to turn their intellectual endeavour to counteracting pervasive patriarchal assumptions about their inferiority and human incompleteness (*Consciousness* 10-11). Moreover, literate women wishing to write always found themselves in an anomalous position; female loquacity was associated with promiscuity, whereas male eloquence was celebrated as the mark of an educated and distinguished man (Jones, "Nets" 1). Women were considered by men to need constant surveillance in three specific areas: the mouth, their chastity, and the entrance of the house; this connection between speaking and wantonness was common to legal discourse and conduct books (Stallybrass 126). The pressures on women to remain silent and enclosed, verbally, sexually and scribally, can only have increased as print culture developed and there was greater access to both literary and religious models to inspire would-be female poets. Certainly, there is considerable scholarly agreement

² Sor María de Santa Isabel used the pen name of Marcia Belisarda and it is this name that will be used throughout the study. It should also be noted that the name "Violante del Cielo" is the Spanish version of this nun's name. It also appears, in works by and about her, as "Violante do Céu" and "Violante do Céu."

³ Although the title page of her *Parnaso lusitano*, published in 1733, denominates Cielo's convent thus, in her own sonnet marking her withdrawal into the convent she describes it as "el convento de Nuestra Señora del Rosario de la corte de Lisboa, que el vulgo llama Monasterio de la Rosa del orden de Santo Domingo" (*Parnaso* 44).

on the Counter-Reformation repression of women in terms of their education and independence, both physical and intellectual. For example, Paul Julian Smith has claimed that there were even fewer women writing in Spain in the Counter-Reformation period than elsewhere in Europe, as a result of the Spanish obsession with domestic privacy that also prevented the publication of memoirs and letters (14). Similarly, Beth Miller notes that only three women of late medieval Spain left any substantial work—Leonor López de Córdoba, Teresa de Cartagena and Florencia Pinar—and that few women wrote in the Spanish Empire in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (4).⁴

In spite of these observations, the number of poems recorded in Serrano y Sanz's *Apuntes para una biblioteca de escritoras españolas* for the seventeenth century alone, indicates that women were writing and furthermore that their families and descendants felt sufficiently strongly about their compositions to retain them, hence leaving a discernible trace of women's intellectual powers, personalities and education. Although many women may have been discouraged from coming forward in print, others, such as Violante del Cielo, saw their work published, while Marcia Belisarda had clearly prepared her poetry collection for a publication that never took place.⁵ It is a matter for speculation as to why her works were not published, but

⁴ A number of studies of Spanish women's history and literature have been published in recent years and are cited in the course of the study. Of particular note are: Alain Saint-Saëns, ed., *Religion, Body and Gender in Early Modern Spain* (San Francisco: Mellen Research UP, 1991); Marina Scordilis Brownlee and Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Cultural Authority in Golden Age Spain* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1995); Beth Kurti Miller, *Women in Hispanic Literature: Icons and Fallen Idols* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); Milagros Ortega Costa, "Spanish Women in the Reformation" *Women in Reformation and Counter-Reformation Europe: Public and Private Worlds*, ed. Sherrin Marshall (Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1989); Isabel Pérez Molina, *Las mujeres en el Antiguo Régimen: imagen y realidad (s. XVI-XVIII)*. Antrazyt, 1st ed. (Barcelona: Icaria, 1994); Mary Elizabeth Perry, "The Politics of Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Making of the Spanish State," *Culture and the State in Spain: 1550-1850*, Eds. Tom Lewis and Francisco J. Sánchez (NY, London: Garland, 1999); Mary Elizabeth Perry and Anne J. Cruz, Eds., *Culture and Control in Counter-Reformation Spain* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992); Cristina Segura, *Feminismo y misoginia en la literatura española: fuentes literarias para la historia de las mujeres* (Madrid: Narcea, 2001); Mariló Vigil, *La vida de las mujeres en los siglos XVI y XVII*. 1st ed. (México: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1986); Lisa Vollendorf, Ed., *Recovering Spain's Feminist Tradition* (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2001) and Iris M. Zavala, ed., *Breve historia feminista de la literatura española (en lengua castellana): La mujer en la literatura española: Modos de representación desde la Edad Media hasta el siglo XVII*, vol. II, 3 vols. (Madrid, Barcelona: Anthropos, 1995).

⁵ Serrano y Sanz also notes in his entry on Cristobalina Fernández de Alarcón that "[d]os eruditos de este siglo, D. José María Capitán y D. Juan Quirós de los Ríos, intentaron publicar reunidas las poesías

given that the poetic name she chose is anagrammatically derived from her convent name, María de Santa Isabel, it may be supposed that publication of a collection of verse, including love poetry, by a nun, failed to clear the censoring gaze of a male confessor.⁶ Her failure to publish may also demonstrate the importance of being part of an established patronage network. Cielo's works were published by a highly placed friend, one of the court coterie with whom Cielo maintained contact throughout her long life. Class and social connections were vitally important in establishing the degree of intellectual and physical freedom a woman might enjoy, as can be seen in the life of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, who was favoured by successive Vicereines in Mexico.

The choice of sonnets for this study, from among the variety of poetry that these five women write, is particularly important as a means by which women could demonstrate their capacity for abstract thought. The sonnet is the pre-eminent form in early modern poetry in Western Europe. Probably deriving from the *strambotto*, at the hands of Giacomo da Lentino, a *notaro* at the thirteenth century Sicilian court of Frederick II, it was taken up with enthusiasm and developed first by Guittone, and later by the *stilnovisti*, particularly Guinizzelli, Cavalcanti and Dante Alighieri. It is with Dante that the sonnet achieved a complexity and originality that would not be achieved again until Petrarch. Dante's and Petrarch's sonnets, more than any other works, cemented the sonnet into the western canon as one of the major poetic forms.

Petrarch's *Rime* focus principally on his love for Laura, although he also includes political and religious themes. With Petrarch the journey towards interiority, begun in Giacomo's earliest sonnets, comes to fruition in Petrarch's desire for the beloved, internalised into a study of the poet-lover's moods and attitudes in

de Da. Cristobalina." Manuel Serrano y Sanz, *Apuntes para una biblioteca de escritoras españolas*. (Madrid: Atlas, 1975) 407.

⁶ St Teresa and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, as is well known, suffered interference from their confessors. In addition, writing nuns were frequently writing under instruction, and in full knowledge that their works would then be scrutinised for incorrect or heretical thinking. See Electa Arenal and Stacey Schlauf, *Untold Sisters: Hispanic Nuns in Their Own Works* 1st ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989).

confronting the virtuous, strong and ideal figure of the beloved. His example was followed by a number of successful Italian poets, including Bembo, Castiglione, Michelangelo and Tasso. The style was rapidly and easily assimilated into Spanish, initially through the works of the Marqués de Santillana, who produced sonnets both amorous and religious, themes that were closely related in fifteenth-century Spain.⁷ Later, the sonnet would be brought to its intellectual and artistic peak in Spain in the Golden Age sonnets of Lope de Vega, Góngora and Quevedo.

Of all verse forms the sonnet provides the best opportunity to display wit, linguistic ingenuity and knowledge, all combined in a tightly controlled, fourteen-line stanza, with strict requirements as to rhyme scheme.⁸ These strictures make the sonnet a particularly difficult verse form, and the achievement of witty, well-structured sonnets is, in itself, a demonstration of outstanding qualities of education and ingenuity. In addition, its formal requirements make the sonnet a more elevated style of poetry than the *romance*, the *silva*, the *canciones*, *seguidillas* and *octavas* also written in the period and practised by the women in this study.

As an extremely popular form of display among court poets and dedicated court amateurs alike, the sonnet constitutes an ideal format in which to uncover the skills of these women and the forces that motivated them to write as they did. Its often-veiled language and conceits provide suitable ground from which to launch subtle criticism at the prevailing patriarchy without overtly upsetting the order of their personal lives or that of their families, who would suffer humiliation were they to achieve notoriety through their writings. This concern is relevant given the importance of class in Spanish society and that these poets are all from the upper

⁷ For detailed studies on the history and nature of the sonnet, as well as its principal early exponents see: Christopher Butler, "Numerological Thought," *Silent Poetry: Essays in Numerological Analysis*, Ed. Alistair Fowler (London: Routledge, 1970) 1-31; Paul Oppenheimer, *The Birth of the Modern Mind: Self, Consciousness and the Invention of the Sonnet*. (NY, Oxford: OUP, 1989), Elías L. Rivers, Ed., *El soneto español en el Siglo de Oro* (Madrid: Akal, 1993); Maurice Valency, *In Praise of Love: An Introduction to the Love Poetry of the Renaissance*. (NY: Macmillan, 1958) and Ernest H. Wilkins, "The Invention of the Sonnet," *Modern Philology* Thirteen (1915-16) 79-112.

⁸ In early modern Spanish sonnets, the quartets are invariably rhymed ABBA ABBA, while some relaxation in the structure of the tercets allows a number of combinations. The tercet structures favoured by these women poets are CDE CDE and CDC CDC.

classes.⁹ While an emphasis on gender restricted women to a single category, when class is considered, women in the dominant classes had conferrable assets of status and wealth, privileges that further established the class structure and the status of the men who controlled it (Stallybrass 133). As will be seen in the course of my analysis, these poets have much to gain from the very system that attempts to oppress and restrict them. At the same time, in winning prizes at national *certámenes*, literate women make a statement about female equality and enjoy a degree of “chaste” fame.¹⁰

Equally important in attempting to discover the lived experience of seventeenth-century Spanish women through their writings is the choice of subject matter. A scrutiny of verse by women in the period shows a preponderance of poems addressing various aspects of personal involvement in the fields of love and friendship. It may be deduced, therefore, that affirmations of love and friendship were very important to these poets, since historically it is from personal experience that women, denied higher education and freedom to travel, have had to write. Lerner has also noted that women poets are quite explicit in their self-identification; they speak out of their own lives (*Consciousness* 168). Her writings on women’s struggle to express themselves are particularly valid and useful to this study, since these poets are at pains to express women’s experience and their capacity for reason.

⁹ As an example of family reaction to non-conforming women, the family of Luisa de Carvajal refused to acknowledge her once she actively sought disparagement and began her life of poverty in Madrid. Abad notes that she was in the Plaza Mayor, when her cousin the marqués de Almazán passed by “a caballo . . . con sus criados. . . el marqués disimuló conocerla. Los criados que la conocieron comenzaron a discurrir sobre el verla en tan abatido traje y ocupación tan humilde.” Abad further observes that this determination to ignore her existence was general among her relatives. Camilo María Abad, *Una misionera española en la Inglaterra del siglo XVII (1566-1614)*. (Santander: Universidad Pontificia, 1966) 77-78.

¹⁰ For example, a poet who is not included in this study, Cristobalina Fernández de Alarcón, achieved considerable fame and is mentioned in Lope de Vega’s *Laurel de Apolo*. She was particularly successful in national *certámenes*, with one of her sonnets securing sixth place in a poetry festival held in Seville in 1623 in which Juan de Jáuregui finished eleventh. The *Encomio de los ingenios sevillanos. En la fiesta de los Santos Ignacio de Loyola y Francisco Xavier*, by Juan Antonio de Ibarra, was published in Seville by Francisco de Lira in 1623 and received the approbation of Lope de Vega. See Julián Olivares and Elizabeth Sievert Boyce, *Tras el espejo la musa escribe: lírica femenina de los Siglos de Oro*. 1st ed. (Madrid: Siglo Veintiuno, 1993) 447. The Sobrino Morillas sisters also enjoyed considerable success in these competitions. For further detail on their writings see Arenal and Schlau, *Untold Sisters* 131-89.

Whether or not women were as incarcerated in the home as the moralists would have liked, the fact remains that men were freer to act as they chose, albeit within class norms, were better educated and had legal control over the assets of their womenfolk. They were also, at the upper levels of society, away from home on business, at court, in the colonies of the New World, or in the armies in the Low Countries.¹¹ Companionship among women in the domestic sphere was important to personal well-being, as well as to community and moral support, especially during the absence of fathers, husbands and brothers. Friendship also served a purpose in securing a place in the social scale, in a class-based society dependent, to a large extent, on patronage.

The convents, as well as being sites of patronage, were often the centres of social entertainment both among the nuns and between nuns and visitors from outside. The degree of vocation and strictness of rule varied between convents but, regardless of rule, the exchange of letters, the performance of plays and readings of poetry strengthened the social bond and provided respite from an arduous daily routine. In the parlours of the more relaxed orders, as Defourneaux points out, there were numerous visitors of both sexes.¹² There were also amateur dramatics and poetico-theological “jousts” modelled on the literary tournaments popular across Spain (110). This competitive, poetic activity is clearly to be seen in Belisarda’s work. These habits of writing and participating may also have altered the way in which women thought about their compositions. As Electa Arenal and Stacey Schlau have argued, works written by nuns reclaim the vernacular and hence the language of birthplace and family, that is, the language of women (2). Religious women’s writing

¹¹ As will be seen in Chapter Two Part B, Cueva and Ramírez write sonnets to male family members away on military service.

¹² Defourneaux makes his observations as part of a social history of early modern Spain. For similar social histories see: José Deleito y Piñuela, *La mujer, la casa y la moda (en la España del rey poeta)*. (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1946); José Deleito y Piñuela, *La vida religiosa española bajo el cuarto Felipe: santos y pecadores*. (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1963); Fernando Díaz-Plaja, *La vida y la época de Felipe III*. 1. ed. (Barcelona, España: Planeta, 1998); Fernando Díaz-Plaja, *La vida cotidiana en la España del siglo de oro*. Crónicas de la historia; 9 (Madrid: EDAF, 1994), Fernando Díaz-Plaja, *La vida cotidiana en la España de la Inquisición* (Madrid: EDAF, 1996); Antonio Domínguez Ortiz, *La sociedad española en el siglo XVII*. vol. 1, 2 vols. (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 1992); Ludwig Pfandl, *Cultura y costumbres del pueblo español en los siglos XVI y XVII* (Barcelona: Araluze, 1959).

involves a personal and conversational tone where the Virgin Mary, as author of the Magnificat, is both poet and divine mother-in-law (Arenal and Schlau 15-16). Indeed, to see the Virgin Mary as a poet also legitimises the nuns' own scribal activities.¹³

It is not surprising that the Virgin Mary should play such a prominent role in women's thought and writing. The author of the Magnificat could give comfort to religious women, instructed to write by confessors and terrified of inadvertently exposing ideas and feelings that might be construed by the Inquisition as heretical. Given that Spain was the most fervently Catholic country in Europe, the precepts of Catholicism permeated every aspect of life and were zealously guarded by the Inquisition. It is for this reason that analysis of divine verse appears throughout this study, in the chapters dealing with patronage and friendship poetry, as well as that of the family. However, the highly erotic, mystical poetry of Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza is unusual among seventeenth-century female poets and is therefore treated separately. None of the other poets writes mystical sonnets; their religious fervour is that of their contemporaries, lacking the fiercely militant qualities of Carvajal's vocation.

Carvajal's radical and independent life could only be sanctioned on the grounds of her professed vocation from God. As studies of Renaissance and early modern women's history and literature in the last twenty years have indicated, women struggled against the social restrictions within which they lived. Studies cite such notable figures as Teresa de Ávila, María de Zayas, Ana Caro and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, in the Hispanic world, Aemilia Lanyer and Katherine Philips in

¹³ For further information on gender and religion in Spain see: Arenal and Schlau, *Untold Sisters*; Emilie Bergmann and Leah Middlebrook, "La mujer petrarquista: 'hollines y peces'. Poética renacentista a través de la óptica de Sor Juana," *Breve historia feminista de la literatura española (en lengua castellana)*. Tomo II: *La mujer en la literatura española, modos de representación desde la Edad Media hasta el siglo XVII*, ed. Iris M. Zavala, vol. 2 (Editorial Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1995), 1145-151; Alain Saint-Saëns, ed., *Religion, Body and Gender in Early Modern Spain* (San Francisco: Mellen Research UP, 1991); José Deleito y Piñuela, *La vida religiosa española bajo el cuarto Felipe: santos y pecadores* (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1963), and Mary Elizabeth Perry, "Subversion and Seduction: Perceptions of the Body in Writings of Religious Women in Counter-Reformation Spain," *Religion, Body and Gender in Early Modern Spain*, ed. Alain Saint-Saëns (San Francisco: Mellen Research UP, 1991).

England, Louise Labé in France, and Gaspara Stampa and Moderata Fonte in Italy.¹⁴ They show the tragedy of female oppression but also celebrate the triumphs of those few who rose above the system. In general, however, learned women were single, often cloistered, or widowed. Lerner notes a general pattern of intellectual precociousness, encouraged early but discouraged later in life. Those forced into wedlock could not continue their intellectual life after their marriage (*Consciousness* 30).

The majority of women are absent from the record altogether, since most of them were not permitted education, or the possibility of participating in the public sphere. Even in the religious world, opportunities were limited and controlled. While all this is well proven, however, it is not the full story. These works have survived, in spite of a general view of women's intellectual efforts as inferior, as well as in the tendency of those in power to observe of writing women that they were *varonil*.¹⁵ By exceeding their sex they could be admired for their masculine qualities. Hence, they made no difference to the prevailing views of feminine inferiority. Nevertheless, as will be seen in the following chapters, the sonnets of these women demonstrate a particularly feminine strength and independence. They do not hesitate to burlesque male pretensions and to criticise them. These criticisms tend to be at the personal level, rather than being aimed at the governing systems that determined their lives. They certainly support women as intelligent and rational beings, but their works are

¹⁴ Some of the recent writings on European women's history and literature will be discussed in the course of the study. Of particular interest are: Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse, Eds., *The Ideology of Conduct* (New York: Methuen, 1987); Deborah Lesko Baker, *The Subject of Desire: Petrarchan Poetics and the Female Voice in Louise Labé* (West Lafayette: Purdue UP, 1996); Danielle Clarke and Elizabeth Clarke, *This Double Voice: Gendered Writing in Early Modern England*. (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000); Margaret Ferguson, ed., *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); Susan Frye and Karen Robertson, Eds., *Maids and Mistresses, Cousins and Queens: Women's Alliances in Early Modern England* (New York, Oxford: OUP, 1999); Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale UP, 2000); Marilyn Migiel and Juliana Schiesari, Eds., *Refiguring Woman: Perspectives on Gender and the Italian Renaissance* (New York: Cornell UP, 1991); Nancy K. Miller, *The Poetics of Gender*. (New York: Columbia UP, 1986).

¹⁵ Two studies dealing with women who go beyond what were considered the limits of their sex, or their portrayal in Spanish literature are: Patricia H. Labalme, *Beyond Their Sex: Learned Women of the European Past*. (New York: New York UP, 1980) and Melveena McKendrick, *Woman and Society in the Spanish Drama of the Golden Age: A Study of the Mujer Varonil* (London, New York: CUP, 1974).

not radical statements of independence, indeed the poetry frequently suggests that they found life both enjoyable and fulfilling. I therefore tend to support Constance Jordan's "safer and less controversial" terminology, to describe their writing as "pro-woman" (2). As women of the upper classes they could have expected a considerably better quality of life than that of their poorer sisters. However, it is notable that, given the prevalent notions of women's fatally flawed humours, supposed to prevent them from reaching the intellectual superiority and reason of men, all of these women show their poetic heroines as having a powerful capacity for reason.

The poets who figure in this study have attracted variable critical interest, from brief acknowledgements, as regards the poetry of Cueva and Belisarda, to anthologies and entire books in the cases of Carvajal and Cielo. All of the poets appear in Serrano y Sanz's invaluable *Apuntes*, first published in 1895. They all also appear in the most complete anthology to date of early modern women's poetry in Spanish, *Tras el espejo la musa escribe*, edited by Julián Olivares and Elizabeth Boyce in 1993, which includes a very comprehensive introduction.¹⁶ Some poetry also appears in a 1989 anthology, *Antología poética de escritoras de los siglos VI y XVII* (Navaro).

The earliest of the poets is Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza, born in 1566, in Extremadura, to a noble family.¹⁷ The extraordinary nature of her life and vocation have ensured the production of many studies, commencing shortly after her death, when her confessor, Michael Walpole, first wrote the biography that began what he hoped would be the process towards canonization. Like Walpole's, the majority of these studies have been decidedly hagiographic. In 1632 another biography, based on Walpole's, was published: *Vida y virtudes de la Venerable Virgen Doña Luisa de*

¹⁶ The detailed introduction to this volume provides information about the lives of women in the seventeenth century, as well as discussion of their poetic skills and achievements.

¹⁷ Further details of Carvajal's life are included in Chapter Five.

Carvajal y Mendoza. Su jornada a Inglaterra y sucesos en aquel Reyno (Muñoz).¹⁸

The fullest account of her life is that written in 1966 by a Jesuit, Camilo María Abad: *Una misionera española en la Inglaterra del siglo XVII (1566-1614)*. In the same year Abad published her *Epistolario y poesías*, which included a biography and an introduction to her poetry. Abad's two studies, while detailed and scholarly, wholly endorse her militant fervour and strive to emphasise her saintliness, perhaps as a means to promote the cause for canonization, still in abeyance.¹⁹ His interest in her poetry lies in its evocation of her religious calling and he does not offer any kind of critique of her poetic skills or her subject matter.

Carvajal's poetry is notable for its intensely passionate style, and has been highly praised for its artistic qualities by Serrano y Sanz. Margarita Nelken shares his opinion, and makes the following observation: "La propia Sta Teresa no ha descrito con más intensidad las emociones de la comunión. . . . Doña Luisa es la más ilustre de las escritoras religiosas del siglo XVII" (76). More recently, Carvajal has been the focus of much detailed, critical study, not least Elizabeth Rhodes' bilingual work, *This Tight Embrace*. Her life and, less prominently, her poetry, have been discussed in a number of articles, some of which I contend with in the course of my analysis of her poetry.²⁰

¹⁸ Carvajal was also highly valued by English Catholics. In 1881, Lady Georgiana Fullerton published *The Life of Luisa de Carvajal*, based on Muñoz, and this was followed, in 1923, by an anonymous play: "Donna Luisa de Carvajal: A Catholic Play by a nun of Tyburn Convent." In 1930, the Catholic Truth Society published a pamphlet hagiography entitled "A Spanish Heroine in London: Doña Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza." Her militant political efforts in London ensured that she also appeared in the Calendar of State Papers and in the dispatches of Felipe III's London ambassadors, as well as in the Downshire papers, which give voice to Archbishop Abbot's negative opinions of her vocation. She is also discussed in Albert J. Loomie, *Spain and the Jacobean Catholics*, vol. II, 2 vols. (London: Catholic Record Society, 1978), and Calvin F. Senning, "The Carvajal Affair: Gondomar and James I," *Catholic Historical Review* 56.1 (1970): 42-66.

¹⁹ Even Iberia Airlines, the national carrier of Spain, has attempted to lift Carvajal closer to heaven, naming one of its 747 passenger jets after her.

²⁰ These include: Elizabeth Rhodes, "Luisa de Carvajal's Counter-Reformation Journey to Selfhood (1566-1614)," *Renaissance Quarterly* 51.3 (1998): 887-912 and Anne J. Cruz, "Chains of Desire: Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza's Poetics of Penance," *Estudios sobre escritoras hispánicas en honor de Georgina Sabat-Rivers*, ed. Lou Charnon-Deutsch (Madrid: Castalia, 1992). In 2003, a review of some of her letters and poetry, including translations appeared, with some brief, biographical details, written by Margaret A. Rees, *The Writings of Doña Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza, Catholic Missionary to James I's London*. (Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen Press, 2003), and most recently, M. García Verdugo, *Luisa de Carvajal: Aventurera y escritora*, 2004, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Available: <http://www.ucm.es/info/especulo/numero26/carvajal.htm>, 8 September 2004. In Spain, a life was

There is far less information available on the other poets, with the exception of Violante del Cielo.²¹ Although their birth dates are sometimes not known, or are debatable, all appear to have been born in the first decade of the seventeenth century. Leonor de la Cueva y Silva, daughter of a noble family in Medina del Campo, was niece of the celebrated lawyer, courtier and poet, Francisco de la Cueva y Silva, to whom she wrote a funeral sonnet in 1621. Barely decipherable script at the end of her manuscript bears the date 1697, suggesting a very long life (ms. 4127 276).²² Some of her sonnets indicate her determination to celebrate the nobility and valour of her line, perhaps as a means of elevating herself as part of the typical pursuit of patronage favour. However, she also writes sonnets that criticise masculine pretensions and hypocrisy, and others celebrating female fortitude, honesty and moral courage. Her single extant play, *La firmeza en la ausencia*, extols women's loyalty and criticises the abuse of power.²³

Like Cueva, Catalina Clara Ramírez de Guzmán was born in an important rural centre, Llerena, in 1618. Some confusion has arisen in anthologies over her actual birthdate, since a sister, Catalina, is recorded as being born in 1611.²⁴ Two manuscripts of her work, numbered 3884 and 3917, totalling 118 poems, are held in the *Biblioteca Nacional* in Madrid. Ramírez's poetry is almost ethnographic in its detail about family life in a country town. Although she writes few sonnets, her other works make interesting reading for their contrast with the received wisdom about

published, without the poetry, by Maria de las Nieves Pinillos Iglesias, *Hilando oro: Vida de Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza* (Madrid: Laberinto, 2001).

²¹ Most of the critical work on Cielo is available only in Portuguese.

²² Her manuscript, considered by Serrano y Sanz to be an autograph, is conserved in the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid.

²³ This play has now been published several times. See Teresa Scott Soufas, *Women's Acts: Plays by Women Dramatists of Spain's Golden Age* (Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1997); also Marina Subirats, Juan Antonio Hormigón, Felicidad González Santamera and Fernando Doménech, Eds., *Teatro de mujeres del Barroco* (Madrid: Asociación de Directores de Escena de España, 1994). It is not known whether *La firmeza en la ausencia* has ever been performed. There are also several articles discussing aspects of the play; these are detailed in Chapter Four, where I explore the play's sonnets.

²⁴ This infant must have died before Ramírez was born. Although Joaquín de Entrambasaguas gives 1611 as her birthdate, and Olivares and Boyce take this date from Entrambasaguas, her baptismal certificate reveals a birth date of 1618. Arturo Gazul assumes the early death of the first Catalina, and that "[c]omo consuelo y recuerdo de esta hija malograda, se le puso su nombre a la segunda, pero agregándole el de Clara." Arturo Gazul, "La familia Ramírez de Guzmán en Llerena," *Revista de Estudios Extremeños* XV.III (1959): 522, Antonio Carrasco García, *La Plaza Mayor de Llerena y otros estudios* (Valdemoro: Tuero, 1985) 108-09.

women's plight in the period. She clearly enjoyed the fondest relationships with her large family, including her father and brothers.²⁵ Her poetry is light-hearted and entertaining, but also often acid and cruel in the style of Francisco de Quevedo, whose works she knew, according to Gazul (510). Her poetry was first published in 1929 by Joaquín Entrambasaguas y Peña, who included a detailed biography in his introduction.²⁶ Ramírez also wrote a book entitled *El extremeño*, now lost.

Both Ramírez and Cueva lived all their lives in their respective towns. Ramírez never married, and while Cueva's marital status remains unclear, that she had the freedom to write a *comedia* and to compose poetry throughout her life suggests that she did not marry.²⁷ It is, perhaps, this single independence that enabled both poets to write as openly as they do. Of the remaining two poets, Marcia Belisarda was born in Toledo, according to Serrano y Sanz, though her birth date is not known. Almost nothing is known of her life, other than that she entered the convent of the Concepción in Toledo. Her manuscript, number 7469, is conserved in the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid and it is clear from the prologue and encomiastic poems that precede her poetry, that she intended it to be published. She is unusual in reserving the sonnet form for her more playful and secular verse, where others, particularly Cielo, find its formal structure more suitable for works of religious devotion. There has been little critical attention paid to Marcia Belisarda's work, with the notable exception of the editors of *Tras el espejo la musa escribe*. Her poetry includes both religious and secular verse, and she frequently celebrates the importance of reason over passion, and argues for women's rational capabilities.

²⁵ Gazul corrects an anomalous reference to Ramírez in Serrano y Sanz, that she was daughter of the eminent jurist and humanist, Lorenzo Ramírez de Prado. She was his niece.

²⁶ Historically detailed studies of her life, but not her works, have also been undertaken by others. See Gazul, "Familia Ramírez," 499-577, and Carrasco García, *La Plaza Mayor de Llerena y otros estudios*. 98-135.

²⁷ Ramírez's testament, leaving the bulk of her estate to her brother, Pedro, was written in 1684, and notes her civil status as *doncella*. Entrambasaguas observes that she had several suitors and assumes that the son of the Almezquita family was the favoured suitor, but that the relationship was doomed by the enmity that developed between the families. Joaquín de Entrambasaguas y Peña, "Estudio preliminar," *Poesía de doña Catalina Clara Ramírez de Guzmán*, ed. y notas por Joaquín de Entrambasaguas y Peña (Badajoz: Centro de Estudios Extremeños, 1930) 31-32. Further details of this enmity are provided in Chapter Three.

The last and most prolific poet in this study is Violante del Cielo, born in Lisbon Violante Silveira de Montesinos. Serrano y Sanz gives her birth date as 1601, as do Olivares and Boyce, but in the introduction to a 1993 edition of Cielo's *Rimas varias*, Margarida Vieira Mendes declares that Cielo's birth date was 1607, verified by sight of her birth certificate. If this date is correct, then Cielo's reputation as a child prodigy is well deserved. A play by her, now lost, was performed for Felipe III, during his visit to Lisbon in 1619, when she was either twelve or eighteen years old, depending on the biographical information to hand. Cielo lived among the highest circles of Portuguese society, and she retained these contacts when, in 1630, she entered the convent attached to the Lisbon court, the most wealthy and luxurious in Portugal at that time. According to Serrano y Sanz, Cielo entertained friends there and continued to write poetry, which leads him to conclude that she appeared to have no religious calling at all. I shall contest this view in the course of my discussion, for Cielo composed clever religious poetry that shows not only a full knowledge of spiritual matters but a deep faith as well. A collection of her secular verse, *Rimas varias*, was published in Rouen, France, in 1646, by the Portuguese ambassador to France, Vasco Luis da Gama, Conde de Vidigueira, whose wife, a close friend of Cielo, is the recipient of several poems. Serrano y Sanz also theorises that Cielo entered the convent due to an unsuccessful love affair with the Portuguese poet, Paulo Gonçalves de Andrade, with whom she exchanged a number of poems. This claim, which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four, is refuted by Vieira Mendes.

After her death, Cielo's religious verse was collected in two volumes and published in Lisbon in 1733, by Miguel Rodrigues, under the title of *Parnaso lusitano de divinos e humanos versos, compostos pela Madre Soror Violante do Ceo, religiosa dominica no Convento da Rosa de Lisboa, dedicado a Senhora Soror Violante do Ceo, religiosa no convento de Santa Martha de Lisboa*. The first volume consists entirely of sonnets and includes a cycle of twenty-one sonnets on the

mysteries of the rosary, the only extant, thematically linked sonnet cycle by a Spanish or Portuguese woman of the period known to date.²⁸ In addition to her published works, an eighteenth-century manuscript held in the British Library includes a number of Cielo's sonnets (Add. ms. 25353). Cielo continued to write poetry throughout her long life, her last recorded poetic works being two sonnets written to celebrate the birth of a new prince in 1689. She died in 1693.

Cielo has always enjoyed considerable fame in Portugal, and she appears in numerous studies and anthologies of Portuguese poets that stretch from the seventeenth century to the present day.²⁹ In addition to Vieira Mendes' 1993 edition of the *Rimas varias*, which includes a comprehensive introduction and notes to the poetry, there is one unpublished doctoral thesis by Victor Rojas, written in 1975, that deals with her life and works: "Vida y obra de Violante do Céu." Recently, Olivares and Boyce have contributed an article "Sor Violante del Cielo (y de la Tierra): The Subversion of Amorous Lyrical Discourse" ("Sor Violante" 189-201).³⁰ I engage in Chapter One with some of the conclusions drawn by a number of nineteenth-century scholars in regard to the nature of Cielo's religious vocation and her sexual orientation.

In choosing these five poets, I am able to situate their works in relation to the widest possible socio-historical background. Their lives span part of the sixteenth and almost the whole of the seventeenth century, and encompass both the religious and the secular worlds. It is of particular note that none of these women married. This may have been due to the shortage of manpower experienced in Spain in the

²⁸ The mysteries of the rosary number fifteen. Cielo writes more than one sonnet on what must have been, for her, the most important mysteries, those concerning Christ's betrayal, crucifixion and resurrection.

²⁹ These include: *A Fénix renascida ou obras poéticas dos melhores engenhos portugueses*, published in Lisbon in 1746; *Ecos, que o clarim da fama dá: Postilhão de Apolo*, 1761-62; *Escritoras doutros tempos—Extractos das obras de Violante do Céu, Maria do Céu e Madalena da Glória*, 1914; José Maria Costa e Silva, "Ensaio biográfico sobre os melhores poetas portugueses," vol. VIII (Lisboa: Silviana, 1854) 57-92; Conde de Sabugosa, *Neves de antanho*. (Lisboa: Portugalia, 1919); Teresa Leitão de Barros, *Escritoras de Portugal. Génio feminino revelado na literatura portuguesa.*, vol. I (Lisboa: 1924) and Vítor Manuel Aguiar e Silva, *Maneirismo e barroco na poesia lírica portuguesa*. (Coimbra: Centro de Estudos Romanicos, 1971) 545-47.

³⁰ In 1998 a short biography was also published by Andrés José Pociño López, ed., *Sóror Violante do Céu (1607-1693)* (Madrid: Ediciones del Orto, 1998).

seventeenth century, or it may have been by deliberate choice, as a means of maintaining a degree of independence.³¹ These issues will be discussed in the ensuing chapters but it is worth noting here Gazul's interpretation of Ramírez's *doncella* status, written in 1959. He is responding to Entrambasaguas' opinion that Ramírez's supposed love for Joan de Almezquita was spoiled by a family row. Gazul creates a masculine mirror image of the statement later made by Jordan, that where "prudent historical scholarship would lead one to expect that practically none of the principal issues raised by nineteenth- and twentieth-century feminists would find representation in the early modern period . . . the reverse is the case" (7-8):

El hombre español no suele enamorarse de una mujer que destaque por su talento y cultura. Salvo excepciones, la prefiere ignorante y vulgar, porque para él es insufrible esta suerte de superioridad espiritual. Entre una belleza inteligente y una belleza estúpida hará el amor a la estúpida, porque la siente como más suya, con un dominio más fácil y absoluto de su corazón. En el fondo de su condición de macho que reacciona contra aquella superioridad. Quiere sentir la ufanía del gallo orgulloso y mandón ante la gallina apocada y tímida que aguarda en todo momento, al margen de su cloquera, la erótica pisada de su señor. (509)

Gazul here reflects without irony on the apparently immutable character of the Spanish male and his preferences. In the process he reveals that little has changed over the intervening centuries in their attitude towards women.

The book is divided into five chapters, all of which use the sonnets to discover some of the ways in which women thought, felt and acted in the period.³² Each discussion is set against the paradigms of thought and theory—religious, philosophical and political—that determined the course of seventeenth-century life for the Spanish ruling classes. Chapter One focuses on the poetry of patronage, and particularly on the works of Violante del Cielo and Leonor de la Cueva y Silva. Patronage was of singular importance in securing advantageous positions at court, or

³¹ Shifra Armon is just one historian who notes the effects on marriage of manpower shortages in seventeenth-century Spain. She puts the disproportionate survival ratio between women and men down to long absences and high death rates among males, due to wars and an inheritance system that made it difficult for any but the eldest son to wed, therefore reducing the probability of marriage for many young women. Shifra Armon, *Picking Wedlock* (Lanham: Rowman Littlefield, 2002) 51.

³² Given that many of these sonnets have never been published, an appendix of the sonnets analysed appears at the end of each chapter. I have lightly modernised the punctuation and spelling where necessary.

in provincial government. For the purposes of my discussion, this chapter is divided into four parts. The first is devoted to the love poetry written to attract the attention of the patron, through two sonnets by Cielo. She employs the language of the love sonnet in the manner of male courtiers, as a means of courting and flattering those higher up the chain of patronage. Cielo does not restrict her flattery to her male superiors, for women, too, had opportunities to dispense patronage among a female coterie. The poetry of friendship and admiration designed to demonstrate close links with the powerful and to secure political patronage is considered through works by Cueva and a sonnet by Ana Caro in the second part of the chapter. The drive for personal prestige is revealed in the third section, where Cielo's closeness to the royal family is evident in her sonnets celebrating royal events, which ensured her own fame and that of her convent. The chapter concludes with a discussion of Cueva's works that celebrate the honour accruing to her family through their successful operations within the patronage network.

Chapter Two will examine the significance of the family in early modern Spain, as presented in poetry by these women. The family was of great importance as the only means of financial and physical support available in times made uncertain by economic and subsistence crises, and by regular outbreaks of plague. In addition, the domestic and the maternal were the only realms in which women were able to operate with a modicum of freedom. However, such liberty did not extend to control of the purse or even access to the doors and windows of the home.³³ The value placed on family status can be seen in the passionate interest of contemporary society in the nature of their bloodlines. The family was also clearly of great

³³ See, for example, Carmen Martín Gaité, *Desde la ventana: enfoque femenino de la literatura española* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1987). She observes that it was the automatic assumption that women approached the window for erotic purposes, to be seen. It was never considered possible that they went to the window for air and to see, rather than to be seen: "En otras palabras, no se le ocurría a nadie pensar que tal vez no fuera su cuerpo, sino su alma la que tuviera sed de ventana" (36). Similarly, in writing of her early life in her spiritual autobiography Carvajal notes: "Imitaba mucho a mi madre en aborrecer liviandades y poco recato de puertas y ventanas." Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza, *This Tight Embrace: Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza (1566-1614)*. trans. Elizabeth Rhodes, ed. Elizabeth Rhodes (Milwaukee: Marquette UP, 2000) 42.

importance to all five of these poets, all of whom write sonnets that show various aspects of family life. Chapter Two, Part A, deals with marriage and the roles of the father and mother, drawing principally on the works of Violante del Cielo. It does, however, incorporate one work by Ramírez, the only poem by these women that celebrates a wedding. My readings of Cielo's sonnets will show that while she seeks to cement Counter-Reformation views on the importance of the father as head of the family unit, she also celebrates a particularly human Virgin Mary, who is both simple mother and champion of women.

Chapter Two, Part B, involves poetry that explores the relationships between children and their parents, and between siblings. Here I focus on the works of Ramírez, and although many of her poems are not sonnets, the fresh information they bring to our perceptions of relationships between family members merits the inclusion of some of them here. In addition, sonnets by Cielo about the nature of Christ's relationship with his mother promote the entirely human and caring tenderness that can exist between son and mother, irrespective of their status in the hierarchies of Church and state.

The importance of family relationships to the individual was closely seconded by alliances of friendship. The sonnets that celebrate female solidarity and friendship form my discussion in Chapter Three. The value of friendship to women is reflected in the fact that all five poets write sonnets about its nature and compose works to or about their friends. My analysis begins with a discussion of the contemporary theories of friendship developed by the ancients and by the Church, and still relevant in the seventeenth century, leading on to readings of the sonnets. Also included are important funeral sonnets by Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz that mark the death of her friend and patron, the Marquesa de Mancera.

Attempts by these poets to enter the debate about women via their own love sonnets will form the basis of Chapter Four. As will be seen in the development of my argument, they take a fascinating approach to writing of love. In male-authored love

sonnets, women are portrayed as silent objects of desire, and as signifiers of divine perfection. This is in line with the Petrarchan mode, where praise of the lady and enumeration of her beauties are its principal subject matter. While the blazon did not begin with Petrarch, having its origins in classical antiquity, the Petrarchan beauty rapidly became a codified figure of golden hair, ebony brows, ivory hands and a snowy bosom. It is a system that readily lends itself to parody and contra-blazon, as is apparent in the love sonnets in this chapter. Furthermore, although poets are still influenced by Petrarchism in the seventeenth century, the *desengaño* of the baroque colours the poetic subject matter.

The chapter is divided into four sections, of which the first discusses women in relation to Petrarchism, both in terms of their objectification under this system and their own appropriation of the Petrarchan mode. The female poets featured show their capacity to write in this masculine manner, while subverting and ridiculing its pretensions. This subversion is taken even further in a second section where Belisarda and Cueva compose love sonnets utilising a male speaker, and hold up to scrutiny current notions of masculine honour. The problematic process of writing both as subject and object of love poetry leads to the third section, where I discuss sonnets in which the love experience becomes an educative process, leading to *desengaño* and the discarding of the male lover. The final section discusses four sonnets in Cueva's play, *La firmeza en la ausencia*, which critiques masculine power and its abuse. The sonnet vows, which champion constancy and devotion between lovers, are addressed to each other by the two couples who are at the centre of the action: Don Juan, Armesinda, Tristán and Leonor. These sonnets demonstrate Cueva's determination that genuine love and respect supersede the requirements and expectations of gender and class.

The fifth and final chapter is reserved for Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza's erotic poetry, addressed to her *amado*, Christ, and by association, the Host. Carvajal's mysticism is unique among these poets, and in her verse she draws heavily on the

Song of Songs, as well as Juan de la Cruz and Teresa de Ávila, whose works she is known to have had. Her sonnets are discussed against a background of the Counter-Reformation religious fervour that gripped Spain at the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth, and the mysticism that was particularly prevalent in Spain in this period. I also draw on the medieval antecedents to Spain's early modern mysticism in my analysis of her works.

All five chapters therefore focus on different aspects of love and friendship, viewed from the secular and the sacred, the higher and lower classes. Most important, however, is that these aspects are the views of contemporary women. I read these women's sonnets as cultural expressions of their own socio-historical context, taking into account insights provided by the pioneering work of the later twentieth century's studies of women and social history. Hence, I build on this work to re-write the Baroque, to include the attitudes of the female "Other." In doing so I shall provide a broader picture than has hitherto been established in relation to seventeenth-century women's lived experience and I shall show that there was more to the Baroque period than *desengaño*, however prevalent that state of mind may have been in society. In the course of my analysis I propose that literature and art cannot simply be separated from other kinds of social practice, notwithstanding the fictive nature of poetic production in the early modern period. While the speaking subject of early modern poetry does not necessarily represent either the poet, or an appeal to a post-Romantic sincerity, nevertheless the activities that surround the artist clearly exert an influence on the words they produce.

I contend that the intellectual and social influences that impinged upon the lives of these five women can be discerned in their literary production and can shed light on their activities and their intentions. In seventeenth-century Spain there was a powerful requirement for order that flowed from both Church and state. Both affected the lives women were permitted to lead, for women in this period had no opportunities for independence. I examine whether these women sought autonomy

or whether, as privileged members of the elite and educated class, they were able to find a means to express their creativity, within the confines of their contemporary society, that suited their intellectual and artistic capacities.

CHAPTER 1

POLITICS, PATRONAGE, PARENTAGE AND POETRY

In this chapter I examine sonnets written specifically to further personal and family status through the well-recognised and utilised medium of the patronage system. These are principally the poems of Violante del Cielo, who was unusually close to the sources of power in Portugal, in spite of her monastic status, and Leonor de la Cueva y Silva's works which promote her family, written from a provincial centre. Although they approach their compositions from different viewpoints, they seek to achieve a similar result: an increase in status, rewards and political protection for the client. In writing to flatter a highly placed patron, to incorporate themselves into the courtly milieu, or to advance the cause of the family as a whole, they engage with a specifically masculine discourse, in most instances accommodating their own writing to that discourse, as will be discussed below.

A formal definition of the patron/client relationship in early modern Europe describes it as a set of social practices that conditioned all areas of nobiliary and ecclesiastical existence (Baker 106). The system was frequently the butt of criticism from humanists such as Thomas More, whose *Utopia* proposed the abolition of the property relations upon which patronage rests. Within the prevailing model of governance, framed on the hierarchical ideal, where government of the state and family alike were supposed to mirror the government of heaven, the patronage system operated in a revolving system of debt and favour, carried up the social scale on a tide of flattery. Writing of political patronage in the court of James I of England, for example, R. M. Smuts encapsulates the importance of political patronage that obtained in all the Western European courts:

[P]ower and prestige must always be expressed through a large and impressive entourage . . . met partly by periodic attendance of peers and leading gentry at court. . . . Kings also appointed provincial magnates to ceremonial posts within their households, . . . such appointments served as

an important form of patronage, helping to cement allegiance to the crown. More was always involved, however, than a simple exchange of material rewards for political service. Gentlemen coveted court positions not only for the salaries they carried, but for the honour that membership in the king's household conferred. Conversely a crowded court manifested the king's own honour. (88)

The value placed upon honour is clearly to be seen in the poetry of Leonor de la Cueva y Silva, who proclaims the aura of *hombria* that clings to her male relatives and, through this, the honour that accrues to herself and her family.

Providing a wider definition of the nature of the patronage that structured early modern society, Linda Levy Peck describes a symbiotic and symbolic relationship: private, dependent and deferential alliances intended both to reward the client and provide proof of the power and standing of the patron. Patron/client relationships were established through mutual friends, kinship ties and local bonds, and transactions were often brokered through courtiers and important officials. Patronage employed a specific language, based on a theory of mutual benefits and gift-giving, that determined political and social behaviour (3).³⁴ In this respect, Violante del Cielo's patronage sonnets exploit bonds of kinship and friendship, giving in return, graceful flattery that magnifies the worth and splendour of the subjects.

Women both benefited from and were objectified by patronage, which oiled the wheels of state and kept legions of courtiers in a constant state of fawning anxiety. Young women were pawns in the bartering system that saw marriages arranged according to the social benefit accruing to the brides' and grooms' families. Nevertheless, women submitted to the system. Although they often had little or no choice in the matter, they too enjoyed the social advancement afforded by a suitable marriage, or by family connections that enabled them to assert their place above those of their female contemporaries.

³⁴ Pablo Jauralde Pou details the high levels of corruption at the court of Philip III, which prompted Francisco de Quevedo both to partake of rewards through his association with the Duke of Osuna and other notables, and later to criticise the system through his political writings. Pablo Jauralde Pou, *Francisco de Quevedo (1580-1645)*. 2nd ed. (Madrid: Castalia, 1999) 362-83.

At the highest levels, royal marriages were based entirely on dynastic lines, designed to foster the interests of a royal house through marriage and the provision of sons and heirs. Empress María of Austria, for example, was the daughter of Charles V, daughter-in-law of Ferdinand I and wife of her cousin, Maximilian II. When she retired to the convent of the Descalzas Reales, in Madrid, she retained a considerable court, as well as her political interests, conferring regularly with both Philip II and Philip III. She provided support to Margaret of Austria, her niece and the latter's wife, and her perceived interference was not appreciated by Philip III's favourite, the Duke of Lerma (Sánchez 68, 92). Magdalena Sánchez notes that the Empress pursued personal and familial agendas during her time in Madrid, considering it her duty to petition for pensions and other types of financial assistance on behalf of her attendants (94). The system functioned as long as everybody had something to gain from it; each participant knew how to play their part, as the Empress's sense of duty reveals.

For upper-class female religious, profession in a royal convent ensured continued access to the powerful elites with whom they identified. When Violante del Cielo withdrew into the convent attached to the Royal Palace in Lisbon in 1630, she remained within the social milieu into which she had been born, as can be seen in her many poetic compliments to court notables and the royal family. This flow of gongoristic praise ensured that she remained connected firmly to those who held control over church and state. As such, she was of great benefit to the social and financial security of her convent.³⁵ By using verse she is able to participate in the important matters of church and state in a socially acceptable manner, and by writing in the sonnet form, a higher form of poetry, she shows her exceptional poetic skills, and enters the realm of the courtier who writes sycophantic sonnets to his lord.

³⁵ Cielo's close connection with both church and state hierarchies is also seen in the *Parnaso lusitano* in a number of sonnets. For example, she dedicates two sonnets to Padre Mestre Fr. João de Vasconcellos, Provincial de Sao Domingos. She marks the death of General André de Albuquerque at the Battle of Elvas in 1659, where the Portuguese defeated the Spanish; she congratulates Don Pedro, Regent of Portugal, for his decision to elevate Don Pedro de Lancastro, Duke of Aveiro, to be Inquisitor General and Cardinal of Portugal, while a further sonnet to the duke praises his exceptional nature.

The founding of convents also provided opportunities for female patronage, especially after the Council of Trent, when there was a strong movement towards scrupulous observance of female claustration, codification of religious rites and greater control of the activities of *beaterías*.³⁶ In a study of the convents of Valladolid, Elizabeth Leffeldt notes that one of the benefits of patronage was the right of the patron to name women who could enter the convent without providing a dowry. Pious charity could thus allow marginalised or impoverished women to avoid a questionable existence outside. However, since the provision of dowries allowed the donors to exercise their personal preferences in the choice of recipients, it also demonstrates the almost ritualistic observance of patronage that existed among the nobility and at court.³⁷

Redemption could also be sought through endowing chapels in the convent church, further supporting female monasticism. When patrons sought to be buried in these chapels, as did, for example, Doña Luisa de Zarraga and Doña Ana Paredes Aldrete in Valladolid, they provided substantial sums for masses, chaplains' salaries and adornments for the chapels (Leffeldt 1023-24). Similarly, in provincial Llerena, the four daughters of Antonio Núñez Ramírez, grandfather of Catalina Clara Ramírez de Guzmán, all entered convents in the town. When he died in 1619, he left instructions to his wife to found a family chapel in the Iglesia Mayor de Nuestra Señora Santa María de la Granada, in Llerena (Carrasco García 101).³⁸

³⁶ Leffeldt also argues that in the case of Valladolid, enclosure was not universally enforced, and that the city even supported several *beatas*, the most famous of whom was Marina de Escobar. Nevertheless, she goes on to detail the enormous number of convents endowed in Valladolid in the immediate post-Trent period, and assumes the relative poverty of convents and the declining rate of endowments in the seventeenth century to be due to the various orders' own determination toward a poverty that eventually made convent maintenance virtually impossible. Elizabeth A. Leffeldt, "Discipline, Vocation, and Patronage: Spanish Religious Women in a Tridentine Microclimate," *Sixteenth Century Journal* 30.4 (1999) 1009-1030.

³⁷ See Maureen Flynn, *Sacred Charity: Confraternities and Social Welfare in Spain, 1400-1700*. (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1989). Flynn observes that "it is with dowries that we see the patronage system of old regime society most grievously manipulating with private prejudices the fate of the poor" (59).

³⁸ Antonio's widow carried out his instructions, for the will of their last surviving grandchild, Antonia Manuela, commands that she be buried "en el entierro y tumba de los Sres. Maestres de la Orden de Santiago que está dentro de la Capilla Mr. de la Yglesia Mor. de Nra. Sra. Sta Maria de la Granada de esta ciud. que es de mi casa y donde estan enterrados mis ascendientes." Gazul, "Familia Ramírez," 541.

Family considerations extended beyond the founding of chapels. The importance of kinship networks in securing patronage, particularly political patronage, should not be underestimated. When Leonor de la Cueva y Silva wrote sonnets that praised her famous uncle and the feats of her brother in the royal armies, she also recorded her own blood association, linking it with their prestige, as will be seen below in a discussion of her verse. Social status and kinship served Violante del Cielo well in providing her with a comfortable and secure convent life, while for Luisa de Carvajal, exalted family connections proved to be vitally important to her London mission. The aura that clung to her lineage is revealed in the inclusion of her family tree in recent biographies (Pinillos Iglesias n. pag.; Rees, Appendix I). Pinillos Iglesias includes information detailing noble and religious titles, showing the importance for a seventeenth-century noble family of their claim to honourable fame. Meritorious service appropriate to, and demanded of, their social status, could not only secure advantageous marriages, but also royal favour. Bartolomé Bennassar confirms that the role of the aristocrat was more than mere parasitism at court. He describes an *aristocracia de servicio*, a service that often cost dearly in financial terms, in exchange for titles and fame (*Historia* 378 ff).

Luisa de Carvajal's mission could not have survived without the assistance she received from her kin and friendship networks, for in Protestant London she was in no position to beg alms from a Catholic community under pressure. This assistance was not merely financial, for the high status of her contacts silenced the criticism at home occasioned by her secret journey to London.³⁹ By far her most powerful ally was the Marqués de Siete Iglesias, Rodrigo de Calderón, husband of

³⁹ Even before her departure, Carvajal's letter to her friend, Inés de la Asunción, from Valladolid, in January 1605, suggests that she was already meeting resistance: "Yo me he resuelto en ir sin aguardar a nadie, que es nunca acabar, y sin coche por la misma causa." Luisa de Carvajal *Epistolario y poesías*, Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, Ed. Jesús González Marañón, completada y revisada por Camilo María Abad, vol. 179 (Madrid: Atlas, 1965) 145. The negative manner in which her mission was viewed in some quarters is addressed by Carvajal in February 1606, when she writes to Sor Magdalena de San Jerónimo, at the Flemish court: "Y en tales desmerecimientos, no me maravillo que se tenga por 'opinión' mía los trabajos con que deseé abrazarme, y que vuestra merced los califique con ese nombre, quitándoles, arrepentida, el que primero les daba de 'devoción'" (155).

her cousin and at that time favourite of the Duke of Lerma. Through this relationship Carvajal was able to secure royal support for her enterprise, to the extent that Philip III ordered that she be provided with a monthly stipend of 300 *reales*.⁴⁰ Carvajal wrote to Calderón in August 1611, acknowledging the gesture: “Suplico a vuestra merced se acuerde de sinificar [sic] al rey nuestro señor mi gran reconocimiento a la merced que ha hecho a nuestra pobre casita, con la cédula de los 300 reales, que vuestra merced aumentó con real ánimo también” (*Epistolario* 326).⁴¹

The sonnets that will be discussed in this chapter reveal these women’s ability to work within and secure benefits from a patronage system more political than literary. They were not seeking to become professional poets, a position that would have demeaned their status; rather, they demonstrate their familiarity and facility with the system that ensured their social and economic pre-eminence. For the purposes of this discussion, the sonnets are divided into four principal sections. In the first, the patron lover, the sonnets of Violante del Cielo in particular, appropriate the language of codified seduction to attract the attention of the ladies of the court. The second section explores the encomiastic sonnets of political patronage. Here I discuss the works that do not lie within the genre of love poetry, but which are written specifically to praise those who themselves functioned within the system, and whose deaths are marked by Cielo’s verse: these include Bernarda Ferreira de la Cerda, herself a renowned poet, and María de Ataíde, a *dama* at the Portuguese court. This leads to a third section, which discusses sonnets directed to the ultimate founts of patronage: the king and, later, the regent of Portugal, by Violante del Cielo, and a poem to the Cardinal Infante of Spain, by Leonor de la Cueva y Silva. In the fourth and final section I examine patronage and the family, where Cueva provides several examples

⁴⁰ The king’s pension of 300 *reales* per month was later increased to 500 *reales*. Among other kin who assisted her mission were D. Juan de Mendoza, one-time ambassador to London, Carvajal’s uncle, the Cardinal Archbishop of Toledo, Bernardo Sandoval y Rojas; her cousins, the Marqueses de Caracena, Viceroys of Valencia; and Doña Beatriz Ramírez de Mendoza. Abad, *Misionera*. 241-3. Elizabeth Rhodes notes that bureaucratic incompetence meant that no pension reached her until three months before her death. Carvajal y Mendoza, *Tight Embrace* 20.

⁴¹ Carvajal did not live to see Calderón’s fall from grace after the death of Felipe III, that culminated in his execution in 1622.

illustrative of her pride in the honour accruing to her family through the feats of her soldier brother, Antonio, and her statesman uncle, Francisco.

1.1 “Yo cantaré, señora, lo que lloro”: Wooing the Patron

Love sonnets to one’s patron were common currency among court society across Western Europe. Male courtiers appropriated the language of Petrarchan courtly love to woo favour in verse that kept the composer’s name in front of a would-be patron.⁴² Writing in a typically masculine field of endeavour, these sonnet writers pursued both political patronage and literary fame. Violante del Cielo, an accomplished poet and intellectual, had much to gain in drawing herself to the attention of highborn ladies who had access to the throne. Several of her sonnets to female friends may be seen as more than just conventional rhetoric, since such women enjoyed a degree of reflected power through their husbands. Indeed, it was probably through the influence of one such friend, Inés de Noronha, that Cielo’s *Rimas varias* were published in 1646 in France, where the Conde de Vidigueira, Inés’ husband, was Portuguese ambassador.

Ann Rosalind Jones has observed that the female poet resorts to three postures in relation to masculine amorous writings: she either accepts the discourse, accommodates her own discourse to that of the male writer, or subverts the masculine. Jones regards feminine discourse not as a battle for supremacy but as a process in which the female attempts a negotiation and accommodation of her texts within the male rhetorical and symbolic discourse (*Currency* 3-9). Violante del Cielo’s poetry, at least that poetry dedicated to specific members of the court, accommodates itself unapologetically within the prevailing masculine mode familiar

⁴² In England, for example, Ben Jonson and John Donne strove with varying degrees of success to assert themselves. Arthur Marotti observes that Donne used literature as a means to secure the social prestige and preferment that successful exploitation of the patronage system provided. He did not consider himself a professional man of letters. Arthur Marotti, "John Donne and the Rewards of Patronage," *Patronage in the Renaissance*, Eds. Guy Fitch Lytle and Stephen Orgel (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1981) 208. On Jonson, see Robert C. Evans, *Ben Jonson and the Poetics of Patronage*. (Lewisburg, London: Bucknell UP, 1989). Such behaviour was a commonplace among ambitious suitors in the patronage system, as much in Italy, France and Spain as in England.

to her. This benefited her socially and no doubt her convent financially, and also showed off her poetic skills and her superior education. While overt subversion of the masculine would not serve Cielo's purpose in these sonnets aimed at self-promotion, her feminine speaker subtly undermines masculine humoral theories and the assumptions of biological determinism.

Two sonnets by Cielo not only demonstrate her verbal skill but also her means of remaining visible and relevant to her powerful patrons. One of these poems was clearly intended to be read at two levels, both entertaining the recipient and inspiring admiration for the poet's wit. Cielo's love sonnet, "Yo tomaré la pluma," is the opening poem in the *Rimas varias*. It is addressed to "Elisa," possibly the same person who figures in Cielo's sonnet, "Belisa el [sic] amistad es un tesoro," namely Isabel de Castro. Like Petrarch, and the legions of poets and courtiers who followed him, Cielo seeks to immortalise the beloved through her verse and at the same time to elevate herself as a poet:

Yo tomaré la pluma, y de tus glorias
coronista seré, dichosa Elisa,
porque quien tus memorias eterniza,
la tenga de mi amor en tus memorias. (1-4)

The specific intention of this apparent determination to praise Elisa is to mark herself as a writer of poetry that will outlive time. She achieves this aim in the opening lines. Elisa becomes the tool that serves her purpose, but benefits through her own chaste fame, enshrined in verse on the page. Elisa and the poet/speaker are closely allied to each other through the sonnet, although always in opposition. One rises as the other falls, one's pleasure is the other's pain, as Cielo adopts the pose of the suffering Petrarchan lover, casting the beautiful and elusive Elisa as its cause. Cielo also introduces a personal tone, when she alludes to the anxieties immortalised by "Silvano": "Dulces serán por tí, por mi notorias / las ansias que Silvano inmortaliza" (5-6). "Silvano" was the name given to Paulo Gonçalves de Andrade, by both he and Cielo in their poetic exchanges. If "Silvano" indeed immortalises the sufferings of love

in verse, then in writing like “Silvano,” Cielo reveals her willingness to engage in the prevailing masculine discourse. She therefore expresses her love for Elisa as a victory for her subject, but an agony for the speaker, “quien debe su dolor a tus victorias” (8).

Paradoxically, it is in writing within this discourse that Cielo shows her originality. She does not attempt to subvert the traditional message of courtly love poetry. Rather, she accommodates her own writing to it. Although she does not shrink from revealing that this love sonnet is penned from one woman to another, Cielo must write as a man, since in the Neoplatonic schema that she employs, it is impossible for a woman, traditionally the beautiful object that inspires the love sonnet, to pen such a sonnet herself.

The very nature of Neoplatonic thought requires intellectual elevation and superiority, but under humoral theory this is physiologically impossible for a woman, due to her cold, moist humours. As Ian Maclean describes it, the Neoplatonic lover loves not only the woman, but also God and himself as well: “The perfection of love is in reciprocity; but its origin lies in beauty, which women possess in greater store than men.” This is the single opportunity provided in Neoplatonic love for a woman to rise above her supposed incompleteness, since her external beauty represents a beautiful soul, and this greater beauty indicates that she is endowed with spiritual gifts above those of men (24). When Cielo openly displays the speaking subject as a woman, then, she subtly alters the Neoplatonic and courtly masculine tradition within which she is writing. She openly challenges humoral theory, yet appears to obey the rules of poetic decorum, as she extols the beauty of the beloved and proclaims her speaker to be painfully possessed by love.

The greater paradox is reserved for the tercets. Rather than the beloved’s beauty being her homicide, the speaker claims that the proclamation of love makes a sword of her pen and will procure her death: “[P]ues ordena el amor, quiere la suerte / que sea, al fin, mi pluma, mi homicida” (10-11). In composing this lyric of seduction

Cielo rehearses the lot of the client of patronage. Freely expressing love of the patron is essential to earning the patron's goodwill, but freedom to act and think in this system is reserved to the person at the top of the chain. In writing love poetry to a patron, the poet seeks to live, both in the poetry and at the hand of the patron, but in order to do so, s/he must sacrifice self in that patron's interests. The poet both creates and dies in subsuming creativity to service, and even then, this willing martyrdom might be wasted in the face of magnificent disdain and disparagement. It is for this reason that the pen that openly proclaims the client's love is potentially the weapon that will "kill" her in social and patronage terms.

By obeying love's decree, by falling on her sword and publishing her love for Elisa, life and death become one. However, they are also banished in the eternity of that love, now inscribed on the page: "que poseyendo tú, me des la muerte / y que escribiendo yo, te dé la vida" (14-15). The poet as maker gives birth to her own poetic version of Elisa and of herself, offered and now "possessed" by Elisa. As she proposes, the sonnet to Elisa will outlast both poet/subject and patron/object, giving both herself and the poet acceptable, eternal fame. Cielo's open expression of female love for another woman, although constructed within rhetorical conventions of the period, led nineteenth-century scholars to entertain the possibility of lesbian relationships between Cielo and her women friends. For example, Costa e Silva writes of her work:

[O]ra como me parece que uma amizade simples e pure nunca usou de semelhante linguagem, presumo, que sem escrupulo, poderei inferir desta, e d'outras poesías, que a moderna Sapho ardeo nas chammas daquelle amore inatural, de que foi accusada a antiga Sapho, e que tão frequente se desenvolve nas mulheres, e com especialidade nas Freiras . . . [P]óde como tudo ser que me engane, nem pretendo que os Leitores adoptem a minha opinião como certa, mas que examinem, e decidam como entenderem (Costa e Silva 68).⁴³

⁴³ Costa e Silva here refers to a poem not discussed in this study, the first verse of which reads: "Si vivo en ti transformada / Menandra, bien lo averiguas, Pues quando me tiras flechas / Hallas en ti las heridas." Closer attention has also been given to this particular poem, and the question of Cielo's suspect sexuality, by Julián Olivares and Elizabeth Sievert Boyce, "Sor Violante del Cielo (y de la Tierra): The Subversion of Amorous Lyrical Discourse," *A Ricardo Gullón: sus discípulos*, ed. Adelaida López de Martínez (Erie, Pa: Aldeeu, 1995) 189-201.

The language Costa e Silva found so suspect needs to be read in the context of the period. Overflowing rhetoric and baroque excess were the norms, particularly in addressing those who could benefit the client in the well-established system by which favours were exchanged in a fluid market of flattery and aggrandisement. Cielo's baroque love/patronage sonnets simply show her awareness and utilisation of the dynamics of such a system. Her friends were the court ladies and her convent was relaxed in its rule and close to the Court.

The above sonnet shows the clear distinction between the defiance of time in female-authored poetry and the *carpe diem* sonnets of Petrarch, Shakespeare, Quevedo, and many other poets and courtiers, that were fashionable in the early modern period. These were intended to encourage the beloved to make the most of her fleeting beauty by bestowing herself on the lover before that beauty should fade. Like the other women in this study, Cielo does not write *carpe diem* poetry of the masculine type, but adapts the familiar process to her own use. Hence, there are no blazons in these women's poetry, with the single exception of Ramírez's self-portraits, which, in any event, subvert and mock the blazon mode. What is foregrounded in their poetry instead, is the sum of all the excellent qualities of the patron/beloved taken together, and it is these that prompt the poetic attempt to defy time. The solidarity of shared experience among a sisterhood of upper-class women, in which everybody knew the role they were expected to play, ensured that pleas to patronage could be more subtly made.

Cielo's friendship with Inés de Noronha, Condesa de Vidigueira, was long-lasting and beneficial, and Cielo addresses more than one sonnet to her.⁴⁴ Cielo's sonnet to her absent friend, "Prendas de aquella diosa soberana," is one of the most gongoristic of her collection, resorting as it does to classical themes and high-flown language. It is clearly important to Cielo that the absent countess should not forget her, and in seeking to prompt her friend by means of a cleverly written sonnet, she

⁴⁴ Another sonnet is discussed in Chapter Three, "El amistad es un tesoro": Feminine Friendship".

both maintains the thread of communication and entertains her patroness, concealing her anxiety for recognition in clever and flattering terminology. This is a sustained display of wit, for Cielo misappropriates this language, not only to glorify love, but also to complain of the lack of correspondence. Fear of being forgotten was a powerful motivator for the client to bring him/herself to the attention of the patron.

In the course of this sonnet Cielo links Nise “la divina” with Venus: “Prendas de aquella diosa soberana / que Sol abrasa, cuando estrella inclina” (1-2). In ancient times, Venus was thought to be both Eosphorus, the morning star and Hesperus, the evening star. Cielo, in the guise of unrequited lover, calls on the goddess of both love and beauty, linking her to the divine “Nise,” while through these hidden references to dawn and dusk she suggests Nise’s enduring presence in her thoughts. Through this doubled figure, however, Cielo’s speaker also accuses Nise of being a Janus, for she is both benign and tyrannical, she promises but also withholds, and what she withholds is herself, showing “indicios de tirana” (8). The speaker despairs that so much potential pleasure in Nise’s company is lost to her through the tyranny of distance and the consequent inability to share their thoughts, made worse by the patron/friend’s epistolary silence. There is an intimacy in this second quartet that celebrates the likeness of the two in thought, and also their shared literacy and education that suggests genuine friendship: “Qué gusto, qué placer, qué gloria vana / tuviera yo, si Nise la divina . . .” (7-8).

The Janus nature of Nise is rediscovered in the tercets, harking back to the duplicitous goddess of the first quartet. The speaker accuses Nise, body and soul, of being miserly in denying the lover/Cielo her “pensamientos raros” and her “luceros.” This latter word is a delightful pun, for “lucero” represents both Lucifer and the *Stella veneris*, Venus. The painful absence and silence of the beloved is summed up in the final tercet: Cielo’s survival depends on Nise’s letters. They not only provide her with news of her friend’s life in France, but they also renew the life of their friendship, and

strengthen the bonds of patronage. All of these aspects are important to Cielo in maintaining her position as courtly poet and in enlivening the enclosed life of the nun.

Violante del Cielo, in writing love poetry to her friends, provides a showcase of her talents and reminds them that although she is nominally enclosed in the convent, she is still part of their circle. As she praises the excellence of the aristocratic court ladies, she works within an established, masculine amorous discourse. However, she appropriates it to her own ends, creating a tie that binds her to these *damas* through female fellowship, unbridled admiration, and a display of her own intelligence and verbal skill. In doing so she defies prevailing physiological theories and permits the recipients of her works to participate in a celebration of feminine excellence. As will be seen in the following section, however, she does not confine her patronage works to the courtly love style. Cielo, Cueva and Marcia Belisarda all write economiastic verse, inscribing themselves into a more direct, masculine political discourse, and showing that women can be more than secondary recipients of the male family members' patronage rewards.

1.2 “Al puerto de bonanza”: Political Patronage

The kind of political friendships that male courtiers of the early modern period cultivated, those that promised gains in the social and economic scales of the patronage system, were only available to women to a limited extent and then only to those women active in the courts of the highest ladies of the land, such as the *damas* of the Portuguese court discussed above.⁴⁵ However, a family's kin and friendship network did provide opportunities for women to obtain employment suitable to their social position at court, where they could also achieve a measure of financial

⁴⁵ Noblewomen's service in a noble or royal household, either as a means to a degree of financial independence or to an advantageous marriage, is also discussed by Sharon Kettering in her study of patronage in early modern France. Kettering notes the intense competition between noblewomen for the few available places in great households. These posts offered advancement opportunities and “a way to secure a dowry and marry or to escape an unhappy marriage.” Sharon Kettering, *Patronage in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-century France* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002) 56. For a succinct account of the roles, rewards and responsibilities of the seventeenth-century nobility see Bartolomé Bennassar, *Historia de los Españoles*. Trans. Bernat Hervàs, vol. 1 (Barcelona: Crítica, 1989) 379-90.

independence, escape from burdensome marriages, or find suitable marriage partners.

Existing poems point to the value to women of these connections, while the patronage sonnets of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz indicate that the same order prevailed in Spain's colonies. Her poems to two of Mexico's *virreinas*, the Marquesas de Mancera and de la Laguna, suggest not only that Sor Juana relished their friendship at a personal level, but also that these relationships offered her political protection and unique opportunities to further her studies without censure from her superiors in the Church. It was through the Marquesa de la Laguna that her first volume of poems was published.⁴⁶ Juana's sudden retirement from writing and study came when the ties and protection of viceregal patronage were less powerful.

Among the many examples of patronage poetry, often single poems, published in Serrano y Sanz's *Apuntes*, is a sonnet by Antonia de Nevares, sister of Lope de Vega's lover, Marta de Nevares, to the Condesa de Olivares.⁴⁷ The sonnet is exceedingly sycophantic, as the opening lines indicate: "Símbolo de la paz te cupo en suerte / ave de Venus, celestial, no humana" (1-2). With the Conde-Duque at the height of his powers, his wife, too, was a magnet for women seeking favour, a post for themselves or their husbands, or just an acknowledged acquaintanceship that would enable a noblewoman to establish her own clientage. While it is not known whether Antonia de Nevares was personally acquainted with the Condesa, when Ana Caro writes a sonnet to "Doña Inés Jacinta Manrique de Lara, estando enferma," the tone of the sonnet, a graceful compliment to a lady of the principal nobility, conveys the impression of a connection that was both personally enriching and socially beneficial.

⁴⁶ The collection was published under the title of *Inundación Castálida de la única poetisa, musa décima, Soror Juana Inés de la Cruz*, in Madrid, in 1689. A facsimile of the title page is reproduced in Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, *Obras completas*. ed. Alfonso Méndez Plancarte, vol. 1, 4 vols. (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1997) n. pag.

⁴⁷ Antonia de Nevares' sonnet is mentioned in Serrano y Sanz and published in Clara Janés, *Las Primeras poetisas en lengua castellana* (Madrid: Ayuso, 1986).

Ana's sonnet is couched in terms of sincerity and truth, and begins by reassuring Inés, under the pastoral name of Nise, that her beauty is ineradicable, as the poet attempts to dispel the patient's fears: "Si pensara, señora, que al terrible / mal que molesta vuestra hermosura / de alivio le sirviera la pintura" (1-3). Caro further emphasises that this is not the mere flattery of a client. She hence claims a closer, more privileged relationship, while acknowledging the sycophancy of client discourse: "Bien sin lisonja puede ser creíble . . . pues nada a esta hechura / faltó en lo raro, bello y apacible" (5-8). The poet/speaker declares that her attempt to divert the patient from her illness by painting a lovely picture in verse is confounded by the natural beauty of the subject. She finally abandons the search for appropriate superlatives, asserting that such creative endeavour serves only to divert her attention from its rightful place: the captivating presence of the object of the poetic compliment herself. Caro disposes of the illness and its ravaging potential, while complimenting the Marquesa's excellence. She thereby projects herself as worthy of attention:

Ea, que hago agravio a los mejores
Si de vos, bella Nise, el pensamiento
aparto donde hay tantos superiores
que ofuscan todo humano entendimiento. (11-14)

Poetry of this type functioned as an advertisement in the patronage and friendship networks of noble poetic subjects, as well as offering the advice and moral support so necessary amid the factionalism of court existence.

Living far from the capital, in Medina del Campo, did not keep Leonor de la Cueva y Silva from full awareness of the pitfalls and benefits of patronage. This is demonstrated through her sonnets that praise her family members and the honour they bring to the family name, as detailed below. Another sonnet offering a more general observation and criticism of the workings of patronage and its precarious nature, is entitled: "Introduce un pretendiente, desesperado de salir con su pretensión, que con el favor de un poderoso la consiguió muy presto." The fall from

grace of *poderosos*, such as the duques de Osuna and de Lerma or, even more notably, the Conde-duque Olivares himself, signalled the end of their clientage networks. The *pretendiente's* precarious career is also lampooned by Juan de Zabaleta who utilises similar maritime imagery to that employed by Cueva, in observing of the plight of the suitor at court: “La nave que está sólo sobre un áncora no está segura; la que está sobre dos está más firme” (210). He describes the court as “la fuente que distribuye los premios” and observes that the “pretendiente” looks for new ways to acquire a post not so that he can perform a service, “sino cómo alcanzará el cargo, y hágalo como lo hiciere” (213).

In Cueva’s sonnet, the whole tale of the young man’s fall and rise is summed up in the quartets, the first of which locates him, devoid of hope, adrift in a storm of disfavour:

Sin esperanza en su tormenta esquiva
 un navegante por el mar perdido,
 de mil olas furiosas combatido,
 rota la nave, al agua se derriba; (1-4)

With the ship of his patron sunk, he is alone and adrift on a sea of indifference unless he can rapidly acquire another.⁴⁸ However, although in danger of sinking into social oblivion, he does not, yet, abandon hope: “y aunque su furia del sentir le priva / se anima contra el mar embravecido” (5-6). It is suggested that the client in a patronage relationship has to be adaptable, and ready for the change of circumstances that will result also in a change of allegiances, if s/he is successful in finding another patron. The effect of the *pretendiente's* renewed courage is immediate, as the final lines of the quartets reveals: “y sale al puerto de una tabla asido / muerta su pena ya, su gloria viva” (7-8).

⁴⁸ One well-known example of the calamity that could befall the inferior in the chain of patronage is that of Francisco de Quevedo, whose brilliance did not save him when he was implicated in Osuna’s downfall. As a result it would be some years before he was able to acquire any kind of traction at court. This patronage system existed throughout Western Europe. The famous English diarist of the same period, Samuel Pepys, for example, performed great service to the English Navy through his intelligence and industry, but he would never have had the opportunity to achieve the wealth and status that he did without the constant support of the Earl of Sandwich. He was also sufficiently adroit to distance himself from Sandwich as his patron fell from favour.

Cueva employs a significant metaphor in her conceit that brings the “pretendiente” into port “de una tabla asido.” A plank is a suitable piece of flotsam to have come from a shipwreck. However, as a table the word offers a feast of meaning, since God furnishes a table for his people in Psalm 23. The table also represents the comforts of home, food, sustenance, solidity and security, all of which are derived from the patron. The octet closes with a fine balance of life and death; rather than social death, it is his “pena” that dies away. The “pretendiente”’s glory is a living, earthly one of personal gratification, ironically represented in Cueva’s portrayal. Here he is an unprepossessing figure, on the brink of ruin, and clutching the “tabla” that will transport him from disaster to success, but only, of course, for as long as the patron wills it.

Cueva’s specific use of the term “pretendiente” removes it from the realm of conventional love poetry, as does her title’s inclusion of the “favor de un poderoso.” In spite of the suggestive “esquiva” of the first quartet, that may imply a lovelorn figure, Cueva’s love poetry invariably describes the variously disappointed lover as a *galán*. Her maritime imagery also hints strongly that this sonnet is a critique of the patronage system to which, elsewhere, she also aspires, since there are many established literary antecedents for the ship as a metaphor for the state, with all its connotations of control and of navigation by reference to the stars.⁴⁹ The stars that Cueva’s *navegante* must look to are both the highly-placed patron, and astrological guidance for his fortunes. Cueva reinforces her point that patronage could make or break an individual’s fortune, by simply summarising the little story of the quartets in the tercets. Here, she mocks the “débil pretensión” of her subject, who tries to sail his affairs in a “mar de mil temores,” becoming a would-be suicide in a Lethe of patronal indifference that leaves him without hope: “al agua del olvido echarte quieres” (12). Cueva’s critique of the “pretendiente” accords well with her views of the valour and

⁴⁹ The term “government” derives from the Greek *kubernó*, meaning “to steer a ship,” via the Latin *gobierno*.

honour she sees as accruing to her own family through the courage and daring of her family members. Cueva subscribes to the idea that success as a client requires a considerable degree of *sprezzatura* and stamina, coupled with a machiavellian capacity to build metaphorical hedges and ditches against the torrents and outrages of fortune.

The powerful effect that can be achieved by attachment to a patron able to advance the pretensions of even the most feeble fop is achieved by the sudden, triumphant ending in the “puerto de bonanza,” a particularly apt metaphor which refers both to arrival in safe harbour from the storm and to times of plenty and prosperity. The little journey begins without hope and ends in success, in patronage terms. Throughout, however, the client is not the architect of his own destiny, but is portrayed as an insignificant and unworthy piece of flotsam on the ebbing and flowing tide of political favour.⁵⁰

When Cielo writes an admiring sonnet to a Portuguese aristocrat, the Condesa de Penaguião, she employs similar, maritime imagery in groping for superlatives. Having observed the splendour and intelligence of the Condesa in the octet, she moves, in the tercets, to express the effects on her speaker of such deliriant excellence: “Que quien en tal objeto contemplando / como en inmenso mar se va perdiendo / callando significa, acierta errando” (9-11). The language revolves repeatedly around seeing and being seen, with linked alternations of “mirar / admirar” that fix the speaker’s besotted gaze on the Condesa, causing both joy and mental disturbance. As in the sonnet to Elisa, all this glory is celebrated without any reference to the body of the Condesa, who is presented as a glowing entirety. Although the fixed gaze of the bewitched lover is present, there is no atomising of the Condesa’s physical features, no golden hair, sapphire eyes or ruby lips; rather, the

⁵⁰ Covarrubias defines “bonanza” as “la serenidad del tiempo quando se sossiega y amansa en el mar la tempestad y está quieta. Por similitud llamamos bonanza el tiempo de la prosperidad, quando todas las cosas suceden a gusto y la fortuna va pujante con prosperidad y viento en popa”. The anonymous writer of *Lazarillo de Tormes* shows that the system of patronage was not limited to the upper classes, but existed at all levels of society. When Lazarillo tells his story it is from the safe “buen puerto” of his less than honourable relationship with his wife’s employer.

speaker is totally absorbed by her all-encompassing splendour. There is more to this relationship than mere beauty. The patron dispenses favour, position, gifts, but never herself, and is always just out of reach, so that the petitioning client is always reaching out, striving for the smallest attention.

Cueva not only writes about the pretensions of others. She also writes sonnets that locate her in a superior position in the social hierarchy of her own region. For example, she heaps sonnet praise on the poetry of the local *regidor*, don Juan Fernández de Ledesma, and acknowledges a young man's success at *toros y cañas*.⁵¹ This dangerous game, reserved for the wealthy upper classes, provided opportunities for display and advancement for the successful contestants. In writing of such events, Cueva inscribes herself into this privileged, provincial circle, and shows that she is knowledgeable about and participates in the lives, interests and pastimes of the important men of her region.⁵² Her knowledge of the activities of her town are most clearly to be seen in a sonnet to "Gerardo amigo" about the decline of Medina. It provides historically relevant details about the deteriorating fortunes of the landed gentry in seventeenth-century Spain, and the impact of these changes upon her own life, as the opportunities for social advancement diminish with the town. She joins in a practice begun by Petrarch and continued into her own day, not least by Quevedo, in his famous sonnet "Miré los muros de la patria mía," when she writes of the ruin of her town as a means to meditate on the passage of time, decay and the inevitability of death.

In a litany of negativity, Cueva joins Spain's economic decline to her own immediate environs, seen in the light of a more illustrious past. She opens in epic

⁵¹ For a detailed description of the aristocratic entertainments of the *juegos de cañas* and the *corrida*, see Marcelin Defourneaux, *Daily Life in Golden Age Spain*, Trans. Newton Branch (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1970) 133-34.

⁵² Cueva's sonnets are entitled: "A unas ingeniosas liras que compuso Juan Fernández de Ledesma, Regidor de esta villa, refiriendo el trágico suceso de S. Agustín," and "A D. Juan Francisco de Peralta y Velasco, habiendo salido aventajado en todo en unas fiestas de toros y cañas en Valladolid." Juan Fernández de Ledesma appears to have enjoyed a long-term friendship with Cueva. Towards the end of her manuscript, pages 251-53, it is carefully noted that two or three poems are the work of Juan Fernández de Ledesma, her own name appears again above the works that follow.

style: “Quiéroos pintar el miserable estado / en que Medina está, Gerardo amigo” (1-2), and justifies her own, unique position as both witness and victim of the change: “yo, que de sus desgracias soy testigo, / puedo contar mejor a qué ha llegado” (3-4). Expressing a feminine and baroque *desengaño*, Cueva employs the failing town and the withered “damas” as metaphors for the state and its social and economic decline. The powerful symbol of female fecundity and fertility as the seedbed for growth, ripeness and harvest, is converted, in the shrivelling of the femininity of the “damas,” into a representation of Spain’s bankruptcy and lost potency. Gone with the images of ripe beauty are the men who paid court to them and, with them, the social engagements that enlivened the domestic boredom. Also lost are the opportunities for preferment that political friendship once made possible: “de sus galanes solamente os digo / que aún rastro de su gala no ha quedado” (5-6). There is irony, too, in the fact that Cueva appears to address this sonnet to a friend who has escaped Medina long enough before to be unaware of the decline of the city.

The repeated “no hay . . . no hay . . . no hay” of the second quartet creates a sobbing, wailing note of dissatisfaction, augmented by a catalogue of the town’s new problems: “penas,” trabajos,” “males” and “muertes” (8). Significantly, there is no shift of argument at the turn, as the grieving negativity fills the sonnet. The wintering of the town’s economic glory is reflected in her observation that spring is no longer celebrated; every day the town is reduced still more, with only the old and infirm left; the young have gone to the wars, to find work, or to the colonies to seek their fortune. The fact that Cueva appears never to have married gives an autobiographical twist to this sonnet. As a well-placed and wealthy heiress, she should have been a highly desirable match. It can only be a matter of speculation as to whether she chose single autonomy, or whether it was chosen for her by the shrinking possibilities occasioned by Medina’s decline.

Cueva is not alone in celebrating the influential members of her immediate environment. Marcia Belisarda’s manuscript includes sonnets of praise to local

writers in Toledo, and a romance written to be sung in the convent chapel for the visit of the provincial, Fray Baltasar Fernández, that would surely have brought her to the notice of the local church hierarchy.⁵³ Encomiastic verse provided a legitimate avenue through which women poets could express themselves. These works were likely to be read by a wider audience, but, more importantly, in such poetry women could write as the equals of their male counterparts, both in reason, and in their ability to judge the worth of the works and words they praise.

As can be deduced from the above examples, the value attached to close relationships with powerful figures is not limited to the centres of power. It can be seen in the rivalries that occurred among the principal families of Catalina Clara Ramírez de Guzmán's own town. Llerena was a relatively important town in the period, as it lay on the road to Seville and was a military base that saw all the principal generals of Felipe IV's army pass through it during Spain's war with Portugal.⁵⁴ Gazul describes it as a city of "alta burocracia, la de la Inquisición y la de sus órganos administrativos. Sus gobernadores fueron segundones de aristocráticas familias e hidalgos con más pergaminos que fortuna" (517). This portrayal points to the importance of class and place over mere wealth. Entrambasaguas claims that the activities of Ramírez's father earned him many enemies among the important citizens of the town, including Captain Lorenzo de Figueroa, whose son-in-law was *alférez* in don Francisco Ramírez's company, and who was deprived of "la bandera porque no acudía a las cosas de su capitán." Such disparagement apparently caused Figueroa to leave the country with the expulsion of the Moriscos in 1609 (15). However, the

⁵³ Belisarda's encomiastic poems are entitled: "Alabando al romancero Juan Pérez Roldán la ciencia de músico compositor, soneto" (ms. 7469 9r); "Alabando la fábula de Hercules y Deyanira de Don Gerónimo Pantoja, vecino de Toledo, escrita en octavas elegantes" (ms.7469 n. pag.); "Alabando las novelas de don Pedro de Para [?]" (ms. damaged), vecino de Toledo, y de su ingenio huidísimo," (ms. 7469 17r) and "Romance que se canta entre dos en la Concepción de Toledo a Padre Fr. Baltasar Fernández, su provincial de la provincia de Castilla entrando a visitar el convento" (ms. 7469 24r). The Biblioteca Nacional, in Spain, contains a small collection of music by Juan Pérez Roldán (1610-1671), "Música para los ministrales de El Pilar de Zaragoza," the dates of which suggest that he could be the composer praised by Belisarda.

⁵⁴ The army's important role in the town, and the facility with which they could requisition war materials are revealed in another of Ramírez's works: "Pidiendo a un caballero que tomaba caballos para el ejercito que reservase uno del coche" complaining "que parece tiranía / dejarnos el coche cojo" and puns that "en un potro nos ponéis / si nos quitáis un caballo" (ms.240v).

greatest enmity derived from a family of equal rank and status, the Almezquita.⁵⁵ The struggle for supremacy created a rivalry that developed into a lasting feud over questions of protocol and hierarchy, “uno de tantos incidentes que en aquella época provocaba el puesto a ocupar en cualquier sitio público y aun privado” (Gazul 520). From these enmities may have developed some of Ramírez’s more acid poetry.

Perhaps mindful of the high status that her family pretended in the community, Ramírez writes no sycophantic poetry to other notables, with the single exception of a *décima* “a la ausencia de los Condes de la Puebla” that begins “De los Condes el ausencia / siente el lugar a porfía / pues consiste su alegría / en que dure su asistencia” (1-4). The poem ends in wordplay by stressing the loneliness that will be occasioned should they “despuebla el lugar.” Here she was clearly outranked in nobility, although the light tone of the poem also implies a relationship bordering on equality.

For Violante del Cielo, it may have been the restoration of the Portuguese monarchy in 1640 that made her encomiastic poetry so optimistic and laudatory. She wrote several sonnets to the new Braganza king, Don João IV, who took the Portuguese throne in 1640, and several more to courtier friends. She also commemorates the deaths of highly placed friends, including the Duchess of Aveiro, Juliana de Lencastre, wife of the third duke, and writes laudatory sonnets to other writers, as well as to friends at court.⁵⁶

When Cielo celebrates her highborn friends in verse, it is their character and their intelligence that she celebrates most. Therefore, although she accommodates herself to male discourse in her sonnets, she adapts it to a form more acceptable to women, by focusing her praise on women’s capacity for wit and intelligence, which she praises equally with their physical beauty. When Cielo writes a sonnet epitaph to

⁵⁵ The family are denominated thus in Entrambasaguas. Gazul refers to them as the “Almerquita.”

⁵⁶ These friends include the aforementioned Condessa de Penaguião and dona Mariana de Luna. A further sonnet to Inés de Noronha will be discussed in detail in the chapter on friendship. For details regarding Cielo’s social position, education and the friends of both sexes with whom she exchanged verse, see Margarida Vieira Mendes, “Apresentação,” *Violante do Céu: Rimas varias*, ed. introdução notas e fixação do texto: Margarida Vieira Mendes (Lisboa: Editorial Presença, 1993) 13.

the *dama de corte* dona Maria de Ataíde, Condessa de Penaguião, that formed part of the recorded funeral obsequies, she again looks to the imagery of brilliant light and extraordinary intelligence with which she praised Maria in life. The epitaph is written to arrest the attention of the passer-by. It is not the conventional warning to prepare for death that is the end of all living things, but extends the beauty and *ingenio* of her subject beyond the grave. The reiteration of “yace, yace, yace” acknowledges the *dama*’s death but is juxtaposed with a celebration of her specific qualities, enumerated throughout the sonnet, to be summed up in the final line with the name of the deceased: “yace Dona Maria de Ataíde.” Dona María is a light, a flower, an object of affection and envy, and an example of perfect elegance. The first line of the tercets suggests the temporary nature of this earthly death: “Yace una suspensión del pensamiento,” as if Dona Maria has merely paused for a moment before continuing her brilliant career in the heavenly court.

This sentiment, which likens the earthly court to that of heaven, is picked up and embellished in the second of Cielo’s sonnets included in the funeral obsequies. Here, she writes of Dona Maria’s passage from the earthly to the heavenly court in almost identical terms to those in her sonnet, in the *Parnaso lusitano*, on the fourth glorious mystery, the Assumption of the Virgin Mary into Heaven, which will be elaborated on further in Chapter Two Part A. In these sonnets Cielo seizes the opportunity of a great public funeral to praise both her apparent subject, María, and her king, the ultimate fount of benefits. This is not the only sonnet in which Cielo employs extravagant language in praise of her king, as will be revealed in the following section.

The sonnets discussed above show these women poets’ awareness of the nature, benefits and rewards to be obtained from patronage, as well as their consciousness of the pitfalls and traps inherent in such an imperfect system. Nevertheless, as women who benefited socially and financially from the system, they subscribed to it as a normal part of their social environment. Though it was engaged

in principally by male courtiers, the potential for social advancement and independence that the system provided for women ensured that they seized any opportunities to display their intellectual and social gifts.

1.3 “Monarca generoso”: Romancing Royalty

Celebrating the royal rites of passage in verse offered a variety of opportunities to the poet: to create the propaganda that reinforced the desired social norm of the state as a family, under the benevolent paternity of its king; to stand out from among the other suitors for patronage by an elegant display of wit and flattery; and to inscribe oneself into the literary heritage of the nation, since public celebrations of royal events were likely to result in the circulation of verse and song that could become part of the national literature. The publication of the funeral rites of María de Ataíde is one example of such writing, and it was partially by this means that Cielo was able to straddle the line between retired and public life. The honourable status accrued through her family connections secured her entry into the royal convent, while the combination of her own skills and this royal connection ensured her literary fame within her own society, a fame that probably saved her and her work from the censure and censorship endured by other notable religious, such as Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, or the Sobrino Morillas sisters.⁵⁷

Celebrating the revolution of 1640 that saw João IV take the throne by popular acclaim, Cielo’s sonnet in the *Rimas varias*, “A el Rei Dom João IV de Portugal, Soneto en dialogo,” recites a catechism that commences: “Que logras Portugal? um Rei perfeito” (1). Where almost half of Cielo’s sonnets in the *Rimas varias* are rendered in Spanish, when she writes on the important matter of

⁵⁷ From a talented family, the Sobrino Morillas sisters both entered St Teresa’s convent of the Discalced Carmelites in Valladolid, taking the names of María de San Alberto and Cecilia del Nacimiento. Their manuscripts reveal details of the censorship to which they were subjected. For a more detailed analysis of their work, see Arenal and Schlau, *Untold Sisters*; or Stacey Schlau, *Viva al siglo, muerta al mundo: Selected Works/Obras escogidas de/by María de San Alberto (1568-1640)*. (New Orleans: UP of the South, 1998).

succession within Portugal and the return of her own king, she reverts to Portuguese. She also lays down the appropriate service to one's king, in an oxymoron that converts service into liberty: "que liberdade tens? ser-lhe sujeito" (4). Entwined with this liberating and noble service is the honour and profit to be gained from patronage: "Que tens na sujeição? honra, e proveito" (5). This is emphasised by the express view that with the transition to Portuguese rule, the country has been transformed from a labyrinth to a firmament of political stars: "Que eras antes dele? um laberinto, / que te julgas agora? um firmamento" (9-10). With the royal government based in Madrid for sixty years, opportunities for patronage were considerably reduced; expectations of the new king must have been prodigious among the aristocracy. In another sonnet, addressed directly to the king, Cielo's second quartet describes the benefits that accrue to those in royal service, concluding that dying in the king's service ensures redemption, thus further imprinting the idea of a king as representative of God:

Quem se vos rende, alcança liberdade,
quem vos adora, ostenta sutileza,
servir-vos muito, é denotar grandeza,
morrer por vós, buscar eternidade. (1-4)

The fervent nature of these sonnets was surely connected to the state of war that existed between Spain and Portugal following the revolution; the throne was not securely in Portuguese hands until 1668, twelve years after João IV's death. Irrespective of this supposition, the notion that service to one's superiors ensured reward is firmly entrenched in the sonnet's terminology as a natural part of aristocratic existence.

Cielo's long life, most of which was spent beside the court, and her literary fame during her own lifetime, ensured a flow of sonnets marking the royal rites of passage. In 1669 she wrote in praise of the birth of a daughter to the Regent, D. Pedro; in 1687 she marked the second marriage of the king, now Pedro II to Maria Sofia Isabel. She offers moral support and praises the strength of her "Monarca

generoso” when his first child, D. João, dies within a few days of his birth and, in 1689, celebrates the birth of the new heir, concluding that the Portuguese throne is now secured in succession, while hastening to wish the present incumbent a long life: “Nasce para depois de eternidades, / suceder a hum Monarca sem segundo / nos meritos, no cetro, e na coroa” (12-14).

The above sonnet is immediately followed by another, which concludes the first volume of the *Parnaso lusitano*, addressed to “El Rey nosso Senhor em agradecimento de hua mercè, que fez à Autora em o dia do nascimento do Principe D. João, que Deos guarde.” Cielo abases herself appropriately in the opening line: “A Vossos pès, Monarca generoso,” and from this humble position offers thanks: “Graças vos sacrifico agradecida / por conceder soccorros a huma vida” (2-3). The tercets liken the king to Alexander the Great and wish him a life long enough that humankind will regard him as essentially divine, and long enough “para alcançardes de continuo / Já victorias do perfido Othomano” (12-13). Skilfully, Cielo converts her king into a Christian hero, a Portuguese Santiago de Compostela, who, through his God-given power, will defeat the infidel. It is an extraordinarily martial end to a sonnet of thanks for benefits received from the ultimate fount of patronage. It thus suggests that Cielo took the opportunity as a favoured and faithful old retainer, now nearly ninety years old, to apprise the king of her own desire for a Christian victory by force of arms.

As Cielo seeks to aggrandise the nobility, honour and martial prowess of the Portuguese king, she also demonstrates the importance attached to family honour and prowess. In this she is not alone among these poets. The opportunities for patronage afforded by being part of an honourable and honoured family forms the subject of the following section, which will analyse the poetry written in praise of her family members by Leonor de la Cueva y Silva.

1.4 Honour and *Hombría*: Patronage and the Family

The acknowledgement of the value of well-managed patronage and the importance of being associated with the right families, can be seen in several sonnets by Leonor de la Cueva y Silva. These also reveal the importance that she places on family honour as a conduit to appropriate, family renown. In a funeral sonnet she celebrates the life of her famous poet/lawyer uncle, Francisco de la Cueva y Silva,⁵⁸ in two others she celebrates her brother's military prowess, which saw him singularly favoured by Cardinal-Infante Ferdinand, brother of Philip IV. These sonnets emphasise the benefits that accrue through association with the favoured kin, rather than on affectionate, familial relationships. They bear no relationship to the love sonnets of the type already discussed, intended to flatter and impress the patron. Rather, they establish the importance of blood lines in determining social status. It is social status that has so much bearing on the success or failure of patronage negotiations.

In the funeral sonnet, Cueva immediately asserts her relationship to the dead man in the title: "Al sepulcro de el Sr. Don Francisco de La Cueva y Silva, mi tío." The sonnet is filled with admiration for the man's accomplishments as Cueva extols his intellectual brilliance, linking it to the great names of antiquity. In the process, she associates herself with his fame and name, and locates herself at his side, sharing his classical learning. The man is known by and praised for his literary and social feats, trumpeted in the quartets with a series of statements that cover his wisdom and statesmanship, revealed in his favourable comparison with Numa and Cato.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Among Francisco de la Cueva y Silva's extant works in the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid, are legal treatises on the election of Saint Teresa as Patron of Spain, 1615, and on the Immaculate Conception, a work co-authored with Felipe III's *privado* the Duque de Lerma. Quevedo also dedicated a funeral sonnet to him. Francisco de Quevedo, *Poesía original completa*. Ed. introducción y notas de José Manuel Blecua (Madrid: Planeta, 1996) 281. Blecua adds the footnote that Don Francisco was described by González de Salas as "varón muy noble, limosnero y poeta." He appears also in a length entry in Lope de Vega's *Laurel de Apolo*, Silva III. Lope Felix de Vega Carpio, *Colección escogida de obras no dramáticas de Frey Lope Felix de Vega Carpio, por don Cayetano Rosell*. Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, vol. 38 (Madrid: Atlas, 1950) 199.

⁵⁹ The reference to Numa is probably to Numa Pompilius, in legendary Roman history the successor of Romulus as second king of Rome. His long and peaceful reign was regarded in later times as a sort of golden age. The reference to Cato is either to Dionysius Cato (fourth century AD), the author of a volume of 164 moral precepts in Latin hexameters, or to Marcus Porcius Cato the elder, (234-149 BC), also known as the Censor (a distinguished soldier, lawyer and moralist who crushed an insurrection in

Cueva also reiterates her uncle's literary genius: "fama," "trunfos publica," "rara pluma," "aclama," all of which will ensure he remains unfaded in memory.

In the tercets Cueva turns to broader themes still. Reflecting the Renaissance interest in classical thinkers as the epitome of intellectual endeavour, she claims that the famous *tío's* accomplishments are superior to those of the Seven Sages of Athens, and to the Roman goddess of war, Minerva.⁶⁰ But Minerva is a multi-tasking goddess, honoured also as goddess of crafts and of reason:

Callen los siete sabios de la Grecia
y humille Atenas su laurel sagrado,
pues éste de Minerva el triunfo lleva.
¿A quién con más razón el mundo precia? (9-12)

Significantly, Cueva insists that pure reason demands this appreciation of her uncle. Conventional wisdom of the period, steeped in humoral theory that portrays women as hapless victims of their own physiology, has it that reason is not the province of women. However, Cueva, in drawing the female goddess of reason to the reader's attention, affirms that women, too, are capable of education and reason. Indeed, Minerva's mythical skills are also associated with those of *hombria*, as she is surpassingly excellent in both reason and in war. In asserting that her uncle is even greater than Minerva, Cueva praises his statesmanship and reason, as well as his warrior and leadership qualities. At the same time she reminds the reader that she shares her uncle's blood and, therefore, potentially his outstanding qualities. Furthermore, Cueva inherits the honour associated with his famous name as she aggrandises both sides of her family, separating the two names that represent her lineage with laudatory adjectives: "que de uno a otro polo es ya llamado / el grande Silva y el insigne Cueva" (13-14). Name is clearly of great importance to Cueva, as is her own value within the family. She is punctilious in putting her name to each of her

Spain and advocated the simple, strict social life of ancient Roman tradition). M.C. Howatson and Ian Chilvers, Eds., *The Concise Oxford Companion to Classical Literature* (Oxford, New York: OUP, 1993).

⁶⁰ The seven sages, known in Greek tradition as statesmen, law-givers and philosophers of the seventh and sixth centuries BC, are generally acknowledged to be Solon of Athens, Thales of Miletus, Pittacus of Mitylene, Cleobulus of Rhodes, Chilon of Sparta, Bias of Priene, and Periander of Corinth. Howatson and Chilvers, Eds., *Classical Literature*

poems in the Biblioteca Nacional's manuscript, inscribing herself into the record as the creator of intellectual works.⁶¹

Women's access to the important concept of honour in the seventeenth century was circumscribed. Unable to partake in family honour except as the conduit through which honour passed, it is significant that women like Cueva attempted to participate in the honour process through sonnets such as that just discussed.⁶² Cueva pursues this line further in sonnets written for her brother, don Antonio, praising his military prowess in the train of the Cardenal-Infante Ferdinand, brother of Philip IV. Discussing the masculine notion of honour, Donald Larson observes that under the banner of *hombria* or "overt masculinity," honour was described as the greatest value apart from religion. For the Old Christian, "the only way for a man to be truly a man was to exercise to the fullest the masculine attributes of fortitude, bravery and domination." Added to this was the importance of blood purity and the subordinate relationship of women to men, since honour "depends on the ability to impress one's will on others" (7-10). Under this schema, sexually deviant behaviour by the women of any man's family, whether father, son or brother, deprives male kin of their honour. Women themselves cannot possess honour but merely pass it on to their sons.⁶³

What Larson does not discuss is the beneficial effects that the masculine honour accruing to its male members has on the entire family. A blood association with the principal families of the realm can only have enhanced the futures of all the extended family members, including their women, whose commodification in the

⁶¹ There is a striking difference between this sonnet and the *liras* written on the death of her father, which exhibit love and sadness (ms. 4127 189-90). Here, there is no mistaking the personal tone that expresses an affectionate relationship within the private family sphere. There is no attempt to locate her father within his social group, nor to celebrate family honour. Where she reserves the sonnet for the formal praise of a dead statesman, she chooses a more homely style to write of her father. The poem is reproduced in the appendix to this chapter.

⁶² Cueva, like Cielo, also wrote verse to royalty. Two elegiac sonnets were published, marking the deaths of Isabel de Borbón in 1645 and, in 1689, of Queen María Luisa de Borbon. Olivares and Boyce, *Especjo* 105.

⁶³ For further relevant discussion of honour in Spanish society, see Ludwig Pfandl, *Historia de la literatura nacional española en la edad de oro*. 2a ed. (Barcelona: J. Gili, 1952) 414, and Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano, *Feminism and the Honor Plays of Lope de Vega*. Purdue Studies in Romance Literatures, V.4 (West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue UP, 1994).

matter of marriage and honour could at least secure them a step up the social ladder, even if it granted them no greater independence. At the beginning of Philip III's reign, for example, the king distributed considerable sums among his courtiers and these favours extended to the women of the court: "Las mercedes que se concedían a las damas de honor de las reinas e infantas – siempre escogidas entre los linajes más distinguidos – eran ya tradicionales, y acostumbraban a ascender a millares de ducados" (Bennassar, *Historia* 380).⁶⁴

Cueva's sonnets to her brother reflect the *hombria* detailed by Larson, for her brother finds royal favour through his military feats. She incorporates into them both the affection she feels for her brother and praise of the honour he brings to the family. Cueva also inserts herself and her family into Spanish history, for it is clear from the content of the sonnets that Antonio de la Cueva y Silva was an officer in the Cardinal-Infante's army, en route to the decisive battle of Nördlingen, which took place in 1634. The first sonnet is preceded in her manuscript by adulatory *octavas* addressed to the Cardinal-Infante, entitled "Al Serenisimo Infante Cardenal don Fernando de Austria cuando dio la capitanía de caballos e hizo su gentilhombre de la boca a mi hermano don Antonio de la Cueva y Silva el día que entró en Milán con el guión." It is conceivable that Cueva sent this poem, with the sonnet, to her brother in the hope that it would pass through the hands of the Cardinal-Infante himself. The sonnet bears a similar title: "Parabien a mi hermano don Antonio de esta MI [¿merced insigne?] que su Alteza le hizo el día que tomó el guión."

Cueva's knowledge of classical practice creates an appropriately high tone, in crowning her brother with laurels of congratulation. She further elevates him by juxtaposing the young man and the king's brother, Ferdinando, in the opening two lines of the first quartet:

Goza joven gallardo la dichosa
merced insigne de su Real alteza

⁶⁴ For a social portrait of Castilian nobility in the period see Bartolomé Bennassar, *La España del Siglo de Oro* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2001) 187-88.

de el árbol se corone tu cabeza
 en que fue convertida Dafne hermosa. (1-4)

In the tercets, the two are again linked as she asks heaven's protection for the fount of her brother's future success, and for Antonio himself. The concluding tercet acknowledges the bonds of affection between Cueva and her brother, as it once more links honourable fame with the family's name: "Tanto bien y favor querido hermano / y en todo trance seas tan dichoso / que ganes nombre y fama esclarecida" (11-14).

Similarly, the sonnet addressed to Antonio before the army's march into the Low Countries expresses love for her brother as well as pride in the family's rank and achievements. She begins by wishing her brother a long life in the most affectionate terms: "Goza felices años dichosos, / querido y dulce hermano" (1-2). However, once again the second quartet is dominated by ancestral *hombria*, now carried, through her brother, into the period of her own generation:

De tus antecesores generosos
 la gran fama que eternamente dura,
 la tuya aumente pues que ya procura
 cantar de tu valor, hechos famosos. (5-8)

As in the sonnet to her dead uncle, Cueva measures Antonio against the perfect classical examples, anticipating that his feats will eclipse those of the Greek hero of Troy, Achilles: "El mundo espero los viva tan grandes / que las hazañas del valiente Aquiles / junto a las tuyas deslucidas veas" (9-11). Although, as a woman, she does not take part in warfare, she seeks to enhance her own status through the aura of honour and fame that she creates around her brother's participation in the king's forces.

Given that the poetry by seventeenth-century women still surviving in the present day can only be a sample of a much larger body of work, Cueva's sonnets celebrating her uncle, her brother and his master, stand as a representative indicator of the value placed by literate women on family honour and fame. The opportunities to write and to place themselves on the record alongside successful men were few,

but women took advantage of the chances that came their way, articulating their intellectual equality in poems composed for *certámenes* and in elegiac verse. These provided opportunities to add personally to family honour, rather than to be viewed merely as the channel for masculine *hombria*, achieved through socially sanctioned marriage and motherhood.

Conclusion

These sonnets to patrons demonstrate a wider range of possibilities for women than may previously have been conceded. They also reveal that women were fully aware of the benefits available to them, their families and their convents through the workings of patronage, and that women did not pass up the opportunities to participate when they were presented to them. These poets did not simply wait, passively, for any benefit that might accrue to them as a reflection of masculine endeavour. Instead, they knowingly engaged in a masculine field, negotiating benefits in the patronage marketplace, and seeking to elevate their own status and show their intellectual excellence in the written word. Women's language was seen as excessive and a symptom of moral laxity and sexual availability by the moralists. Hence, the writing of sycophantic poetry to those who could offer them political protection may be another strategy by which women bypassed the restrictions that nominally governed their lives. These restrictions were not only enjoined by moralists, but were enshrined in the patriarchal family structure that represented a microcosmic model of the governing system of the Church and the state. In the next chapter, women's views of their familial role in seventeenth-century Spain will be discussed, through readings of sonnets pertaining to the family and its divine model, the Holy Family.

SONNETS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE IN THE CHAPTER

“Yo cantaré señora lo que lloro”: Wooing the patron.

Violante del Cielo

Yo tomaré la pluma, y de tus glorias
coronista seré, dichosa Elisa,
porque quien tus memorias eterniza
la tenga de mi amor en tus memorias.

Dulce serán por tí, por mí notorias
las ansias que Silvano inmortaliza,
si tus mismas victorias solemniza
quien debe su dolor a tus victorias.

Yo cantaré, señora, lo que lloro
pues ordena el amor, quiere la suerte
que sea, al fin, mi pluma, mi homicida.

¡Ay decreto cruel del bien que adoro,
que poseyendo tú, me des la muerte,
y que escribiendo yo, te de la vida!
(*Rimas varias* 1).

Prendas de aquella Diosa soberana
que Sol abrasa, cuando estrella inclina,
reliquias de una mano, que por digna
divina da temor, y aliento humana.

Qué gusto, qué placer, qué gloria vana
tuviera yo, si Nise la divina
a las mismas acciones de benigna
no vinculara indicios de tirana.

Letras me niega ¡ay Dios! porque de avaros
no acuse solamente sus luceros
sino también sus pensamientos raros.

¡Ay qué importa que en fe de castigaros
la gloria me conceda de teneros,
si la vida no me da para lograros!
(*Rimas varias* 6)

“Al puerto de bonanza”: Political Patronage

Ana Caro

Soneto a Doña Inés Jacinta Manrique de Lara, estando enferma

Si pensara, señora, que al terrible
mal que molesta vuestra hermosura
de alivio le sirviera la pintura,
que al pincel de los versos es factible,

Bien sin lisonja puede ser creible
que a fin de mejorar tal criatura
en la salud, pues nada a esa hechura
faltó en lo raro, bello y apacible,

Que anduviera buscando los mayores

asuntos que ayudaran a mi intento:
 Ea, que hago agravio a los mejores
 Si de vos, bella Nise, el pensamiento
 aparto donde hay tantos superiores
 que obfuscan todo humano entendimiento.
 (*Apuntes* 534)

Leonor de la Cueva y Silva

***Introduce un pretendiente desesperado de salir con su pretensión,
 que con el favor de un poderoso la consiguió.***

Sin esperanza en su tormenta esquivada
 un navegante por el mar perdido,
 de mil olas furiosas combatido,
 rota la nave, al agua se derriba;
 y aunque su furia del sentir le priva,
 se anima contra el mar embravecido
 y sale al puerto de una tabla asido,
 muerta su pena ya, su gloria viva.
 ¡Ay debil pretensión, que ansina eres
 navegante en un mar de mil temores!
 Rota la nave, muerta la esperanza,
 al agua del olvido echarte quieres,
 donde, asiendo la tabla de favores,
 sales triunfante al puerto de bonanza.
 (ms. 4127 238)

Violante del Cielo

A la Señora Condesa de Penaguiño

Si como admiro en vos, lo que en vos miro,
 explicara de mí lo que en mí siento,
 no hallara en el abono detrimento
 lo que en mí siento, y lo que in vos admiro.
 Mas ¡ay! que a tanto bien en vano aspiro,
 o rara suspensión del pensamiento,
 explique admiración, y sentimiento,
 el exceso feliz con que deliro.
 Que quien en tal objeto contemplando
 como en inmenso mar se va perdiendo
 callando significa, acierta errando:
 Pues admirando al paso que sintiendo,
 si ofende la cordura delirando,
 acredita el ingenio conociendo.
 (*Rimas varias* 8)

Leonor de la Cueva y Silva

A el miserable estado y desdichas de Medina

Quiéroos pintar el miserable estado
 en que Medina está, Gerardo amigo;
 yo, que de sus desgracias soy testigo,

puedo contar mejor a qué ha llegado.

Ya sus juegos y fiestas se han dejado,
sus damas acabó el tiempo enemigo;
de sus galanes solamente os digo
que aún rastro de su gala no ha quedado.

No hay caballos, no hay fiestas, no hay carreras,
no hay contento, no hay gusto ni alegría:
todo es penas, trabajos, males, muertes.

No se celebran ya las primaveras,
disminúyese todo cada día.
¡Oh triste villa entre contrarios fuertes
que hacen en ti mil suertes
el tiempo vario y la cruel fortuna,
pues no tienes en ti buena ninguna!
(Ms. 4127, 232v)

Catalina Clara Ramírez de Guzmán

Décima a la ausencia de los Condes de la Puebla.

De los Condes el ausencia
siente el lugar a porfía,
pues consiste su alegría
en que dure su asistencia.
Bien se ve con evidencia
lo que llega a aventurar,
pues si se quiere apurar,
ninguno negarle puede
que es fuerza que solo quede,
si se despuebla el lugar.
(Ms. 3884, 241r)

Violante del Cielo

Epitafio

Yace en este sepulcro venturoso
que miras suspendido, o caminante,
una luz, que excedió lo mas brillante,
una flor, que venció lo mas hermoso.

Yace un entendimiento portentoso,
un objeto mayor de afecto amante,
un exemplar de todo lo elegante
una ocasion de todo lo envidioso.

Yace una suspension del pensamiento,
un asunto capaz de heroica pluma,
un exceso que en todo excesos pide.

Yace un motivo eterno al sentimiento,
mas para que lo diga todo en suma,
yace Doña Maria de Ataide.
(*Memorias funebres* n. pag.)

Pasó de firmamento a firmamento
Maria, presuncion del ser humano,
pues pasó del palacio Lusitano

a la esfera mayor del lucimiento.
 En vano procuró su detrimento
 de la Parca cruel la injusta mano,
 pues subir al Palacio soberano,
 fue conseguir en todo eterno aumento.

Pero si con Deidades asistía
 en la esfera de un Jove sin segundo,
 (que es la mayor Deidad en mortal velo),
 ¡Qué aumento superior conseguiría
 la que asistía a lo mejor del mundo,
 sino pasando a lo mejor del Cielo!
 (*Memorias funebres* n. pag.)

“Monarca generoso”: Romancing Royalty

Violante del Cielo

A el Rei D. João IV de Portugal ***Soneto em diálogo***

Que logras Portugal? um Rei perfeito,
 quem o constituiu? sacra piedade,
 que alcançaste com ele? a liberdade,
 que liberdade tens? ser-lhe sujeito.

Que tens na sujeição? honra, e proveito,
 que é o novo Rei? quasi Deidade,
 que ostenta nas acções? felicidade,
 e que tem de feliz? ser por Deus feito.

Que eras antes dele? um laberinto,
 que te julgas agora? um firmamento,
 temes alguém? não temo a mesma Parca.

Sentes alguma pena? ãa só sinto,
 qual é? não ser um mundo, ou não ser cento,
 para ser mais capaz de tal Monarca.
 (*Rimas varias* 10)

A el Rei Dom João IV de Portugal

Um só pesar senhor sente a vontade
 neste excesso da glória Portuguesa
 e é não poder com vosco ãa fineza
 deixar de parecer comodidade.

Quem se vos rende, alcança liberdade,
 quem vos adora, ostenta sutileza,
 servir-vos muito, é denotar grandeza,
 morrer por vós, buscar eternidade.

Tudo finezas são, mas de tal modo
 comodidades só parecem, quantas
 finezas há, na paga que dais nelas.

E assi de todas, o remédio todo
 é fazermos por vós finezas tantas,
 que tal vez o pareça algũa delas.
 (*Rimas varias* 16)

A El Rey nosso Senhor na morte do Serenissimo Principe o Senhor D. João primogenito de sus desposorios, que faleceo em breves dias.

Senhor, esse valor, que portentoso
Ostenta em cada acção hum vencimento
Oh não se renda não ao sentimento,
Triunfe do sentido o valeroso.

Porque se bem, Monarca generoso,
Pode muyto hum pezar, que he tão violento,
Que poder não se muda em rendimento
A vista de hum valor tão poderoso!

Vencey pois em vòs mesmo excesso tanto,
Advertindo tambem, que està no gloria,
A causa do pesar, que quer rendervos:

Veja no vosso alivio o mudo espanto,
Que levais de vòs mesmo esta victoria,
Porque só vòs a vòs podeis vencervos.

(Parnaso lusitano 70)

Ao nascimento do Principe noss Senhor D. João que Deos guarde, que nasceo em . . . 1689

Nasce segundo, para ser primeiro,
este Principe augusto, e peregrino,
Pois logrando excelencias de divino,
Sugeitarà felice o mundo inteiro.

Nasce para aumentar o cativo
dos coraçoes do luso, e Palatino;
Pois cada qual se ostentará mais fino
em tributarlhe o amor mais verdade.

Nasce para exemplar de Magestades,
Honra de Portugal, pasmo do mundo,
gloria de Deos, jactancia de Lisboa.

Nasce para depois de eternidades,
Succeder a hum Monarca sem segundo
Nos meritos, no cetro, e na coroa.

(Parnaso lusitano 74)

A El Rey nosso Senhor em agradecimento de hũa mercè, que fez à Autora em o dia no nascimento do Principe D. João, que Deos guarde.

A Vossos pès, Monarca generoso,
graças vos sacrificio agradecida,
por conceder soccorros a huma vida
contra o poder do fado rigoroso.

Remunère o Senhor mais poderoso
huma acção tanto às suas parecida,
pois quanto tem de menos merecida,
tanto mais vos abona de piedoso.

Oh vivey, Alexandre Lusitano,
idades tão sem conto, que divino
Vos presuma tal vez o ser humano:

Vivey para alcançardes de contino
Jà victorias do perfido othomano,

Jà triunfos tambien de meu destino.
(*Parnaso lusitano* 75)

Honour and hombría: Patronage and the Family

Leonor de la Cueva y Silva

Al sepulcro de el Sr. Don Francisco de La Cueva y Silva, mi tío

Este que ves que cubre blanca losa,
aunque la dura tierra le consume,
fue en el saber otro segundo Numa,
y otro Catón en ciencia milagrosa.

De su ingenio, la fama numerosa
triumfos publica, y de su rara pluma,
mil grandezas aclama en breve suma,
con que hace su memoria más gloriosa.

Callen los siete sabios de la Grecia
y humille Atenas su laurel sagrado,
pues éste de Minerva el triunfo lleva.

¿A quién con más razón el mundo precia?
que de uno a otro polo es ya llamado
el grande Silva y el insigne Cueva.
(Serrano y Sanz 337).

Liras en la muerte de mi querido padre y señor

Dejad cansados ojos
el justo llanto que os convierte en fuentes.
Cesen ya los enojos
y enjugad vuestros liquidos corrientes,
que al mal que oprime el pecho
el alma y corazón le viene estrecho,
y en tan terrible pena
ni hallo descanso gusto ni alegría.
De todo estoy ajena
y solo tengo la desdicha mía
por alivio y consuelo.
Que de todo lo más me priva el cielo,
quitóme en breves días
airado y riguroso un bien amado,
a las fortunas mías
añadiendo este golpe desdichado.
¡O suerte fiera y dura!
Llorad ojos llorad mi desventura.
Contenta el alma estaba
en sus trabajos, penas y dolores,
con el bien que gozaba.
Mas la parca cruel con mil rigores,
fiera y embravecida,
cortó el hilo al estambre de su vida.
¡Musa detente un poco!
Que si de tantos males hago suma
y en el presente toco,

no es suficiente mi grosera pluma,
 que pues estoy penando,
 cuanto puedo decir digo callando.
 (ms. 4127 189r).

Al Serenisimo Infante Cardenal don Fernando de Austraia cuando dio la capitania de caballos e hizo su gentilhombre de la boca a mi hermano don Antonio de la Cueva y Silva el día que entró en Milán con el guión.

Segundo Apolo de el mayor de el mundo,
 Hijo de Marte, nieto de Felipe,
 Fenix raro divino y sin segundo
 que no hay valor que al tuyo se anticipe.
 Lauro te rinda tierra y mar profundo,
 y cuanto adora tronco el de Aganipe,
 Divino príncipe y protector luciente,
 corona te ha de ser no suficiente.
 Gallardo Atlante de el Iberio suelo,
 en cuyos hombros penden las Españas,
 Hermosa afrenta de el Señor de Delo,
 que en luz mas clara todo el orbe bañas.
 La fama escriba en el celeste velo
 con pluma de diamante tus hazañas,
 y el sol y luna alfombra de tus huellas
 tus plantas besen en lugar de estrellas.
 ¡Goze insignes victorias de tu mano
 nuestro Rey! y pasando a tus mayores,
 más que el aurora aljofar da a verano,
 fe de la suerte, triunfos superiores
 de el príncipe de Roma soberano.
 La silla alcances gracias y sabores
 y siempre de tu nombre, en paz y en guerra,
 al cielo admiración – yugo a la tierra.
 Pues premios dignos das a tus criados,
 Cesar piadoso y Romulo valiente,
 como el Magno Alejandro adelantados
 para hacerte inmortal de gente en gente.
 Contan grandes mercedes animados
 quien no te ha de ofrecer su sangre ardiente,
 poniendo en tu servicio espada y vida,
 dichosa suerte si por ti perdida.
 A nuevo empeño tal favor nos llama,
 joven dichoso, invicto Ferdinando,
 pues asido – mi hermano de tal rama
 la desbocada envidia va pisando.
 Mi indigna pluma tu grandeza aclama
 con que humilde doy fin tus pies besando.
 Perdona mi atrevida rustiqueza
 pues soy esclava de tu Real alteza.
 (ms 4127 248v-250v)

Parabién a mi hermano don Antonio de esta MI [¿Merced insigne?] que su alteza le hizo el día que tomó el guión.

Goza joven gallardo la dichosa
merced insigne de su Real alteza;
De el árbol se corone tu cabeza,
en que fue convertida Dafne hermosa.

Muestre muestre tu diestra valerosa,
conforme al cargo heroica fortaleza,
y en las empresas de mayor grandeza,
salga siempre tu espada vitoriosa.

Guarde el cielo a tu divino soberano,
amparo de caídos generoso,
y a ti gozarte deje en larga vida.

A tanto bien y favor querido hermano,
y en todo trance seas tan dichoso
que ganes nombre y fama esclarecida.
(ms.4127 250v-251r)

A d. Antonio de la Cueva y Silva mi hermano estando muy favorecido de su alteza cuando partió a Flandes.

Goza felices años dichosos,
querido y dulce hermano, la ventura
que de tantos pesares asegura
por tu medio los fines mas gloriosos.

De tus antecesores generosos
la gran fama que eternamente dura,
la tuya aumente, pues que ya procura
cantar de tu valor hechos famosos.

El mundo espero los viva tan grandes
que las hazañas del valiente Aquiles
junto a las tuyas deslucidas veas.

De el invicto Ferdinando en Flandes
a los pies pongas los rebeldes viles,
mostrando bienes del gran Silvio Eneas.
(ms. 4127 269r-269v)

CHAPTER 2

FROM HOLY FAMILY TO WHOLLY FAMILY

The family in early modern Spain was the smallest element through which social control was exerted by the patriarchal establishments of Church and state. Seventeenth-century notions of the family stemmed partially from the Church Fathers and from post-Tridentine Church doctrine. These notions were supported by the many moralists who went into print in didactic literature, of whom the most widely known and respected were probably Juan Luis Vives, Luis de León and Juan de Zabaleta. Also still valid were the precepts of Alfonso X el Sabio and his *Siete partidas*. The post-Trent urge for order as a means to present a united front to growing Protestantism reinforced the paradigm. As head of the household, the father was responsible for all under his roof, and with absolute power over every aspect of their lives, a power reinforced by law. The family, however, stood for more than this. At the upper levels of society, the importance attached to *limpieza de sangre* and *hombria*, created of the family a social statement and a ladder to preferment in the patronage system. The value of these connections to social success can be discerned in the sonnets by Leonor de la Cueva y Silva, to her uncle and her brother, already discussed in the previous chapter.

In order fully to explore the important topics related to the family, through the lens of the sonnets and other poetry left by these women, the chapter will be divided into two parts. Part A, under the heading of “Marriage, Motherhood and Patriarchy,” examines first the nature of marriage and its meaning to women. In a second section I discuss the role and responsibilities of the father as head of the family, and how this is approached by the poets. The empowering role that motherhood could provide for women forms a third section. Part B, “Children and Siblings,” is divided into two sections. The first will explore the nature of relationships between children and their parents, while that existing between siblings forms the second section.

These poems cover both religious and secular matters, but at the base of almost all of them is a determination to independent thought that reveals a great deal about the authors' intentions and concerns with regard to their own families. Through them can be gained a glimpse into the the hidden world of women's experience of family life in seventeenth-century Spain. Even bearing in mind Anne Cruz's warnings of the danger of misreading the writing in search of its authors, I shall contend, as she does, that, "we may still glean significant aspects of women's subjectivity through the self-referential traces left in their literary production" ("Challenging Lives" 104).

CHAPTER 2, PART A

MARRIAGE, MOTHERHOOD AND PATRIARCHY

La palabra esposa lo más que significa
es comodidad, lo menos es deleite.
(Juan de Zabaleta, *Día de fiesta por la tarde* 115)

Family links provided opportunities for an advantageous marriage, organised between the respective fathers without any requirement to consult the wishes of their daughters. Marriage was an important rite of passage, not only for its class significance, but also because it marked the beginning of a new, legally and theologically sanctioned, socially recognised unit in the patriarchal system. Though marriage is often portrayed as the silent enslavement of women to their husbands' control, where women were able to secure socially advantageous marriages they also gained in prestige. There are no poems, even among Ramírez's often acid verse, that denounce the institution of marriage or want of affective support. It is nevertheless significant, in the terms of this study, that, with one solitary exception, these poets do not celebrate the marriages of family members and friends in verse. As always in a study of early modern works by women, it is as important to study their silences as the words they inscribe on the page. Thus, my analysis will include a survey of marriage practices and attitudes in the period, in relation to what is known of the lives and works of the poets.

Marriage in this period meant more than the advantageous linking of families and the production of children. It also included marriage to Christ through enclosure in the convent or, less formally and with greater difficulty, a semi-enclosed life with a group of like-minded women in a *beatería*.⁶⁵ For many women, marriage to Christ provided them with security and a measure of independence. For others, the daughters of impoverished members of the middling and upper classes unable to marry off their daughters, it meant incarceration for life, with or without the necessary

⁶⁵ See Lehfeltdt, "Discipline," 1019-20.

vocation. Nevertheless, the optimistic verse of Marcia Belisarda shows that, for her, to welcome a new bride of Christ into the convent was a cause for celebration.

Family and home were the approved, indeed the only other life-paths for secular women that the Church and moralists would countenance. In her poems to St Joseph, to be analysed below, Violante del Cielo demonstrates her adherence to Counter-Reformation orthodoxy in promoting the nuclear family, with the *pater familias* at its head, as the epitome of Christian organisation. However, within the family, Cielo's sonnets on the motherhood of the Virgin Mary present an entirely different view of maternal empowerment from that promulgated by the Church. Her view proposes Mary as an example to other women, not of meek submission, but of strength and independence.

2A.1: The Yoke of Marriage (The Esposa's Esposas).

[!]t is an impossible that any clerk
wol speke good of wyves
(Chaucer, "The Wife of Bath's Prologue," l.689)

The lives of early modern women of rank and education may have been more comfortable than many of their sisters. However, their life-path opportunities were few, limited principally to marriage to Christ, through enclosure in the convent, or enclosure in the home through an arranged marriage. The Church and the Spanish state were united in their views on social control and had common objectives with regard to the secular world, such as the protection of the family nucleus, one of the principal axes of society. There were ample scriptural and patristic sources to bolster this approach. Augustine, for example, regarded marriage as a truly good institution because it was created by God before sin existed in the world.⁶⁶ The principal goods of marriage for Augustine were the procreation of children, spousal fidelity, and the sacred commitment of husband and wife to each other until death.

⁶⁶ Augustine's view of marriage as a divine institution can be found in a number of texts: notably *The Good of Marriage* 1.1, *The City of God* 14.22, *Marriage and Concupiscence* 1.1, and the *Commentary on the Gospel of John* 10.2.2.

Paradoxically, as the Council of Trent sacramentalised marriage and the Protestant faith cultivated family sentiment, the authority of the husband over his wife became even stronger. Even in a loving marriage, there were inherent contradictions and tensions. The wife was excluded from economic activity that did not accord with the biological unit of mother, father and children. As the Church supported a stable, domestic union, it also undermined it and interfered in its structure, enhancing the role of the father (King 38). The prevailing ideal of marriage in early modern Spain was that of the dominant husband, lord in his own domain, and of the subservient and obedient wife, who managed hearth and home under his protection and domination. The husband administered all his wife's affairs and she could only sign legal documents with his permission. He had a concomitant duty to provide for his family and to provide dowries. He also had the absolute power to punish and to authorise marriage until the child reached the age of twenty-five years (Alcalá Zamora 170).

Well-intentioned and influential works by moralists, such as Juan Luis Vives and Luis de León, endorsed prevailing views of women's basic inferiority and their appropriate role in the home. The humanist, Vives, wrote *Education of a Christian Woman*, originally in Latin, in 1523, for Catherine of Aragón, to assist in the education of her daughter, Mary Tudor, the future queen of England. He portrayed himself as a defender of women and was considered to be so in his time, yet although he advocated women's education, it was only within the tight parameters of learning for moral self-improvement and to deter idleness. However, as Valerie Wayne has proposed, in spite of the derivative nature of his preoccupation with women's chastity and mental weakness, he was an innovator in the early years of the Northern Renaissance: "The rigid life he prescribes for women . . . was not the worst alternative for them then: it was one of the best available" (28). Vives, after all, considered companionship to be essential to the correct functioning of a marriage,

although such companionship and mutual concern would always be subsumed under the husband's overall control.

Like his contemporaries, Vives is particularly preoccupied with female chastity, expressed in marriage through a woman's continence, and evident in her silent, meek and obedient deportment and through her not provoking lust in her husband. With regard to speech, he subscribes to humoral theory; his concern is that it is the weakness of women's minds that prevents them from being able to bridle their tongues and "as a result there is no limit to their quarreling and no logic in their abusiveness, since there is no room for reason or judgment" (219). Because of this perceived lack of temperance and reason he urges women not to disagree with their husbands or hurl insults, for once provoked, "it will be difficult for him to make reconciliation, and even if he does become reconciled, every time he remembers that humiliation, he will not be able to look at his wife with a favorable eye. In the eyes of God, too, what displeasure it brings!" (219). His advice is based on the assumption that since women cannot avoid their natural weakness, it is important to provide them with the tools of passive acceptance necessary to endure their God-assigned, deferential role.

Writing at about the same time, the highly influential Fray Luis de León does not share Vives' comparatively enlightened opinions on female education. He endorses the long-held Aristotelian view of women's mental incapacity and inferiority. In his widely circulated treatise, *La perfecta casada*, he also proclaims the absolute necessity for obedience to the husband in every aspect of life. Bolstered by scripture, Greek philosophy and the Church Fathers, León's rationale is that only by accepting her naturally inferior status to the male can a woman truly fulfil her divinely ordered role as centre of the household and helpmeet to her husband, whose goods she is able to augment by her zeal and care.

However, invective poetry by prominent poets, particularly Francisco de Quevedo, the absence or negative portrayal of wives in *comedias* and the critical

writings of seventeenth-century moralists suggest that the ideal was not always achieved.⁶⁷ Women found ways to circumvent the irksome restriction of household enclosure. It was difficult for a devout husband to prevent his wife from going to church, for example, and this created problems of unsanctioned social contact with men, despite the presence of *dueñas* or *escuderos*. Wives also attended processions, *romerías*, and religious fiestas. For the more daring, the *tapado* also allowed illicit outings, while some tolerant husbands permitted visits to friends, though these were frowned upon by the Church (Alcalá Zamora 174).

Alfonso X “El Sabio,” who enshrined the importance of marriage as a social pacifier and regulator in the fourth of his *Siete partidas*, and hence as a social rather than a private good, shared Augustine’s view of marriage as the holiest of the sacraments because it was ordained by God: “Por aquellas palabras creed y multiplicad y fenchid la tierra” (qtd. in M. Stone 63).⁶⁸ The fourth *Partida* also stressed the importance of mutual consent between partners to the marriage. Yet it was not until the Council of Trent that the Church grudgingly accepted that couples could marry without also obtaining parental consent. Even then, such marriages were regarded as indecorous or illicit (38).

The church’s doctrine on marriage, and the paternal role in partner choice did not, however, always accord with popular practice.⁶⁹ Marilyn Stone records that illegitimate births were common in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in all social classes and that clandestine marriages were common from the thirteenth to the

⁶⁷ Below are some examples, listed by title, of Quevedo’s satirical sonnets, taken from Quevedo, *Poesía original completa* 514-73. They provide a rich vein of misogyny directed principally at the old, those who use cosmetics, and the presumed infidelity of married women: “Mujer puntiaguda con enaguas,” “Hastío de un casado al tercero día,” “Casamiento ridículo,” “Epitafio de una dueña,” “Desnuda a la mujer de la mayor parte ajena que la compone,” “A una fea, y espantadiza de ratones,” “Vieja verde, compuesta y afeitada,” “Pinta el ‘Aquí fue Troya’ de la hermosura,” “Hermosa afeitada de demonio,” “Marido paciente, que imagina satisfacerse de su deshonra con hacer a otros casados ofensas,” “A una mujer afeitada,” “A uno que se mudaba cada día por guardar su mujer.” Quevedo’s own late, failed marriage to the widowed Doña Esperanza de Mendoza, is, of course, well documented. See, for example Jauralde Pou, *Francisco de Quevedo (1580-1645)* 632-33, 70-75.

⁶⁸ The *Siete Partidas* were compiled during the reign of Alfonso X (1252-1284). The Church did not officially recognise marriage as one of the sacraments until Session XXIV of the Council of Trent, 1563.

⁶⁹ See R. H. Helmholz, *Marriage Litigation in Medieval England* (London; New York: CUP, 1974) 25ff. Studying medieval English marriage practices and examining court records, Helmholz asserts that people resented church interference and preferred to regulate their own marriage practices.

sixteenth centuries (61). The Church experienced difficulty in formalising marriage patterns at all levels of society in Catholic Europe, and it was only after Trent that the Church was able to impose its authority by invalidating marriages that had not been performed in public before the parish priest (Goody 148). These facts suggest that there was no lack of affection and desire between couples, but that they simply wished to have the freedom to choose their partners.

An important conduit and outlet for social comment was the *comedia*, where married women were largely invisible. However, while wives may be ignored in seventeenth-century *comedias*, the path to marriage frequently forms the core of the action. Melveena McKendrick has argued that in the seventeenth century only the dramatists continued the Erasmian liberalism of the sixteenth century, albeit within the circumscribing attitudes of their day. She notes the playwrights' concern that women should be free to follow their inclinations in the choice of a husband and that parents who try to force their daughter to marry against her will must be responsible for the consequences (327-28). When marriages were arranged along dynastic or economic lines, however, mutuality was not a concern.

The writings of the moralist, Juan de Zabaleta, nevertheless suggest that many married women did their best to please their husbands. In his popular *El día de la fiesta por la mañana y por la tarde*, Zabaleta, in inveighing against women's use of cosmetics, observes that all that is required of a wife is that she perform her office. He encapsulates the inequity of female enclosure and male freedom in his refutation of the idea that women paint themselves to "rehacer el cariño del matrimonio":

Pienso que se engañan. El amor entre los casados bien puede ser que le empiece la hermosura, pero quien le prosigue en la condición, los hijos y los buenos oficios. La palabra esposa lo más que significa es comodidad, lo menos es deleite. La mujer que trata blanda y atentamente a su marido con cualquier cara es hermosa. (115)

It is at least to Zabaleta's credit that in the same paragraph he censures husbands who mistreat the wives who meekly conform to the approved model: "Muy inicuo, muy ingrato es menester que sea el hombre que no quiere bien a la mujer propia

que cumple con las obligaciones de mujer" (my italics). However, in the case of those regarded as transgressive women, for example, those accused of adultery, the important matters of male honour, pride and *limpieza de sangre* supersede any other consideration:

[L]os jueces, para castigarla, no preguntan la causa, sino averiguan el delito; convencida, la condenan a muerte, aunque su marido la hubiese dado mucha causa. ¿Con qué ojos mirará el mundo, con qué ojos mirarán las leyes, a la mujer que, porque su marido la hace alguna vez mal pasaje, se vuelve contra la honra de su marido? (133)

Women's lack of a real role to play in the matter of matrimony, other than that allowed them by masculine expectation and control, is strongly suggested by the paucity of poetry by women to mark this important event. Those who went along with the system were officially and legally imprisoned by it, regardless of the small freedoms they could secure for themselves. Those who resisted and sought greater independence, found themselves at variance with societal norms. Writing of Catalonia in this period, for example, Isabel Pérez Molina states that masculine control and tutelage were channelled through matrimony that was always a contract between men permitting the circulation of women among the various families. The purpose of this circulation, requiring control of female sexuality, was the continuation of patrilineal descent, and reproduction of the existing social structure ("Mujeres y matrimonio" 27).

As commodities in a marriage market controlled by fathers, and bearing both economic and social rewards and consequences, it is not surprising that these women do not write epithalamions or sonnets in praise of marriage. The survival of the patriarchal ideas underlying the commodification and exchange of women into the modern period has been criticised by prominent feminist philosophers such as Luce Irigaray: "The society we know, our own culture, is based upon the exchange of women. . . . The passage into the social order, into the symbolic order, . . . is assured by the fact that men, or groups of men, circulate women among themselves" (170). Irigaray harnesses Marxist theories of commodities as the elementary form of

capitalist wealth to the status of women in so-called patriarchal societies. In this schema women's reproductive capacity and exchange value contribute, without compensation, to the symbolic patriarchal order. Women are exchanged, not as women, but as women reduced to a common feature: "their current price in gold, or phalluses" (174-75).

It is, then, significant that none of the poets in this study married, and that among all their poetry, only one *romance* by Catalina Clara Ramírez de Guzmán, concerns a marriage: that of her youngest sister, Ana Rosalea, ten years her junior, to whom Ramírez gives the pastoral name of Anarda in her verse. Ana married don García Alonso de Villalobos, a lawyer of the *Reales Consejos* who took Ana with him to Úbeda, leaving behind a trail of debt (Carrasco García 114). Half of the *romance* is taken up in acknowledging the beauty of the bride, who outrivals the sun. It ends in conventional wishes for "tan apacible unión / que juzguen horas los siglos" (18-19), and the hope that the marriage may be fruitful. Children, Ramírez reveals in the final line, are the "fortuna mayor."⁷⁰ Don García barely appears in the poem at all, except as the "garzón" whose hopes have been realised, and in the same stanza, Anarda is described as "tan dulce posesión" (12). For Ramírez, marriage makes Anarda one item in the husband's catalogue of assets; there is no suggestion that she also possesses him.

Ramírez is exceptional among these poets in writing many poems to and about identifiable members of her own family, which celebrate rites of passage, as well as everyday family events. It is not so much surprising that she wrote a poem about a sibling's marriage, as that she wrote only one, given that six of the ten siblings of the family survived to adulthood and that three, Beatriz, Lorenzo and Ana, subsequently married. Given her propensity to write on all manner of family events,

⁷⁰ The marriage of Ramírez's youngest sister was not fruitful, nor were those of her other siblings. The last surviving sibling, Antonia Manuela (Antandra in Ramírez's poetry), notes this in her testament of 1697, also affirming that she herself did not marry: "Nunca tomado estado ni dejado hijos ni descendientes mis hermanos." Carrasco García, *La Plaza Mayor de Llerena y otros estudios* 113. The illegitimate son of her brother, Lorenzo, clearly did not rate a mention.

this surprising lack of epithalamic verse may well indicate Ramírez's disdain for, or disapproval of the marriages finally settled upon by her family. Beatriz's ill-fated marriage, when she was past fifty, lasted only two days, when her husband, don Álvaro de Henestrosa y Cabrera, died (Gazul 524).

Marriage to Christ, via enclosure in the convent, brought its own restrictions, although it also provided opportunities denied to secular wives. Nevertheless, it must have been particularly irksome for those young women incarcerated against their will by their families. Whatever the circumstances of young women's enclosure, when Marcia Belisarda celebrates a number of nuns' professions in her poems, she expresses joy that these women have joined with Christ in marriage and proclaims their enduring purity. For example, in a *romance* she writes: "sabed que el supremo Rey / sus desposorios se letra / con hija del gran Bernardo" (5-7), and a *villancico* opens with "Tierna esposa del cordero" (1).⁷¹ Many women entered the convent as a means of avoiding the pressures of marriage and, in the cases of women like Sor Violante del Cielo or Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, in order to be able to pursue their intellectual interests. Spiritual marriage to Christ is expressed in much poetry by religious women, often with strong bodily overtones, as the logical culmination of the marriage is deferred until the day of their resurrection.

This desire to fuse her own body with that of Christ is a common feature of Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza's poetry. She transgressed the norms of society and achieved remarkable independence by neither marrying nor entering a convent. As previously stated, her high social status probably gave her the latitude she desired, but also made her behaviour all the more shocking to her peers. Although Carvajal rejected marriage and shrank from male contact, her poetry abounds with images of

⁷¹ Three poems, a sonnet, a *romance* and a *villancico*, dealing with the profession of nuns and celebrating their *desposorios* with Christ are entitled: *A la profesión de una monja bernarda que la hizo en día de la degollación del baptista estando el santísimo sacramento descubierto y su nombre Paula*, (ms. 7469:19r); *Villancico a doña María de la Puebla profesando en la Concepción franciscana de Toledo estando el santísimo sacramento descubierto* (ms. 7469:56r); and *A la profesión de doña Petronila de la Palma en la Concepción Real de Toledo siguiendo la metáfora de la palma* (ms. 7469:7v). This last sonnet will be discussed fully in the chapter on friendship.

reciprocal love between her persona, Silva, and Christ. In a funeral sermon preached in her honour at the Jesuit English College of St Gregory in Seville, Father Juan de Pineda, while never missing an opportunity to describe the manly qualities without which, in his view, her mission would have been impossible, speaks of Carvajal's perfect marriage to Christ:

Pregunto, ¿cuál es la más perfecta casada, la que lo es con un hombre mortal, y tiene el corazón partido como dice el Apóstol, o la que desposada con el celestial desposo con voto de fe y lealtad (que es aquello, *desponsabo te mihi in fide*) está dedicada al único servicio y amor de su criador, que no se muere, ni se acaba? Casad una flaqueza y delicadeza mujeril, con un corazón de varón, una flaca naturaleza con un espíritu fuerte, intrépido, acometedor de grandes y heróicas empresas, y haréis una perfecta casada, aunque sea una perpetua y perfeta [sic] virgen. (7)

Father Pineda here persists in the medieval ideal, where virginity was always superior to marriage, and the most perfect *casada* was she who pledged herself to Christ, pursuing a life of blameless sanctity freed from the pull of the flesh. However, Carvajal's sonnets are remarkably erotic, as will be seen in Chapter Five.

Leaving aside her personal preferences on the matter, Carvajal does not reject marriage for the women of her own, extended family; a number of her letters are addressed to her married cousin, Isabel de Velasco, and she writes in affectionate terms about the concerns of that family.⁷² Her considerable correspondence to Rodrigo de Calderón originated in the family connection through his marriage to another cousin. Furthermore, her own vow of obedience indicates that hers was not a rebellious position towards the norms of Spanish society; it was simply that, for Carvajal, those norms could not supersede those of God, from whom she believed her vocation for martyrdom to derive. Paradoxically, she couched her rebellion in a discourse of obedience, both to God and to those she regarded as her religious superiors. By citing God as her authority, she could pursue the independent

⁷² Isabel de Velasco was married to Luis Carrillo de Toledo, Marqués de Caracena, Viceroy of Valencia. In a letter to her on 15 September 1598, Carvajal includes an affectionate family detail: "[L]e puedo juntamente dar a v.sría la enhorabuena de un sobrino que me dicen le ha nacido a vra sría, de su hermana." Carvajal y Mendoza, 98. The formality of the tone in this letter is typical of Carvajal's epistolary style and demonstrates her determination to humble herself whenever possible. She addressed everybody in such terms, even those whom people of her class would regard as her social inferiors.

course that she had determined to follow while still displaying obedience, albeit to a higher power. Experience had taught her the importance of obedience to powerful men and to Catholic protocol, which she claimed to have practised since childhood (Rhodes, "*Tight Embrace*" 5).

This requirement for obedience to a superior male figure obtained at all levels of society, as well as the spiritual arm of the state. Hence, women were answerable to a paternalistic chain of command, whether their marriages were ordained by the Church or by their fathers. The control and power exercised by the father figure as head of his family is nowhere more clearly seen than in the sonnets of *Violante del Cielo*, which will be discussed in the following section. However, as I shall also argue, even as she promotes the Counter-Reformation ideal, she also inserts her own preference for a gentle, tolerant exercise of power that incorporates feminine aspirations.

2A.2 The Paterfamilias

Unlike Juan Luis Vives or Luis de León, Augustine's view of masculine dominance in marriage rested not on women's supposed mental weakness and propensity to sin, but on the type of wisdom of which they were capable. While he saw men and women as having both speculative and practical wisdom, with both essential to managing one's life, he believed that women excelled in the practical and men in the speculative, in accordance with the opposition between *scientia* and *sapientia*. Donald Burt encapsulates Augustine's views on the matter of subordination in the family as the superiority of speculative wisdom over the practical, a dominance necessary for a normal society (107). This dominance, for Augustine, bore considerable responsibility:

In homes dominated by love, those who command are those charged to have regard for the interests of the others. In such families those who command are actually at the service of those whom they seem to order about. They rule

out of duty to those they care for and compassion for those for whom they must provide. (*City* 19:14)

Augustine's benevolent dictatorship discusses a subtle and effective ideal that achieves its objectives without brutality: the home dominated by love. Such a home conceals the paternalistic inflexibility that still inscribes the norm. In the early modern, upper-class household, the *pater familias* reflected the kingly role and represented God the father at a microcosmic level; he was a controlling agent responsible for all people under his roof, from family members to *criados*. As it was his responsibility to discipline and order his household, he was also answerable for any transgressions that took place within it, and this made him a jealous guardian of family honour (Alcalá Zamora 171).

This strong, honourable and authoritative father figure became harnessed to Church propaganda following the Council of Trent, when serious attempts were made to normalise sacramental marriage in the face of the increasing number of liaisons devoid of official sanction (Ibero 108). The Church turned to art as widely accessible visual propaganda, using idealised images of the Holy Family to strengthen its message of benign paternalism. Indeed, Baroque Spanish artists' depictions of the Holy Family differ widely from those of the Renaissance, as will become evident in the following discussion.

In her study of Baroque art as a tool of the Church, Alba Ibero has noted that the Church, as art patron, procured paintings of the Virgin and Child that had a didactic function, since these representations "ilustran perfectamente el pensamiento cristiano basado en la sujeción de la mujer a la maternidad, considerada como la culminación máxima de su vida" (102-03). Ibero also notes a significant change in pictures of the Holy Family. The figure of Joseph, in Renaissance works an aged figure in the background, becomes progressively younger in Baroque paintings and takes a more dominant position as *pater familias*. This contrasts with an increasing effacement of the Virgin, whose pictorial dominance in earlier works is replaced by

representations of a passive mother, obedient and fulfilled in her role.⁷³ There is also a process of secularization of the figures, providing exemplary, didactic images of the ideal family (106). Particularly illustrative of this change are the paintings by Murillo of the Holy Family. The Virgin is represented only through her role as mother: passive, seated, occasionally engaged in needlework, while a young, virile and dark-haired Joseph is variously portrayed as busy about his carpentry, protectively guiding his family into Egypt and even holding the baby himself before the seated Madonna. In moving into the domestic realm, the authoritative father displaces the pre-eminence of the Virgin mother.

This figuring of Joseph as the dominant and controlling figure in the family group can also be seen in two sonnets written by Violante del Cielo celebrating not only Joseph's sanctity and power, but also his humanity. He fulfils the appropriate role as ideal head of the family, in caring for his wife and child, and Cielo establishes this immediately in the first sonnet, addressing him in the title as *glorioso Patriarca*. Cielo also affirms her adherence to orthodox thinking in making Joseph an authoritarian figure of the highest order: "Pues en la humanidad de ser Divino / padre adoptivo al temporal gobierno / fuistes del mismo Dios" (1-3). God assumes human form and subjects himself to the household discipline of Joseph, who, in his role as adoptive father, is raised to God-like power and status: "¡O cómo parecido os imagino / en esta dignidad al Padre Eterno!" (5-6). This description of Joseph figures the microcosmic representation of God's greater realm, exactly in line with received wisdom of the time as to the divinely ordered nature of human society.

⁷³ The early paintings that put Joseph in the background accord with the very minor role he played in the religious thought of earlier Christians. The scriptures provide little information about him or his life. Apocryphal stories of Joseph record him as a widower with five children, married at the age of 40, who lived with his wife for forty-nine years. He was therefore ninety at the time of his betrothal to Mary. Charles Souvay, *St Joseph*, 2004, Catholic Encyclopedia Online, Available: <http://newadvent.org/cathen/08504a.htm>, 8 August 2004. Ibero notes that until the Baroque period he was not only a secondary figure but frequently an object of derision among the popular classes (106). See also Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex* (New York: Random House, 1983). Warner notes that in Byzantine nativities Joseph is fast asleep beside a rock, his back to the miracle. With the new domestic idealism after the Renaissance he begins to inspire a cult of his own, even being adopted by St Teresa of Ávila as her personal patron, "the father of my soul" (189).

Furthermore, Joseph is both spouse and defender of the pregnant Mary: “Y si en defensa de su Madre pura / esposo os hizo de su propia Madre, / y en vos su mismo crédito asegura” (9-11). The protective role is confirmed by scripture, but only once divine revelation assures him of the child’s divinity.⁷⁴ The effects of injury to a husband’s honour in this period have been studied by Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano, through the lens of Lope de Vega’s plays. These reveal that the degree of violence required to recuperate lost honour depends on the extent to which the husband has lost control: “Wives whose illicit desire remains in the realm of the imagination can be brought back under control through punishment . . . or set at a distance through banishment.” Where sexual appropriation has occurred, either by consent or through rape, murder is the most likely outcome. The husband’s power and control are mediated through his menacing presence once he becomes aware of his dishonour (132-33). Cielo’s portrayal sets Joseph apart from the prevailing ideologies of honour and *limpieza de sangre* in seventeenth-century Spain, where husbands could legitimately kill adulterous wives, provided both wife and lover were caught in the act. However, this is not necessarily a divergence from the orthodox view on Cielo’s part, since Joseph’s special status derives from his role as adoptive father of a child of divine origin.

Unusually in Cielo’s poetry, the Virgin Mary is figured in this sonnet in the same, passive manner as the paintings of the period. Such a portrayal faithfully mirrors traditional concepts of maternity. Cielo sets out to emphasise the relationship between Joseph, as earthly father and representative of a divine father, and the Christ child, both God and helpless baby, as the sonnet again reverses the social order in the final tercet. Cielo affirms that as the Christ child is obedient to his fate, he also becomes Joseph’s “súbdito,” humbled before him in the household hierarchy.

⁷⁴ The scriptural authority is Matthew, who records that “before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit; and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in the dream saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary for your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she shall bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins’” (1:18-21).

Nevertheless, her concern that Joseph may not fully realise the significant elevation in his status is reflected in “que a vos no os cuadre” (12). In addressing a sonnet, ostensibly of praise, to Joseph, but suggesting that he does not know his own worth, Cielo sets herself as sonnet creator in a position dominant to that of Joseph. In portraying Joseph as unaware of his part in the unfolding drama of the Nativity, Cielo inserts herself into the sonnet as a superior figure in reason and knowledge to the person she venerates. Cielo subtly reverses the basis of power; she has the benefit of history and faith to support her statement, but she is also a woman writing in an era when women were said to be weaker, both physically and mentally, than their male superiors.

Cielo’s second sonnet to St Joseph is a triumph of wordplays and Old Testament typology, as she employs poetic praise to reveal her own worth as a poet versed in the art of the conceit. Again, Joseph is portrayed as the Counter-Reformation ideal of protective, providing fatherhood. Indeed, her choice of the Old Testament Joseph as the pre-figuring model serves to reinforce the positive qualities of an even more heroic New Testament Joseph. The comparison of the two Josephs is particularly apt, and not only because they share a name; balanced analogies between the Old and the New Testament provided proof of the truth of Christian revelation. In this sonnet, Cielo maintains her two Josephs in perfect equilibrium as she rehearses their separate exploits in the first two quartets, opening with the Old Testament Joseph:

Previniendo el peligro más contrario
 guarda trigo un Joseph de eterna fama,
 con que del mundo salvador le aclama,
 la varia multitud del vulgo varío. (1-4)

This Joseph was sold into slavery in Egypt, and rose to prominence for his wisdom, perspicacity, and his ability to interpret the pharaoh’s dreams. The New Testament Joseph fled before Herod into Egypt to keep his little family safe and in so doing saved the souls of humanity from spiritual famine, since his act permitted

Christ to achieve his goal of sacrifice on earth. This Joseph, too, received divine instructions in a series of dreams.⁷⁵ As is usual in employing Old Testament typology to reveal Christian “truth,” the *pan* of the new covenant of love is a better bread than that of the old covenant of the law:

Mas de otro mejor Pan depositario
otro Joseph, que en Dios de amor se inflama,
ostentando feliz su ardiente llama,
guardó de Cielo y Tierra el sacro erario. (5-8)

Faith and belief are as essential to spiritual survival as bread is to bodily preservation: the sonnet refers specifically to the perfectibility of the Old Testament types in the New, as the grain in the Old Testament becomes the bread of the Host. The second Joseph also exceeds the first in his length of service: the first Joseph garnered food for seven years, the second Joseph reared Christ to adulthood: “Y porque en todo al otro pareciese, / siete abriles le tuvo tan guardado, / que al primero excedió Joseph segundo” (9-11).

Infused by the love of God, Joseph cares for his *sacro erario*, as Christ is cradled in the centre of the poem. This protective Joseph becomes something of a Janus figure, caring for and protecting the child like a mother, guarding and managing his family like the ideal father. The poet sings Joseph’s praises in the final tercet, in clever wordplay that weaves a circular path of creation and salvation. In rearing the child Christ to adulthood, Joseph becomes the creator of his own Creator and the saviour of his Saviour: “¿Qué mucho pues que el título adquiriese / de Creador del Creador, que le ha creado, / de Salvador del Salvador del mundo?” (12-14).

⁷⁵ Matthew records a series of dream revelations to Joseph. In 1:20 he is made aware of the divinity of the Christ-child: “But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.” After the birth of the child in Bethlehem, Joseph receives a second vision: “And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him” (Matt 2:13). Finally, as promised, when Herod dies Joseph is again instructed via a dream: “But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt” (Matt 2:19).

Cielo's positive affirmation of Joseph as head of his household and loving protector of his wife and child accords well with the observations of Electa Arenal and Georgina Sabat de Rivers. They affirm that St Joseph was a favourite subject for female religious writers as "una figura serena, comprensiva y lejana de las actitudes que se identifican con el hombre intransigente" (71). The imagery of Cielo's two sonnets of praise is wholly affirming, extolling Joseph's wisdom, warmth and humility. The social and religious paradigm enabled the church to enjoin loving warmth on fathers without damaging the natural order. As Joseph comes to the foreground in so many paintings of the same period, so Cielo joins in the educative process in works that were available to an influential coterie readership. In two further sonnets she strives both to praise exemplary male figures and to soften the edges of the patriarchal imagery.

Having established St Joseph as the ideal of fatherhood, Cielo moves to express the warmth of a more gentle father love, relating it to divine revelation and allegory, in sonnets which praise a saint and a priest. In the first, "A S. Antonio de Lisboa, llamado vulgarmente de Padua, con el Niño Jesus en los brazos," she celebrates St Anthony's vision of a loving child who affectionately embraces him. Although the sonnet removes the subject matter from the sublunary to the divine, in representing the love of God for the human soul, nevertheless the outward manifestation of the miracle is of an affectionate embrace between man and child. St Anthony of Padua was Portuguese and a contemporary of St Francis, whose order he joined seeking the martyrdom already achieved in Morocco by a number of St Francis' followers. Cielo links them closely through the double miracle of St Francis' stigmata, celebrated in the first quartet: "Y vuelto crucifixo el cuerpo hermoso / Diole de su dolor el más interno" (3-4); and through the appearance of Christ to St Anthony as a child in the second: "Su Nacimiento le mostró glorioso / en forma de un desnudo Niño tierno" (7-8).

As the child embraces St Anthony in his vision, Cielo presents the man in the role of mother: “Púsosele en los brazos soberanos / Igualándose en esto con su Madre” (10-11). In the terminology used by Cielo, this representation in the first tercet is no disparagement of St Anthony. Rather, she re-focuses the Counter-Reformation representations of the Virgin and Child, to privilege the female over the male, while contriving to show the affection between man and child, saint and God, and mother and child. Cielo blurs the distinctions between the sexes, and the roles and duties in the family, even though she rights the hierarchical imagery in the final tercet. In cradling the child, St Anthony represents God the Father in Heaven who cradles all humanity: “Oh favor celestial, raro, excesivo, / Que vuelva Cielo Empíreo vuestras manos / La summa Idea del Eterno padre” (12-14).⁷⁶ The imagery is not only of a miraculous vision of divine favour, but of the same, loving relations between parent and child that she presents in the St Joseph sonnets. The heavenly father is reflected in the specular re-creation of the holy man. As the child is the repeated image of the parent, man is the earthly image of God, and this image is doubled as the miraculous child represents both the human and the divine. Cielo recurs to this imagery in a sonnet that attempts to elevate the status of Fray Antonio de la Concepción, of Lisbon, a priest who experienced a vision in which the Host became a child who embraced him. In each sonnet the embrace is mutual, suggesting reciprocity in child-adult relationships, and, in the feminising of St Anthony, a potential fluidity in parental roles as well.

Cielo’s celebrations of fatherly love, represented by Joseph as ideal, protective *pater familias*, together with her location of the Virgin mother in a nurturing role, indicate that Cielo subscribed to Counter-Reformation ideology of the family. However, her advancement of St Anthony and fray Anthony in a more feminised role

⁷⁶ In her terminology, Cielo suggests a knowledge of Plato’s theories, described by her contemporary, Covarrubias, as: “Idea, vale tanto como un exemplar eterno, perpetuo e inmutable de cada una cosa de todas las que la naturaleza acá produce; esto es según la opinión de Platón y su secta, a la cual se opone Aristóteles y su escuela . . . el que ha de hazer alguna cosa imitando el original, modelo o patrón, le es forzoso tenerle delante para irle mirando y contemplando, como haze el pintor que copia alguna pintura de su original.”

shows her drive to value the mother-figure, and her poetic approach to the Virgin Mary is not at all orthodox. The Virgin Mary, as simple woman, mother and divine, provides the pivot around which many of Cielo's poetic arguments are based; in Cielo's works she becomes "Everywoman." As such, she provides a safe, socially acceptable vehicle for Cielo's defence of women and mothers that does not work overtly against church doctrine. It is to this maternal role that I will now turn.

2A.3 "Tierna madre": Women's view of motherhood.

As Mariló Vigil has observed in relation to the mother figure, however prescriptive her role may have been in the paintings of the period, she was otherwise almost invisible. The *comedia* gives the impression that society has no mother; when she does appear she is either without maternal sentiment or frankly anti-maternal (126). Indeed, Cruz describes the *comedia* as "the most egregious in its absence of maternal roles; when the mother appears on stage it is to fulfill an archetype, never to assume a 'real' subject position" ("Feminism" 38). Cruz and Vigil are amply supported in this view. Ludwig Pfandl, for example, goes further in asserting that "la mujer como madre era algo misterioso, de lo cual no se hablaba fuera de los límites del hogar. La madre . . . no figura nunca como personaje en las comedias, ni es objeto de glorificación en la lírica" (*Cultura* 125). This last may have been true of the production of male poets, who did not hesitate to burlesque women in general and wives in particular, and at the time Pfandl made these comments much of the excellent scholarship on women's writing had yet to occur. However, as I shall argue, women poets often take a surprisingly positive view of the family, given women's subservient place within it.

For a noblewoman, motherhood had other important connotations. Motherhood was often imposed on them by the men on whom they depended, or by the obligation to provide an heir. For women of all classes, to raise sons to adulthood

was the means to secure their own support in old age (Lerner, *Consciousness* 122). Since motherhood was of vital importance in securing a noble wife's future, this may account for Cielo's choice of the most perfect and noble mother, the Virgin Mary, as her model, over and above the exemplary value she held for the Church. She does not, however, seek to celebrate a meekly submissive Virgin model. So many of Cielo's sonnets are devoted to eulogising and praising women's fortitude, wisdom and achievements, that they manifest a determination to raise women's status and seek recognition for their contribution to society.

The Virgin as mother is exempt from the biological and physical facts of normal childbirth; as Warner has observed, the only function she shares with ordinary womankind is that of suckling an infant (*Alone* 192). Yet Cielo does not celebrate this important, nutritive activity in any of her poetry, neither does she pray to the Virgin in her more traditional role of intercessor for sinful humankind. Instead, through Cielo, the Virgin as human mother becomes a rallying symbol of female agency and independence and, above all, of power and dominance.⁷⁷

As a nun, Cielo had opportunities to read the prescriptive works of Luis de León, Juan Luis Vives and Luis de Granada, among others, but she also had access to saints' lives, such as Pedro de Ribadeneyra's *Flos Sanctorum*, made available to nuns as examples of tolerant suffering. As Armon has argued, the multiple cultural archetypes provided to literate women in Counter-Reformation Spain taught more than mere silent obedience. As martyred saints were by nature rebels, the lives of the saints taught resistance as well as submission, while teachings about the Virgin Mary could both encourage surrender to the Church or a desire to expand book learning (26). Cielo is unusual in the number of her sonnets that concern or address the Virgin Mary. Scholars of the medieval period, when the cult of the Virgin was at

⁷⁷ Conversely, for Elizabeth I of England, it was her virginity and untouchability that gave her power. Marriage may have provided her with a direct heir, but it would also have brought her into conflict with a husband who would, naturally, seek to take his rightful, dominant place in her household. Her status made her the epitome of dynastic desirability, but by remaining aloof she retained undisputed power in her own hands.

its height, have found that Marian veneration was more the province of male religious. While women's worship of Mary was an important part of their devotional practice, they were far more interested in the humanity of Christ (Bynum, *Jesus as Mother* 269).⁷⁸ This is certainly the case in the mystical poetry of Luisa de Carvajal.⁷⁹

The divine motherhood of Mary is accepted by all Christian churches, because it appears in scripture. Nevertheless, as Lerner reveals, her many functions were interpreted by both theologians and Church officials in patriarchal and conservative terms. Not only did her virginity sanctify that choice for ordinary women but her submissiveness to the divine will in the Annunciation was to be the model for female behaviour. She also served as a paradigm of silent submission to female destiny through her tragic motherhood (*Consciousness* 127). According to Warner, this model of humility rapidly gained ascendancy through the Franciscans and, later, the Dominicans, through whose example the Virgin "left her starry throne in the heavens and laid aside her robes and insignia and diadem to sit cross-legged on the bare earth like a peasant mother with her child" (*Alone* 182).

Cielo's sonnets, however, envision the Virgin Mary from a number of opposing angles, none of which is submissive. Although portrayed as the simple mother concerned for the welfare of her child, she is also a woman who exerts control. This power does not mirror the patriarchal jurisdiction of the divinely ordered hierarchy mediated through the intercessory figure of Mary. Instead, the protagonist appropriates societal expectations of the demure female figure to a subtler form of dominance. In her sonnet on the Annunciation, from her *Mysteries* cycle, for example, Cielo specifically locates the Virgin, a simple, young peasant woman, as

⁷⁸ On the medieval veneration of the Virgin, see also Marina Warner, *Monuments and Maidens: The Allegory of the Female Form* (London: Picador, 1985).

⁷⁹ This attitude appears to have continued in the seventeenth century. Of the more than two hundred seventeenth-century sonnets noted or published in Serrano y Sanz's *Apuntes para una biblioteca de mujeres*, only fifty-five address a specific religious figure, and of these only fifteen are addressed to the Virgin Mary. Although this represents approximately 8% of the whole, seven of these are written for one *certamen*, in Zaragoza in 1644, celebrating the Virgen de Cogullada. By contrast, a *certamen* marking the translation of the relics of San Ramón Nonato, also at Zaragoza in 1618, provided eleven sonnets for the record.

the controlling figure in the exchange between herself and the angel. The crux of the sonnet is Mary's silence. A desirable attribute for women, according to the moralists, it here occasions considerable anxiety on the part of the speaker. The angel is at first portrayed as a foreign diplomat seeking a noble or royal bride for a political marriage:⁸⁰

Dad Virgen Soberana el *sí* dichoso
al Nuncio celestial, que veis presente,
que de este *sí* Divino está pendiente
del mundo todo el general reposo. (1-4)

Cielo proposes that Mary achieves power through her silence, as she keeps the divine "nuncio" waiting for her response. The speaker urges Mary's assent, for only thus can Jesus come into the world and reverse the effect of original sin. Her acquiescence will also lead to the vindication of all womankind, as Mary replaces the culpable figure of Eve and creates an entirely different and more favourable model of female agency. This ransoming of Eve by a second Eve was already a popular image; in the medieval mind it "inspired the ingenious imagination of the medieval Christian to pun and riddle. For the greeting of the angel—Ave—neatly reversed the curse of Eve" (Warner, *Monuments* 60). Through the angel and Mary, Cielo creates two parallel images of the female: the approved social ideal of the subservient, supplicant speaker, and the new model of powerful agent for female good:

El Verbo, que le aguarda respetuoso,
(si bien es de licencia independiente)
obedeciendo anticipadamente
no ha de bajar sin este *sí* glorioso. (5-8)

In Cielo's determination that it is the woman who holds the upper hand, "licencia" represents both Mary's freedom to assent or decline, and God's freedom to act, willingly held in check by his proleptic deference to the woman who will become his mother.

⁸⁰ Such a practice was common among the kingdoms of Western Europe in securing dynastic marriages. Just one example is the failed attempt in 1623 to secure a political alliance between England and Spain through the betrothal between Henry, heir of James I to the throne of England, and the daughter of Felipe III of Spain.

Cielo's version of the events of the Annunciation owes nothing to scripture or to dogma; rather, it seems to come out of her own meditation on the impact of such an apparition on the young woman. She develops the importance of this respectful obedience to a woman on the part of the Messiah, by shunning the usual turn after the quartets. Instead, Cielo continues to elaborate on Mary's control of the situation right to the last line: "No baja, hasta que vos le deis licencia, / Porque veáis, que hará después de humano / quien antes de humanarse os obedece" (12-14). In the course of the sonnet, Mary's role in the drama of the Annunciation changes from that of the bride begged for her hand, to the mother whom God will obey.

Cielo may also have been influenced by the preaching of St Francis de Sales and Cardinal Bellarmine, both of whom discuss the marriage of God and the Virgin. St Francis affirms that God bestowed the divine kiss that caused Mary to conceive at the moment she acquiesced. Similarly, Bellarmine preaches that God sent the Archangel Gabriel to secure the consent required of a bride before a marriage can occur (Ellington 161). Yet in Counter-Reformation Spain the bride's consent was, at least in official terms, barely a matter for consideration; women were not in a position either to agree to the arrangement or to choose.⁸¹

Available figures on marriage in the period indicate that one of the reasons for the population crisis of the seventeenth century was the increasingly late age at first marriage of both males and females, most marrying in the late twenties.⁸² Existing biographical data on Cielo suggests that it was at just this age that she entered the

⁸¹ Pérez Molina, for example, argues that fathers maintained an interest in controlling their daughters' marriages for patrimonial and economic reasons and, in relation to these, the creation of alliances between families that permitted them to rise in the social scale or maintain themselves within a socio-economic group. Although marriage without [parental] consent was legal in canon law after Trent, the requirement to celebrate marriage before a priest and two witnesses made marriages without consent more difficult. Isabel Pérez Molina, "Las mujeres y el matrimonio en el derecho catalán moderno," *Las mujeres en el Antiguo Régimen: Imagen y realidad* (Barcelona: Icaria, 1994) 31.

⁸² See Alcalá Zamora, who argues that an average marriage age of twenty-two to twenty-four in the Middle Ages, fell for a period before rising again in the seventeenth century due to emigration (172-73). See also Armon, who debates women's relative freedom from the travail of wifely duties due to their later age at marriage, and a scarcity of eligible men (46).

convent, when an intention to marry was disastrously interrupted by her family.⁸³ In Mary's reticence Cielo joins the playwrights in affirming that it is women who should be free to make decisions about their lives and about whom they marry. It is symbolic of the patriarchally ordered formation of families that Cielo resorts to Mary, the ideal mother and an incontrovertible, divine source, to fortify her argument.

Similarly, Cielo emphasises her desire for female agency by figuring no mere mortal father, but the divine *Verbo* who waits respectfully for Mary's acquiescence. Since God is outside time and all-seeing, he knows that as a human child Christ will have to obey this woman who will be his mother. This divine obedience to a mortal parent emphasises the moral worth of the mother figure in particular, and women in general, thus contesting the arguments devised to keep women in their position of powerlessness. In this sonnet, the controlling father is nowhere to be seen, either as God or man. This absence is in direct contrast to Cielo's idealised, Counter-Reformation presentation of Joseph as the ideal *pater familias*.

Furthermore, Cielo's privileging of the ideal figure of Mary does not conform to her intercessory role. Such a paradigm, for all its importance, reinforces the hierarchical marginalising of the female, albeit as an ally in the heavenly court. Cielo seeks to champion the limiting domestic and maternal roles permitted to women, through the supreme example of the mother of God. As will be seen in a number of sonnets to the Virgin Mary to be discussed below, it is principally in these poems that Cielo deviates from her religious orthodoxy.

In her sonnet on the Third Mystery of the Rosary, *Del nacimiento de Cristo Señor Nuestro*, Cielo manifests her views on maternal and filial tenderness. She returns to the pictorial imagery of the holy family in a companion work to her sonnet to St Joseph. Again, Old Testament typology serves to bring forth and amplify the

⁸³ In the introduction to her anthology of Cielo's verse, Vieira Mendes notes that before Cielo entered the convent, Paulo Gonçalves de Andrade intended to marry her but was prevented by her grandfather, Gonçalo Nunes de Ávila, who was against it. Andrade left the kingdom and never returned. Vieira Mendes further observes that this information, provided by a contemporary, dispels the idea of previous biographers that Cielo entered the convent because her love was not returned. Vieira Mendes, "Apresentação," 11.

New Testament miracle. As she links the Old and New Testament Josephs in the earlier sonnet, Cielo similarly makes clever use of the Old Testament figure of Ruth as a model of female loyalty, moral strength and daughterly devotion. As the Book of Ruth reveals, in the midst of abject, widowed poverty, far from her own land, she was favoured (and later married), by Boaz because of the devotion she showed to her mother-in-law, whose family had become hers on marriage.⁸⁴ As Boaz's wife she was the ancestor of David, himself a type for Jesus Christ. The language of the sonnet is simple, in contrast with the complex imagery that reveals the peasant life of the Old Testament figures, the holy family, and the humble birth of Christ. This same imagery also projects long-held pagan associations of the female body with the earth that nurtures the seed:⁸⁵

Este trigo, que en pajas recogido
anhela Ruth con singular cuidado,
si le adoráis, por ser de Dios sembrado,
Dios le sembró, por ser de vos nacido. (1-4)

Whereas Ruth gleaned barley in the fields of Boaz, in this later (and therefore better) version of the event, Christ is both the seed of Christianity and the wheat of the eucharistic bread, even as he is a child lying on straw in a manger. As Ruth gleaned her grains in a time of famine, Mary cradles her "trigo" in a time of spiritual famine, in Christian terms. Not only does Cielo portray the mother as the ancient earth, ploughed and seeded to produce the bread of life, she is also the gardener who nurtures the seed into life and tends the growing plant. The importance for Cielo of this vision is evident in repeated references to the life-giving process of grain-growing, where seeding, watering and nurturing also express the mother's homely role.

⁸⁴ The relevant scriptural reference source for Cielo is in Ruth, chapter 2: "And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore" (Ruth 2.11).

⁸⁵ Regarding the metaphors of the female body and its relation to the ploughing and seeding of the earth in early agricultural societies of Greece, see Page DuBois, *Sowing the Body: Psychoanalysis and Ancient Representations of Women* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988) 39-64.

Cielo goes on to argue that it is Mary's exceptional nature that makes the bread of the "Rey sagrado" even better: "que si en la humana esfera / vuestra rara pureza no se hallara, / nunca tan bello trigo el mundo viera" (9-11). It is significant that the poet chooses the metaphor of kindly nature as a nurturing mother who sustains all her children. Cielo is writing at the dawn of the Scientific Revolution, which, as Western culture became increasingly mechanised, would transform the metaphor of benign nature into a wilderness that could be tamed and exploited. Such a change in paradigm is discussed by Carolyn Merchant, particularly in relation to the mining of the earth, which had been a cause for debate even in the times of Plato, Ovid and Pliny. Merchant argues that moral restraint and, conversely, greed, avarice and lust, were associated in the Renaissance with the image of the female earth. However, new, positive values connected with mining viewed it as a means to improve the human condition, a position supported by Agrícola and Bacon (40).⁸⁶

As nature could be controlled, so too could women, as the enlightened educational opportunities of a humanist Renaissance fell back under the pressures of the Counter-Reformation's dominion. Cielo, however, creates positive, dual feminine images: Mary was chosen by God, as the child-king of the Jews is chosen to be sacrificed: "si le adoráis, por ser de Dios sembrado, / Dios le sembró, por ser de vos nacido" (3-4). As both seedbed and gardener, Mary is urged to care for the child so that he may fulfil his destiny and become the "pan de las almas escogido" (8). The Virgin Mary is proposed as an exemplary mother, rather than the passive, powerless woman of the sonnets to Joseph. Furthermore, she is firmly allied to the ordinary women who work the fields and tend the plants, rather than to an impossible of ideal purity and parthenogenesis.

⁸⁶ For a more detailed discussion of the increasing exploitation of nature and the earth in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries see "Nature as Female," Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1990) 1-41.

Mary's foreknowledge of Christ's sacrifice is revealed in the second quartet where Cielo's scriptural knowledge evokes the first of the Seven Sorrows of the Virgin:⁸⁷

Si le queréis (Señora) ver crecido,
 rociadle bien con este llanto amado
 pues sabéis, que le tiene el Rey sagrado
 para pan de las almas escogido. (5-8)

The first sorrow is related to the prophecy of Simeon at the time of the presentation in the Temple: "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed" (Luke 2:34-35). Hence, the mother's tears are symbolic of both emotional nourishment and maternal grief at the loss of a child, a frequent occurrence in the period. In spite of this proleptic sorrow, the tears also convey ideas of abundance, fecundity and plenty, associated with the life-giving qualities of water, and this is emphasised in the repetition at the turn: "Rociadle bien. . ." (9). Tears, as Warner has observed, flow from the body without the implications of pollution that accompany other bodily fluids. They are thought of as pure, like water, used by the Christian Church as a symbol of life and purification (*Alone* 222).

The tercets, however, are given over to supposition; the frailty and uncertainty of human survival, and perhaps of perinatal survival, is reflected in the imperfect subjunctive: ". . . si Dios tan pura no os formara, / aunque el género humano pereciera, / nunca en la humanidad tal pan sembrara" (12-14). In the chain of events unfolding around the birth of Christ, one missing element, Mary's perfection, would have prevented its occurrence and damned the world for eternity. There would have been no promise of salvation enshrined in the Eucharist and no celebration of Christmas, the feast for which the sonnet is written. As the sonnet progresses, Cielo

⁸⁷ The sorrows of the Virgin, which in medieval liturgies varied between five and fifteen, were officially fixed at seven in the seventeenth century by Pope Paul V (Warner, *Alone* 218). They are the prophecy of Simeon, the flight into Egypt, the loss of Jesus in the temple, the meeting with Jesus on the road to Calvary, the Crucifixion, the Deposition, and the Entombment. All of these are celebrated in sonnets from Cielo's sequence on the Rosary, in the *Parnaso lusitano*.

moves away from the simple, flawed humanity of the peasant mother to the divine example that the Virgin Mary represents for her, and that she wishes to hold up as an example to other women. However, in privileging Mary's exceptional nature and linking it to her role as loving mother, she also advances the cause of women as valuable, responsible members of society, promoting their domestic roles as vitally important to the wellbeing of the nuclear family.

For Cielo, a divinely authoritarian Mary was a model worth emulating and presenting repeatedly to her female readers. The sonnet that marks the end of her sequence on the Mysteries of the Rosary, the Coronation of Mary as Queen of Heaven, is a triumphant celebration of Mary's elevation. Cielo repeats the important message of the first mystery of the rosary, the Annunciation, discussed above—that being queen of heaven and earth pales compared with being obeyed by God: “Que aun es poco ser de ellos respetada / Quien fue del mismo Dios obedecida” (3-4). Cielo goes even further in the second quartet, where, as she is introduced into the heavenly court, Mary contains the Holy Trinity within her body: “Tan amorosamente introducida / os tiene en sí la Trinidad sagrada” (5-6).⁸⁸ It is as though she is in a state of permanent pregnancy that does away with time and mortality, for Mary, as a divine figure, is outside time. The quartet is complex and tortuous as Cielo attempts to insert Mary into a state of equality with the Trinity. Each gives birth to the other. As she is crowned by the Trinity, held within her body, the Trinity in turn gives birth to her as a divine figure: “Que, aunque estáis de su mano coronada, / parecéis de su seno procedida.” This serpentine weaving of images is typical of Cielo's style, and here it creates the effect of turning the Trinity into a Quartet, proposing Mary as equal in power to the three members of the Trinity. Cielo affirms again that without Mary Christ could not have come into the world; Mary was therefore as essential to the formation of the Trinity as God was to her creation.

⁸⁸ Cielo's use of the word *introducido* makes clear that this is no ordinary arrival. She enhances the superiority of the Virgin's incorporation into the royal court of Heaven, following Covarrubias's definition of the word: “como introducir a uno en palacio para que hable al rey” (740).

Cielo may, in this imagery, be expressing her awareness of the Orthodox rite of the Dormition, which, in a number of iconographic representations, sees Mary become a child in the arms of her son. As Julia Kristeva further explains: “Indeed, *mother* of her son and his *daughter* as well, Mary is also, and besides, his *wife*: she therefore actualizes the threefold metamorphosis of a woman in the tightest parenthood structure” (169). Though this imagery may have informed her writing, Cielo does not seek to insert Mary into the inferiority of mother, daughter or wife. Instead, in negotiating the parameters of women’s power and its limitations, she presents Mary as the prime example of feminine empowerment, achieved through the maternal role.

Having magnified Mary to the highest degree, Cielo prays to her as to a God, reminding her that she is the champion of women: “Y pues honrar debéis lo femenino” (12). She also hints at a more earthbound court patronage in specifically repudiating the request for court favour from her queen to ask, instead for divine pardon: “Dad a musa incapaz, a voz impura, / si no dulce favor, perdón benigno” (13-14). This last tercet confirms Cielo’s vision of the Virgin Mary as a female deity rather than as an intercessor for humankind whose mortality she has shared. Indeed, a reading of all one hundred sonnets in the *Parnaso lusitano* does not reveal a single instance where the poet appeals to the Virgin Mary as intercessor, though she frequently praises the excellence of the Mother of God.

Warner has argued that the Church harnessed the Assumption of Mary into heaven to promote the honour of queens in earthly hierarchies, to the exclusion of other women. This strategy served to uphold the status quo to the advantage of the powerful elites (*Alone* 104). I contest this view, at least in regard to Cielo’s poetry, as well as the idea of the Virgin’s inaccessibility to women. For Warner, the impossible ideal set up by the Church creates a position of hopeless yearning and inferiority: “The process is self-perpetuating; if the Virgin were not venerated, the dangers of sex, the fear of corruption, the sense of sin would not be woven together in this

particular misogynist web, but would be articulated in a different way” (*Alone* 104). I argue that Cielo both venerates the Virgin and articulates her sentiments in a different way, by not following the Church’s misogynist view. As Cielo’s sonnet sequence follows the lives of Christ and his mother, and as she moves from Mary’s maternal role to her heavenly one, Cielo seeks to occlude the problematic status occasioned by Mary’s immaculate divinity. For Cielo, the Virgin Mary, as a divine queen, remains accessible to women, both as a deity and as a co-sharer in female experience. She is also a friend, confidante and peasant mother, analogous and accessible to human mothers at all levels.

Conclusion

As this and the preceding section have shown, Church and state attempted to reinforce social control through the exemplary figures of Joseph and the Virgin Mary. Cielo both promotes and takes issue with these ideals, raising questions as to how this humane view of parenthood manifested itself in poetry about the family. In Chapter Two B I will discuss child-parent and sibling interactions in the seventeenth-century family as then-current theories of child-rearing regarded them, and as seen, principally, in the poetry of Violante del Cielo and Catalina Clara Ramírez de Guzmán.

SONNETS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE IN PART A

2A.1: The Yoke of Marriage (The Esposa's Esposas)

Catalina Clara Ramírez de Guzmán

A el desposorio de una dama.

Para las bodas de Anarda
 convidado estaba el sol,
 y habiendo de competirla
 vergonzoso se aumentó.
 Quiere negar que el huir
 no ha sido poco valor,
 alegando que él es uno
 y que sus ojos son dos.
 La esperanza acreditada
 se halla con el garzón,
 pues ha puesto sus deseos
 en tan dulce posesión.
 Sin duda que con Anarda
 la dicha se equivocó,
 que iba en casa de una fea
 y por yerro le tocó.
 Vivan a pesar de el tiempo
 en tan apacible unión,
 que juzguen horas los siglos
 dándole envidia al amor.
 Dilatase su progenie
 en tan bella sucesión
 que eternice su memoria
 que es la fortuna mayor.
 (ms. 3884 237v)

2A.2: The Paterfamilias

Violante del Cielo

Al glorioso Patriarca S. Joseph

Pues en la humanidad de ser Divino,
 padre adoptivo al temporal gobierno
 fuistes del mismo Dios, que niño tierno
 desde su Padre a sujetarse vino.
 ¡O cómo parecido os imagino
 en esta dignidad al Padre Eterno!
 Pues aquel, de quien tiembla el mismo infierno,
 a daros obediencia se previno:
 Y si en defensa de su Madre pura
 esposo os hizo de su propia Madre,
 y en vos su mismo crédito asegura,

¿Qué excelencia hay, Joseph, que a vos no os cuadre:
Si el mismo, a que obedece la ventura,
súbdito es vuestro a título de Padre?
(*Parnaso lusitano* 25)

Al mismo Santo

Preveniendo el peligro más contrario,
guarda trigo un Joseph de eterna fama,
con que del mundo salvador le aclama
la varia multitud del vulgo vario.
Mas de otro mejor Pan depositario
Otro Joseph, que en Dios de amor se inflama,
Ostentando feliz su ardiente llama,
guardó de cielo y tierra el sacro erario.
Y porque en todo al otro pareciese,
siete abriles le tuvo tan guardado,
que al primero excedió Joseph segundo.
¿Qué mucho, pues, que el título adquiriese
de creador del Creador, que le ha creado,
de salvador del Salvador del mundo?
(*Parnaso lusitano* 26)

A S. Antonio de Lisboa, llamado vulgarmente de Padua, con el Niño Jesus en los brazos

Quiso representar el Verbo Eterno
su pasión a Francisco milagroso,
y vuelto crucifixo el cuerpo hermoso
Diole de su dolor el más interno.
Y queriendo después el Sempiterno
favorecer a Antonio venturoso,
su Nacimiento le mostró glorioso
en forma de un desnudo Niño tierno.
Y por representarlo más al vivo
púsosele en los brazos soberanos,
igualándole en esto con su Madre.
Oh favor celestial, raro, excesivo,
que vuelva Cielo Empíreo vuestras manos
la summa Idea del Eterno Padre.
(*Parnaso lusitano* 42)

Al Venerable Padre Fr. Antonio de la Concepción Religioso del convento de la Santísima Trinidad de Lisboa, mirando, que la hostia sagrada se transformaba en un niño, que le echaba los brazos al cuello, y los abrazaba amorosamente.

¡Oh qué premios ganaron los servicios,
que habeis hecho feliz al Rey sagrado!
Pues depuso por vos lo rebozado,
cuando abrazos os dio por sacrificios.
Si el amor se conoce en los indicios,
como lo merecido en lo alcanzado,

mucho del mismo Dios fuistes amado.
 Pues Dios hizo de amante los oficios,
 y tanto os regaló su Omnipotencia,
 que niño, como Dios de los amores,
 Os dio los atributos de divino:
 Pues como es Trino, si Único en la Esencia,
 único os hizo a vos en los favores,
 y en el hábito (Antonio) os hizo Trino.
 (*Parnaso lusitano* 39)

2A.3 “Tierna madre”: Women’s view of motherhood.

Violante del Cielo

Primer misterio del rosario santísimo La Anunciación de Nuestra Señora

Dad, Virgen Soberana, el *sí* dichoso
 al Nuncio celestial, que veis presente,
 Que deste *sí* Divino está pendiente
 del mundo todo el general reposo.
 El Verbo, que le aguarda respetuoso,
 (Si bien es de licencia independiente)
 obedeciendo anticipadamente,
 no ha de bajar sin este *sí* glorioso.
 Mirad lo que debeis a su clemencia,
 pues pudiendo bajar Dios soberano
 al claustro puro, que por Dios merece,
 No baja, hasta que vos le deis licencia,
 porque veáis, que hará después de humano
 quien antes de humanarse os obedece.
 (*Parnaso lusitano* 8)

Tercer Misterio: Del nacimiento de Cristo Señor nuestro

Este trigo, que en pajas recogido
 anhela Ruth con singular cuidado,
 si le adoráis, por ser de Dios sembrado,
 Dios le sembró, por ser de vos nacido.
 Si le queréis (Señora) ver crecido,
 rociadle bien con este llanto amado
 pues sabéis, que le tiene el Rey sagrado
 para pan de las almas escogido.
 Rociadle bien, que si en la humana esfera
 vuestra rara pureza no se hallara,
 nunca tan bello trigo el mundo viera.
 Porque si Dios tan pura no os formara,
 aunque el género humano pereciera,
 nunca en la humanidad tal pan sembrara.
 (*Parnaso lusitano* 9)

Al Quinto Misterio, de la Coronación de nuestra Señora.

Recebid la corona merecida
(o Reina de dos mundos adorada)
que aun es poco ser de ellos respetada
quien fue del mismo Dios obedecida.
Tan amorosamente introducida
os tiene en sí la Trinidad sagrada,
que, aunque estáis de su mano coronada,
parecéis de su seno procedida.
¡Oh! lograd para siempre la ventura,
que el soberano Sol el Uno, y Trino
en su misma Deidad os asegura.
Y pues honrar debéis lo femenino,
dad a musa incapaz, a voz impura,
si no dulce favor, perdón benigno.
(*Parnaso lusitano* 23)

CHAPTER 2, PART B

CHILDREN AND SIBLINGS

Moralists and thinkers, again drawing on the Church fathers, had much to say about the appropriate education for children of both sexes, as well as the relationship of fear and respect that ideally should exist between children and their parents. In the poetry of Ramírez, however, relationships within the family were not always as austere as the moralists would have us believe. As will be seen in my discussion, her poetry shows deep and reciprocal affection between all members of the family, as well as humour and, often, a complete lack of the formality prescribed for relations within the familial hierarchy.

A silence on the part of the moralists as to the appropriate relationship that should obtain between siblings is also breached by these poets. This is particularly so for Cueva and Ramírez, and in the letters of Carvajal. Continuing communication between free brothers and enclosed, or semi-enclosed sisters, brought new ideas and interests into the home. The poetry demonstrates enduring affection and contact, and relaxed and loving relationships between parents and children, and between siblings, that provided social and emotional support. Again, Part B is divided into two sub-sections that consider first, the poetry that explores the relationships between children and their parents, and then the poems written by Cueva and Catalina to their absent brothers.

2B.1 Suffer the Little Children

Although St Augustine insists on strict discipline as an essential part of childrearing, he permits infants some respite in the earliest stages of their lives. Portrayed as gifts of God, loved equally with their parents by God, they thus create great responsibilities for their parents, given their helplessness compared with other young animals. Burt describes Augustine's thinking on parenthood as the requirement for parents to love their children "not as friends but in order that they might become friends" (93). This creates a disciplinary burden, for although an infant is incapable of personal sin, as it grows its behaviour must be disciplined to avoid the possibility of falling into sin:

Our infancy proves how ignorant we humans are when we begin our lives and our adolescence proves how full of folly and concupiscence we become . . . This is the reason why we use fear in trying to control the wildness of growing children. This is the reason why we have teachers and school-masters with their rulers and straps and canes. In our training of even a beloved child we not infrequently follow the advice of Scripture to "beat his sides lest he grow stubborn." (*City* 22.22)

Augustine's writings were particularly influential in the medieval and early modern periods and his concern for parental love and care for children, even the very young, is at variance with Philippe Ariès' study, *Centuries of Childhood*, which claims that medieval and early modern concepts of childhood were very different from those of today. Ariès argues that it was not that parents neglected or despised their children, but simply that the idea of childhood, as we understand it today, did not exist in medieval times. Ariès quotes from Molière in asserting that an infant too fragile to take part in the life of adults simply "did not count."⁸⁹ Similarly, Lawrence Stone, writing of the changes taking place in English society between 1500 and 1800, also considers omnipresent death to colour relations in society; parents did not

⁸⁹ Ariès attributes a medieval mindset to Molière's seventeenth-century character, Argan, in *Le malade imaginaire*. A father of two daughters, one an infant, one of marriageable age, acknowledges only the elder. The younger is too young to count "because she could disappear." Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*. trans. Robert Baldick (London: Cape, 1962) 128.

invest emotional capital in any single individual and especially not in “such ephemeral creatures as infants.” Stone argues that the resultant emotional neglect of infants by their parents reduced the former’s prospects for survival (651-52).⁹⁰

Montaigne’s essay “Of the affection of fathers for their children,” first published in 1588, appears to agree with the sentiments of Lawrence Stone, Ariès and Molière:

I cannot entertain that passion which makes people hug infants that are hardly born yet, having neither movement in the soul nor recognizable shape to the body by which they can make themselves lovable . . . A true and well-regulated affection should be born and increase with the knowledge children give us of themselves; and then, if they are worthy of it, the natural propensity going along with reason, we should cherish them with a truly paternal love. (280)

Montaigne’s argument certainly measures affection according to the capacity of the child to earn it and there is naturally no post-Romantic notion that the child-rearing practices of the parents have anything to do with the end result. He derides the fascination that childhood games hold for some adults, “as if we had loved them for our pastime, like monkeys, not like men” (281). However, his avowed inability to understand those who coddle their children and delight in their antics suggests that other views than his predominated, while his argument depends on the age of the child. He, too, sees no reason to waste emotion on a child who may soon die, but he endorses affective relations with older children, as will be seen below.

In relation to the care of children, it is worth returning again to the *Siete Partidas*. *Partida IV* is seeded with references to the precious nature of children and their need for demonstrative love and care. In *Partida II*, on the raising of royal children, affection is proposed as an essential ingredient for the child to grow and

⁹⁰ Lawrence Stone’s statements on the ephemeral nature of infants is more than a little offset by the epigrams of Ben Jonson that commemorate his dead children. His sonnet to his seven-year-old son, who died of plague, begins “Farewell thou child of my right hand, and joy” and includes the line “Here doth lie Ben Jonson his best piece of poetry.” To his daughter he writes “Here lies, to each her parents’ ruth, / Mary, the daughter of their youth” and ends with the plea: “This grave partakes the fleshly birth; / Which cover lightly, gentle earth!” Hugh Maclean, *Ben Jonson and the Cavalier Poets: Authoritative Texts, Criticism*. [1st] ed. (New York: Norton, 1974) 7-8. That Jonson should compose a tender poem to a baby of six months to honour her memory indicates that he clearly did not consider her to be “ephemeral.”

thrive. Sarcasm and physical harm are considered to inspire fear, which may lead to illness or death (M. Stone 90). According to *Partida* IV.19, both parents have authority over their children and are obliged to care for them through that natural law which moves all things in the world to raise and care for what is born to them (98). The *Partidas* differentiate in the matter of parental responsibility, however; before children reach the age of three years, the mothers should nourish and care for their children, but they become the father's responsibility after that age. This ideal was still current in Renaissance thought; where women could exert control over slaves, the control of children lay in the hands of the *pater familias* (I. Maclean 59). The extensive space given in the *Partidas* to the care and rearing of children, even to noting that children are more likely to love and obey a father who takes the trouble to rear them himself, points to affection in the home (IV.19.2). Moreover, the inheritance rights pertaining to legitimate children, and the insistence that all children, licit or not, are entitled to be reared with affection, is at odds with Ariès' and Stone's views that parents did not form emotional attachments to their infants.

Like the *Partidas*, the content of women's sonnets regarding the family do not bear out Ariès' contention that people in the medieval and early modern periods did not invest affection in their children. Rather, the love they portray is intimate and reciprocal.⁹¹ Where Violante del Cielo views familial love through the orthodox, post-Tridentine lens of the Holy Family, she nevertheless uses these *exempla* to postulate tenderness and enduring love between parents and their children. In the same way, Ramírez's poetry clearly reflects a warm, lively and loving family relationship that accords with Augustine's views on the household dominated by love, as will be seen below. Where Cielo's sonnets support tender maternity toward children of all ages,

⁹¹ Similarly, as will be seen in the chapter dealing with female friendship, Lady Ann Fanshawe's journal makes clear that her young daughter accompanied her and was warmly welcomed on social visits in Madrid. Lady Ann's memoirs have particular value as testimonial narrative, as an eyewitness account by an outsider. Since upper class behaviour across all the countries of Western Europe had more in common than engagement between upper and lower classes of the individual societies, Lady Ann's observations provide valuable evidence of Spanish women's comportment compared with the strictures of the moralists.

Ramírez's verse focuses on her and her siblings' affection for their parents; she is therefore expressing the sentiments of older, even adult children.

Advice on the raising of older children differs markedly from that given with regard to the very young. For example, Montaigne's interest in older children bears no relation to his attitude to infants. In the same essay on fatherhood he asserts that a father should make himself worthy,

by his virtue and ability, of [his children's] love by his goodness and the kindness of his behaviour . . . No old age can be so decrepit and rancid in a person who has passed his life in honor as not to be venerable, especially to his children, whose souls he ought to have trained to their duty by reason, not by necessity and need nor by harshness and force. (281)

Montaigne is not the only writer of the period to record this paternal tenderness. Francis Bacon, for example, writes that a wife and children are a kind of discipline of humanity, asserting that single men "are more cruel and hard-hearted (good to make severe inquisitors), because their tenderness is not so oft called upon" (82).⁹²

On the education of children, Montaigne differs also from Augustine, who expects parental love to be exhibited through command and correction in the early years, using fear as a means to control "the wildness of growing children" (*City* 22.22). In contrast, Montaigne looks forward to the enlightened educational views of Rousseau, and condemns violence in the education "of a tender soul," holding that what cannot be done by reason, wisdom and tact cannot be effected by force. He affirms that his one surviving daughter, six years old, has never been punished for her childish faults. This is not an all-embracing attitude, however. He goes on to declare that, given the different, more commanding and disciplined role expected of men, he would have been "much more scrupulous in this respect toward boys, who are less born to serve and of a freer condition: I should have loved to swell their hearts with ingenuousness and frankness" (281-82).

⁹² Unfortunately, Bacon's essay goes on to reinsert the wife into the subservient role common to his time but irksome in the twenty-first century: "It is one of the best bonds both of chastity and obedience in the wife if she think her husband wise, which she will never do if she find him jealous. Wives are young men's mistresses, companions for middle age, and old men's nurses" (82). As mistresses, companions and nurses, he never grants women the opportunity to be individuals with needs and desires of their own.

A hundred years after Montaigne, as Cielo's long life came to an end, John Locke, the English philosopher, writing after the overthrow of Divine Right monarchy in England, pitches his advice on education somewhere between Augustine and Montaigne. Although he seeks a friendly and companionable relationship in the adult, he regards the means to acquiring this to be fear and awe instilled in childhood:

Those therefore that intend ever to govern their children, should begin it whilst they are very little, and look that they perfectly comply with the will of their parents. Would you have your son obedient to you when past a child; be sure then to establish the authority of a father as soon as he is capable of submission, and can understand in whose power he is. If you would have him stand in awe of you, imprint it in his infancy; and as he approaches more to a man, admit him nearer to your familiarity; so shall you have him your obedient subject (as is fit) whilst he is a child, and your affectionate friend when he is a man. (Locke pt. III s.40)

Locke's views on child rearing may have been coloured by his role as tutor to the son and heir of the Earl of Shaftesbury, for whose education he was responsible, with none of the bonds of blood.

Cielo's sonnets on the family always show strong ties of affection between parent and child. In a sonnet on one of the Sorrows of the Virgin—in this instance the loss of the holy child in Jerusalem—Cielo's homely first quartet foregrounds the tears of relief shed by a mother when her child is found safe and well.⁹³

Que bien muestra Señora, el justo llanto,
que con exceso tanto habéis vertido,
que quien a Dios presume, que ha perdido,
debe buscarle con exceso tanto.

Although Cielo acknowledges, rather comically, that to lose a god is a good reason to shed tears and conduct an urgent search, Mary's tears are also those of a worried mother, concerned for her missing boy, rather than those of worship for a divine figure: "Ni al Cielo, ni a la tierra cause espanto / lo mucho, que tal pena habéis sentido" (5-6).

The biblical record of Mary's expostulation when she finds Jesus discoursing with the elders in the temple is typical of a mother's outraged relief at

⁹³ For the biblical account, see Luke 2:42-49.

finding a wayward child: “And when they saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, ‘Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been looking for you anxiously’” (Luke 2.48). Cielo expresses this not in querulous irritation, but in relief and pleasure that balances the misery of the quartets: “pues la gloria, que os da después de hallarle / es cual la misma pena de no verle” (10-11).

In the tercets Cielo converts the mother’s search to allegory, thus cleverly manipulating and highlighting two concerns: for mothers, epitomised in the figure of Mary, and for consolation of the human soul through faith: “No queráis vos, ni su Deidad inmensa, / que el alma, que una vez supo buscarle, / llegue nunca por culpas a perderle” (12-14). Mary’s desperate search for the Christ child becomes an allegorical figuring of the soul’s anxious quest for God which, once complete, brings such bliss that disengagement from it is impossible. Since the soul is usually portrayed as female, this may account for the absence of Joseph.

As seen in Part A, the Church used manipulated images of the Holy Family in its determination to show how a Spanish family of the baroque era should comport itself. Cielo uses these images as both *exempla* for her readers, and also as representations of real and affectionate interest in the welfare of their children. The enduring presence of the *Siete Partidas* suggests that this concern was not a new phenomenon in Spanish society, at least as regards relations between women and children. However, once the children were of an age to be the father’s responsibility, moralists take a stronger stand against this tenderness, as is explained by Mariló Vigil:

Vives y Justiniano . . . tras propugnar una vinculación místico-maternal entre madre e hijo, con objeto de conseguir que las mujeres críen personalmente a sus niños, atacan las manifestaciones de ternura de la madre hacia los hijos que ya no están en edad de lactancia. Vives cree que las mujeres deben mantener una actitud autoritaria y distante con sus hijos y pone como ejemplo a su propia madre. (132)

Confusion in the stand taken by many of the moralists makes it clear that tenderness towards children did not stop at weaning and that considerable cossetting

of children continued in spite of injunctions to the contrary. Neither was there any difference between the attitudes of fathers and mothers toward their offspring: “Lo normal, de acuerdo con los testimonios de la mayoría de los moralistas, que también eran partidarios de una educación autoritaria, era que los padres—no sólo la madre—mimaran y consintieran a sus niños” (Vigil 132-34).⁹⁴

For Cielo, the bond established at birth between mother and child is reciprocal, equal and enduring, as is revealed in several of her holy sonnets on the Mysteries of the Rosary, specifically those of the seven sorrows of the Virgin. They draw startling conclusions, at variance with the biblical record. Once again they privilege the affectionate relationship between Mary and Jesus, mother and son, at the time of his betrayal and crucifixion, as Christ contemplates his impending fate. It seems that in her determination to foreground the human dimension of maternal/filial love, Cielo utilises the most powerful images of love and sacrifice available to her, but not by appealing to the divine or intercessory qualities possessed by Mary and her son.

In her sonnet on the first dolorous mystery, Christ’s prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, Cielo makes it abundantly clear that in her view Christ loved his mother as a devoted and human son. Thus, Christ’s prayer is not about his ordeal at all; instead, he is concerned with the suffering his crucifixion will cause his mother. This is at variance with the teachings of Augustine, with which Cielo would certainly have been familiar. Augustine projects love of the family as right and proper because they are loved by God, and affirms that Christ loved Mary not as evidence of the bond between child and mother, but because she was God’s faithful daughter (Burt 97).

⁹⁴ Such demonstrative affection by both parents is also represented in Montaigne’s determination that a son should feel more for his father than fear, though he retains the masculine-centred theories of his era: “I loathe the custom of forbidding children to use the name of father and enjoining upon them some strange address, as being more respectful; as if nature had not readily provided sufficiently for our authority . . . It is also wrong and foolish to prohibit children who have come of age from being familiar with their fathers, and to prefer to maintain an austere and disdainful gravity toward them, hoping thereby to keep them in fear and obedience. . . . Even if I could make myself feared, I would much rather make myself loved.” Montaigne, *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*. trans. Donald M Frame (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1965) 284.

Cielo clearly shares Alfonso el Sabio's view of familial love and support as a good, beneficial to society, since she frequently recurs to Christ's humanity, always manifested in its most selfless form.

The most complete biblical account of the Agony in the Garden is in Matthew 26:26, where it is recorded that Jesus prayed three times to be spared the forthcoming trial, each time terminating with the subjection of his own desires to the will of his father.⁹⁵ Cielo expresses the agony of Christ's impassioned prayer in the first quartet, but already she lays the ground for her argument: "Aunque temor de humano al fin parece, / Más es temor de amante, que de humano" (3-4). While fearing one's end is a common human preoccupation, Cielo places Christ's love for his mother in another category altogether; his love for her is not merely that of a divine figure for his creation, for in his mortal state human self-interest is superseded by his concern to spare her suffering. By emphasising Christ's filial love, Cielo again pursues her determination to portray Christ as a human figure, quite separate from the divinity he will assume after the crucifixion. By bringing Christ into a more earthly dimension she can also make his sacrifice more accessible to human comprehension. Cielo figures the prayer as an Ignatian meditation, in which the octet "composition of place" overflows into the tercets. In this way, she expresses the intensity of Christ's feeling: "Más teme en vos pesar tan infalible" (9). Cielo then turns to extol the exceptional virtue of Christ, not in his sacrifice for humankind, nor in his divinity, but in his overriding love for Mary as his human mother:

Y así al Padre suplica tiernamente,
que su muerte le exente, si es posible.
Mirad, si os ama con afecto ardiente
¿quien más, que de su muerte lo terrible,
teme de vuestra pena lo valiente? (10-14)

This expression of filial concern, tenderness and devotion is no accident on Cielo's part. She repeats it even more explicitly in another sonnet, entitled *Quarto Misterio doloroso de Cristo Señor Nuestro con la cruz al hombro*. Cielo takes her

⁹⁵ See Matthew 26: 37-44.

inspiration from John, as the other three gospels detail Simon of Cyrene as the cross-bearer.⁹⁶ For the remainder of the story, she is dependent upon tradition rather than biblical exegesis. Christ's falls on the Via Dolorosa number three, according to some traditions, and more according to others, though none is mentioned in the Bible. Cielo appropriates these stories to her own purpose, to emphasise the humanity of Christ and the loving ties that bind children and parents. Rather than use the occasion of Christ stumbling under the weight of the cross as a metaphor for the burdens of human life and sin from which he will both be liberated and be the liberating force, Cielo uses it to show the strong and self-negating love of a son for his mother. The sonnet opens with a series of negatives that firmly state her fresh look at an old story:

No del largo camino enflaquecido,
Ni del peso del leño derribado,
En la tierra (Señora) está postrado
el vencedor en acto de vencido. (1-4)

The speaker is in the privileged position of knowing already that Christ is the *vencedor*. Hence his fall is not attributed to his apparent defeat, although Cielo achieves a nicely balanced wordplay in the juxtaposition of *vencedor/vencido*, which suggests Christ's divine majesty even as he lies in the dusty road on the way to his crucifixion.

While the first two lines of the second quartet begin to develop Cielo's new argument regarding the fall to earth, they also constitute a metaphorical statement of the reason for Christ's ministry on earth: "la causa porque en tierra está caído / (Dejo de Adán el misero pecado)" (5-6). Although she parenthetically leaves aside the sin of the Garden, attributed to Adam rather than Eve, the location of the statement next to Christ's "fall to earth" serves to strengthen Christ's role as *vencedor*, since the reason he "fell to earth" in the first place was to fulfil the fate he now completes, to become conqueror of original sin. This first line of the quartet also looks forward to

⁹⁶ For the biblical text see John 19:17.

the remaining two lines, which resort to repetitive wordplay, as Cielo insists that Christ's true burden, and the reason for his fall on the road, is the impact of the impending separation from his beloved mother: "Es peso del pesar, que le ha causado / Verse de vuestros ojos dividido" (7-8). As in a love sonnet, Cielo privileges the eyes in both quartet and tercet. The first tercet focuses on the face of Christ, and the sight of his mother, coupled with awareness of their impending parting, fills his eyes with tears as they meet hers. In the quartet Christ grieves to be separated from his mother's eyes; in the tercets their eyes are reunited across the road: "Bien lo acredita así su rostro santo, / que mostrando, que busca tal presencia, / Los ojos vuelve atrás con tierno llanto" (9-11).

Cielo wrote her sonnets as mothers across the Iberian peninsula were bidding tearful farewells to sons who, like Cueva's brother, Antonio, were going off to the wars, or like Ramírez's brother, Lorenzo, were sailing away to the New World; these will be discussed further in the following section. By foregrounding such relationships in her verse, Cielo makes Christ's message more accessible to her reader or listener, and his example easier to follow, for however much he may suffer the emotional pain of a human son, Christ does not fail to do his duty.

Finishing where the sonnet began, the inevitability of the crucifixion sees Christ again shoulder his cross. Now, however, it is a metaphorical burden, bound up in the separation that will break off the mutual gaze. The relationship between the son and the woman who is his mother will be irrevocably changed from this moment: "O logre tal favor tal diligencia, / que para quien (Señora) os ama tanto / la más pesada Cruz es vuestra ausencia" (12-14). The gospels make it clear that Christ went willingly and obediently, if in dread, to his death. By converting his dread into that of separation from his mother, Cielo depicts the enclosed and hidden world of home and family, setting maternal selflessness in a position of equality with Christ's expiatory sacrifice.

Cielo's determination to foreground mutual and reciprocal love between mothers and sons is again evident in her treatment of the Ascension. It is clearly important to Cielo that motherhood be lifted out of its position of inevitability and be seen as more than the duty and culmination of every wife's experience. Warner has argued that there has been no logical equivalence in any society, pagan or Christian, between exalted female objects of worship and a high position for women, and that veneration of the Virgin brings no corresponding rise in status for women, especially not in the Roman Catholic world (*Alone* 283). However, it may well be for just this reason that Cielo so determinedly humanises the divine. By showing that Christ and his mother share human understanding and emotion, Cielo seeks both to use their perfect example and to project it at a level where motherhood and womanhood can be valued in society.

In the sonnet on the Ascension, joy, maternal pride and sadness are embodied in the figure of the mother:

Compiten en vos misma juntamente
 El placer, y el pesar o Reina amante,
 es el placer, porque va Dios triunfante,
 Es el pesar; porque quedáis ausente. (1-4)

Mary's own self-sacrificing nature is expressed in the second quartet: "Mas como vuestro amor es tan constante / Prefiere lo que estima a lo que siente" (7-8). Her personal loss is subsumed under the crescendo of pleasure, victory and love at the conquest of death. Cielo likens the grief of parting to the pain of labour, traditionally forgotten when the mother receives her child into her arms: "Ni del pesar queréis tener memoria" (11). Christ, now occupying a divine realm, is not, as in the previous sonnets, the main focus here. Instead, Cielo utilises the unique moment of the Ascension to privilege the role of the mother as heroic, noble, loving and self-sacrificing. This exemplary mother is strong enough to favour "lo que estima" over her own sorrow. Women everywhere were putting the needs of the empire before their own, thus giving particular resonance to Cielo's repeated message.

In portraying the Virgin in human terms, Cielo also gives new dignity to the limiting roles women were officially permitted to play. As she toes the party line in her poetry, she also exalts the female role and claims for it a stamp of divine approval. By promoting women's strength through the figure of the Virgin Mary to an audience accustomed to the propagandistic nature of baroque religious art, she is also able to enter the *querelle des femmes*, protected by the exemplary nature of her subject. Cielo reinforces her message in her sonnet to John the Evangelist, where she extols the virtues of the man who was linked indissolubly to Mary by Jesus from the cross.⁹⁷

Warner has argued that the Virgin receives the human race in trust when Christ gives her into John's keeping and John into hers, where he comes to personify the Church (*Alone* 220). Cielo does not pursue this line in her sonnet to St John, which is an unabashed paean of praise to the evangelist. The concluding tercet measures John's merit not by his deeds, but by Christ's nomination of him as Mary's adoptive son: ¿Mas qué mucho, que fuiste tan amado, / Si mereciste (o Juan) ser venturoso / de la Madre de Dios hijo adoptivo?" (12-14). Thus Christ's care for his mother after his death and resurrection endorses Cielo's arguments in the sonnets that precede the crucifixion: her overwhelming conviction that Christ was more concerned for the welfare of his mother than his own fate in the hours before his torture and crucifixion. It is hardly coincidental that this analogy of John, at Calvary made the adoptive son of Mary, is used by Augustine as his model for loving one's parents:

The good Teacher does what He thereby reminds us ought to be done, and by His own example instructed His disciples that care for their parents ought to be a matter of concern to pious children. . . . From this wholesome doctrine it was that the Apostle Paul had learned what he taught in turn, when he said, "But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." And what are so much home concerns to any one, as parents to children, or children to parents? Of this most wholesome precept, therefore, the very Master of the saints set the example from Himself, when, not as God for the hand-maid whom He had created and governed, but as a man for the mother, of whom He had been

⁹⁷ This sonnet is reproduced in the appendix to this chapter.

created, and whom He was now leaving behind, He provided in some measure another son in place of Himself. (Augustine, *Gospel of John* 119.2)

As so often in Augustine's writing, he refutes here his own comment, discussed earlier, that we must love our families not above God but because they are loved by God, and that Christ's love of Mary stemmed not from her role as his mother but because she was a faithful daughter of God. In the *Gospel of John*, Augustine sees Christ's action as the last act of love by a human son for his mother.

Cielo's sonnets demonstrate the earthbound expression of mutual need for love and recognition that exists among family members at all levels of society. It is not that she does not show due reverence for God, but rather that she refuses to diminish the importance of human tenderness as a reflection of God's love. In the same manner, Ramírez's loving, witty and funny poems to her family indicate a warm tenderness that is not measured against one's love for God, a given for every Christian, but exists in a realm of its own.

Unlike Cielo's preoccupation with the Holy Family, Ramírez writes many poems to and about her own family. The majority are barely concealed by pastoral names, both for herself and for her familial subjects.⁹⁸ Although few of her works are sonnets, the glimpses that her poetry affords into the lives and pastimes of the Spanish rural elites in the seventeenth century merit a brief digression to some of her other poems.⁹⁹ In a short poem to her father, Ramírez begs him to bring her a modish, sheer *manto* from Madrid, using her wit to inveigle him into complying; in another, she pleads for an *almilla*, a form of tunic, suggesting: "No os causara maravilla . . . quien el alma os ha dado / os pida en cambio una almilla."¹⁰⁰ Other poems express sadness at her father's absence, commiserate with him, struck by

⁹⁸ Gazul details the baptismal details of ten children born to the family, of whom six survived. Ramírez's pastoral names for her family were: Anarda, for Ana Rosalea, born 1628; Antandra for Antonia Manuela, born 1625; Tisbe for Beatriz, born 1617; Clori for herself, Píramo for her older brother Pedro Antonio, born 1619; and Lauro for Lorenzo, born 1622.

⁹⁹ These poems are reproduced in full in the appendix to this chapter.

¹⁰⁰ Juan de Zabaleta deploras such garments, writing thus of the *dama*: "Pónele una criada el manto de humo; ella queda como sin manto; tan en cuerpo se está como se estaba, y de aquella manera quiere ir a la calle ... El humo, por su naturaleza hace llorar a todos; muy sin ojos está la razón que no llora con aquel humo" (119).

“principios de gota,” and with her mother over her failing eyesight, brought on, it seems, by excessive needlework:

Tus ojos forman querella
ponderando que es rigor
amar tanto la labor
que ciegues, Silvia, por ella. (1-4)

This poem provides a glimpse into the world extolled by Luis de León in *La perfecta casada*, a world in which the wife is hard-working, self-sacrificing and uncomplaining, busy with needlework and household chores. In these poems there is no sense that Ramírez holds her father in fear and awe and she clearly loves her mother, expressing concern for her health and wellbeing.¹⁰¹ The unusually personal nature of her poetry is attributed by Entrambasaguas to her provincial upbringing and therefore her distance from the centres of poetic decorum: “Solamente [Doña] Ramírez—tal vez debido a su alejamiento de los centros literarios—apartóse totalmente de la norma general y escribió poesías no culteranas” (41). An outsider she may have been in the seventeenth century social fabric, but her poetry brings forth a privileged, personal view of family life and everyday amusements that is of sociological significance. In addition, the commotion over precedence on the *estrado*, detailed in Chapter Four, shows that provincial life for the upper classes did not differ greatly from that in the city.

An external observer’s opinion of parents’ continuing interest in their children tends to confirm that most parents probably did not follow the austerity of Vives but instead revelled in their children’s activities, as Lady Ann Fanshawe’s memoirs indicate: “[They] take much pleasure to see their little children act before

¹⁰¹ Ramírez’s attitude to her father is even more relevant, given available biographical details about the family. Carrasco García shows her father, Francisco Ramírez Guerrero, to be an “arrogante y altivo capitán” who had many enemies. Described as a good example of the new type of emerging bureaucrat, on his move from his birthplace of Zafra to Llerena he succeeded in winning the hand of Isabel Sebastiana de Guzmán, whose father had intended to marry her to the heir of the condes de Puebla. Francisco also waged a machiavellian campaign to secure a permanent place as *regidor* of Llerena. He travelled to Madrid, where he petitioned to have the number of permanent local *regidores* increased from eight to twenty. He then filled the new seats with his supporters, giving himself a position of unrivalled power in the area. Carrasco García, *La Plaza Mayor de Llerena y otros estudios* 103-05. Ramírez’s poetic plea for a *manto* becomes more interesting in the light of her father’s business in Madrid.

them in their own houses, which they will doe [sic] in perfection” (173). As the wife of the English ambassador to Spain in the middle of the seventeenth century, her memoirs reveal much of everyday life in Spain, if only at the highest levels. Even so, there was a distinct change in the way that children were treated once they reached the age of six and were considered ready for instruction. Where before there was little difference in the treatment of girls and boys, now their newfound maturity was measured by the exchange of childhood robes for those modelled on adult lines, and in their first communion (Kagan 7-9).

It would be natural to assume that this change in attitude would taint the relationships obtaining between siblings, as boys went away to school, and that the closeness of early childhood would dissolve with distance. However, as the following section will show, the poetry of Ramírez that so clearly describes her family and their pastimes gives the lie to this assumption. Her attitude is endorsed by the sonnets of Cueva, discussed in the chapter on patronage, that both praise her family’s name and show affection for the brother who exhibits the requisite *hombria* expected of a gentleman of his class.

2B.2 “Carísimo hermano mío”: Love Among Siblings.

Early modern Spanish moralists have little to say about the relations between siblings. While boys were sent out to become *criados*, to be educated, or received advanced education from tutors at home, girls were expected to follow the activities of their mothers. Lady Fanshawe observes that “[u]ntil their daughters marry, they never stir so much as down stairs, nor [marry] for no consideration under their own quality, which to prevent, if their fortunes will not procure, they make them nuns” (173).¹⁰² In spite of the perceived distances between the sexes, Ramírez writes a number of poems to two of her brothers when they are far from home that express a range of emotions, from tenderness to sardonic amusement. The brothers’ activities

¹⁰² This was the general picture, but the previously mentioned marriage between the parents of Ramírez shows that some parents, at least, bowed to the preferences of their daughters.

reflect the tightly limited opportunities available to sons of the nobility, where the older son followed the role of the father, and younger sons often went, willingly or not, into the Church.¹⁰³

Ramírez's elder brother, Pedro (Píramo in her more playful poetry), a year her junior, followed his father into military service as the *alférez* of his father's company. He later became administrator of the *Real Servicio de Millones* in the city of Lugo. In 1680 he became lieutenant governor of Llerena, where he lived with Ramírez and their sister, Antonia Manuela. He never married (Carrasco García 111).¹⁰⁴ Lorenzo, who was born in 1622, was "uno de aquellos clérigos a medio ordenar que tanto abundaban en el siglo de Lope, más amigos de amores que de disciplina" (Entrambasaguas y Peña 21-22). This opinion accords with two poems Catalina writes to Lorenzo, one, a *décima*, is entitled *A un galán que negaba el galanteo que hacía a una pastelera*:

Lauro, tu recato es justo,
 pero ¿a él cuál más te llama,
 el crédito de tu dama
 o el crédito de tu gusto?
 Mal con tu elección me ajusto,
 pero, pues determinado
 estás, anda con cuidado,
 porque tu dueño crüel
 no te eche en algún pastel,
 pues te tiene tan picado. (1-10)

This *décima* trades humorously on the prevailing urban myth that *pasteles*, a pie made with chopped meat, were often made with carrion, or the flesh of the recently executed. She suggests that he is happy to flirt with a low-class baker's girl, but not

¹⁰³ For a discussion of the sibling rivalry occasioned by the practice of primogeniture among the upper classes, see Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977) 115. See also Kagan, who outlines the patriarchalism of seventeenth-century Spain and the tightly prescribed career of the oldest child who, under the system of *mayorazgo*, would inherit the bulk of the family's wealth. Louis Montrose also discusses the problems that primogeniture in England caused to younger sons through Shakespeare's treatment of the practice in *As You Like It*. Louis Adrian Montrose, "'The Place of a Brother' in 'As You Like It': Social Process and Comic Form," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 32.1 (1981): 28-54.

¹⁰⁴ In providing these biographical data, Carrasco García corrects the assumption of Entrambasaguas y Peña, that Pedro Antonio was killed at the battle of Rocroy, and that a sonnet by Ramírez mourning the death of a soldier was about her brother.

to acknowledge her otherwise, provoking the suggestion that the *pastejera* may have the last word.¹⁰⁵

Similarly, Ramírez writes a lengthy *romance*, a small part of which is reproduced below, to this same brother lamenting his imprisonment, apparently effected by his religious superiors to punish his vanity in refusing to cut his abundant hair. It may have been the discipline that caused him to give up the habit and emigrate to Guatemala, in about 1650, where he married (Carrasco García 109). Lorenzo was four years younger than Ramírez, and the poem reveals the fond exasperation of an older sister, as these excerpts show:

Esta noche, hermano mío,
 meditando tus sucesos,
 me desvelé, que el cuidado
 se lleva mal con el sueño.
 Y a instancias de la razón
 y de mi amor a los ruegos,
 propuse hablarte, aunque digas
 que es dar voces en desierto (1-8)

.....
 Por órdenes dicen unos
 que el tal juez te tiene preso,
 y por desórdenes otros,
 que es un enigma tu pleito. (49-52)

.....
 Y perdona que de gorra
 se han entrado mis consejos,
 cuando, obstinado y temeroso,
 te haces sordo a los preceptos. (81-84)
 (Ms. 3917:360r)

The same closeness is expressed in Ramírez's sonnet to Pedro Antonio, away on military business. In the same manner, Cueva's sonnets to her brother, discussed in Chapter One, show affectionate concern. The loving and emotional ties between the brothers and sisters bear out Lawrence Stone's articulation of the close relationships between siblings of the opposite sex that characterised the early modern English family. This relationship, he claims, did not suffer the envy and

¹⁰⁵ According to Carrasco García the *pastejera* did have the last word, as he is recorded as having a bastard son by a *pastejera*. Carrasco García further suggests that this son, Manuel, was pointedly left out of the will of the last surviving sibling, Antonia Manuela, because she disapproved of the affection that Ramírez showed toward him (113-14).

bitterness often felt by a younger brother for the family heir (115). Here, Ramírez utilises many of the tropes of the conventional love sonnet. Similarly, the *sobrescrito* on a letter to her brother, Pedro, addressed to “el más valiente soldado,” describes him as “el que es mi hermano y mi amante” (9) (ms. 3884 228v). However, where this poem is lively and optimistic, the sonnet of absence is quiet and sad:

Acertar a decir mi sentimiento
fuera desaire de mi pena grave,
que en el silencio solamente cabe
la significación de mi tormento. (1-4)

As Pedro fulfils the role appropriate to a man and oldest son, away earning honour for the family, to express grief at his absence would be inappropriate. Instead, the octet employs every possible manifestation of silence: “silencio,” “mudamente,” “silencio” and “callando”: “decir callando lo que amando siento” (8). Ramírez’s sadness is expressed in silence, forced on her by her distance, in the domestic realm, from her brother, away on the masculine business of war. That Ramírez so emphasises the silence occasioned by her brother’s absence suggests that this role was unusual for her. As in Cielo’s sonnet on the Annunciation, it is the power of silence, women’s eloquent burden, that most clearly evokes the relationship. Through silence she expresses strong feelings of love and loss that speak of a genuinely affective relationship, especially in the context of her other family-related verse.

The tercets move from silence to multiple protestations of love that make the “pena” of absence bearable, and this is emphasised by the location at the end of each line of the first tercet, of a reiterated crescendo of love: “amaros,” “quereros,” “adoraros.” However, Ramírez ends the sonnet on a declining note of anxiety, occasioned by her concern both to see Pedro and for his safety as a soldier: “Que el alma que no tiene ya que daros / gusta de tener ansias que ofreceros” (13-14). The dangerous reality of his soldier’s role in defence of a crumbling European empire is also revealed in another sonnet that Entrambasaguas supposes to be about Don Pedro’s death at the battle of Rocroy, May 1643 (21). However, not only does she

write about her brother elsewhere after that date, but Carrasco García provides evidence of his survival, as previously stated.

In providing a sociological picture of seventeenth-century family life, even if only for the upper levels of Spanish society, Ramírez helps to support the contention that within the household there was often real affection between siblings that superseded the differences in education for brothers and sisters, and the demands of empire. The companionship of brothers, whose freedom of movement was not impeded by societal mores, must have brought new ideas and interests into the household that influenced the way that Catalina or Cueva thought and wrote. Ramírez's whole life was passed in Llerena and her poetry derives from her own and her family's activities and interactions.

Lerner has argued persuasively that women, deprived of "cultural prodding," or dialogue and encounter with persons of equal education and standing, were also denied knowledge of the existence of women's history, and were therefore unaware that others like them had made intellectual contributions to knowledge and to creative thought (*Consciousness* 12). The experiential nature of Ramírez's works bears out Lerner's contention that women's educational deprivation and the absence of a "usable past" leans them more heavily toward their own experience in developing their ideas.

Conclusion

Given the political upheavals, economic, subsistence and public health crises suffered by Spain in the seventeenth century, it might be expected that individuals would not risk investing excessive emotional capital in children and the family, since the potential for losing them was too great. However, the family provides a unique refuge from the problems of greater society. The presence of genuine tenderness and affection among family members is clearly evident in the poetry of the women discussed in this chapter. The most prolific poet, Violante del Cielo, reiterates Church-led, Counter-Reformation propaganda in her presentation of the ideal family, embodied in her word pictures of the Holy Family. Nevertheless, the degree of familial concern registered in her poetry, particularly her startling expressions of filial tenderness in some of her sonnets of the Passion, goes far beyond Church requirements for patriarchal conformity in the family. It is evident that she appropriates the Church's propaganda to her own use, advancing and defending the value of women as wives and mothers. Where the principal concern of the moralists is sexual and social propriety, regulated through discipline and the expectations of social and religious hierarchies, these poets show that affection for the family, the principal pillar of social survival in unhappy times, was a shared, affective relationship.

While these poems give an insight into relationships between siblings, mothers and children, in most the father remains a shadowy figure. In Cielo's idealising portraits of Joseph, he is a remarkably feminised individual, as is St Anthony of Padua, far from the militaristic and paternalistic ideal described by the moralists. Similarly, Ramírez's frankly affectionate poetry to her father demonstrates a relaxed and familiar relationship. It provides an informal view of family life that suggests that fathers were more actively involved in the emotional networks of family

than moralising treatises would suggest. This view is borne out by the constant complaints of moralists that parents were spoiling their children.

The family served as protector, source of religious fervour, social regulator and means to social advancement. In an age before sentimentalism and romantic idealisation, and before psychotherapeutic techniques and studies, it was affection and solidarity in the family that ensured physical and political survival in uncertain times. There were, however, other networks that sprang naturally from familial contact with the outside world. Bonds of friendship between families aided social advancement but also extended further than this, providing an emotional and spiritual bolster for both women and men. It is the nature of friendship in seventeenth-century Spain, as seen through the writings of these women, that will form the basis of the next chapter.

SONNETS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE IN PART B

2B.1 Suffer the Little Children

Violante del Cielo

Quinto Misterio: Del Niño perdido

Que bien muestra Señora, el justo llanto,
que con exceso tanto habéis vertido,
que quien a Dios presume, que ha perdido,
debe buscarle con exceso tanto.

Ni al Cielo, ni a la tierra cause espanto
lo mucho, que tal pena habéis sentido,
pues perder un Infante habéis temido
que aclama el Serafín tres veces santo.

Pero bien el pesar os recompensa,
pues la gloria, que os da después de hallarle
es cual la misma pena de no verle.

No queráis vos, ni su Deidad inmensa,
que el alma, que una vez supo buscarle,
llegue nunca por culpas a perderle.

(Parnaso lusitano 11)

Al primer misterio doloroso: A la Oración del Huerto

El ruego, que a su Padre soberano
con lágrimas de sangre el Verbo ofrece,
aunque temor de humano al fin parece,
más es temor de amante, que de humano.

Porque si bien, Señora, lo tirano
de la muerte su espíritu entristece,
si bien por lo mortal casi enflaquece
quien tiene todo el orbe en una mano,
más teme en vos pesar tan infalible:
Y así al Padre suplica tiernamente,
que su muerte le exente, si es posible.

Mirad, si os ama con afecto ardiente
¿quien más, que de su muerte lo terrible,
teme de vuestra pena lo valiente?

(Parnaso lusitano 12)

Quarto misterio: De Cristo Señor nuestro con la Cruz al hombro

No del largo camino enflaquecido,
Ni del peso del leño derribado,
en la tierra (Señora) está postrado
el vencedor en acto de vencido.

La causa porque en tierra está caído
(Dejo del Adán el misero pecado)

Es peso del pesar, que le ha causado
verse de vuestros ojos dividido.

Bien lo acredita así su rostro santo,
que mostrando, que busca tal presencia,

los ojos vuelve atrás con tierno llanto.
 ¡O logre tal favor tal diligencia,
 Que para quien (Señora) os ama tanto
 la más pesada Cruz es vuestra ausencia!
 (*Parnaso lusitano* 15)

A San Juan Evangelista

Águila, cuyo vuelo peregrino,
 a más alto llegó que al mismo Cielo,
 pues al pecho de Dios llegó tu vuelo,
 y a la mayor ventura tu destino.
 Fenix de amor, amante siempre fino,
 gloria del mismo Dios, honra del suelo,
 soberano exemplar, raro modelo
 de todo lo perfecto, y lo divino:
 Tú del más alto Rey digno cuidado,
 imán de su afición tan poderoso,
 como de sus secretos dulce archivo.
 ¿Mas qué mucho, que fuistes tan amado,
 si mereciste (O Juan) ser venturoso
 de la Madre de Dios hijo adoptivo?
 (*Parnaso lusitano* 27)

Segundo Misterio Doloroso: De la Ascensión

Compiten en vos misma juntamente
 El placer, y el pesar o Reina amante,
 es el placer, porque va Dios triunfante,
 Es el pesar; porque quedáis ausente.
 Cada cual de los dos es tan valiente
 Que a poder más presume, que es bastante
 Mas como vuestro amor es tan constante
 Prefiere lo que estima a lo que siente.
 Dais a placer tan justo la victoria;
 Porque como el amaros enajena,
 Ni del pesar queréis tener memoria:
 ¡Pasión en fin de admiraciones llena!
 Que es de mayor placer la ajena gloria
 de lo que os da pesar la propia pena.
 (*Parnaso lusitano* 20)

Catalina Clara Ramírez de Guzmán

Pidiendo la autora a su padre que la trujese un manto estando en Madrid.

Doña Catalina Clara
 un manto pide de gloria,
 y si como la memoria
 la voluntad enviara,
 no duda que se comprara;
 mas sabe sufriros tanto
 que no le causará espanto,
 si os hallaréis sin dinero,

que le enviéis un no quiero
 que sea más claro que el manto.
 (ms. 3884 240r)

Pidiendo el autor a su padre una almilla

No os causara maravilla
 ni es justo que os dé cuidado,
 que quien el alma os ha dado
 os pida en cambio una almilla
 de la tela que más brilla,
 me la sacad encarnada.
 Petición tan ajustada
 no debe causaros pena
 porque para nada es buena
 una mujer desalmada.
 (ms. 3884 222r)

A la Ausencia de su Padre

De mi firmeza ¡ay! amor
 quiere hacer prueba la ausencia,
 y hallara mas resistencia
 cuando juzga más temor.
 Mas ¡ay! que es tan superior
 su poder a mi poder
 que aunque esté firme en querer,
 hará su rigor severo
 que a aquel por quien vivo y muero
 diga que no puedo ver.
 (ms. 3884 228v)

A la madre de la autora que tenía los ojos malos, y hacía labor con que se le ponían peores.

Tus ojos forman querella
 ponderando que es rigor,
 amar tanto la labor
 que ciegues Silvia por ella.
 Pero como solo ella
 te entretiene, (cosa es llana)
 tomaré de buena gana
 (en esta fineza advierte)
 solo por entretenerte
 que me zurzas la badana.
 (ms. 3884 227r)

Al padre de la Autora viniendo con principios de gota de Madrid

Aunque tan soberbio es
 el mal que os causa aflicción,
 para pedirnos perdón
 con dolor va a vuestros pies.
 Si en lo humilde halla interés,
 su malicia conocida,

no habrá sido inadvertida
 la inquietud que me alborota,
 temiendo que agüe una gota
 el gusto de la venida.
 (ms. 3884 240v)

2B.2 “Carísimo hermano mío”: Love Among Siblings.

Catalina Clara Ramírez de Guzmán

A un galán que negaba el galanteo que hacía a una pastelera

Lauro, tu recato es justo,
 pero ¿a él cuál más te llama,
 el crédito de tu dama
 o el crédito de tu gusto?
 Mal con tu elección me ajusto,
 pero, pues determinado
 estás, anda con cuidado,
 porque tu dueño crüel
 no te eche en algún pastel,
 pues te tiene tan picado.
 (ms. 3884 230v)

Soneto a su hermano Don Pedro

Acertar a decir mi sentimiento
 fuera desaire de mi pena grave,
 que en el silencio solamente cabe
 la significación de mi tormento.
 De esperanzas de veros me alimento
 que es manjar en la ausencia el más süave,
 y mudamente mi silencio sabe,
 decir callando lo que amando siento.
 Y aunque paso esta pena por amaros,
 no puedo arrepentirme de quereros,
 que no dejarme el gusto de adoraros
 por ahorrar la pena de no veros.
 Que el alma que no tiene ya que daros
 gusta de tener ansias que ofreceros.
 (ms. 3884. 223r)

A un caballero que murió muy mozo en la guerra, habiendo andado sobradamente bizarro en la ocasión que le mataron.

Moriste, joven, en edad florida
 dando vida a tu fama con tu muerte.
 No te engañó, te mejoró la suerte,
 pues pasas por la muerte a mejor vida.
 Si la parca fatal, enfurecida,
 cortó el hilo a tu vida, bien se advierte
 que envidia fue, porque tu brazo fuerte
 no le quitase el nombre de homicida.

No aclame el enemigo la victoria
de que agostó tan verde primavera,
al tiempo muerta y viva a la memoria.
Tu valor te mató, que no pudiera
otro que el lograr tan gran victoria,
y quiso echar el resto en la postrera.
(ms. 3884 241r)

CHAPTER 3

“EL AMISTAD ES UN TESORO”: FEMININE FRIENDSHIP

The ancient Menander declared that man happy who
had been able to meet even the shadow of a friend.
(Montaigne: *Essay on Friendship*)

It is a common fact regarding research into the lives of early modern women that their way of life, interests and pastimes are virtually invisible in the record, and that any information gleaned about women in the period has first to be filtered through the lens of a male writer.¹⁰⁶ This raises questions as to how women formed and retained friendships, and the role of friendship in female solace and solidarity, in a hierarchical, patriarchal society that favoured female enclosure as an ideal. Virginia Woolf highlighted this lack of depictions of female friendship in *A Room of One's Own*, when she observed that until Jane Austen's day women in fiction were never shown as friends, and when they appeared in fiction, were seen only in relation to the other sex (75). As I shall show in this chapter, however, friendship between women was a valuable and beneficial part of their lives. Its intellectual and emotional benefits can be glimpsed through the poetry and other writings of those women whose works survive, providing a small but significant archive of seventeenth-century female thought, both religious and secular.

In writing on friendship between women in this chapter, I shall first discuss the social conditions and relationships in which literate women found themselves in the seventeenth century. I will then proceed to an examination of the influences, both philosophical and religious, that informed thinking during that period. This discussion will set the stage for my examination of women's poetry of friendship. The importance

¹⁰⁶ One notable exception to this comes in the form of the remarkably frank poetry of Katherine Philips “the matchless Orinda,” writing in the middle of the seventeenth century (she was born in 1632). Just one example is her poem “To my excellent Lucasia on our friendship. 17th July 1651,” which begins “I did not live untill this time / Crown'd my felicity, / When I could say without a crime, / I am not Thine, but Thee.” Katherine Philips, *The Collected Works of Katherine Philips*. ed. Patrick Thomas (Stump Cross: Stump Cross Books, 1990) 121. Like Francis Bacon, Philips here defines her friend as another self, a twin soul: “But never had Orinda found / A Soule till she found thine; / Which now inspires, cures and supply's, / And guides my darken'd brest” (11-14).

to women of these relationships caused them to write, often movingly, to and about the female friends who shared the same restrictions and frustrations in their daily lives. However, they also extracted all the benefits available to them in a political and social system that was not as tightly controlled as the moralists would have liked.

Both hierarchy and patriarchy were the norms across seventeenth-century Europe, and obtained in all aspects of state, society and the church, including the convents. Where a sisterhood of joint service might be expected, instead the *monjas de velo negro* sang in the choir and engaged with spiritual matters, while the nuns of the white veil undertook the menial tasks.¹⁰⁷ Sor Ana de San Bartolomé, who was sent by St Teresa to found convents outside Spain, criticises the social stratifications of church and state in her autobiography, where she negatively compares the Spanish methods of enforcing obedience with those of the French. In writing of her experience in Paris with another Spanish nun, Isabel de los Ángeles, Sor Ana expresses this difference: “[Y]a ella lo hacía bien, que iba tomando más el estilo de la Francia y dulzura . . . Y cierto, yo lo hallo mejor y más conforme a la condición de Nuestro Señor Jesucristo, que, si lo miramos, andaba con sus discípulos como hermano y compañero” (qtd. in Arenal and Schlau 35). The societal stratification so disliked by Sor Ana was replicated in the Church even to the extent that it was also one of the great customers for the slave traders. Records show the existence of female slaves in convents, particularly in Andalusia and Spanish America (Bennassar, *Spanish Character* 110-11).¹⁰⁸ This does not, however, detract from the firm relationships developed between nuns of the same “class,” as can be seen from the poetry of Marcia Belisarda.

¹⁰⁷ Concha Torres Sánchez defines this cultural stratification more exactly: *legas* were the sisters of charity, excluded from devotional work; the *freilas* were nuns who served as adjuncts to the military Orders; the *monjas de medio hábito* were domestic servants and the *monjas del coro* were aristocratic women whose duties were limited to the devotional Concha Torres Sánchez, *La clausura femenina en la Salamanca del siglo XVII: Dominicas y Carmelitas Descalzas*. Acta Salmanticensia. Estudios históricos y geográficos; 73, 1st ed. (Salamanca: Universidad de Salamanca, 1991) 68.

¹⁰⁸ Bennassar cites the baptismal records of slaves to nuns in Cordoba. It is also well established that there were slaves in the convent where Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz wrote her poetry in Mexico City.

A problem arises in discussing the nature of friendship in the seventeenth century. Early modern concepts of friendship, like those of the ancients, did not accord with the modern understanding of the term. Friendship then fell loosely into three categories: family, patron/client relationships, and the more equal relationships between individuals that would accord with Aristotle's "essential" friendship.¹⁰⁹ Where the convents are concerned, given that, like the smaller unit of the family, their hierarchies mirrored social and state norms, it is possible to assume that friendship within the convent would have followed two paths: the patron/client model to be found in male society outside the convent walls, and the private friendships of equals living in an enclosed, homosocial environment, with shared ideals and aspirations. The poetry to fellow nuns by Marcia Belisarda, to be analysed in this chapter, indicates a warm, familial relationship in which nuns were drawn into the convent community, but the titles suggest that they are written for women of quality who are joining their aristocratic equals.

Conduct books, when they discussed the proper role of women, were entirely concerned with the domestic sphere, whether *doncella*, *casada* or *viuda*. With the prevailing patriarchal writings insisting at all levels on silent, obedient, modest and demure women, their meddling hands always to be occupied with sewing, weaving and other domestic tasks, it might be expected that the opportunities to share confidences and amusements must have been small indeed. Yet the poetry of women both inside and outside the convent walls reflects genuine, affective relationships, as can be seen in the relaxed wittiness and personal nature of

¹⁰⁹ Regarding friendship within the family, see the treatise on marital duties, written in 1568 by Edmund Tilney, entitled *The Flower of Friendship*. The Spanish conduct books on marriage and female deportment, discussed in the previous chapter on the family, do not extend to an ideal of friendship between marriage partners other than to offer the advice that the wife's unquestioning obedience and devotion to her husband, whatever his condition, will obtain harmony in the home. For a wider discussion of the definition of friendship in the period see P. Burke, "Humanism and Friendship in Sixteenth-Century Europe" in J. Haseldine, ed., *Friendship in Medieval Europe* (Stroud: Sutton, 1999) 262-71. In looking at private friendship, Burke cites a number of famous examples: Francesco Vettori and Niccolò Machiavelli, Albrecht Dürer and Willibald Pirckheimer, Philip Sidney and Fulke Greville, among others. The extremely limited public forum available to women clearly does not permit him to find similar examples of female friendship.

Ramírez's and Cueva's poetry, and in Cielo's sonnets from within the convent to her aristocratic friends outside.

Outside the convent, women were theoretically constrained to various degrees, according to the dictate that the interior of the home was the proper place for women, the exterior being reserved for men. As has been discussed in numerous histories, however, and as the critical writings of seventeenth-century moralists already discussed in this study have shown, women did find opportunities to go out: to worship, to visit friends in their homes, or, for the wealthy, to drive about in their coaches. So many Spanish conduct books of this period impress on husbands the need to prevent their wives from exchanging visits with their neighbours that it must be presumed to have been a common practice. Neither were they to allow excessive church visiting or devotional *romerías*, other potential avenues for social intercourse among women, or worse, between women and men.¹¹⁰ Luis de León, for example, notes that among married women it was as if their houses "fuesen de sus vecinas, así se descuidan dellas, y toda su vida es el oratorio, y el devocionario, y el calentar el suelo de la iglesia tarde y mañana" (*Perfecta* 143-44). Similarly, Juan de Pineda, in his *Reloj de príncipes*, insists that "se debe recatar mucho el hombre cuerdo de que sus hijas y mujer anden vagando de visita en visita, y de estación en estación; ni se debe mover mucho por las devociones" (qtd.Vigil 157).

The houses of the wealthier Spaniards offered luxuriously furnished reception rooms in which to entertain guests.¹¹¹ As Defourneaux explains, the salon was often divided by a wooden screen, on one side of which women entertained their friends, squatting on cushions in the Arab manner, on a raised platform, the *estrado*, while the males on the other side of the screen sat on chairs. The women chatted

¹¹⁰ Jacques Derrida has also commented on the "double exclusion" to which women were subject in "all the great ethico-political-philosophical discourses on friendship, . . . the exclusion of friendship between women and . . . the exclusion of friendship between a man and a woman." Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*. Trans. George Collins (London, New York: Verso, 1997) 642.

¹¹¹ The testaments of Ramírez's parents, for example, detail the appointments of the family home: "Hubo para todos camas suntuosas, escritorios, bufetes, objetos de plata, colchas, mantelerías, almohadones de terciopelo o damasco de estrados, y para las hembras, hasta baterías de cocina. También numerosos cuadros." Gazul, "Familia Ramírez," 527-28.

over drinks of chocolate, chewing on aromatic clay, *búcaro*, imported from Latin America.¹¹² Educated women also gathered in cultural groups in their homes, “where they used all the refinements of language which the poetry of the time had made fashionable” (149-54). It is this pretension to intellectual pursuits that Quevedo mocks so cruelly in *La culta latiniparla*. Women also attended the theatre and sat in their own gallery, decently segregated from the men.

Entertaining in the home seems to have been conducted according to a strictly hierarchical protocol. For example, Entrambasaguas records the enmity that developed between Ramírez’s family and the Almezquita, the son of whom was one of her suitors:

[N]ació una rivalidad que desembocó en odio y malquerencia por una cuestión de protocolo y jerarquía; . . . Yendo D^a. Isabel de Guzmán y D^a. Francisa de Mendoza a visitar a la mujer del governador de Llerena, D. Juan de Córdoba, disputaron ambas visitantes sobre cuál de las dos había de ocupar el puesto principal del estrado, originándose una violenta riña que dio en tierra con el afecto y la amistad que unía a las familias respectivas. (32)

The relationship never recovered from this encounter, although Ramírez avoided using any of the Almezquita family as the butt of her burlesque verse.

In addition to the above activities, impressions recorded by seventeenth-century English visitors to Spain do not indicate that women were universally obeying the often-repeated demands of the conduct books for silence and invisibility. Given that the same repressive and patriarchal regimen where women were concerned was also the ideal to strive for in Protestant England, it may be assumed that Spanish women were not as silent and invisible as may be supposed. Barbara Shaw Fairman’s useful collection of contemporary, anecdotal views of seventeenth-century Spanish society bears out this contention. For example, the wife of an English diplomat, Robert Bargrave, writing in the early part of the century of the *madrileñas*,

¹¹² Ramírez lampoons this habit in a *décima* entitled “A una mujer tan amiga de barro que se desayunaba con él”: “Si en la moneda se paga / que se pasa, Leonor yerra / pues se tragara la tierra. / A quien la tierra se traga / salud y color le estraga, / de su vicio la porfía / y ella dice cada día, / queriéndose disculpar, / que se la quiso almorzar / porque comerla quería” (ms. 3884 221r).

whom she found to be generally beautiful, also observed that they were far from being sequestered in their homes, and were much more lascivious and libertine than in other places (171). Lord Roos, who found women of the lower classes immoral and libertine, observed that upper class women, in spite of their grave manner, “unen ingeniosamente en su trato social cierto pudoroso atrevimiento con aquella gravedad” (172). Similarly, an anonymous letter, later in the century, found Spanish women “más animadas, más ingeniosas y de mejor ‘carácter,’ en el amplio sentido de la palabra” (172-73). A uniquely personal view of Spanish women in society can also be found in the memoirs of Lady Ann Fanshawe, wife of the English ambassador. She, too, notes the liveliness of Spanish women: “They are generally pleasant and facetious company, but in this their women exceed, who seldom laugh, but never aloud, but the most witty in repartees and stories and notions in the world” (173).

Perhaps what gave cause for concern among the conduct book writers was that which these anecdotes reveal, for they give Spanish women a lively, intelligent and rather daring comportment, at variance with their objectification in the discourses of the moralists; they also remind us of the danger of generalisation when discussing the lives of seventeenth-century women, whose words so seldom appear in the record. Ramírez and Cueva not only enjoyed loving family relationships that were far from silent, but, as will be seen below, they direct affectionate and mocking poems to friends of both sexes. Their works are important, given the paucity of other evidence that women were able to enjoy such relationships. Since they write to and about friends and kin apparently without censure, it is safe to presume that the same activities in which they engaged were also enjoyed by their wider networks of friends and acquaintances.

The ideas of Aristotle and Augustine were still highly relevant to thinkers of seventeenth-century Spain, mediated through the writings of Aquinas and other Christian writers, much of which influenced early modern views and deportment.

Since pagan philosophy was readily accepted into Christian thinking before the fourth century, what these women lacked in direct knowledge would have been conveyed to them through sermons, as well as by their priests and confessors.¹¹³ Some women, such as Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, who maintained a considerable personal library, may well have had direct access to some of these philosophers' works.

Aristotelian thought on friendship, similar to that which obtained in seventeenth-century Spanish society, is broad, including political, family and other associations. Aristotle considers friendship to be both an activity and a virtue, essential to all, regardless of age or status. It includes the natural relations of kinship, where parents and children see each other as "other selves" through shared characteristics and through the cultural imprint received by children from their parents (8.12.1162a5). He categorises three species of friendship, based on goodness, utility and pleasure. The first is altruistic and described by Aristotle as "essential" friendship: good friends act to advance the good of the other. Other forms of friendship are egoistic and therefore "accidental": the good of the friend is promoted because of the benefits or pleasures thereby acquired by the individual. According to Aristotle,

a useful friend loves for the sake of his own good, a pleasant friend for the sake of his own pleasure (8.3.1156a 14-15) . . . Perfect friendship is the friendship of good men and of men who are similar according to their virtue. For they wish things that are good similarly to each other as good men and they are essentially good. (8.3.1156b 7-9)

Thomas Aquinas shares many of Aristotle's views of friendship, and refers to him frequently in his *Summa Theologica*, where only the Bible is quoted more often than the *Nicomachean Ethics* (Pakaluk 147). Where Aristotle distinguishes complete friendship from friendships for pleasure and utility, Aquinas makes the

¹¹³ See Hyatte (388-89), who argues that key Latin words (*caritas, benevolentia, beneficium, virtus, officium, sapientia*) took on a Christian cast with the medieval reader's bias and that most medieval readers, when encountering them in Cicero or Seneca, saw meanings not irreconcilable with Christian thought. Christian writers singled out texts by Cicero and Seneca, or parts of them, from the pagan corpus at an early date, well before the fall of Rome, and accepted them as moral authorities. Reginald Hyatte, *Arts of Friendship: The Idealisation of Friendship in Medieval and Early Renaissance Literature* (New York, Leiden: E J Brill, 1994).

binary definition of love of friendship and love of concupiscence in the *Summa*. He determines in II.I.4 that friendship is necessary for happiness, citing a number of reasons: since scripture defines future happiness as glory and since this “consists in man’s good being brought to the notice of many,” the fellowship of friends is necessary. He quotes Seneca’s Epistle VI, which states that “there is no delight in possessing any good whatever, without someone to share it with us.” Since delight is necessary for happiness, and since charity, which includes love of God and our neighbour, is perfected in happiness, the fellowship of friends is essential in order to achieve delight and to perfect charity:

If we speak of the happiness of this life, the happy man needs friends, as the Philosopher says (Ethics ix, 9), not, indeed, to make use of them, since he suffices himself; nor to delight in them, since he possesses perfect delight in the operation of virtue; but for the purpose of a good operation, viz. that he may do good to them; that he may delight in seeing them do good; and again that he may be helped by them in his good work. For in order that man may do well, whether in the works of the active life, or in those of the contemplative life, he needs the fellowship of friends. (II.I.4)

Just as Seneca’s influence can be seen in Aquinas, he was also widely read and influential in medieval and early modern Europe. Francisco de Quevedo, especially, found particular affinity with aspects of Senecan Stoicism related to life as simply a prelude to death. However, in the matter of friendship, Seneca reveals a Ciceronian approach; one must test a man’s character thoroughly before accepting him as a friend in unconditional confidence. Seneca expresses his notion of friendship to Lucilius as “that true friendship which not hope nor fear nor concern for personal advantage ever sunders, that friendship in which and for which people are ready to die.” He then determines that the possession of valuable knowledge or things cannot be enjoyed unless there is someone with whom to share them (39). Perhaps his most startling assertion, both in his time and in the early modern period, was that character, not birth or social standing, determined goodness, and that friends may be found even among one’s slaves (94). It is easy to see how Seneca’s humanist Stoicism could be subsumed into Christian belief. Seneca’s views on

friendship, self-reliance and self-discipline, kindness and forgiveness towards others, blend well with Christian values, as do Stoical views of a world community believing in a supreme providence, to whose will it was man's duty to conform.

Similarly, St Augustine regarded friendship as the highest expression of a person's social nature and as a solid foundation for any society (Burt 57). Like Seneca, Augustine does not distinguish social status in the development of friendship; rather, it depends on order, "an arrangement of equal and unequal things which gives to each its proper place" (*City* 19.13.1). This theoretically makes unity possible even between the greater and the lesser, and raises important questions about friendship in the light of the prevailing hierarchical mode in state, church and family in seventeenth-century Spain. Augustine's insistence on a divinely ordered hierarchy, however, would preclude Aristotle's essential friendship, since even where a form of friendship existed, the importance of order would always make the lesser subservient to the greater.

There is little evidence of any consideration of the nature and practice of female friendship in the writings of Spanish moralists, other than in terms of condemning women for excessive visits to their neighbours. There must have been some clear concept of essential friendship, however, for Ignatius of Loyola, in the *Spiritual Exercises*, instructs his followers, when meditating, to conclude with a colloquy, made "in the way one friend speaks to another, or a servant to one in authority—now begging a favor, now accusing oneself of some misdeed, now telling one's concerns and asking counsel about them" (138). Loyola's meditative practices were not limited to male practitioners, although it was not considered appropriate for women to undertake the complete exercises. Unusually, Luisa de Carvajal undertook the part of the exercises pertaining to election, or the fulfilment of God's will, before departing for London. Elizabeth Rhodes notes that this portion of the exercises was recommended to Carvajal specifically because of her mission and that Carvajal writes of completing them. Religious women were normally guided through "open

exercises," thus called because they lacked those related to election (Rhodes, "*Tight Embrace*" 15).

Given the scarcity of direct reference to women's friendships, the memoirs of Lady Anne Fanshawe acquire particular importance as testimonial narrative. She not only describes the manner of living of the Spaniards in the middle of the seventeenth century, but records cordial visits by women to each other's homes, all in the most positive terms. For example, she notes that on 24th March 1665 she was visited by the "Marqueza de Liche . . . who had not made a visite before in 7 years. On Thursday 26th I returned the visite to . . . the Marquesa, who entertained me with a very fine banquet, and gave to my youngest girle Betty a little baskett of silver plate very richly wrought" (175). Not only did women visit, then, but their children went with them and were clearly well received.

Contemporary thinkers elsewhere in Europe discuss social friendship in similar terms to the ancients, both Greek and Roman, and to Aquinas. All are agreed on the necessity of friendship as a good. Bacon concurs with Cicero in regarding friendship as an inescapable part of being human; in Cicero's *De Amicitia*, Laelius states that friendship "is the one thing in human life which all men with one voice agree is worthwhile . . . [it] threads its way through the life of every man; no matter how he chooses to live, he cannot divorce himself from it" (XXIII, 86-87). For Cicero, self-love and self-sufficiency make friendship with a like person easier to acquire. He subscribes to the "other self" model of friendship, which shares everything, including thoughts and aims and concludes that "he who looks at a true friend, see as it were a reflection of himself. Thus those who are absent are made present, the needy are made rich, and the weak strong" (39).

Similarly for Bacon, shunning of society and a preference for solitude, other than for "a higher conversation," is inconceivable. He regards friendship as necessary for personal wellbeing, for the best friends provide solace and counsel. He goes further than Aristotle's and Cicero's "other selves":

[I]t was a sparing speech of the ancients to say that a friend is another himself, for that a friend is far more than himself . . . If a man have a true friend he may rest almost secure that the care of those things [children, work] will continue after him . . . [W]here friendship is, all offices of life are as it were granted to him and his deputy, for he may exercise them by his friend. (138-44)

As will be seen in my discussion of a sonnet by Violante del Cielo, “Belisa, el amistad es un tesoro,” there is nothing to choose between Bacon’s view of true friendship and Cielo’s. There is a warmth and a personal tone to Bacon’s view of friendship which barely touches on the political friendship discussed by Aristotle, except to observe how highly monarchs prize friendship, which, given their elevated status, is difficult to acquire unless they raise certain individuals to be their “favourites” or “privadoes” [sic], terms he finds wanting. Bacon prefers the Roman name for such friends: *participes curarum*, “for it is that which tieth the knot” (139). Of course, as has already been discussed, Cielo also exploited to the full the political friendship that Bacon regards as prized by monarchs.

Bacon’s warmth and inclusiveness is not entirely the position of Montaigne, whose essay on friendship was spawned by the death of a particularly close friend, Etienne de Boieté. Montaigne differentiates between friendships that are a communion of souls, where two friends become as one person, and “ordinary” friendships that are mere acquaintanceships and where the level of trust can never be as high. Real friendships, he argues, cannot exist between parents and children, because of “degree” and because children could never be in the position of advising their parents. The prime prerequisite of a good friend is the ability to offer wise counsel as an equal: “A single dominant friendship dissolves all other obligations. The secret I have sworn to reveal to no other man, I can impart without perjury to the one who is not another man: he is myself” (Montaigne 142).

Montaigne finds brotherly affection incomparable with affection for women, which is “more active, more scorching, and more intense,” spurred by desire for “what flees from us.” Once this heated affection becomes friendship, which

Montaigne describes as “harmony of wills,” it loses its power because its end is physical satiety rather than spiritual partnership. This spiritual bond Montaigne regards as beyond the ordinary capacity of women, whose souls are not “firm enough to endure the strain of so tight and durable a knot” (137). Once again, women as a group are precluded from spiritual intimacy by a perceived weakness of purpose, will and character, and they are blamed for the physical attributes that instead prompt animal desire in supposedly rational men. Montaigne calls on the “common agreement of the ancient schools” to support his contention that women are incapable of making a bond of friendship equal to that of men. He therefore does not venture to explore the possibility or nature of friendships among women.

Montaigne’s ideas will be contested in the sonnets of “other selves” below, where there is ample evidence of genuinely deep and spiritual relationships between women. I shall first discuss the burlesque verse of Marcia Belisarda, Ramírez Ramírez de Guzmán and Leonor de la Cueva y Silva, that clearly indicates women’s pleasure in exercising their wit, sometimes cruelly, on their friends, both male and female. Subsequently, I shall engage with poetry that clearly indicates the supportive social relationships practised by women, in which the poets write sonnets to each other, offering advice, support and encouragement. A third section, that of friendship in absence and death, encompasses sonnets where commendatory poetry celebrates the qualities of dead friends, in tones of love and loss.

3.1 “No es la miel para este burro”: The Burlesque

It is tempting to deduce that as women were criticised for excessive church-going as a means to quasi-legitimised social contact with friends of both sexes, women’s opportunities for social engagement were few. However, the contemporary views recorded by Shaw Fairman, discussed earlier, suggest otherwise. If women’s prescribed roles pertained to the private sphere and tireless domestic activity, those

upper class and educated women who had more access to leisure time utilised the enclosed domestic environment as a site for shared entertainment and companionship. Thus Lady Ann Fanshawe notes that “[w]hen they visite it is with great state and attendance. When they travell they are the most jolly people in the world, dealing their provisions of all sorts to every person they meet, when they are eating” (173).

Furthermore, these social encounters provided an opportunity to exercise and demonstrate feminine intelligence and wit. Ramírez, for example, addresses a number of burlesque poems to family members, and writes playful poetry to or about both male and female acquaintances, showing considerable confidence both in their execution and in her willingness to engage in the masculine pastime of mocking friends in verse. These sonnets suggest that women were able to enjoy friendly pastimes with members of both sexes, under a theoretically rigid and codified ceremonial procedure.¹¹⁴

There is no hint in Ramírez’s sonnets of the “subtle appropriations and reshufflings of prevailing notions of feminine virtue” mentioned by Ann Rosalind Jones in her discussion of the strategies used by Renaissance women poets to justify their writing (“Fame” 80). Where Jones refers to women poets’ use of deference and self-effacement as a method of promoting their own reputation against the masculine right to fame, Ramírez writes secure in her social position and her poetic ability. In one sonnet, for example, the lengthy title provides the reason for its composition, and even before the sonnet begins, its target is described as “ridículo”:

Respondiendo a un soneto de un hombre ridículo cuyo apellido era Castaño que habiendole dado a una Dama un vejamen en que él no acertó a responder más de que se holgaba de ser el instrumento de la conversación y la antífona, y esto refirió tantas veces que hizo reparo particular, salió muy obligado de una que le picaba con más disimulo. Le

¹¹⁴ See Deleito y Piñuela, *La mujer* 102-03. He notes the habitual separation of sexes while acknowledging that *tertulias* for mixed company took place among the upper classes “todo habitualmente dentro de un ritual prefijado.” However, he also observes that ritualistic practices were the norm during visits between women (32).

envió un soneto gracioso con un hermano de ella tal mostrandose en él muy agradecido. (ms. 3884 233v)

Given the plethora of verse written by Ramírez to her family, it seems likely that the “hombre ridículo” is a friend of the speaker’s brother, that she has already produced a burlesque poem to which the subject had been unable to respond readily, and that she feels quite at home engaging in flyting, the poetic exchange of insults as a battle of wits generally reserved for the universities and literary academies.

Ramírez does not hesitate to award all the laurels of this poetic competition to the supposedly weaker and less educated sex. Her equine metaphors embrace both the name of her victim and also the image of a dull, slow horse being spurred into action. They therefore suggest that she is riding him, thus both celebrating a particularly masculine type of power and feminising the object of her cruel wit. With the inclusion of nature and plant imagery, she relegates him, in various ways, to a subhuman category, in which the *castaño* is a horse or a tree, but never a man. She challenges his masculinity at every opportunity, highlighting her disappointment, occasioned by his lack of confidence, in the first quartet: “y cuando sólo trato de obligaros / viendoos desconfiar me desanimo” (3-4). By the second quartet she is questioning whether he is able to protect her as a caballero should: “¿Será tal árbol mi seguro arrimo?,” or whether he favours her at all, for Covarrubias’ definition of the term *tener arrimo* is “tener favor de un señor.” This man, she suggests, is too indecisive to enable her to distinguish either his intentions or his masculinity.

The uncertainty creates a deliberate ambiguity in the tercets, where the speaker describes Castaño as the source of her “alegría,” suggesting that rather than making her happy, he makes her laugh: “De mi alegría sois el instrumento / y mi Antífona sois de todo el año” (9-10). Thus the musical harmony and reciprocity implied by “instrumento” and “antífona,” is undercut, becoming instead a state of perpetual opposition. It also harks back to the implied riding of the first tercet; now he is an instrument on which she plays her own tune. The puns continue right through to

the final tercet: “Veros Castaño, claro es lo que siento / sólo el ser zaino fuera mayor daño” (12-13). The juxtaposition of “zaino,” which bears the double meaning of a dark brown horse and a treacherous person, with “castaño claro,” again undercuts the masculinity of the “hombre ridículo” to demand that he show his true colours. Finally, Castaño is reduced to a raw youth, a “boquirrubio.”

Such a sustained attack on the pride and mental abilities of a young gentleman could only be made less insulting by being part of the banter between friends. There is no sign here of a silent, domesticated woman confined to her sewing, the kitchen and the *estrado*, nor is this the only example of Catalina’s forthrightness and confidence in lampooning the supposedly superior sex. Entrambasaguas has also observed the cruel wit in Catalina’s poetry, “cuya sátira, retórica de gracia e ingeniosa intención—a menudo cruel—realizada por un estilo conceptista siempre alejado del mal gusto, y legítimo hijo del de Quevedo recuerda vivamente las inimitables obras del gran poeta satírico madrileño” (51). However, Ramírez does not restrict herself to lampooning the mental and physical failings of the opposite sex, as scrutiny of her manuscript reveals.¹¹⁵

It is significant that Ramírez chooses to ridicule in men that on which they most pride themselves: their assumed natural superiority in intelligence and in action, their attractiveness to women, and their stature and figure. Her sonnet to a small man is perhaps her most devastating and the most reminiscent of Quevedo.¹¹⁶ The quartets provide an absurd description of a microscopic man, while the sestet pretends to search for him. The first quartet includes the line “saber quisiera levantar figura” (3). The term “levantar figura,” according to Covarrubias, is principally

¹¹⁵ The scope of this study does not permit a detailed study of all her verse, but in one *décima*, for example, entitled “A una bizca,” she mocks a woman with a squint (ms. 3884 230v), and in another, lampoons male vanity: “A un hombre que por mostrar los dientes blancos se estaba siempre riendo” (ms. 3884 221v).

¹¹⁶ Gazul presumes that Ramírez would have known part, if not all, of Quevedo’s works, and also observes the enmity that existed between her uncle, D. Lorenzo Ramírez de Prado, famous *jurisconsulto*, and Quevedo, following D. Lorenzo’s “respuesta al Memorial famoso en que el gran escritor expuso al rey Felipe IV la situación calamitosa del país y la corrupción de su burocracia.” This was presumably the *Consejo y consejería de principes*, written in 1617. Gazul describes it as “una réplica adulatora que mancha la buena fama de aquel jurisconsulto” (510).

astrological: “disponer en las doze casas que señalan los lugares donde en aquel punto se hallan los signos del zodiaco, y en ellos los planetas y los lugares de las estrellas fijas.” Ramírez subtly suggests that her small subject must remain in a fixed point so that she can focus on him. Two other definitions of the term add to the insulting nature of her sonnet: “hombre ridículo, feo y de mala traza”; and “el hombre entonado, que afecta gravedad en sus acciones y palabras.” As in the sonnet to Castaño, there is only one voice, that of the female speaker.

Wordplay on *antojos* sees her both desire to see him and requiring spectacles in order to see him: “Mirando con antojos tu estatura, / con antojos de verla me he quedado” (1-2).¹¹⁷ The absurdity of this imagery gives the lie to its sincerity and suggests that she is mocking someone she knows well. However, the second quartet is particularly cruel, as in two lines she identifies all that makes a person human, the union of soul, body and reason:

Lástima tengo al alma que en clausura
la trae penando cuerpo tan menguado.
Átomo racional, polvo animado,
instante humano, breve abreviatura. (5-8)

She mocks Neoplatonic notions of soul/body duality; if the body is the prison of the soul, this soul suffers unduly by the closer confines of the flesh. As a result, extra pity is engendered for the soul, which naturally aspires to a higher purpose but is here compressed in a kind of torture. She adds to the torture by terminating the quartet with a rapid list of insulting images in which she yet manages to capture his humanity: the “átomo” is rational, the “polvo” is a spiritual substance, the “instante” is human. However, all of this is undercut in the opening lines of the sestet: “¡di si eres voz!, pues nadie determina, / dónde a la vista estás tan escondido / que la más perspicaz no te termina” (9-11). Francisco is silent and concealed from the public gaze, feminised by his tormentor and hence, less than human in the terms of

¹¹⁷ There are a number of similarities between this sonnet and Quevedo’s verse; for example, he dedicates a *canción* to “Una mujer pequeña,” in which he describes his subject as “tan nonada, que os prometo / que aun no sé si llegáis a ser sujeto” (5-6). He also feels for the soul, so tightly constrained: “Calabozo de la alma, y tan estrecho . . . miro que aun vos tenéis la alma de rodillas” (19-24). Quevedo, *Poesía original completa* 604.

contemporary gender theories. Yet, for all its apparent cruelty, the very hyperbole of this sonnet robs it of much of its vitriol, and the diminutive name applied to the subject, Felicio, suggests both happiness and also that subject and speaker are well acquainted with each other.

Although Ramírez is the only poet of this group to write such powerful verse, there are other examples that adopt a more gently mocking tone. Leonor de la Cueva y Silva, for instance, writes a *décima* to “un descortés” who “a todos asombre / con su proceder grosero” (5-6). The offence lies in his refusal to doff his hat: “que llega su gallardía / a no hacernos cortesía / por no romper el sombrero” (8-10). Marcia Belisarda also indulges in poetic play, although in her case, as a nun, she does not engage in the more acid exchanges of insults of the academies or Ramírez’s *salón*.

The titles of a number of Belisarda’s sonnets, beginning with “Dándome por asunto . . . ,” suggest that these were written for the poetry competitions on specific subjects with which nuns amused themselves. There are many examples of poetry writing by female religious, carried on not only within, but also between convents, and providing a complete repertoire of poetic styles. Unfortunately, the majority are anonymous and lack personal reference (Custodio Vega 195).¹¹⁸ As is clear from the structure of her collection, however, Belisarda intended her works for wider circulation than the confines of the convent. As will be seen in her other sonnets, to be discussed below, she not only claims authorship, but also often provides personal references. In one first-person sonnet Belisarda mocks the sonnet form itself, while also lampooning the other poet’s gongorism, but the message is concealed in well-

¹¹⁸ See also Emilio Orozco Díaz, who, in writing of the influence of St Teresa’s writings on her nuns, makes the following observation: “Es en esta última poesía de sencillo y modesto fin devocional, didáctico y festivo, sin preocupación de originalidad, donde la Santa se identifica y confunde con la obra poética de sus monjas a quienes estimulaba no sólo a cantar, sino a componer de repente para dichos fines coplas o letras devotas. Mucha de esta producción—de la Santa y de las religiosas—era, pues, improvisación, de la que la mayor parte se perdería pronto, ya que cumplía una finalidad inmediata—a veces puramente ocasional—y vivía esencialmente dentro del convento como cantos en la tradición oral.” Emilio Orozco Díaz, *Expresión, comunicación y estilo en la obra de Santa Teresa (notas sueltas de lector)*. (Granada: Excma. Diputación Provincial de Granada, 1987) 119. Marcia Belisarda’s poetry, however, offers a fragment of the potential for clever creativity turned both to religious and secular ends that existed within the convents in the period.

composed admiration and self-denigration. Although Belisarda confesses to “poco saber,” and the anonymous other is her “Reina,” or poetic superior, Belisarda also creates in her writing a well-formed and witty sonnet that gives the lie to her modesty. She confesses to having had the sonnet only a short time. However, she has already conceded defeat and has not only given it up but is returning it whence it came. She again undercuts her modest stance suggested in the final line of the first quartet, “mi juicio siento con algún defecto,” in being able to return her reply after only “poco más de un día” (3).

At first reading, Belisarda’s sonnet appears to be all it claims, a graceful nod to a superior poet acknowledging the other’s greater wit and learning. Moreover, as we do not have the other’s sonnet for comparison, this makes an acceptable reading. However, the poet herself describes it in her manuscript as a *burlesco soneto*, and a second reading suggests that the very production of her own sonnet contradicts her claim to “poco saber.” This awareness calls into question whether the other sonnet is really clever or an overwrought piece of gongorine excess. There is a degree of sarcasm in the parenthetical comments in the octet, “(curiosa mi ambición en su porfía)” (6), and in the sestet, “(otra intención de mí no se presuma)” (13). In the octet she finds herself surprisingly and daringly ambitious in undertaking such an enterprise, while in the sestet she writes as a nun, noting that she complies with the rule and engages in self-examination of her faults.

Like some medieval scholar, Belisarda toils over the incomprehensibly difficult writings. However, rather than reason and logic being employed in a weighty matter that may save her soul, this speaker is engaged in a densely composed poem from which she can extricate neither herself nor the meaning. There is no turn at line eight, as the struggle continues to the final tercet, at which point she concedes defeat: “y, hablando como debo, en mi conciencia, / (otra intención no se presuma) / digo que no es la miel para este burro” (12-14). The terminal proverb at first appears to be an exercise in self-mockery and self-abasement, but it also encapsulates the

suggestion that the “burro” is the other’s sonnet and the “miel” her own sweet reasoning: the “juicio” called into question in the first quartet.

In writing this sonnet and poetry on the many other *asuntos* presented to her, Belisarda expresses not only her skill with language, but also her ability to compose poetry at will and by artistic inspiration. She is both poet and artisan. Like male courtiers, who fulfilled paid functions and wrote poetry for display, Belisarda shows that educated women in the convent system also went about their assigned tasks and demonstrated their *sprezzatura* in dashing off a witty poem on demand. Belisarda’s poetry, intended for publication, shows literate women sought to express, by all means available, that given the tools they were the mental equals of their male counterparts.¹¹⁹

Opportunities for women to express the enjoyment of friendships through burlesque verse, as in the above sonnets, must have been rare indeed, but this only serves to make these examples all the more important in a consideration of women’s enclosure and silence in the period. They suggest that women were not only not silent before the opposite sex, but were not expected to be by their male friends. These sonnets suggest that the restrictiveness of the ideal system did not interfere with social interaction at a microcosmic level; indeed its restrictiveness may well have made the bonds of friendship stronger. The poems women write to each other reveal this bond clearly. As the following section will show, they demonstrate that they, too, enjoy friendships with “other selves.”

¹¹⁹ A perusal of Serrano y Sanz’s *Apuntes* reveals the numerous poems and sonnets that were written for local and national *certámenes* in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which provided a legitimate outlet for women’s verse and hence opportunities for officially sanctioned fame.

3.2 “Un amigo el otro siente”: Sonnets of “other selves”

As already stated in the introduction to this chapter, Montaigne determined, in his essay on friendship, that women were, by nature, incapable of achieving the spiritual bond of friendship that existed between men because of their “weakness of spirit” (Montaigne 137). However, a number of the friendship sonnets by these women do demonstrate that close relationship discussed by Montaigne, as well as by Aristotle, Seneca and Bacon, where two souls become one and share reliable advice and moral support. Violante del Cielo, for example, writes a meditative sonnet, probably to her friend, Isabel de Castro, that clearly sets out her understanding of the meaning of friendship and gives the lie to Montaigne’s argument that women are incapable of understanding this bond.¹²⁰ On a far more personal note, she also writes to extend support and praise the beauty of her friend and benefactor, Inés de Noronha, during her husband’s absence.¹²¹

The title of this last sonnet is given in the *Rimas varias* as “A la Señora Condesa de Vidigueira vestida de pardo, por la ausencia del Conde.” However, the sonnet also appears, among other verse by Cielo, in an eighteenth-century manuscript from the Jesuit College in Coimbra, held at the British Library, where the title is given as “A Condesa Vidigueira estando vestida de pardo por su marido.” This is not an autograph manuscript and is later than the *Rimas*, but there is sufficient discrepancy in the two titles to suggest that the sonnet may have circulated under different titles, rather than that this is simply scribal error. Given that the Conde was the publisher of the collection, this raises the possibility that the title was changed

¹²⁰ Olivares and Boyce suggest that this sonnet was probably addressed to her friend, Bernarda Ferreira de la Cerda. However, Vieira Mendes determines that the addressee is Isabel de Castro, a friend to whom Cielo also dedicated an epistle on a royal death. Vieira Mendes’ source is the conde de Sabugosa’s *Neves de Antanho*, published in 1919. See Vieira Mendes’ note in do Céu, *Rimas varias* (1993), 58. The pastoral name “Belisa” tends to support Vieira Mendes’ contention.

¹²¹ Vieira Mendes provides biographical details about the lady, noting that she was the daughter of the powerful third conde de Calheta, Simão Gonzalves da Camara, and granddaughter of the first conde do Castelo Melhor. She married in 1632 and Vieira Mendes suggests that the sonnet could have been written in 1642, when the conde left to become ambassador to Paris. do Céu *Rimas varias*, 53.

when the sonnet went to print, in order to avoid embarrassment. As given in the manuscript, the title transforms the import of the sonnet so that it offers moral support and consolation to a friend suffering under a husband's coercive control, that extended even to her clothing. However, Cielo's acknowledgement of the brown dress also suggests that her friend may have adopted the Franciscan habit, also a favourite burial garment, to mark her husband's absence; such a practice was customary, as a history of Spanish women reveals:

La Marquesa de Villars, esposa del embajador francés en Madrid, refiere en 1679 de esas reuniones que "todas esas mujeres hablan como urracas fuera del nido, muy adornadas con hermosos trajes y pedrerías, salvo aquellas cuyos maridos están de viaje o en alguna embajada. Una de las más bonitas, por ese motivo, iba vestida de gris. Durante la ausencia de sus maridos se consagran a algún santo y llevan con su hábito gris o blanco algunos pequeños cinturones de cuerda o de cuero. (Voltes and Voltes Bou 74)

The intention in this sonnet is to reassure a friend that her beauty, physical and spiritual, cannot be concealed in an ugly gown, whatever may have occasioned its wearing: "Ostenta la mayor soberanía / en la misma humildad, Nise la hermosa" (1-2). Cielo begins by describing what she observes, using the third person, before going on to a direct, second-person apostrophe in the tercets. She skilfully employs metaphors of light and shade, sunshine and clouds, so that the friend is seen to be a source of light and life that outshines her drab garments and even the *gala* garments of the *fiestas*. Although she proclaims that the countess wishes to demonstrate her sadness, this only serves to enhance her brilliance:

Por no causar, su sol, tanta alegría,
cuando de una tristeza está quejosa,
pardas nubes admite rigurosa,
y en pardas nubes luce más su día. (5-8)

The husband, whose absence or whose command is the reason for the sonnet, is almost completely effaced by this gesture of friendship and admiration, and appears only in the title. The sonnet itself focuses on providing positive images of the woman friend, who is never presented as an objectified individual. Rather, the imagery exudes beauty, light, richness and quality, while the references to sovereignty and to

victory indicate a battle for supremacy, easily won by the countess, as Cielo intrudes her “soberanía” into the opening line of the sonnet. As so often in her laudatory poetry, and as already seen in the sonnet to the countess of Penaguião, in Chapter One, Cielo celebrates this countess’s ingenuity: “bien tu ingenio, tu intención declara” (11). Finally, however, Cielo alludes to the unusual garment as an expression of love, perhaps, after all, by the friend for her absent husband: “En nube tan oscura luz tan clara / en traje tan grosero amor tan fino” (13-14). Whatever the real purpose of this sonnet, it serves Cielo well, for it is her friendship with the countess that ensures the publication of her poetry and it is the countess whose excellence shapes the sonnet.

As Cielo’s sonnet emphasises the value of female friendship as a social support and comforter, Ramírez writes a love sonnet to an absent friend that blurs the line between the erotic and the sororal. While the codified nature of this sonnet places it within the milieu of a work intended to display the poet’s skills, nevertheless, the expression of closeness in the title, “A la ausencia de una amiga, hablando con ella,” also indicates the powerful bond that friendship represented to women and the even more important place of unsanctioned conversation. In such a sonnet it is clear that Ramírez does not share the Senecan attitude to absence in friendship, that “pleasure in their company—and there is no greater pleasure—is one we enjoy the more when we are absent from one another. For having our friends present makes us spoil” (108). Seneca’s reasoning lies in his belief that friendship resides in the spirit, which is never absent. Ramírez’s title incorporates the recipient of the sonnet into the thoughts of the speaker, banishing the distance of separation and emphasising the equality that exists between friends. Yet the pain of absence steals her voice and, able only to talk in whispers, she finds that an unvoiced sentiment has no force:

Cuando quiero deciros lo que siento,
siento que he de callaros lo que quiero;
que no explican amor tan verdadero
las voces que se forman de un aliento. (1-4)

Silence was the only officially appropriate position for a woman to adopt, since speech, and worse, voicing opinions, was always related to a presumed sexual openness and availability. As Ann Rosalind Jones has stated in discussing the formation of Renaissance gender theory, all women, married or not, were constrained to silence.¹²² Nevertheless, Ramírez's poetry collection indicates that silence was not part of her lived experience. It freely praises, mocks and criticises the behaviour and posturing of those around her. The absence of a friend, then, has real poignancy: Catalina has lost a confidante able to share her opinions, and the committing of words to paper is not sufficient to quell the loss of the other's immediate presence; she has been silenced, not by decree but by absence.

While nominally keeping to the structural formalities, the sonnet divides into a primary quartet that sets out the problem, a central group of seven lines that lays down and answers the proposition, and a final tercet that provides the result of the internal debate: that there is no solution while the absence continues. The entire sonnet is infused with terminologies of disease, wounding, life and death. Her thoughts swing back and forth from her position in Llerena to that of her friend, while the repeated sense of loss is reflected in the chiasmus of "vivo y muero/morir . . . la vida/vivo . . . muerte." The remedy sought in line six is still unresolved at line twelve:

Si de dulces memorias me alimento,
 que enfermo del remedio considero,
 y con un accidente vivo y muero,
 siendo el dolor alivio del tormento,
 ¿qué importa que me mate vuestra ausencia
 si en el morir por vos halle la vida
 y vivo de la muerte a la violencia?
 Pues el remedio sólo está en la herida; (5-12)

¹²² In her cited examples Jones also demonstrates the long history of this constraint, for example, Thucydides' belief that "the most praiseworthy woman is she whose praises are kept within the walls of the private house." She also cites Aristotle's analogy of gendered virtue: silence in women balanced by eloquence in men, and its concomitant expression in the Renaissance theory of Barbaro: "Women should believe that they have achieved the glory of eloquence if they will honor themselves with the outstanding ornament of silence." The ideal woman was "unseen, unheard, untouched, unknown—at the same time that she was obsessively observed." Ann Rosalind Jones, "Surprising Fame," *The Poetics of Gender*, ed. Nancy K. Miller (New York: Columbia UP, 1986) 79.

Using the Petrarchan terms of the bereft lover, Ramírez attempts to salve the wound of absence with sweet memories of the beloved, which leads only to further pain and misery at the realisation of the friend's continued absence. There is only one remedy for the pain: the presence of the friend, without whom death and life become one. This possibility, however, remains unfulfilled, and the pain unresolved.

The hyperbolic death-in-absence theme, a common trope in early modern love sonnets, affirms not only the importance of female friendship to women, but also the extravagant nature of language in the period, especially poetic language, when addressing matters of sentiment. The erotic quality of such verse has to be seen in the light of the context in which it was written, when even the term "erotic" had a much less sexually charged meaning than it does today.¹²³ Hence, Catalina demonstrates herself to be part of the literary culture of her era, while also paying a compliment to a friend. At the same time, her friend understands well the codified nature of such poetic pleasantries but can also accept it as a genuine expression of friendship.¹²⁴

Similarly, the true nature of friendship is demonstrated by Violante del Cielo in her sonnet to "Belisa." Its importance as a revisionist part of literary history is emphasised by Adrienne Martín: "[I]t portrays and extolls female friendship while that topic is generally disavowed in Golden Age literature" (60). The sonnet is delivered as a philosophical treatise, a definition of true friendship as beyond price. Like Seneca, Cielo regards absence as no barrier to the sharing of experience, since

¹²³ The introduction to a collection of erotic verse of the period illustrates the difference between the meaning of the word "erotic" in the seventeenth and the twentieth centuries: "The dictionary of the Real Academia defines *erótico* as 'lo perteneciente o relativo al amor sensual' whereas at the beginning of the seventeenth century, the *Diccionario de Autoridades* 'explica la palabra *erótico*, conforme a su etimología en el sentido más amplio de *amatorio*. Y un siglo antes in 1617 el poeta Esteban Manuel de Villegas publicó unas *Eróticas* que no tienen nada de erótico, en el sentido en que lo entendemos hoy." Pierre Alzieu, Robert Jammes and Yvan Lissorgues, Eds., *Poesía erótica del Siglo de Oro* (Barcelona: Crítica, 1983) viii. In addition, the Greek *eros*, in Platonic thought, is closely aligned to the creative impulse, to join with the Idea.

¹²⁴ The sentiments expressed here closely mirror those of the love sonnet by Violante del Cielo to the absent lover, "Quien dice que la ausencia es homicida," where she explores the paradox of not dying of the fatal illness of separation, a condition she finds far worse than death itself. The sonnet appears in both the *Rimas varias* (1646 (2) and in the British Library Additional Manuscript 25353 (n. pag.).

communication between true friends is a spiritual matter: “Es la amistad un lícito decoro / que se guarda en lo ausente y lo presente” (5-6).¹²⁵

The word “amistad” dominates the first lines of each quartet and tercet, and begins and ends the sonnet. First, the poet elaborates her vision of ideal friendship as a treasure beyond price: the quartets are full of positive qualifiers and she includes both Arabia and Potosí to refer synecdochally to the wealth of the world. The reference takes in both the East and West Indies, a commonly used marker for vast, uncountable riches.¹²⁶ However, they are still insufficient to value the true worth of friendship:

Belisa, el amistad es un tesoro
tan digno de estimarse eternamente
que a su valor no es paga suficiente
de Arabia y Potosí la plata y oro. (1-4)

Whether together or apart, in Cielo’s evocation of friendship friends feel each other’s emotions: “. . . un amigo el otro siente / la tristeza, el pesar, la risa, el lloro” (7-8). In this, she almost exactly echoes the sentiments of Bacon.

Like a practised rhetorician, Cielo shows herself able to argue both sides of her case. Whereas the quartets frame all that is positive and valuable in friendship, the tercets move into the negative mode in the way that religious meditation often employs the *via negativa* to reflect on all that Christ was not: “No se llama amistad la que es violenta, / sino la que es conforme simpatía, / de quien lealtad hasta la muerte ostenta” (9-11). This enables a contrast to be set up in which violence and death occupy balancing and opposite roles.

¹²⁵ See also Janice Raymond, *A Passion For Friends* (Reading: Cox & Wyman, 1991). Raymond discusses the notion of “spiritual friendship” in convents: “Nuns expressed commitment to each other in a mode of communication that is peculiar to spiritual friendship, along with a highly pietistic tone that is typical of this ‘companionship of souls’” (86).

¹²⁶ Shakespeare, for example, employs this motif in “The Merry Wives of Windsor” when Falstaff muses: “She is a region in Guiana, all gold and bounty. . . . They shall be my East and West Indies and I will trade to them both. William Shakespeare, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. ed. and introd. G. R. Hibberd (London: Penguin, 1973) ll. 64-66. Similarly, John Donne, in his poem “The Sunne Rising,” writes of his beloved: “Look, and tomorrow late, tell mee, / Whether both the Indias of spice and myne / Be where thou leftst them, or lie here with mee” (16-18). John Donne, *The Complete English Poems of John Donne*. ed. C. A. Patrides (London: Dent, 1985) 54.

Like Seneca, for Cielo friendship demands loyalty until death. It is a faithful and constant spiritual presence that provides mutual support “entre amigas,” a friendship discovered, sustained and offered unconditionally to Belisa. The sting lies in the final tercet line: “Ésta la amistad es que hallar querría” (12). Although Olivares and Boyce have the last word of this line as “quería,” the conditional, “querría,” is found in the 1646 edition of the *Rimas*, as well as in the British Library’s eighteenth-century manuscript, and is also adhered to by Vieira Mendes in her recent anthology. This conditional alters the tone of the poem and implies that Cielo is expressing genuine friendship in a relationship she now finds lacking. It also precludes the idea put forward at the sonnet’s opening, that Cielo was simply setting out an objective discussion of the nature of friendship. Cielo now regards friendship as an attainable ideal that she has both achieved and offered, as the final lines reveal: “ésta la que entre amigas se sustenta, / y ésta, Belisa, en fin, la amistad mía” (13-14).

Victor Rojas offers several conjectures as to Cielo’s intentions in the sonnet. He suggests that she was writing in the abstract in answer to general questions on the nature of friendship, and that it demonstrates idealism, rather than *desengaño*, as a motivating factor (114). However, in my view, “querría” embodies a distinctly disillusioned tone. Whether disappointed in her friendship with Belisa or not, Cielo proves that she fully understands what true friendship of “other selves” means when she continues, paradoxically in terms of the conditional verb, to offer unconditional friendship to Belisa, moving the ideal into the potentially real. Like Martín, I conclude that the expressions of female friendship espoused by Cielo merit a more literal reading than they have hitherto been accorded (65). The few known facts of Cielo’s life, coupled with the content of a number of her other works, have led biographers to conclude that she found human relationships wanting, and that this was one reason

for her determination to take the veil.¹²⁷ Certainly, in several other sonnets, one of which will be discussed below, she cures herself of the *desengaño* engendered by failed personal relationships, concluding that such disappointing friendships serve only to turn her ever more faithfully towards God.

Where Cielo proffers support to Inés de Noronha and unfettered friendship to “Belisa” beyond the convent walls, this comforting warmth is also seen in the welcoming sonnets written by nuns to celebrate the professions of their sisters. St Teresa had already encouraged her nuns to write, and employed poetry as an effective way to express sisterly warmth to new entrants in the convent. In reading Teresa de Avila’s poetry, the most striking immediate effect is its joyous and accessible simplicity. Although she employs a range of rhetorical devices, most notably alliteration and anaphora, her verse is comparatively free of the frequent, even excessive, recourse to self-criticism and denigration seen in her prose works. Her poems are, principally, simple *villancicos*, mostly composed for specific and important activities within the convent, such as holy days and the professing of new nuns. This type of poetry strengthens the image of the convent as a site of mutual support with a modicum of independence, secluded from the problems, stresses and dangers of quotidian life and, significantly, the pressures imposed by fathers, husbands and brothers, even though the convent produced pressures of its own. However, Teresa was also at pains to stress that friendly relations within the convent should be of a general and communal nature, as a means to avoid jealousy and the factionalism that can arise from particular friendships.¹²⁸

In spite of the strictures imposed or recommended by Teresa, Marcia Belisarda’s poetry, particularly the funeral sonnet to “Anarda,” to be discussed below,

¹²⁷ See, for example, Vieira Mendes, “Apresentação,” who takes issue with previous biographers’ determination that Cielo entered the convent because of a failed love affair. See also Víctor Julio Rojas, “Vida y obra de Violante do Céu,” Doctoral thesis, Indiana, 1975, 30-36.

¹²⁸ In her *Constituciones* St Teresa goes further: “Ninguna hermana abraza a otra, ni la toque el rostro ni en las manos, ni tengan amistades en particular, sino todas se amen en general, como lo mandó Cristo a sus Apóstoles.” Teresa de Jesús, *Obras completas*. Ed. Otger Steggink and Efrén de la Madre de Dios, 4th rev. ed. (Madrid: Editorial Católica, 1974) 642.

shows strong commitment to individual friends. She employs rather more complex imagery than that of Teresa, as can be seen in the sonnet written to celebrate a profession in her own Convento de la Encarnación in Toledo. Belisarda sets out her artistic intentions in the title: “A la profesión de Doña Petronila de la Palma en la Concepción Real de Toledo, siguiendo la metáfora de la palma.”¹²⁹ The palm is a useful metaphor to link the newly professed nun to both classical and biblical antecedents, for it has many classical allusions, beginning with the birth of Apollo, whose mother, Leto, leaned against the palm tree on Delos as she gave birth to him. This palm became sacred and the symbol of victory in both athletic and military contests (Howatson and Chilvers 310). Horace’s first ode mentions chariot races and their victors’ palms (1.1), and Shakespeare includes the palm of military victory in two of his Roman plays, *Julius Caesar* (1.2.131), and *Coriolanus* (5.3.117).

Leaving aside these martial and triumphalist images, the date palm flourishes in biblical lands, where the fruits are indeed miraculous in their nourishing and sustaining qualities. Belisarda’s choice of the palm metaphor is a graceful gesture to the name the new nun will leave behind as she enters the convent. It also links the new bride of Christ to both Old and New Testaments and to the Holy Land. In the Song of Solomon the groom addresses the bride: “This thy stature is like to a palm tree. . .” (7.7), while in the New Testament, Christ’s entry into Jerusalem was heralded with palms, now celebrated in Palm Sunday. As a pilgrim in search of divine mercy through prayer, the new nun also joins the Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land, the *palmeros*, who brought back palm leaves from their travels.¹³⁰ The garden and nature imagery emphasise both the *hortus conclusus* with its references to virginity and female enclosure, and the wholesome and natural elements of the convent family in an Edenic environment of untarnished purity, accentuated by the etymological linking of the “Real

¹²⁹ Belisarda clearly had close ties to Doña Petronila, as she does not stop at a sonnet but also writes a *décima* that begins: “Tu nombre mismo acredita / el premio justo que alcanza” and concludes “La que en méritos de el alma / tres veces la dan la Palma / virtud, profesión, y nombre” (ms. 7469 8r).

¹³⁰ Writing of Teresian iconology, Alison Weber has also noted Teresa’s identification as “Virgen y Doctora,” symbolised by a palm branch and a golden pen. Alison Weber, *Teresa of Avila and the Rhetoric of Femininity* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1990) 164.

jardín” to paradise: “En este Real jardín, O palma hermosa, / os plantó vuestro dueño soberano. / Dispuso y cultivó, su sacra mano” (1-3). The convent becomes a place where the soul will receive the appropriate nourishment for growth. As a welcoming sonnet to a new entrant, its positive imagery and gentle tone highlight aspects of health, sweetness, softness and goodness.

The new nun’s “planting” in the convent is attributed to God, here a divine gardener, with references to the Garden of Eden and perfection, but also Eve’s responsibility for the fall of humankind. However, the suggestion of Eve that is inextricably linked with the garden and the fall, also looks forward to the redemption of female culpability in the form of the Virgin Mary. As the new plant in the garden metamorphoses into the bride of Christ, she produces the sweet and life-giving “fruta milagrosa.” She is not only pledged to Christ but is also a representative of the Virgin, mother of this miraculous fruit, and this in turn is a reminder that the convent that Doña Petronila will join is the Convento de la Concepción. Belisarda goes further in emphasising that this new bride of Christ is not just a passive recipient of God’s fertile power, but an intelligent, rational woman who chooses this life of her own volition: “No ingrata vegetal, sí generosa; / racional, producid de amor temprano / dulces efectos con intento sano” (5-7). Once again a woman poet takes the opportunity to celebrate female rationality.

The sonnet is carefully divided: the first quartet deals with God’s planting and tending of his “palma,” while the second offers advice that will lead to the spiritual and rational development of the new nun, with the final line summing up her metamorphosis: “Mudando el ser de planta en el de esposa” (8); that is, from Doña Petronila de la Palma, to the bride of Christ. After the turn, the tercets offer alternating views of heaven and earth. The first tercet offers a reminder of the poverty and insignificance of earthly life, during which the faithful must try to redeem the soul through exemplary living: “Advertid, pues, que el dueño es infinito, / abreviada y finita vuestra vida; / pagadle, esposa fiel, frutos del Alma” (9-11). Finally, the poet reminds

the novice that she is not offering empty praise but eternal truths, and she counsels that by living in a way that will please God, the new nun will achieve the victory palm of eternal life: "Gozaréis en su gloria eterna Palma." Hence, adroitly, Belisarda returns the sonnet to where it began, with the "palma hermosa," now transformed. In this way Belisarda effectively bridges the gap between human frailty and divine majesty, with the metamorphosis into a nun the first step towards the greater metamorphosis of eternal life through divine redemption.¹³¹

The welcome to a life of religious devotion was a common reason for poetry writing among nuns, as the above sonnet and Teresa's poetry can testify. However, the advice offered by Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza, in one of only three extant poems by her that do not deal directly with divine matters, is a forceful warning call, probably addressed to her cousin, María, to turn to the difficult path of righteousness.¹³² For Carvajal this was a difficult path indeed, made always more difficult by her self-confessed determination to suffer and die for Christ. That Carvajal was virtually incapable of comprehending that a sane person may not be prepared to follow a similar path is evident in her sonnet, which is nevertheless addressed to someone whom she dearly loves, and for whose spiritual safety she evinces concern. The title incorporates the suggestion that "Amari" is attempting to follow the Catholic practice of good works: "ocupaciones y correspondencias humanas, aunque con buen fin"; the problem for Carvajal is that they are just not spiritual enough, being grounded far too much in human concerns. In writing this sonnet of sisterly advice, Carvajal follows the precepts of Aristotle, Cicero, Bacon and above all Montaigne, in

¹³¹ Although this is Belisarda's only sonnet celebrating a profession, she writes two other welcoming poems to new nuns: "A la profesión de una monja bernarda que la hizo en día de la degollación del baptista estando el Santísimo Sacramento descubierto y su nombre Paula" (ms.7469 8), and "Villancico a Doña María de la Puebla, profesando en la Concepción Francisca de Toledo estando el Santísimo Sacramento descubierto" (ms.7469 56). Both are expressed with the same tenderness and care as the above sonnet and employ similarly complex terminology in combining the human with the divine.

¹³² In noting that only two of her sonnets were directed to mortals, Abad observes that the sonnet to Amari is probably intended for her cousin, María de Hurtado y Mendoza. The other is to "Nise," her doncella Inés. Camilo María Abad, "Nota preliminar a las poesías," *Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza: Epistolario y poesías*, ed. Camilo María Abad and Jesús González Marañón, vol. 179, Biblioteca de autores españoles (Madrid: Atlas, 1965) 423. However, there is also a third sonnet to an unknown *hombre que cayó en la culpa*.

asserting that the proper role of a true friend is to share confidences and proffer counsel.

Carvajal addresses her sonnet to a “señora grave.” Amari is a person of quality, yet casts the pearls of her social superiority before the swine of the “rústico ganado”—in this case not the lower classes but common humanity—instead of offering them to God. The quartets are filled with questions and exclamations as Carvajal tries to determine what motivates Amari. The third line, “de quien con tanto amor eres amada,” is deliberately ambiguous: Amari is beloved by the writer herself (hence her desire to warn Amari before it is too late), and by the source of all Carvajal’s inspiration, Christ. Carvajal appears to blame the growing commercialisation of society and the concomitant market for consumer goods, enhanced by the regular arrival of the treasure ships from the New World, where even a soul may be sold, when she asks: “¿Hate la vana ocupación comprado?” (5). This leads to the conclusion that some evil force has taken possession of Amari: “¿Qué nigromántica arte embelesada / te trae, y de tu bien tan trascordada?” (7-8). The evil power causes her to forget her “true” vocation, that of religion, and her own spiritual wellbeing. For Carvajal, the way of Amari’s present life leads only to darkness and eternal death. The octet ends with two short exclamations that evoke the horror the writer feels at the willing betrayal of faith: “¡Ay alevosa fe! ¡Ay pecho helado!” (8).

Where the octet is a single call to Amari to become aware of her actions, the sestet is a sustained appeal for her to turn back from the easy path to hell, its true nature concealed by the flowers and grasses of human vanity and self-interest: “vas de amor el camino, digo, atajo. / Y ése que llevas, ancho y deleitoso / suele mañosamente ir encubriendo” (10-12). This enhances the urgent tone of the sonnet, and evinces the fervid religious atmosphere that obtained in Counter-Reformation Spain. The plea to Amari, couched in poetic terms that do not veil its vehemence,

reveals the poet's belief that Amari's soul is in danger. As friend and kin, she has no recourse but to give due warning.

The sonnet is unique, not only in its near-desperate emotional appeal, but also because no other sonnet by any of these women seeks to inspire an individual to abandon her present path and cling to a more devout religious life that precludes all normal human pleasures, within the confines of what was, in any event, a religiously inclined society. In all her sonnets, Violante del Cielo never seeks to make a religious conversion among her well-placed friends. It is typical of her superior intellect and education, however, that she pauses to meditate on friendship, both in her sonnet to "Belisa" and in her religious verse, where she writes a number of other sonnets that touch on the theme of friendship but which do not involve contemporary female friendship.

Among Cielo's sonnet sequence on the Mysteries, in the *Parnaso lusitano*, one meditates on the relationship between Christ and his betrayer in the garden of Gethsemane, at the moment when Judas comes to give him the betrayer's kiss. Cielo argues that, through Christ, this betrayal becomes an act of friendship to all humankind. Nevertheless, it first requires a poetic and intellectual struggle to arrive at this felicitous conclusion. The title, "Sobre el Amice ad quid venisti?," refers to the scriptural story of the betrayal in the garden: "And he came up to Jesus at once and said 'Hail, Master!' and he kissed him. Jesus said to him, 'Friend, why are you here?' Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and seized him" (Mat.26:50-51).

The speaker of the sonnet is indignant and puzzled that Jesus, with his foreknowledge of his fate, still welcomes the embrace of his treacherous friend and disciple:

Si sabéis, que este amigo es enemigo,
 ingrato, desleal, fingido, astuto,
 ¿por qué le dais, Señor, ese atributo?
 ¿por qué premio le dais, y no castigo?
 Si de su error sois el mayor testigo,
 si a vuestra adoración niega el tributo,
 si sembrando piedad, no esperáis fruto,

¿por qué llamáis al enemigo amigo? (1-8)

The querulous quartets reveal that all precepts of friendship have been violated by Judas' actions, yet Jesus' behaviour towards Judas is unchanged. Where Jesus continues to treat Judas as his "other self," Judas shows all the worst human attributes; so does the speaker, who, unable to show such Christian tenderness towards a sinner, expresses the human desire for revenge, and punishment for injustice. The octet is framed by the double "amigo/enemigo" and "enemigo/amigo," in posing the impossible question: if you know this friend is your enemy, why do you call your enemy a friend? Thus far, Cielo's sonnet has the appearance of a correctly practised meditation on a specific, biblical theme, in which she creates the composition of place, and then speaks to Christ as to a friend, but this merely sets up the tercets to reveal Cielo's astonishing conclusion.

Continuing to address Christ directly, the poetic voice now determines that Christ, out of his perfect love, deliberately humbles himself before common humanity. Through his more perfect knowledge he is able to see Judas as a friend to all humankind, for it is through his betrayal that Christ complies with his destiny and liberates humankind from the toils of eternal death:

Vos sabéis la razón; mas yo sospecho,
que como en las finezas amorosas
libráis de vuestro nombre las grandezas;
Amigo halláis, que ha sido un falso pecho,
porque con las ofensas rigurosas
os ha dado ocasión de hacer finezas. (9-14)

Cielo's sonnet condemns human frailty, in the person of Judas, but celebrates Christ's sacrifice, joining both in an act of friendship, the kiss that seals the fate of the divine victim and brings hope to the world. Her extraordinary determination that Judas's act of betrayal was, in reality, an act of friendship demonstrates women's willingness to assert friendship as a good and to retain that friendship in the face of all provocation: a trusting faith that is not always well paid, as her sonnets comparing

human and divine love reveal. However, it is not women's love that these poems reject, but rather the activities of the world.

Cielo's sonnets often suggest that her personal interactions in the world outside the convent were not satisfactory, and this may be borne out in the foundering of her relationship with Andrade through the machinations of her family, already discussed. Three of her sonnets compare the difficulties of human love with the perfection of the divine: "Daños del amor humano, bienes del amor divino," "Firmezas del divino amor, inconstancias del amor humano," and "Mal paga del mundo es colirio para ver y buscar a Dios." These reveal, through the misery occasioned by lost or misplaced friendships, the great importance of companionship, shared confidences and mutual support to seventeenth-century women. The following examination of the third of these sonnets will serve as an example.

Although this sonnet retains a conventional quartet/tercet rhyme scheme, it more naturally divides into a six/eight-line structure. The shifting insubstantiality of human relations is compared unfavourably with the utter dependability of divine love in the first six lines, through the use of a familiar proverbial phrase and a well-known biblical reference, reflecting the common nature of human affections and *desengaño*:

Esta pena, mi Dios, este tormento
que me causan agravios repetidos,
castigos son bien al error debidos
de querer fabricar sin fundamento.
¡Oh qué peligro corre el sufrimiento
entre agravios, Señor, no merecidos!¹³³ (1-6)

The turn comes at the sixth line. From there follows the repetition of "Paguen . . . paguen . . . paguen," which emphasises both her own foolishness in expecting more than it is within human capacity to give, and also how dearly the emotions suffer when reliance on human friendship founders on the vacillations of human intercourse

¹³³ The proverbial building of castles in the air is common throughout European literature. The biblical reference is to Christ's description of the man who heeds his words: ". . . [H]e is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation upon rock; and when . . . the stream broke against that house [it] could not shake it, because it had been well built. But he who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation; against which the stream broke, and immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great" (Luke 6:47-49).

compromised by self-interest: “Mas paguen, paguen siempre mis sentidos / las torres que fundaron en el viento. / Paguen la confianza que tuvieron / en humana amistad” (7-10).

The speaker compares her fate with that of those who leave aside relations with their fellows, devoting themselves entirely to God: “Dichosos los que en Vos se confiaron / solamente, mi Dios, pues no cayeron” (12-13). However, by couching the whole of the sestet in the simple past she implies that in the seventeenth century such faith is no longer possible. Gone are her friendships and, by implication, gone also are those lucky few who loved God exclusively, as if she refers to long-dead saints and philosophers. In doing so the poet reflects the common perception of a disillusioned seventeenth century that the world was decaying, that times were out of joint and that true joy and perfectibility lay in a golden past.

These sonnets of “other selves” contrast strongly with Montaigne’s assertion that women were, by nature, incapable of forming and maintaining deep, abiding friendships. The sonnets and other verse written by nuns to mark the entrance of new nuns to their sisterhood demonstrate the importance, not just of their marriage vows to Christ, but also of the bonds that bind women together in shared poverty and obedience. In writing sonnets to their “other selves,” these poets affirm that they fully understand the purpose of the love sonnet as a codified form of display and graceful compliment. However, that they write such sonnets also points to the considerable importance that women placed on the solidarity they received from friendships and shared confidences, as can be seen in Cielo’s sonnet on the brown dress and Ramírez’s sonnet to her absent friend. These are more than mere expressions of wit. Cielo defines the nature of friendship from a woman’s perspective very precisely in her sonnet to Belisa, and compounds her message by identifying the bleak nature of false friendship in her sonnet on the betrayal in the garden. The above poems show that women did not have to be familiar with Aristotle’s affirmation of friends as “other selves” in order to discover a valid and important source of

solace, companionship and shared experience. It is because they enjoy such fruitful relationships with their friends, that sonnets marking their deaths are so poignant, as will be seen below.

3.3 “Lágrimas negras de mi pluma triste”: Death and Friendship.

The same codification of poetic display seen in the Petrarchan love poetry and some of the sonnets discussed above, is also evident in a plethora of encomiastic funeral sonnets directed both to personal friends and to high-born or powerful people in the seventeenth century.¹³⁴ Many women seized the opportunity, during the national outpourings of funeral verse at the deaths of royalty, to express themselves in print in a seemly way, as has also been noted by editors of women’s poetry collections:

La oleada de poesías necrológicas, que eran publicadas en obeliscos o en coronas fúnebres, ofrece considerable interés para nuestro estudio por el elevado índice de participación de mujeres y las posibilidades que brindaba a éstas para hacer públicas sus composiciones, aunque solo fuera dentro del género que aquellas ocasiones requerían. Era, generalmente, una literatura de circunstancias, de limitada inspiración personal y vacía de emociones sinceras. (Navaro 47)

However unwise it may be to search for sincerity in a baroque sonnet, I shall show, in my discussion of the sonnets in this section, that women did not only write funeral sonnets simply to insert themselves into historic, public moments. Beyond the ritualised, public displays of poetic emotion at the deaths of public figures, they also exhibit in their poetry personal, intimate grief, only partly assuaged by Christian belief in the eternal life of the soul. Some of the dedicatees were both personal friends and women of substance and renown, such as Cielo’s friend and

¹³⁴ Serrano y Sanz notes surviving works from at least eleven women who wrote such sonnets in the seventeenth century alone: among them, Violante del Cielo’s sonnet on the death of Lope de Vega. A number of sonnets also appear by women writing in the New World: most notably, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz’s sonnet on the death of Felipe IV. Other popular subjects for such verse were Prince Baltasar Carlos, the Cardenal Infante, Don Fernando, and Queen Isabel de Borbón. For the latter, María Nieta de Aragón wrote, and apparently published, six sonnets on her death, under the title *Lágrimas a la muerte de la Augusta Reyna* . . . Por D^a. María Nieta de Aragón. Madrid Diego Díaz de la Carrera. 1645. No. 245 in Serrano y Sanz, *Apuntes para una biblioteca de escritoras españolas*.

fellow poet, Bernarda Ferreira de la Cerda. Others were purely friends and companions, such as the “Anarda” of Marcia Belisarda’s sonnet. Straddling the two forms of funeral poetry are three sonnets composed by Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz on the death of her beloved patron, friend and supporter, the vicereine of Mexico, the Marquesa de Mancera, in which she celebrates the outstanding physical beauty of the subject and likens her to the sun, with all its regal and divine connotations. The sestet observes that the Marquesa:

nació donde el Oriente el rojo velo
 corre al nacer al Astro rubicundo,
 y murió donde, con ardiente anhelo
 da sepulcro a su luz el mar profundo:
 que fué preciso a su divino vuelo
 que diese como el Sol la vuelta al mundo. (9-14)

Through this sun imagery, Sor Juana is able to include the Marquesa’s role as representative of Spanish majesty and to show that majesty is not limited by gender. This imagery, normally associated with the king’s person, acts in two ways: it emphasises that the virreina’s places of birth and death span the world, as do the sun in its diurnal round, and Spain’s dominion over its colonies. References to the sun also foreground its importance in Mexico’s pagan past, while the sun’s inexorable east-west movement also brings to the fore the assumed permanence of Spanish world domination, the *monarquía* on which the sun never set, and to whose governing classes the Marquesa belonged. Underlying all of this is the simple, historical fact that the Marquesa de Mancera died at sea and hence, as the sun appears to do, passed into the sea that became her grave.

Sor Juana wrote three sonnets immortalising the dead Marquesa. In one, she rehearses the severing of the Marquesa’s beautiful soul from her equally beautiful body; in another, beginning “Bello compuesto en Laura dividido,” she finds solace in the observation that it is necessary to suffer this “divorcio riguroso” in order to achieve eternal union of body and soul at the end of time. Sor Juana insists on the unparalleled beauty of the subject in all three sonnets, an important factor for the

poet in the context of salvation, since physical beauty was in this period seen as the outward manifestation of inner purity and goodness. The line “Pero ya ha penetrado mi sentido,” which opens the second quartet, serves a dual purpose; it begins to resolve the questions of the first quartet and represents the genuine piercing of the poet’s “sentidos”: the grief occasioned by the loss of her beloved friend.

The three sonnets function on a rising continuum of personal involvement. In the first, Sor Juana stands back to observe that the heavens, jealous of her beauty, have stolen the subject; the second questions the division of such a perfect body and soul, and seeks the answer in divine providence, while the third opens directly with the poet’s personal suffering: “Mueran contigo, Laura, pues moriste, / los afectos que en vano te desean” (1-2), and acknowledges still-current humoral theory, in the shedding of black tears:

Muera mi lira infausta en que influiste
ecos, que lamentables te vocean,
y hasta estos rasgos mal formados sean
lágrimas negras de mi pluma triste. (5-8)

The poet claims in this quartet to have lost her muse; hence the death of her *lira*. As she attempts to inscribe her love and grief on the page, the ink is portrayed, instead, as tears from her weeping pen that impede her creative impulse. The black tears also incorporate the idea of the melancholic philosopher and recall that, according to humoral theory, the coldness of the melancholy humour created the necessary mental state for intellection.¹³⁵ Teresa Soufas has outlined how women’s appropriation of the ambiguities and tensions inherent in the theory articulate challenges to notions about the female mind and body (“Gendered Context” 172). Here, Sor Juana claims the status of melancholy poet-genius attributable to

¹³⁵ The theory of melancholy as a natural precursor to scholastic achievement, mental brilliance and artistic achievement in the Renaissance is limited to the masculine sphere. Melancholic male scholars are characterised as having a cold, dry temperament. Women bear the melancholic characteristics of coldness and wetness, identified in the period with excessive emotion, hysteria and mental weakness. Soufas argues that the melancholic tendencies considered typical of the female mind are frequently invoked in the writings of female scholars as a means to enter the debate about melancholy and its limitations on the female. Teresa Scott Soufas, “The Gendered Context of Melancholy for Spanish Golden Age Women Writers,” *Spanish Women in the Golden Age: Images and Realities*, Eds. Magdalena S. Sánchez and Alain Saint-Saëns (Westport and London: Greenwood Press, 1996) 171-84.

masculine writers, but also disclaims these qualities due to the effects of black melancholy on her emotions, occasioned by the Marquesa's death. Although she undercuts her own articulation of female melancholy as a creative urge, by completing three elegant sonnets in celebration of the Marquesa she also re-enters the debate with written proof that gives the lie to her words.

As Sor Juana performs a quasi-official function in eulogising the dead Marquesa, she also, in the process, reveals that in spite of her Christian faith the loss of her friend grieves her deeply. In the same way, Marcia Belisarda writes a sonnet to the dead "Anarda" that seeks both to immortalise the dead woman in print and also to assuage personal grief, insisting that her friend's spiritual perfection will ensure her a place in heaven. Hence death was essential to enable her true life to begin. Belisarda does not begin the sonnet in Christian faith, however. Rather, she focuses on the swift ease of death's stroke, apostrophising an implacable, treacherous Death that takes Christian and heathen alike: "¡Fatal Rigor! ejecutando alevé / La parca (corta el hilo de una vida)" (1-2). Belisarda refers to the classical Fates rather than a Christian reaping of pure souls, as Atropos cuts the thread of Anarda's life. The descriptive qualities and immediacy of the octet indicate Belisarda's presence at this leavetaking.

Personal grief is expressed in the strained structure of the sonnet. The rhyme scheme remains intact, perhaps to show that underlying personal tragedy the normal rhythms of life and death continue inexorably forward. Death's moment occupies the first two lines, followed by a sestet description of the changes wrought in her friend at that instant as, rapidly despoiled of her earthly beauty and vigour, she sighs her last breath: "Postrada yace al fin de un soplo leve, / Lozana planta, que en edad florida / A poca tierra infausta reducida" (5-7). It is a compelling six lines, in which a woman's entire life, colour, personality, intelligence, beauty and vivacity are reduced to a handful of earth. As Belisarda grieves over Anarda's early death, "en

edad florida,” she calls in the lines of the funeral service and of St Paul, and turns from the pagan Atropos to the Christian Bible.¹³⁶

There is a major change at the turn, emphasised by the transition from present to past tense. In the brief space of the last breath, and the passage from octet to sestet, the poet absorbs the shock of loss, and moves on to celebrate her friend in a tercet funeral oration: “Fue Anarda toda gala, entendimiento, / Deidad de ingenio, alma, y hermosura” (9-11). The references to “gala, entendimiento” and “ingenio” imply that the dead woman may have been a contestant in the convent’s poetic jousts (the titles of her own sonnets suggest that Belisarda was an enthusiastic participant). This would make the loss of a companion who shared and perhaps equalled her intellectual interests and capacities particularly poignant. Like Cielo, she seizes the opportunity to celebrate the dead woman’s unusually superior intellect and the sonnet ends optimistically; fortified by her own faith, the speaker turns away from the dead Anarda to the wider world with words of advice and faith that also serve to bolster her own spirits: “No atienda, no, a su falta el sentimiento, / A un punto en que ganó sí, por ventura, / gloriosa vida en un morir preciso” (11-13).¹³⁷

As a celebrated poet in her own time, Cielo composed a number of funeral sonnets to honour famous or powerful individuals. These differ markedly from the expression of personal experience evident in the sonnet by Belisarda above. Examples of such occasional sonnets are those written to mark the deaths of the

¹³⁶ The reference to humankind as composed of earth is found in St Paul’s epistle to the Corinthians: “So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption; . . . It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. . . . Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural. The first man is of the earth, earthy: . . . As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy . . . And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption” (1 Cor.15: 42-50).

¹³⁷ Further evidence of genuine fellow feeling between the nuns and for departed colleagues is to be seen in a poem, also by Marcia Belisarda, entitled “Otra [romance] a una Religiosa que lloraba sin medida la muerte de otra que la había criado,” in which she strives to give solace to her friend. Effectively, this “religiosa” grieved for the woman who had taken the place of a mother. The *romance* begins: “No llores del mal que sientes”; the concluding verse still tries to stem the tears: “No llores, cantete endechas / tu dulce voz que a mi ver / si en ella atenta te miras / Narciso serás después. / Canta, baste que llore / quien te quiere bien / pues de entrambos la pena / viene a ser / Canta canta / Darás gloria a la pena / como a la causa” (ms. 7469 45r).

Duquesa de Aveiro (*Rimas varias* (1646) 56), the *dama de corte* Maria de Ataíde, Condessa de Penaguião (Vieira n. pag.), General André de Albuquerque, who died in the battle won by the Portuguese against “os Castelhanos em Elvas,” in 1659 (*Parnaso lusitano* 67), and two to Maria Luiza de Noronha, “Senhora de doze annos” (*Parnaso lusitano* 66-67). Some of these have been discussed in Chapter One, on patronage. However, like Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Violante del Cielo was also on friendly terms with the nobles and the notables whose lives she immortalised. She enjoyed a close friendship with the famous Portuguese poet, Bernarda Ferreira de la Cerda, who, according to Serrano y Sanz, was born in Oporto in 1595 and died in 1644, and was celebrated in verse by both Manuel de Gallegos and Lope de Vega, suggesting that she was highly regarded as a poet by her male peers.¹³⁸ Cielo wrote a canción to Bernarda and her daughter, published in the *Rimas varias*, and directed two sonnets to her friend on her death; these appear in the *Parnaso lusitano*. In them she celebrates the woman’s poetic gifts and links Bernarda’s heavenly and earthly immortality. Both sonnets are extremely hyperbolic, as the poet strives to do justice to the memory of her friend and, perhaps, to demonstrate her equality in poetic power. There is little sense of the loss that Belisarda strives to control; rather, they are a triumphant celebration of Bernarda’s life and achievements. That Cielo thought Bernarda’s verse admirable and exceptional is clear in the first sonnet by the frequent references, throughout the quartets, to the dead woman as the governing muse on Parnassus who has sipped the waters of the Pierian Spring. Thus Bernarda is portrayed simultaneously as a mortal and a goddess:

la Musa que imperando en el Parnaso
música investigó más sonora.
Por ser, si bien humana, excelsa diosa,
tanto extrañó su sol terrestre ocaso,

¹³⁸ Vieira Mendes describes Bernarda as the daughter of the chancellor of Portugal, Inácio Ferreira Leitão. She published the the first part of *España libertada*, dedicated to Felipe III, in 1618, and *Soledades de Buçaco* in Lisbon in 1624. The second part of *España libertada* was published in 1673 by her daughter, Maria Clara de Meneses. do Céu, *Rimas varias* (1993), 82. Bernarda Ferreira de la Cerda is also recorded as entering poems in two poetic jousts: Montalbán 1636, folios 42, 46 and 137, and Grande de Tena, 1639, folio 134v. José Simón Díaz, ed., *Siglos de Oro: Índice de Justas Poéticas* (Madrid: CSIC, 1962).

que, dejando las aguas del Pegaso,
al cielo renació luz portentosa. (3-8)

This first sonnet is filled with light, movement and sound as Bernarda, already master of the music of the spheres, seeks music even more heavenly, that of the angelic choir: “. . . buscó dichosa / esfera superior con veloz paso” (1-2). Her soul speeds through the heavens at the moment of death, a compelling image also used by Donne in his poem on the death of a young girl in “The Second Anniversarie.” Cielo attributes astral powers to Bernarda after death, as she who can give the Muses pause will be able to influence the stars that affect the lives of mere mortals below: “si Musa suspendió con su armonía, / estrella obligará con su influencia” (13-14).

The theme of a superlative individual who occupies both the earthly and heavenly realms is repeated in the second sonnet. Bernarda’s singular qualities ensure her acceptance into heaven, while the poetry that survives her ensures her continuing fame on earth. Extravagantly, Cielo claims that it was necessary for Bernarda to die in order to be seen by the world as human and not a pagan goddess, and the sonnet remains in the classical world in attributing Belisa’s end to the classical *Parca*:

Murió para saber la absorta gente,
Que era humana deidad tan aclamada,
Si bien muestra en quedar eternizada,
Que fue solo mortal por accidente. (4-8)

This sonnet repeatedly counterbalances life and death, and heaven and earth, with Bernarda occupying both realms. The final tercet is typical of Cielo’s style and liking for chiasmus as earth and heaven, death and life weave and change position, all coming to the concluding observation of her dual eternity; her good, Christian soul, her godlike mastery of poetry, will ensure her eternal fame on earth: “Que logra, cuando muestra dejar todo, / En el Cielo una vida nunca muerta, / en el mundo una fama siempre viva (12-14).

As may be seen in the discussion of the above sonnets, women took their opportunities to inscribe themselves into the national literature in composing sonnets

marking the deaths of notable figures. However, their commemorations of the dead were not always written simply to show their prowess as poets nor to participate in national events. They also expressed genuine grief, loss and love for those companions who had shared their experiences and provided companionship and support.

Conclusion

In studying these sonnets of friendship it becomes clear that women were not universally silent and meek, but nor were they struggling to change the Counter Reformation system that reduced them to the level of nonentity. Rather, these sonnets celebrate their normal, everyday existence, in which they pay and receive visits to friends, mock each other's peculiarities, celebrate each other's small successes and pleasures, and derive from their friendships the succour of mutually affective and enjoyable relationship. As María del Pilar Oñate has pointed out, in this century "cosa nueva es que la mujer salga a la defensa de su sexo" (141), and this can be seen in the robust flying engaged in by Ramírez and Cueva. Nevertheless, as Ann Rosalind Jones also reveals, "every woman poet recognised the necessity of winning men over to her side as mentors and as critics" ("Fame" 80). Women were in no position to demand an equality that tradition, church and officialdom opposed; hence friendships with the opposite sex provided possibilities within which to practise their art, promote social harmony and show women's intellectual capabilities.

Violante del Cielo, the most prolific sonneteer on the matter of friendship, explores it from every angle, from a personal definition to affirmations of sisterly affection, to betrayal and to the loving farewell to a beloved friend. The poetry of Ramírez reveals the playful exercising of friendship that offers a glimpse into the personal lives of the seventeenth-century educated classes. The advice that one may expect from a friend comes principally from the religious, in the sonnet by Luisa de

Carvajal warning her cousin to turn away from the world, and in that by Marcia Belisarda, which reminds the new nun of her role and responsibilities within the sisterhood. Finally, the sonnets of consolation reveal the deep sense of loss occasioned by the deaths of friends, and the solace that comes from deeply held Christian beliefs. The religious faith of these poets, evinced in the sonnets of consolation, is also displayed in their sonnets of divine love, where the model of humankindness and friendship is Christ. Christ, as will be seen in Chapter Six, on mystical poetry, also forms the subject of highly erotic verse in which the poets seek to fuse themselves with the body and soul of Christ. Before turning to religious eroticism, however, I shall examine the erotic poetry written by both secular and religious women, in which the poets explore themes of desire and loss, show a determination to take control of the amatory situation, and demonstrate their familiarity with the Petrarchan mode.

SONNETS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE IN THE CHAPTER.

3.1 Burlesque sonnets: “No es la miel para este burro”

Catalina Clara Ramírez de Guzmán

Respondiendo a un soneto de un hombre ridículo. . . .

Si no acierto a decir lo que os estimo
 baste haber acertado en estimaros,
 y cuando sólo trato de obligaros,
 viendoos desconfiar me desanimo.
 ¿Será tal árbol mi seguro arrimo?
 De la verdad podéis aseguraros
 y aunque el fruto me espine de buscaros
 y siempre he de hacer tema de serviros,
 De mi alegría sois el instrumento
 y mi Antífona sois de todo el año.
 Veros, Castaño, claro, es lo que siento;
 sólo el ser zaino fuera mayor daño,
 pero si procedéis tan desatento
 más seréis boquirrubio que castaño.
 (ms. 3884, 233v)

Soneto a un hombre pequeño, D. Francisco de Arévalo

Mirando con antojos tu estatura,
 con antojos de verla me he quedado;
 y por verte, Felicio, levantado,
 saber quisiera levantar figura.
 Lástima tengo al alma que en clausura
 la trae penando cuerpo tan menguado,
 Átomo racional, polvo animado,
 instante humano, breve abreviatura:
 ¡Di si eres voz!, pues nadie determina,
 dónde a la vista estás tan escondido
 que la más perspicaz no te termina;
 o cómo te concedes al oído.
 En tanto que la duda te examina,
 un sentido desmiente a otro sentido.
 (ms. 3917 362r)

Marcia Belisarda

Alabaronme un soneto tanto que le pedí con instancia, aunque después de leído no entendí nada y respondí el siguiente confesando mi poco saber.

Vuelvo a enviar el que pedí, soneto,
 confesando señora y Reina mía
 que de tenerle poco más de un día,
 mi juicio siento con algún defecto.
 Cuánto más le adjetivo e interpreto
 (curiosa mi ambición en su porfía)

más de mi entendimiento se desvía
 su delicado, altísimo concepto.
 Alguna soberana inteligencia
 escribió para sí tan ardua suma,
 que no alcanzo aunque más y más discurro;
 y, hablando como debo, en mi conciencia,
 (otra intención de mí no se presume)
 digo que no es la miel para este burro.
 (ms. 7469 42v)

3.2 “Un amigo el otro siente”: Sonnets of “other selves”

Violante del Cielo

Ostenta la mayor soberanía
 en la misma humildad, Nise la hermosa,
 quedando por bizarra, victoriosa,
 sin deber a las galas bizarría.
 Por no causar, su sol, tanta alegría,
 cuando de una tristeza está quejosa,
 pardas nubes admite rigurosa,
 y en pardas nubes luce más su día.
 ¡O tú! que por quedar en todo rara,
 Opuestos admitiste en lo divino,
 bien tu ingenio, tu intención declara.
 Pues muestra de tu sol lo peregrino
 En nube tan oscura luz tan clara
 en traje tan grosero amor tan fino.
 (*Rimas varias* (1646) 4)

Catalina Clara Ramírez de Guzmán

A la ausencia de una amiga, hablando con ella

Cuando quiero deciros lo que siento,
 siento que he de callaros lo que quiero;
 que no explican amor tan verdadero
 las voces que se forman de un aliento.
 Si de dulces memorias me alimento,
 que enfermo del remedio considero,
 y con un accidente vivo y muero,
 siendo el dolor alivio del tormento,
 ¿qué importa que me mate vuestra ausencia
 si en el morir por vos halle la vida
 y vivo de la muerte a la violencia?
 Pues el remedio sólo está en la herida;
 mas, si no he de gozar vuestra asistencia,
 la piedad de que vivo es mi homicida.
 (ms. 3884 241r)

Violante del Cielo

Belisa, el amistad es un tesoro,
 tan digno de estimarse eternamente,

que a su valor no es paga suficiente
 de Arabia y Potosí la plata y oro.
 Es la amistad un lícito decoro
 que se guarda en lo ausente y lo presente,
 y con que de un amigo el otro siente
 la tristeza, el pesar, la risa, el lloro.
 No se llama amistad la que es violenta,
 sino la que es conforme simpatía,
 de quien lealtad hasta la muerte ostenta.
 Ésta la amistad es que hallar querría,
 ésta la que entre amigas se sustenta,
 y ésta, Belisa, en fin, la amistad mía.
 (*Rimas varias* (1646) 9)

Marcia Belisarda

A la Profesión de Doña Petronila de la Palma en la Concepción Real de Toledo, siguiendo la metáfora de la palma.

En este Real jardín, O palma hermosa,
 Os plantó vuestro dueño soberano.
 Dispuso y cultivó su sacra mano,
 Para que deis la fruta milagrosa.
 No ingrata vegetal, sí generosa;
 Racional, producid de amor temprano,
 Dulces efectos con intento sano,
 Mudando el ser de planta en el de esposa.
 Advertid pues, que el dueño es infinito,
 Abreviada y finita vuestra vida;
 Pagadle, esposa fiel, frutos del Alma;
 Elogios no, verdades os remito;
 Sed siempre, Palma, a Dios agradecida,
 Gozaréis en su gloria eterna Palma.
 (ms. 4169 8v)

Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza

Soneto espiritual de Silva para una señora grave, a quien ella amaba mucho y deseaba verla muy ocupada en cosas espirituales, porque era muy para ello, y no derramada en ocupaciones y correspondencias humanas, aunque con buen fin.

¿Cómo, di, bella Amari, tu cuidado
 estimas en tan poco que, olvidada
 de quien con tanto amor eres amada,
 te empleas en el rústico ganado?
 ¿Hate la vana ocupación comprado?
 ¿Qué nigromántica arte embelesada
 te trae, y de tu bien tan trascordada?
 ¡Ay alevosa fe! ¡Ay pecho helado!
 Vuelve, Amari; repara que perdiendo
 vas de amor el camino, digo, atajo.
 Y ése que llevas, ancho y deleitoso,
 suele mañosamente ir encubriendo
 entre las florecillas y debajo

de verde hierba el paso peligroso.
(*Epistolario y poesías* 449)

Violante del Cielo

Sobre el ¿Amice ad quid venisti?

Si sabéis, que este amigo es enemigo,
ingrato, desleal, fingido, astuto,
por qué le dais, Señor, ese atributo,
por qué premio le dais, y no castigo?
Si de su error sois el mayor testigo,
si a vuestra adoración niega el tributo,
si sembrando piedad, no esperáis fruto,
por qué llamáis al enemigo amigo?
Vos sabéis la razón; mas yo sospecho,
que como en las finezas amorosas
libráis de vuestro nombre las grandezas;
Amigo halláis, que ha sido un falso pecho,
porque con las ofensas rigurosas
os ha dado ocasión de hacer finezas.
(*Parnaso lusitano* 12)

Mal paga del mundo es colirio para ver y buscar a Dios

Esta pena, mi Dios, este tormento
que me causan agravios repetidos,
castigos son bien al error debidos
de querer fabricar sin fundamento.
¡Oh qué peligro corre el sufrimiento
entre agravios, Señor, no merecidos!
Mas paguen, paguen siempre mis sentidos
las torres que fundaron en el viento.
Paguen la confianza que tuvieron
en humana amistad, pues no llegaron
a prevenir lo que tan presto vieron.
Dichosos los que en Vos se confiaron
solamente, mi Dios, pues no cayeron
por más que el edificio levantaron.
(*Parnaso lusitano* 51)

3.3 “Lágrimas negras de mi pluma triste”: Death and Friendship.

Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz

En la muerte de la Excelentísima Señora Marquesa de Mancera

De la beldad de Laura enamorados
los Cielos, la robaron a su altura,
porque no era decente a su luz pura
ilustrar estos valles desdichados;
O porque los mortales, engañados
de su cuerpo en la hermosa arquitectura,

admirados de ver tanta hermosura
 no se juzgasen bienaventurados.
 Nació donde el Oriente el rojo velo
 corre al nacer al Astro rubicundo,
 y murió donde, con ardiente anhelo,
 da sepulcro a su luz el mar profundo:
 que fue preciso a su divino vuelo
 que diese como el Sol la vuelta al mundo.

Mueran contigo, Laura, pues moriste,
 los afectos que en vano te desean,
 los ojos a quien privas de que vean
 hermosa luz que un tiempo concediste.
 Muera mi lira infausta en que influíste
 ecos, que lamentables te vocean,
 y hasta estos rasgos mal formados sean
 lágrimas negras de mi pluma triste.
 Muévase a compasión la misma Muerte
 que, precisa, no pudo perdonarte;
 y lamente el Amor su amarga suerte,
 pues si antes, ambicioso de gozarte,
 deseó tener ojos para verte,
 ya le sirvieran sólo de llorarte.
 (*Lirica personal* Vol. 1., *Obras completas* 299-300)

Marcia Belisarda

¡Fatal Rigor! ejecutando aleve
 la parca (corta el hilo de una vida).
 Astuta, recelándose, vencida
 de su bizarro ardor en tiempo breve,
 postrada yace al fin de un soplo leve,
 lozana planta, que en edad florida
 a poca tierra infausta reducida,
 desengaños causando, a llanto mueve.
 Fue Anarda toda gala, entendimiento,
 Deidad de ingenio, alma, y hermosura,
 que luego en sí lograrla el cielo quiso.
 No atienda, no, a su falta el sentimiento,
 A un punto en que ganó sí, por ventura,
 Gloriosa vida en un morir preciso.
 (ms. 7469 57v)

Violante del Cielo

A la muerte de Da Bernarda Ferreira de la Cerda

Depuso lo mortal, buscó dichosa
 esfera superior con veloz paso,
 la Musa que imperando en el Parnaso,
 música investigó más sonora.
 Por ser, si bien humana, excelsa diosa,
 tanto extrañó su sol terrestre ocaso,
 que, dejando las aguas del Pegaso,
 al cielo renació luz portentosa.

Las Musas, que con dulce melodía
lloran de tanto bien la eterna ausencia,
transformen la tristeza en alegría;
que Bernarda, deidad de la elocuencia,
si Musa suspendió con su armonía,
estrella obligará con su influencia.
(*Parnaso lusitano* 64-65)

Otro al mismo sujeto sobre la vida de su fama, y gloria

Murió para vivir eternamente
entre excelsos luceros colocada,
la que tuvo en el mundo de admirada,
lo que tiene en el Cielo de viviente.
Murió para saber la absorta gente,
que era humana deidad tan aclamada,
si bien muestra en quedar eternizada,
que fue solo mortal por accidente.
Murió Bernarda en fin, mas de tal modo,
Que asegura al amor virtud tan cierta
(Por medio de la Parca ejecutiva)
Que logra, cuando muestra dejar todo,
En el Cielo una vida nunca muerta,
en el mundo una fama siempre viva.
(*Parnaso lusitano* 65)

CHAPTER 4

“FRIENDSHIP GONE MAD”: WOMEN’S LOVE SONNETS

There can be no doubt that the desire lovers have
for each other is not so very different from friendship;
you might say it was friendship gone mad.
(Seneca, Epistle 9)

Women who composed love poetry stepped into a masculine field, bound by tradition, where the female was the silent and idealised object of unrealised love, merely a rhetorical exercise carried forward from the courtly love mode. When Malón de Chaide discusses the ideal of a love that must be given freely he is not talking of love in the modern, post-Romantic sense.¹³⁹ He describes that Neoplatonic ideal, a chimera of female excellence, where woman’s perceived lack of intellect, coupled with physical beauty, provides her with spiritual gifts above those of man, enabling her to rise above the masculine norm and communicate with the angels (I. Maclean 24). According to Malón de Chaide the lovers’ souls are united both in human terms and in the divine: “[E]l amor llamase potencia unitiva, que une al amante con el amado, sacándole de sí y llevándole a lo que ama y allí lo transforma y hace uno con él . . . síguese que el amado es señor de todo el amante, y el amante se transforma en el amado” (69). In this he differs from other Renaissance theorists of divine love, such as St Francis de Sales, for whom the comparison of divine and human love is simply a simile.

Writing of Castiglione’s influential *Book of the Courtier*, Joan Kelly notes Castiglione’s likening of the beloved lady to the prince, in his theory of Neo-Platonic love. However, she also notes that in a structured hierarchy of superior and inferior, though the lady appears to be served by the courtier, the theory causes her to become symbolic of the reversal of domination, wherein the prince comes to serve the interests of the courtier. The Renaissance lady “is not desired, nor loved for

¹³⁹ Malón de Chaide (1530-1589) was an Augustinian mystic, a brilliant author, preacher and writer. A student of Luis de León, his most famous work is *La conversión de la Magdalena*, published in Barcelona in 1588. Carlos María López, *Malón de Chaide*, 1991, Internet website, *Hispanica*, Available: <http://poesiadelmomento.com/hispanica/43misticos.html>, 2 September 2004.

herself. Rendered passive and chaste, she merely mediates the courtier's safe transcendence of an otherwise demeaning necessity" (195). As with the Renaissance lady, so too with the *dama* of the baroque, where women served as the bartering tool for socially desirable marriages and to smooth the path of patronage.

In addition, and bound up with the Counter-Reformation, is the change from the freer troubadour tradition to more repressive attitudes to women, their education and their relationship to men. Michel Foucault locates a change in European attitudes to sexuality in the seventeenth century, when sexuality became more repressed, bound to language and subjugated in a discourse that defined and delimited sexual practices (17). Anne Cruz, however, discovers this repression in Spain a full century earlier, due to "the supposed threat of miscegenation posed by the country's ethnic and religious minorities" ("Juana" 89). These social and ideological changes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries robbed Hispanic women of a poetic voice that had sung of love in the *kharjas* of Al Andalus, if only to an internal public of other women (Bergmann and Middlebrook 146). Furthermore, Ana Navaro observes that the reduced margin of freedom afforded by the limits of women's education deprived them of the free expression of emotion, while inflexible literary models robbed their literary expression of spontaneity. This latter assertion is perhaps too sweeping in light of the poetry discussed in this thesis. However, as Navaro also observes, "es difícil encontrar entre las poetisas de la Edad de Oro manifestaciones de la intimidad emocional como la expresaron las musulmanas de la Edad Media" (51).

Nevertheless, surviving love sonnets by seventeenth-century women prove them to be capable sonneteers, practised in the rhetoric of love, which they appropriate to their own ends. Navaro deplors the custom of concealing their identities under pseudonyms and surmises that an evaluation of anonymous feminine literature of the period would show a freer expression of amorous intent, extending from the purely sentimental to the sensually erotic (51). Yet the sonnets of the women under consideration in this study show their determination to break the seal

on female silence. They express their views on the love debate, and their thoughts are not veiled in anonymity. Furthermore, their poems provide opportunities to explore their emotional lives. This is not to suggest that the poetry is autobiographical but rather that it expresses an attitude to the emotions prevalent among their contemporaries, and therefore part of their own experience. Their viewpoint is, however, feminine and domestic, rather than proto-feminist, in that they do not rail against the patriarchal system that nourishes and sustains them as members of the upper strata of Spanish society. Their discourse is reserved to the direct and personal, to emotions and feelings that render lived experience in fictive terms. In this they express, to a degree, the Renaissance feminism described by Constance Jordan:

By representing woman as a type in whom are incarnate virtues specifically associated with femininity—mercy, patience, temperance, and so forth—feminists began to argue not only for the worth of woman but also for the feminization of society as whole. Correspondingly, they spoke of a degenerate kind of masculinity. (Jordan 137)

However, the poems resist categorizing, for they do not always represent this feminine type; some poetry shows women to be refreshingly aware of their failings. While they do not argue for a feminisation of society, their poetry is also more than just a rhetorical exercise, and some of the sonnets to be discussed here, particularly those by Cueva, do speak of a “degenerate kind of masculinity.” Their works are not only conscious expressions of artistic endeavour, designed to win praise from companions of both sexes, but also expressions of their attitudes to the activities surrounding them. Thus they comment on moral and social failings, both male and female, and express their view of women as rational, intelligent and morally upright, and certainly equal in these qualities to the masculine view of male conduct.

In this chapter I shall discuss this feminine viewpoint from two angles. Firstly, assuming the continuing influence of Petrarchism in the Spanish love lyric of the seventeenth century, I shall explore the manner in which these women poets negotiate the Petrarchan mode, both utilising and subverting it, creating sonnets in

which a feminine voice articulates the pains of unrequited love. Secondly, I shall explore their appropriation of typically masculine themes of display and desire, creating a male-voiced discourse in order to criticise male attitudes, or to call for sexual equality. These explorations will be undertaken via critical analyses of the love poetry of Belisarda, Cueva, Ramírez and Cielo. Finally, through four sonnets that form part of Cueva's play, *La firmeza en la ausencia*, I shall discuss Cueva's celebration of women's moral and intellectual strength, whereby she challenges gender expectations of feminine *mudanza*.

As they insert themselves into modish, literary-academy and drawing-room activity, these women write confident, witty sonnets. They do not embark upon a lengthy journey through the interior trials of unrequited love in a sequence of thematically related verse.¹⁴⁰ While they discourse on the pain of absence and the agonies of unspoken love, where the object of love is portrayed as male he is not the masculine equivalent of the *dama esquiva* of male love poetry. Instead, he is often exposed to ridicule or censure, and it is often he who is mutable and loquacious. This is most clearly the case in sonnets by Cueva, such as *Muestra Galicia que a Leonarda adora*. These function to admonish the faithless male lover, who is frequently shown to exhibit the fickle and deceitful behaviour traditionally attributed to women.

It was the women of rank who were sufficiently educated to pen poetry. Ann Rosalind Jones has observed of early modern women poets who entered the debate over female intelligence, and who wished to publish their work, that they resisted their exclusion from cultural production: "By drawing on ideological support outside their texts and by compromising with limits on women's speech within them, poets who were not courtesans found ways of mediating social dictates and the conventions of love poetry" (*Currency* 34). This technique is evident in Cielo's *Rimas*

¹⁴⁰ Only Cielo composes a sequence, in her sonnets on the Mysteries of the Rosary published in *Parnaso lusitano*; but in the *Parnaso* the subjects of her verse are exclusively divine and religious.

varias; she also seeds her collection with liberal applications of poetry designed to appeal to patrons, as has already been discussed. Similarly, Belisarda's appeals to reason and the deployment of a male speaking subject work to deflect criticism.

4.1 "Ardiente fuego": Women and Petrarchism

The titles of many of the sonnets indicate at least circulation among a limited coterie. These sonnets, too, mediated social dictates and poetic convention and in doing so conformed to masculine style, while at the same time expressing particularly feminine concerns with regard to social restrictions and conventions. For example, women were seldom, if ever, permitted to choose their own husbands, and no poet extends the imagery of her love poetry to include marriage, not even as an epithalamion.¹⁴¹ Rather, they explore the subject of love as an abstract, feminine ideal of recognition, acceptance and reciprocity, beyond the capacity of some of their male subjects. Theirs is not the conventional view of ideal beauty for Petrarchan contemplation and dissection. However, they sometimes utilise Petrarchan themes as conscious works of poetic art, no doubt inspired by the examples available to them.

Writing of Petrarch's *Rime Sparse*, Nancy Vickers describes it as a primary canonical text produced out of his appropriation of a complex network of descriptive strategies into a single, transformed model. She considers that his role in the historical interpretation and internalization of woman's "image" by both men and women cannot be overemphasized (265). I shall here discuss a small collection of poems that gesture to the Petrarchan mode, although they do not enter it entirely. The most striking aspect of this poetry is the adoption of a feminine voice, for the

¹⁴¹ As has been noted in Chapter 2.1, on the family and marriage, Catalina Clara Ramírez de Guzmán writes a solitary poem to celebrate the marriage of one sibling, Ana Rosalea. In addition, Feliciano Enríquez de Guzmán, whose works do not form part of this study, concludes the second part of her published play, *Tragicomedia de los jardines y campos sabeos*, with an epithalamic soneto a las bodas de Maya y Clarisel. Louis C. Pérez, *The Dramatic Works of Feliciano Enríquez de Guzmán* (Valencia: Albatros, 1988).

female speaker occupies the space exclusively reserved for the Petrarchan lover who adores his lady. Eschewing silence as a mark of modesty, the female poets instead silence the male objects of love in order to express their discontents. Strikingly, given the fragmentation of women's bodies often found in the masculine mode, in these love sonnets there is no blazon, and no fetishising of fragments of the beloved's body, dress, or possessions. Although death features frequently as a typically Petrarchan symptom of the disease of love, it does not allude, as it often does in male poetry, to orgasm. Nor is the binary distinction of life and death/*engaño* and *desengaño* evident. Rather, *desengaño* furthers self-realisation in the speaker and deepens understanding of the love dilemma. Love poetry becomes educative.

The beloved is portrayed as a living, whole being to whom the speaker expresses feelings, hopes and criticisms. Thoughts and emotions attributed to the *amante* or the *amado* are privileged over the passive and atomised body of the traditional model. Whereas, in the masculine, Neoplatonic love convention the ideal is perceived through contemplation of the silent beloved object or her parts, here it is necessary to contemplate the whole person, who is not silent and probably not perfect. Nor is the speaker masochistic in a continued pursuit of the often cruel beloved. Instead, the complaint is frequently delivered as the end result of *desengaño*, achieved through appraisal and realisation of a situation in which the persona is not going to achieve his/her ends. This can be seen in sonnets by Cueva and Belisarda: for example, Cueva's "Alcindo, ya murió en tu desengaño" and "Puse los ojos ¡ay que no debiera!," or Belisarda's "En suspiros y llanto arroje el pecho."

It is also clear from the titles of many of the poems (*Encomendóseme. . .*, *Dándome el asunto . . .*) that poetry was not always produced as the result of personal meditation leading to a distillation of emotion in sonnets and liras. As in male courtier poetry, it was also a means of amusement among friends, or an opportunity for display complementary to the masculine poetry of the academies,

performed to praise the wit of male members and the beauty of the veiled women in the audience.¹⁴²

Writing in a male voice and under a *nom de plume* was one way for women to publish works without attracting censure for their immodesty. Yet the impression given by these women's sonnets is that the male voice is employed instead to critique male pretensions, or to engage in intellectual play, activities certainly not sanctioned by seventeenth-century moralists. The poems of Ramírez, already discussed in Chapter Four, and those of Cueva, demonstrate that these *damas* enjoyed social relationships with members of the opposite sex, in which poetic interchanges were part of social intercourse. Cielo, too, during the course of her friendship with Paulo Gonçalves de Andrade, wrote and received love poems that were more than a mere sharing of rhetorical skills.¹⁴³ In addition, women often participated successfully in *certámenes*, offering their poetry for scrutiny at both local and national levels. Educated women were therefore familiar with the poetic fashions of their time and with the complex conceits of a Góngora or a Quevedo, and had opportunities to read the love poetry of their male counterparts as well as traditional, Petrarchan love sonnets.

When Marcia Belisarda writes a sonnet that begins "Filis de amor hechizo soberano" (1), it is not the interior musing of an anguished and disappointed lover, although she gestures toward a number of Petrarchan conventions, particularly in floral imagery and colour. The speaker of the poem is in the objective position of an observer, outside the action, and the manuscript title indicates that the topic was given to her in poetic challenge: *Dándome por asunto cortarse un dedo llegando a cortar jazmín*. Although Belisarda incorporates life and death, represented in the classical allusion to Filis as "Atropos bella," she never moves into the *carpe diem*

¹⁴² For a detailed study of academy poetry in seventeenth-century Spain, see Jeremy Robbins, *Love Poetry of the Literary Academies in the Reigns of Philip IV and Charles II* (London: Tamesis, 1997).

¹⁴³ Cielo exchanged love poetry with Paulo under the pastoral nomenclature of "Silvano" or "Lauso" and "Sílvia." See, for example, Pociño López, ed., *Sóror Violante do Céu (1607-1693)* 33. Vieira Mendes also notes that their names appear linked as "Lauso" and "Sílvia" in numerous laudatory compositions by some of Portugal's most notable poets of the period. Vieira Mendes, "Apresentação," 11.

tropes favoured by Golden Age male poets. In fact, the slight nature of the topic undercuts the Petrarchan mode altogether. Even where the traditional colours of red and white, portrayed in the blood and the jasmine, are utilised in the second quartet, they do not form part of a blazon:

No bien corta el jazmín cuando tirano
 acero en rojo humor otro ha teñido,
 mintiendo ramillete entretejido
 de jazmín y clavel la hermosa mano. (5-8)

Instead, Belisarda's sonnet becomes a critique of Filis, a silly and vain young woman proud of her minute accomplishment in cutting a flower: "[Filis] quedó del vencimiento más ufano" (4). She converts the sonnet into an anti-Petrarchan admonition of human vanity appropriate to the nun's calling. Though love brackets the sonnet in the first and fourteenth lines, its content has little to do with love or its problems. Rather than seizing the moment in the always uncertain course of life, the poem returns life to the plant through the nourishment of Filis's blood, claiming thereby to infuse and colonise the floral world with love: "en vez de muerte dio al jazmín la vida, de amor el dulce imperio dilatando" (13-14). Where, in Petrarchan poetry, there is interplay between the girl and the flower that leads to reflections on the tyranny of time and its effects on fleeting beauty, here Belisarda emphatically returns to the present. The wounding of Filis's hand works against the traditional model of poetic atomization and the flower remains nothing more than a fragrant backdrop to the young woman. What Belisarda's sonnet does, however, is to highlight the empty triviality of young women's lives, denied education, and bound to the home, the *estrado*, their embroidery and empty conversation, until married off to husbands chosen by their fathers.

In this sonnet the objective speaker is an observer in the marginal space occupied by women in society, but often the *yo* of women's love sonnets is problematic. Writing of Sor Juana's love sonnets, Georgina Sabat de Rivers notes that one of their most unusual aspects is that Sor Juana varies the norm in her

expression of the poetic self, which is sometimes a woman addressing a male beloved, sometimes the complaining male and sometimes an ambiguous figure, whose gender is unidentifiable (105). This is also true of some of the poetry by Cielo already discussed in Chapter One. However, although like Sor Juana these poets also employ masculine and ambiguous voices, the speaking subject is often feminine, suggesting that women made more use of the female poetic voice than may previously have been thought.

The *amor cortés* tradition determines that the female object of poetic desire be portrayed in masculine terms as the *dueño* of the male *amante*, who is able, thereby, to project his own image before his reader. Cueva, in particular, presents poems in which the poetic voice is masculine. This male voice speaks about women and purports to reveal masculine thinking, which can only have enriched the enjoyment of her female audience; this male-voiced poetry will be discussed in greater detail below. The problem for women poets is that, in joining a certain “school” of poetry-writing, they must perforce use the method already laid down, a masculine style intended for male readers. Yet such impersonation enables the female poet to participate in a male discourse considered to be beyond her mental capacity. If we read the *dueño* as male and the *amante* as female, an altogether different vision of female agency is revealed.

A good example of this may be seen in Cueva’s undermining of the Petrarchan mode in a manner similar to that of Belisarda. The sonnet is a gloss on the phrase “¿De qué sirve querer un imposible?” The speaking voice is nominally ambiguous, but poetic concern about the free-roving eyes that have caused the problem of love suggest a female speaker, for there are no restrictions on the male gaze. She begins by apostrophising a personified love, blaming him for her predicament, and employing common Petrarchan themes of death, fire and shipwreck.

¡Basta, amor, el rigor con que me has muerto!

¡Cese un poco, rapaz, tu ardiente fuego!
 Pues ya del alma el señorío entrego,
 por los ojos, no más, a dueño cierto. (1-4)

Rather than seeking to eternalise the beloved figure, Cueva's persona attempts to rid herself of love altogether, for the sonnet raises a social question; what purpose could be served in surrendering so much as one's eyes to a "dueño cierto" who may not meet the approval of the family? Where a male reader would read the sonnet as an attempt to enter the tradition, a female reader may instead see patriarchal restriction as the basis for its conception.

The poet's insistence that the persona has surrendered only through the eyes suggests a female speaker restricting her immodest behaviour to her gaze, while her knowledge of Renaissance theories of love is revealed through the linking of the eyes and the soul. Thus far, with the exception of the ambiguous subject, the sonnet follows a traditional line. In the succeeding quartet, however, the beloved, rather than being fleshed into a vision of unattainable beauty, either male or female, is effaced from the poem into invisibility. Nevertheless, the poet continues the traditional themes of the *amante*, helpless in the toils of love, in the same imagery of shipwreck and drowning that she uses in her sonnet of patronage on the "pretendiente," already discussed in Chapter One:

Y aunque es el bien que adoro tan incierto
 que no pasa de vista, a sentir llevo
 tu fuerza, de manera que me anego
 en mil mares de amar sin hallar puerto. (5-8)

Cueva appears at first to propose for her persona the traditional role of the male lover, helplessly captivated by the *cierto dueño*, tossed about and controlled by the machinations of a capricious Cupid. But, as a female, this *amante* does not conform to the social requirements; she does not control her eyes, permitting them to feast immodestly on the figure: "Riño unas veces a mis libres ojos,/ mas por respeto de lo que han mirado, / detengo el castigarlos lo posible" (9-11). This calls for a re-reading of the quartets, because there the irresistible figure is revealed as barely

visible, and this re-reading converts the sonnet into an anti-Petrarchan complaint. This is not a Neoplatonic reaching for the ideal, as the speaker herself reveals in the final tercet, bringing herself abruptly out of her reverie in the final line gloss: “Y viendo que padezco estos enojos, / digo entre mí a mi pecho enamorado: / ¿De qué sirve querer un imposible?” (12-14). Rather than pursuit of the higher good through the obsessional recitation of the beloved’s charms, Cueva instead claims that the *amante* is in love with the idea of love, an insubstantial and false ideal, ultimately not fulfilling and far from the reality of arranged marriages and female enclosure. This theme of insubstantiality of the beloved object appears to be a preoccupation of women’s love lyric. It is also explored in a sonnet to be discussed below, by Violante del Cielo: *Quien dice que la ausencia es homicida*. Similarly, Sor Juana’s famous sonnet, *Detente sombra de mi amor esquivo*, explores this theme. For women, the unattainable ideal is not a vision of the divine but of emotional freedom within their own environs. This tragic attraction to an impossible independence is frequently revisited in sonnet complaints to the absent lover.

The themes of the absent and longed-for lover, and the pain and torments of love are central to Petrarchan and Golden Age poetry and enjoy a long pedigree extending back to antiquity, as may be seen in the lovers’ complaints of Ovid’s *Heroides*. There, however, the bereft heroines offer specifically directed epistolary complaints to a Jason or an Aeneas. The lovers’ complaints that form the focus of much of the love poetry of the four poets discussed in this chapter are less directed and therefore more universal. The titles often indicate that the women compose their works according to a pre-ordained subject. However, though these may be produced as displays of wit and for entertainment, from them can be deduced the central preoccupations, not only of these women, but also of their anonymous female companions, as to the nature and problems of love. In the Renaissance and in the pre-Romantic period poetry was composed according to the rules of poetic decorum, rather than as an expression of personal emotion. Nevertheless, the highly personal

sonnets of Ramírez reveal that for women poetry served as more than merely literary expression, just as the burlesque sonnets of Quevedo, for example, certainly expressed opinions common to the period in a highly entertaining, if often cruel, way.

These women's sonnets reveal that absence presented particular problems and fears to Hispanic women of the seventeenth century, a preoccupation that should be seen against a social background where men were frequently away, either at court or at war. Given that women were generally not permitted to choose their suitors, the emotions expressed in these sonnets also represent not just vestiges of the courtly love themes of earlier generations, but also a profound grief at the impossibility of choice for women, an impossibility exemplified by the experience of Cielo and Gonçalves de Andrade. One of several poems by Cielo dealing with the absent beloved evokes the universal nature of these problems for women, by effacing the beloved object to almost complete non-existence, in a manner reminiscent of Cueva's sonnet apostrophe to Love, "De qué sirve querer un imposible," already discussed.

In the *amor cortés* model the male is active subject and the female, passive object, but in Cielo's sonnet the persona is unequivocally female, while the beloved is not gendered. This method of composition creates a number of effects. It suggests that Cielo seeks a social world not subject in every aspect to gender constructions, hence broadening the message of her poem beyond that of a mere love sonnet. In effacing the differences between male and female, the non-gendered object makes the expression of emotional pain a more universally experienced phenomenon than does the masculine model. Cielo rejects the conventional death symptoms as inadequate in expressing the depths of despair suffered by the bereft lover. She determines immediately that the Petrarchan notion of absence as death-dealing does not fully explicate the totality of suffering caused by the beloved's absence. For Petrarch, the absent beloved is a rhetorical device through which he reveals his

poetic skill. For Cielo and her female contemporaries, the expressed misery is more than rhetoric and is worse than death, because it does not end:

Quien dice que la ausencia es homicida,
no sabe conocer rigor tan fuerte,
que si la dura ausencia diera muerte,
no me matara a mí la propia vida. (1-4)

The hyperbolic death imagery is neither surprising nor unusual, for Cielo works within the Petrarchan mode, even though she finds it wanting in this instance. As Leonard Forster has noted, “[a] convention working with hyperbole inevitably utilises imagery concerned with death: if the lover’s longing is not fulfilled he dies” (17). Here, absence is proposed as lethal three times in just these first four lines, and though the death theme continues throughout the sonnet it still proves insufficient to express the persona’s overflowing suffering. As she weaves between death and life, she creates a Petrarchan paradox, a purgatory where life and death are conflated. As one is indistinguishable from the other, they parallel Cielo’s non-gendering of the sonnet’s absent object as a model for a non-gendered world. Suspended between life and death, the speaker concludes in marvelling that such a state can be sustained by simple hope: “No quede el sentimiento en contingencia, / que el milagro mayor de la esperanza / es no rendir la vida a tal ausencia” (12-14). The pain of absence is portrayed as entirely the speaker’s; there is neither an expression of mutual pain at parting, nor of a cruel *esquivia* whose indifference brings death of a different kind. Paradoxically, however, the very ephemeral nature of the beloved reproduces in the reader the absence that the persona elaborates in the sonnet. Thus, instead of the Petrarchan interiority of the speaker’s feelings, the pain of parting becomes shared, reflecting the inclusiveness and mutuality of female relationships and female emotional expression.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ Cielo revisits this theme in very similar terms in other sonnets, written in Portuguese, which are not reproduced here, such as *Vida que não acaba de acabar-se* and, more particularly, *Se apartada do Corpo a doce vida*, which completes a complex rhyme scheme wherein the last word of every line is either *vida* or *morte*. This latter sonnet deals with the speaker’s love for “Silvano,” whose name is reiterated four times in successive lines in the quartets. These sonnets are numbers 21 and 22 in Violante del Cielo, *Rimas varias de la Madre Sórora Violante del Cielo, Religiosa en el Monasterio de la*

This participation of the female as the speaking subject of erotic desire has been explored in considerable depth by Deborah Lesko Baker in a study of Louise Labé's poetry. Baker notes that the Sapphic influence (in the French tradition, an expression of intense heterosexual desire) in Labé's first elegy does not erase the Petrarchan presence but works to challenge its exclusivity. Furthermore, Baker highlights Labé's plea for solidarity among women, both in respect of the independent pursuit of study and writing and in relation to their unhappy love relationships (91-98). Labé's volume of prose and poetry was published in 1555, a full century before these Spanish women were voicing their poetic anxieties about love and subjectivity, suggesting a considerable audience, both temporally and geographically.

Similar emotional expressions of absence to those expressed by Cielo are seen in a sonnet by Inarda de Arteaga. Here, however, she does not so much seek to share the misery of separation with the beloved as to express them openly and specifically to the absent *amado*, in a desolate poem of desertion. Although she is not central to this study, her work nevertheless warrants inclusion, since the sonnet expresses the inequalities between the sexes in terms of the freedom of movement allowed to men but denied to women. The fickle male becomes a shifting periphery to the still centre of the bereft speaker. Little is known of Inarda, who appears to have lived on the cusp of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Her only known works are the sonnet discussed here, and an encomiastic *décima* in praise of Agustín de Rojas' *El viaje entretenido*.¹⁴⁵ No other love poem discussed here recreates so fully the desolation of this poem, which evokes the extended complaint of Penelope to Ulysses in the *Heroides* (Ovid 11-19). Nevertheless, social history provides us with a number of reasons why a woman may have been left by her lover other than through

Rosa de Lisboa. Dedicadas al Excelentissimo Señor conde Almirante y por su mandado, sacadas a luz. (Rúan (Rouen): Maurry, 1646).

¹⁴⁵ This *décima* is published in Ana Navaro, ed., *Antología poética de escritoras de los siglos XXVI y XVII* (Madrid: Castalia, 1989).

his cruel indifference: among them plague, subsistence crises, the requirements of empire, and the economic decline of the seventeenth century that, for example, decimated the city of Medina del Campo. This decline is enshrined in Cueva's sonnet, *Al miserable estado y desdichas de Medina*, discussed in Chapter One.

Inarda's sonnet is created as a complaining apostrophe, epistolary in its personal nature, in which the opening line encapsulates the story of the persona's lost love in an image of past happiness and present sadness: "Alegres horas de memorias tristes" (1). Inarda's speaker plays with time and emotions, as momentary pleasure brings her a lifetime of sadness, and *horas* functions both in terms of remembered pleasure and present misery. Without the lover the persona's life has ceased to move forward, condemning her to an eternity of waiting and complaining that must have been the lot of many women whose menfolk went to war or to the New World, never to return:¹⁴⁶

Alegres horas de memorias tristes
que, por un breve punto que durastes,
a eterna soledad me condenastes
en pago de un contento que me distes. (1-4)

The loneliness of the speaker, together with the cessation of both life and pleasurable emotion is emphasised in the retrospective nature of the language and in the ebb and flow of arrival and departure. A succession of polysyllabic verbs end each line, adding a sobbing, sighing quality. The frequent linking of the two protagonists in *vos* and *mí* continually returns the reader to the cause of the speaker's distress as it reiterates the joy of meeting and the pain of parting. Here the speaker differs from Petrarch and from patriarchal gender norms, for the sonnet's terminology of meeting and parting suggests an unpardonable personal intimacy.

¹⁴⁶ Antonio Domínguez Ortíz provides detailed evidence of the subsistence crises and successive epidemics of plague at the beginning, middle and towards the end of the century. He also reveals Spain's loss of manpower through the expulsion of the Moriscos (Valencia, for example, had its population reduced to 40% of pre-expulsion levels). Apart from this there were losses through war, service to the empire in the Low Countries, Naples and the New World, as well as defence of Spain's own boundaries. His data show a marked decline in the decade 1640-50. The population does not begin to rise again until after 1680 and in 1700 is still far from recouping its 1596 level of 8.5 million, reaching only 7 million for the whole of Spain. Domínguez Ortíz, *La sociedad* 101-13.

Therefore, the most painful aspect for the speaker is her ignorance of the cause of this desertion and the male lover's cruelty, revealed in his awareness of, and lack of concern for, the pain that his desertion will cause: "Decid: ¿por qué de mí, sin mí, os partistes / sabiendo vos, sin vos, cual me dejastes?" (5-6). This creates an unbridgeable gulf between female expectation of honourable masculine behaviour, supposedly the norm, and the reality of the male beloved's perfidy and slipperiness in discarding the persona seemingly without effort. The speaker attempts to reason with the object of her love—if he can leave one place to come to her, and then leave her, why can he not return again to her side?: "Y si por do venistes os tornastes, / ¿por qué no al mismo punto que vinistes?" (7-8).

The tercets bring *desengaño* and resignation to her fate, as she admits that the enduring absence of her lost lover has caused even her happiest memories to wane and lose their sustaining force. Again, the loss of love is identified with loss of life. In the typical hyperbole of the love sonnet the speaker claims that the absent *galán* has consumed her entire life, divided between desire and grief. However, even within the context of conscious artistic representations of Petrarchan love, when the speaker of a female-authored poem suggests that one undying love has consumed her life, she challenges the conventional gender expectations of her era. Similarly, Ann Rosalind Jones has observed of Mary Wroth's "Pamphilia", that Wroth's abandoned woman turns her humiliating position into proof of her heroic constancy (*Currency* 143). Since women were regarded by Church, science and moralists alike as helpless in the toils of their own physiology, and therefore weak headed, mutable, moody and easily seduced if left to their own devices, any statement by a woman that women could sustain loyal devotion in the face of fickle masculinity represents an important stand against traditional views of feminine *mudanza*.

That women should feel the pain of extreme grief and loss seems to have been lost on male poets and writers. The privileging of male grief to the exclusion of female affective identity, thus refusing women the possibility of Petrarchan

subjecthood, has been discussed at length by Juliana Schiesari. Schiesari describes this pre-eminent male loss as conferring on the male subject a melancholic heroism quite denied the female. However, Schiesari has also noted, in reading Renaissance Italian women poets, that they revise the tradition by rejecting “the metaphysical figure of woman as a mere icon of male desire.” Schiesari asks what happens when the female as “a mere pretext for a melancholic voice” becomes herself the “I” of the poem (166-67). This question is in part answered by Ann Rosalind Jones’ discussion of the silent Ovidian heroines, Echo and Philomel, who, in the hands of Gaspara Stampa, no longer merely listen, but become speakers of their own desires and accusers of the “cruelly absorbed lover” (“New Songs” 268-69). Schiesari affirms that the mourning of loss in women’s verse becomes a broader mourning for the lost possibilities that women suffer under patriarchal dominance, due to “their lack of an accredited lack” (169).

In seventeenth-century Spain it was still fashionable to write love poetry that acknowledged the Petrarchan mode. However, the sonnets discussed here show that while women were aware of the requirements of Petrarchan verse, they subscribed to them in small measure. Instead, they provided their female speakers with an objective, external view of love, or with the means to speak of the harsh reality of female loneliness in the absence of the beloved that elucidates the objectification of women under both Petrarchan poetics and the patriarchal seventeenth-century reality with which they lived. However, an altogether more positive aspect of these women’s writing can be seen when they appropriate the masculine subject in order to show their ingenuity and education. It is this aspect that will form the basis of discussion in the following pages.

4.2 “¡Ah ingrata Clori!”: Transvestite speakers.

Many of the sonnets written by seventeenth-century female poets were written specifically to participate in a canon that conventional wisdom about female intelligence regarded as impossible, and to display to a male audience women's ability to write successful poetry in the masculine mode. These aims required careful poetic organisation, as has also been noted by Olivares and Boyce with regard to poetry by Cueva: “[T]iene en cuenta siempre al lector hombre y los decretos del género; implícitamente solicita su aprobación de lo bien que ella los obedece, de lo bien que escribe como hombre e imita su poesía amorosa” (*Espejo* 24-25). To be able to pass herself off as a capable and witty male poet gives the lie to the idea of the female as an inferior male. Cueva is in no position to change the social system within which she lives, but neither does she always write within the masculine system. That she demonstrates her awareness of and capacity to engage in this type of writing only makes more meaningful the poems in which she writes against the masculine canon.

Cueva is not alone in writing sonnets in the male voice. Both Marcia Belisarda and Violante del Cielo also write mimetic sonnets that reflect masculine fantasies about women and desire. Cueva, in a sonnet entitled *Introduce un galán desfavorecido de su dama, quejándose de su crueldad*, engages in all the Petrarchan ploys of her male contemporaries in portraying the male lover as involved in battle, besieging the beloved. Belisarda, the poet who most celebrates reason, joins Cueva in writing a sonnet that takes the male view, entitled *Para una novela*, but she goes further, in creating a typically masculine description of the fickle and mutable woman which, from the pen of a woman poet, takes on a distinctly ironic tone. This is in stark contrast to her sonnet, *Si no impide mi amor el mismo cielo*, where, in adopting a male voice, she resorts to reason to control a love disdained.

However, Cielo, the most poetically accomplished, treats love more conventionally as an incurable disease in a sonnet entitled *Para el amor no hay remedio*.¹⁴⁷

Cueva's title, *Introduce un galán desfavorecido de su dama, quejándose de su crueldad*, makes clear her intention to write a traditional love sonnet in the *amor cortés* mode, expressed by a male lover ruled by passion, with the *esquiva* as the object of desire. The quartets call for a truce in the war with repeated imperatives: "Basta/bastan, serena, suspende, cesen," while the tercets reiterate the traditional, courtly love imagery of the cruel beauty: "¡Ah ingrata Clori! ¡Ah ingrata, que a mis quejas / tienes el alma y pecho de diamante! / y parece que vives con mi muerte" (9-11). The lover converts Clori into a parasite, whose power and beauty are enhanced in direct proportion to the life she extracts from him. The first line of this tercet is cleverly structured; in employing *ritmo melódico* and a succession of *sinalefas*, a sustained cry of pain is directed to Clori's diamantine obduracy: "¡Ah ingrata Clori! ¡Ah ingrata, que a mis quejas" (9). Yet the highly hyperbolic language of a sonnet written by a woman employing a male voice undercuts its message of pain, converting it into a mockery of the sonneteer's traditional complaint.

Similarly, Belisarda's sonnet, *Para una novela*, reiterates male views of emotionally labile and morally untrustworthy women. The use of the subjunctive in the first quartet suggests that the speaker is rehearsing an apparent outburst by the absent lover, also named "Clori":

En suspiros y llanto arroje el pecho
la causa que ocasiona mi dolencia,
aunque tras sí con rígida violencia
se lleve el corazón pedazos hecho. (1-4)

The speaker does not clarify whose heart is broken in this quartet. Indeed, the whole sonnet is deliberately ambiguous, blurring subject, object, and gender expectations. Hence, Clori may be dragging her own broken heart, as is suggested by her sighs

¹⁴⁷ This sonnet does not appear in the *Rimas varias* but is included in the eighteenth-century British Library manuscript (Add. ms. 25353).

and tears, or the heart of the rejected lover behind her. The “telling” of the story of Clori justifies the title but also suggests, in its novelty, that this poet seeks to undercut a message which, on the surface, is denigratory of the female and sympathetic to the male. Legal terminology in the second quartet, incorporating sentencing, exile and the satisfaction of a grievance, gestures again to the Petrarchan mode, but also to the world of men, since women have no part in the justice system:

Destiérranme de Clori, a mi despecho,
celos que ésta me intiman cruel sentencia,
mas su gusto matando con la ausencia
ha de quedar mi agravio satisfecho. (5-8)

The irony Belisarda inserts into her sonnet points to the burlesquing of male love poetry, for here it is Clori who dispenses a “justice” considered utterly unjust by the speaker. Although the speaker indicates that he has no choice but to accept his plight, in the tercets he turns to first-person discourse in order to castigate Clori directly. The structure is also strained, for although the rhyme scheme remains dedicated to the tercet norm, the intention of the poet is clearly to separate the castigation of Clori into paired lines. The first pair accuse, the next express the lover’s intentions, and the final two provide a biblical proverb as a warning to fickle lovers:

Pues a otro dueño concedieron palma
de amor ¡oh ingrata, alevel!, tus favores,
a tu ruego cual áspid ser intento,
cerrando en mis oídos puerta al alma,
porque bien no se sirve a dos señores
si no es teniendo al uno mal contento. (9-14)

Again there is mockery in the tercets. The aggrieved male will become an asp in rejecting a beloved who has already rejected him in the quartets. It is his ears that will close the way to his soul, rather than the conventional eyes: an allusion, perhaps, to the verbal excesses with which women were charged. This woman, however, is silent and the tercets await instead her pleas for forgiveness. The adoption of the unusual figure of the deaf “áspid” further supports my contention that this sonnet takes issue with masculine dominance and pretensions, as the poet/nun resorts to

the Psalms to undermine the injured dignity of the speaker: “The wicked go astray from the womb, they err from their birth speaking lies. They have venom like the venom of a serpent, like the deaf adder that stops its ear, so that it does not hear the voice of charmers or of the cunning enchanter” (Ps. 58:3-4). The rebuffed lover becomes the butt of feminine criticism, for this psalm begins: “Do you indeed decree what is right, you gods?” Rather than castigate the “ingrata,” the poet subtly suggests that the male lover is equally at fault.

Remaining with scripture, the poet concludes in the New Testament. She quotes from the Sermon on the Mount to affirm that in the fiction of the poetic love debate it is not the woman who is master, but always the male: “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other” (Matthew 6.24). In making Clori the servant of two masters, the speaker overplays his hand. In the *amor cortés* tradition, it is the female beloved who is the nominal master (*dueño*) of the suffering lover/servant. The sonnet finishes, therefore, in reality. Whether or not Clori has two “masters,” she remains in the position of inferiority. Belisarda exposes the masculine love complaint as a rhetorical sham, and women as simply pawns in political, economic and familial alliances.

In such works, Cueva and Belisarda write in carefully crafted homage to the masculine art of sonnet writing, while subtly criticising the system they appear to emulate. In contrast, Cielo defies structural conventions in pursuing the love-as-disease theme in her sonnet, *Para el amor no hay remedio*. This begins: “¿Qué importa Lisi que mi amor ofendas?” and continues with a ten-line sequence, all beginning “¿Qué importa...?” These piled questions enumerate all the symptoms of the Petrarchan disease of love: “dolor,” “duelo,” llanto,” “muerte,” “pena,” “duda” and “celos,” including a typical paradox: “¿Qué importa llanto que mi fuego enciendas?” That they overflow the usual octet/sestet structure only serves to emphasise the disordered mental state of the male lover. Yet, at the same time, the repeated “Qué

importa” detracts from the Petrarchan message and reveals a more baroque attitude to love in the final tercet: “Si aunque de todo tengo el desengaño / está ya por mi mal el daño hecho” (12-13). Ultimately, however, baroque *desengaño* proves insufficient to cure the ills of the lover; the final line returns him to the helplessness of his plight: “y no encuentro remedio por el daño” (14). Arguing through the causes of his pain does not bring the relief he seeks. The sonnet collapses back into the helplessness of Petrarchan engagement, with the speaker unable to achieve his ends or let them go.

In simultaneously utilising the courtly love mode while altering the structure, so as to reinforce the despair felt by the persona, Cielo emasculates him; he does not take control of the beloved nor cast her aside, showing a distinct lack of *hombría*. However, this sonnet cannot be read purely from the point of view of the masculine persona, for there is no way of knowing whether Cielo intended her speaker to be male, in spite of the female object and the traditionally Petrarchan theme. It was this gender ambiguity in her works that caused nineteenth-century scholars to question her sexuality, as has already been discussed. However, women writing in this male field were compelled to utilise the tropes that indicated their ability to do so, for the pattern was already set for them. Gerda Lerner makes the same point about women’s marginal position in a history written by men (*History* 52-53).

The question of the persona is also left unresolved by Marcia Belisarda and Leonor de la Cueva. By writing in the male mode they broaden the perspective of the reader and make a space for themselves as authors and for their female companions as audience. Pre-conceived notions of female inferiority cannot be brought into the equation. Furthermore, they efface the differences, perpetuated in male-authored works, that situate women only as the manipulated object of their masculine fantasies. When women participate in these poetic activities as readers, they too participate in the debate about women; hence the choice of speaking subject becomes critically important to the understanding of women’s position in the

patriarchal scheme. This shifting voice—masculine, feminine or neither of these—is an enabling strategy in altering women’s perceptions of their own worth and capabilities.

When Belisarda writes mimetic sonnets in the male voice, she goes further than to appropriate an existing mode, either for purposes of display or criticism. She also resorts to the male prerogative of reason, as in her sonnet entitled “*A consonantes forzosos sobre que habían escrito sonetos con asuntos diferentes diferentes personas, diéronme por asunto no desmayar a vista de un desdén.*” For Belisarda, the masculine *yo* justifies her appeal to reason, yet her authorship undermines the presumed masculine supremacy and questions its gendered suppositions. Here Belisarda is again writing within an “academy” of her companions; hence she does not adopt the love-as-war theme favoured by Cueva, the legal arguments of her own sonnet to Clori, or the love-as-disease theme used by Cielo. Instead, she begins with a conditional that links the poet-nun to the voice of her speaker: “*Si no impide mi amor el mismo cielo.*” However, with or without heaven’s sanction, the persona determines to employ reason as a cure for the ills of disdain and the passions of love, as the remainder of the quartet reveals: “*no bastarán cuántos rigores miro, / a ponerle del alma en el retiro, / porque en razón fundado toma vuelo*” (2-4).

This opening does not sound like the complaint of a distracted and rebuffed lover, but suggests instead the application of reason and intelligence to the will, as favoured by religious meditation techniques. It is such an approach that enables the speaker not to “*desmayar a vista de un desdén.*” Nevertheless, Belisarda pursues the traditional line of the hapless lover, painfully imprisoned in the icy disdain of the beloved: “*la causa del dolor porque suspiro / no admite de temor prisión de hielo*” (7-8). This prison is not the paradoxically burning ice of the Petrarchan love lyric; it is transparent and friable, engendering the hope that the prison itself may be melted in the warmth of a mutual gaze.

In Belisarda's sonnet reason conquers the pain of unrequited love. The final line links the religious aspect of the first line to astrological thinking: "no formaré de algún rigor querellas, / sino sólo, Jacinta, de tus ojos, / puesto que están conformes las estrellas" (12-14). If the stars are appropriately aligned the lover hopes to achieve his desires, but in order to see the stars he seeks in vain Jacinta's eyes. Hence, his only complaint is to be denied the eyes through which he seeks to discover his fate. In Renaissance love theory the gaze consisted of beams passing directly from the soul through the eyes. When lovers' eyes met, their souls also joined in mutual harmony. Belisarda links Jacinta's gaze to the heavens and to the soul, only to find that, while reason brings a measure of control, it is not quite enough to quell the passions. Nevertheless, the artful nature of this construct, in which she solves an emotional "problem" with reason, is entirely undercut by the title's clear indication that the sonnet itself is a work of reason and wit; a clever and rhythmic piece of artifice that completes a philosophical excursion through the powers of the soul, not in religious contemplation but in play. Her artfulness in no way deprives her poem of its message that women are capable of reason. In fact, the message is enhanced by the apparent ease with which reason can be employed.

Belisarda's appeal to reason is repeated in her paired sonnets to and from the *dama seglar* to be discussed below. While reason places her in a masculine space, the appeals to heaven, stars and the soul return Belisarda to her convent and her religious companions. Conversely, Cueva, in *Introduce un galán desfavorecido de su dama, quejándose de su crueldad*, and perhaps because she may be writing for male readers, finds in her *galán* the moral strength and fibre lacking in the *galanes* of her other sonnets, where men are frequently found wanting. Here the persona declares himself of sufficient rank to court Clori: "no es bièn que des abrojos / a quien te rinde un alma, por despojos, / no indigna de gozar de tus favores" (6-8). In her conclusion, Cueva celebrates male courage and constancy in the war of love, ranging Clori's murderous attitude with the *amante's* siege methods: "y aunque me matas, he de

estar constante, / con tu desdén luchando hasta vencerte” (13-14). In the process, the poet tells her male readers that, like Chaucer’s Wife of Bath, her speaker knows what women want, and that is to have control of their menfolk. However, where Chaucer frames this as a negative characteristic, buttressing his argument with the words of St Paul, Cueva affirms that women admire persistence and constancy in their male contemporaries.

While these women show their capacity to write in the field of male love poetry, they go further in composing male voiced sonnets in which the *yo* frequently expresses frustration and jealousy in the face of firm, controlled female modesty. In so doing they extol the dignity and moral worth of their formless and silent female objects, and hold up to scrutiny the generally low opinion of women held by men. The commonplace of female inferiority was reinforced over and over by the concordance of Aristotelian teachings, Renaissance medical theories and the teachings of the church.¹⁴⁸ However, these poets mock the Aristotelian, Augustinian and Galenic view of females as inferior or deformed males, doomed to reduced mental and physical capacity by reason of their cold, moist humours. Instead, the male, whether subject or object, is imbued with all the undesirable characteristics normally attributed to women, being emotional, garrulous, flirtatious, unfaithful and irrational. In contrast, women are portrayed as rational and morally strong and all this within the role cast for them by men, of chaste silence. For example, in Cueva’s *Soneto a Floris*, the cause of the male lover’s dilemma is not the *mujer esquiva*, but her absence, as “he” indicates in the opening lines. “Ausente estoy de tus divinos ojos; / En fin, ausente y lleno de desvelos” (1-2). Without access to the mutual gaze he cannot enumerate her charms, and his struggle for self-control in the quartets suggests his banishment, as does his plaintive cry in the tercets: “¿Cuándo se ha de acabar, Floris divina, / La rigurosa pena de no verte / Y el cobarde temor de tu mudanza?” (9-11). This

¹⁴⁸ For a detailed exposition of the Renaissance theories of female inferiority, see Ian Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman: A Study in the Fortunes of Scholasticism and Medical Science in European Intellectual Life* (Cambridge, [Eng.] ; New York: Cambridge UP, 1980).

concrete absence moves the mood away from contemplation, for the speaker has nothing to contemplate. Nevertheless, his revelation in the quartets of the devastating effect of her eyes shows that they dominate him, whether he can see them or not. This mistress is entirely the master of his passion: “¡Ay! ¡Quién gozara de tus rayos rojos / sin tantos sobresaltos y desvelos!” (5-6).

The inevitable effect of the absence is to arouse the male speaker’s suspicions as to the beloved’s actions; there can be no trust in a system that insists on women’s congenital inability to control themselves. At the same time, Cueva attributes emotions normally applied to the female to the suffering lover: he is jealous, irritated by the separation, and he suffers unresolved “antojos” and cowardly fears. Covarrubias expresses “antojos” simply as “el desseo que alguna preñada tiene de qualque cosa de comer, o porque la vió o la imaginó o se mentó delante della.” In Covarrubias, “antojos” is applied exclusively to the cravings of pregnant women, hence Cueva further feminises the male speaker. Even though he demonstrates all the typical symptoms of the Petrarchan lover, being sleepless, sick with worry, and depressed by separation from the beloved, it all comes down to control. If he is not able to see the beloved he is immediately assailed by the certainty that she is being unfaithful. The necessity to curb physical desire is doubly expressed with a delightful pun on *detener* at the end of the quartets that both pulls him up and lets him go:

¡Ay! ¡Quién gozara de tus rayos rojos
sin tantos sobresaltos y desvelos!
Pues mientras duran los nublosos velos
¡He de tener la rienda a mis antojos! (5-8)

Pregnant with desire, the male lover is filled with doubts and uncertainties, represented in the “nublosos velos” of absence that come between him and the sun of his beloved and in his fear of feminine *mudanza*. By contrast, the female subject is “peregrina” in her “firmeza,” as Cueva again erases the differences between the sexes. The female object neither entices nor denies, nor does she have shape or

colour, except for the “rayos rojos” of her commanding eyes. Rather than a cool and virginal moon, Cueva’s “rayos” suggest she is the sun, too dazzling to look at, as she moves around and determines the diurnal round. A pun on “peregrina” notes Floris’ rare qualities and also creates a paradox: she is both firm and mobile. The fears of the lover are finally soothed, as in Cielo’s earlier sonnet, by hope: “Aunque más le sustenta la esperanza” (14). Like Everyman, the speaker finds that only hope remains after every other emotion and quality has been expended.¹⁴⁹

Navigating in the narrow space between intellectual expression and undesirable and damaging fame, women like Cielo, Cueva and Belisarda, in adopting the male persona, reveal their capacity to see the love debate from the other side of the mirror, to join the male speaker who holds up the image of his beautiful beloved as an image of self-worship. In the process the mirror becomes subtly distorted and opportunities are thus created to circumnavigate the limits on female speech. Writing of the power of discourse, Luce Irigaray has noted how female sexuality is never defined with respect to any sex but the masculine. Such a definition usually provides a negative image that offers male sexuality “an unfailingly phallic self-representation” (69-70). What these poets reveal in their male-voiced sonnets is that they, too, take issue with these negative assumptions. They reflect on the shortcomings of the love debate, particularly its one-sided nature, as well as on commonplace masculine presumptions about the female intellect. Furthermore, as they employ and lampoon masculine expression, they challenge gendered opinions of writing women as *varonil*.

¹⁴⁹ This is not the only sonnet in which Cueva feminises the male lover. In another *glosa* Cueva’s speaker tells a cautionary tale: *A un galán. Todo lo pierde quien lo quiere todo* (ms. 4127: 206).

4.3 “Caros desengaños”: Love and self-knowledge.

The constant theme in the love poetry by these female poets, even as it ranges over a variety of topics and styles, is that men and women were not as different as contemporary scientific and religious teaching suggested. The poets argue that both sexes are capable of transgressing norms, of emotional attachment, and, more importantly, of reason, and therefore of learning by experience. Cueva, for example, writes a series of sonnets *a petición*, in which the female speakers acknowledge their own moral defects, discovered through the *desengaño* engendered by dishonourable male conduct. This realisation brings them to a state of independence and freedom. Cueva, as a secular poet, expresses *desengaño* as representing lived experience in the less than satisfactory interchange between the sexes. Belisarda, the religious, espouses an intellectual debate with the distance of considered wisdom.

Belisarda writes an exchange between a *galán* and a *dama seglar* in a pair of sonnets that utilise similar terms to argue the same point from opposed sides, in the scholastic manner. Since, as the poet herself points out, the *dama*'s response utilises the same language, it is clear that the sonnets are written as an exercise in intelligence and wit. However, this does not dilute the message of reason and intelligence that Belisarda wishes to convey.¹⁵⁰ Adding to the impression that Belisarda wishes to join a philosophical debate about physical appetite and its control, the author/nun emphatically distances herself from the persona in the first sonnet, insisting that it is the *galán* speaker who addresses a *dama seglar*. The second sonnet, which responds to and refutes the argument of the first, locates the *dama seglar* in a superior position to the “male” speaker of the first sonnet. It is she

¹⁵⁰ Belisarda also writes *décimas* and a *romance melancólico to pensamiento* (respectively 53v and 31r of Ms.7469). The *décimas*, particularly, deal with memory, intellect and will, while the *romance* determines that wrong thinking brings the ill of which she thinks. She likens sleep to death at ll.9-10 of the *romance*: “si en dormir busco descanso / por ser de el morir diseño.” She may be evoking Petrarch's *Rima* 227, but the allusion also appears frequently in the bible: for example, in Matt. 27:52, John. 11:11, Acts 7:60, 1Cor.15:6.

who argues from reason, from the rational soul, while the *galán* argues for satisfaction of the appetite.

In the first sonnet the male speaker argues for base satisfaction as a positively masculine quality: “Mal haya un apetito refrenado” (1). He inserts the fate of Tantalus in the second quartet as a sort of cautionary tale; if left unsatisfied, desire will dominate the man’s ability to think rationally, and therefore to develop his *pensamiento*:

Si en el tiempo fatal se halla el cuitado
hecho Tántalo al husmo del contento,
agresor general de pensamiento
sin que a la parte se le dé traslado. (5-8)

Reason is purported to be the dominating difference between male and female, for women are “burdened with passionate humours and wandering wombs, both of which are unchecked by (male) reason, and . . . they are disabled by the lack of a phallus, which renders them wounded or deficient males” (Smith 16-17). In this sonnet, Belisarda’s *galán* brings medieval medical theories to his own use. Rather than reining in the appetite by resorting to reason, he instead seeks to satisfy appetite as a means of pacifying the animal side of his nature and thereby allowing his *pensamiento* to take control. This sophisticated argument sees the male speaker attempt to appropriate both action and contemplation to his own benefit.

In the classical myth, Tantalus is castigated for offending the gods. His punishment is purely at the sensual and physical level; he is placed in a pool to his neck but cannot drink from it, fruits are tossed by the wind from his reach and he is driven both by physical frustration and the need for survival. Belisarda’s *galán* seeks to avoid the fate of Tantalus by persuading the “fruits” that he desires, the sexual favours of the *dama*, that restraint is unhealthy, and that she should place herself within his reach. Yet, by focusing his argument on bodily cravings, Belisarda denies him reason and intelligence, and feminises his argument: men are expected to be

practised in the art of conversation, while wheedling persuasion and logorrhea are what males complain of in women.

By expressing his desire for the *dama*, by making her the *norte* of his *vida*, and inviting himself to dance in her flame, the *galán* opens himself to the fate that he seeks to avoid. In the first tercet there is confusion as to the indirect object of the action in its final line: “Yo por huir de aqueste inconveniente / digo que sois el norte de mi vida, / sois el incendio que mi amor inflama” (9-11). Either his inflamed love breathes on and intensifies the *dama*’s fire, or the heat of her nearness engenders a burning desire in the *galán*. The two conventional images create a circularity in which, as the Petrarchan moth of the lover’s soul breathes on and poeticises the beloved object, he also seeks to awaken her own flame. However, the “esta alma / esa llama” of the final line creates a distance between the lover and the *dama* that the *galán* cannot bridge. In this sonnet, Belisarda deliberately gives no space to the silent *dama*; since the *galán* and the *dama* are engaged in scholastic debate, she allows him to speak, uninterrupted, while she ponders her response.

In the second sonnet, which begins “Bien haya un apetito refrenado” (1), the *dama* demonstrates her rational and intellectual control of the argument and makes clear in the second quartet that the ideas she espouses are her own:

Presumo que de juicio está menguado
 aquél que a ejecuciones el contento
 atribuye, si ya de pensamiento
 no es del mismo apetito vil traslado. (5-8)

The *dama* argues that to control physical desire is the most intelligent recourse for a man of honour. The code of *hombria* determines that a man must gain honour through prowess, while a woman can only act as its conduit, passing her husband’s honour to her children. Furthermore, the *dama* expresses the philosophical view that contemplation is preferable to action, particularly when the pursuit is purely for physical satisfaction. In doing so, Belisarda’s feminine voice adopts an ideally masculine role. The *dama* ignores the body to privilege the mind and the intelligence,

and does not shrink from expressing her own preference for the Christian ideal of containment toward which a rational man should naturally strive, as the opening of the sestet reveals: “Para mi gusto es este inconveniente / y es conveniente, pues, para la vida / de mi amor que le temple y no le inflama” (9-11). In advising the *galán* to exercise appropriate control, to warm her passions rather than kill them with excessive heat, the *dama* neither rejects nor invites him, but maintains a balancing control, demanding of him the most noble and pure love. In a neat conceit, Belisarda converts the flame of the *galán*'s final word to a call for more noble aspirations in love: “Esto supuesto de lo antecedente / no vive, a lo primero se convida / y al fin de noble amor solo se llama” (12-14).

It is clear that in these sonnets Belisarda demonstrates her ability to enter the male realm of philosophical debate. In privileging matter over form in the *galán*'s argument, Belisarda professes a manifesto of equality, where irrationality and the irksome demands of the body are shared and not women's alone. Conversely, the *dama* employs Church doctrine, the prerogative of a priest, to argue for containment of the passions for the good of the soul. In using the same terms to create two opposing arguments, Belisarda demonstrates the inherently deceptive nature of the masculine art of rhetoric and the fickleness and slipperiness of language. She proves that a practised rhetorician can argue either side of an argument with equal facility, and she demonstrates the gendered attributes contained within language, depending on who is using it. Given that facility with language is an admired trait in the male, but frowned on in the female, Belisarda thereby casts doubt on the veracity of male verbal production and demands a more reasoned approach to individual intelligence and rationality, as human rather than exclusively male traits. Above all, she asserts that women, too, are capable of reason and self-control.

With regard to women's struggle to prove to themselves and to others their capacity for abstract thought, Gerda Lerner has observed that it has skewed their intellectual development as a group, since their major intellectual endeavour has

been to counteract patriarchal assumptions of their inferiority. It is this struggle that Belisarda enters with her poetry of reason, and her life experience is borne out in Lerner's observation that learned women were mostly single and often cloistered. The intellectual precociousness that was encouraged in youth was discouraged later, forcing women to choose between marriage and enclosure, in other words "the life of a woman or the life of the mind" (*Consciousness* 30).

While Belisarda finds strength in distanced argument and moralising, always from the vantage point of reason, Cueva turns to bitter experience in the education of her female lovers. They and their author occupy a secular world, while the titles suggest that Cueva writes to order and that social restrictions on contact with the opposite sex before marriage were not as stringently observed as the moralists would have liked. For example, Cueva writes a pair of sonnets in which the female speakers courageously acknowledge their outrageous behaviour according to the prevailing social standards. However, in each case the cause of the problem is the male, portrayed as insincere and untruthful for encouraging one lover while promised to another. The sonnets are placed next to each other in the manuscript. Both claim to be written by request, and their didactic purpose is indicated in their lengthy titles as, for example: *Soneto a petición: Introduce una dama que se aficionó a un galán que estaba prendado de otra y dándole a entender su amor la correspondió, hasta que vino a saber que quería a otra y enojada le hace este soneto dando de mano a su amor*. These titles not only indicate social intercourse between the sexes, but that the nominally superior males were seen to act as Eve figures in tempting the young women. The women do not scruple to show their interest, defying the restrictions on where a *doncella* could safely cast her eyes. The nominal restriction on wanton gazing was clearly still in force in the following century. When Carmen Martín Gaité makes observations about the female gaze in the eighteenth century, she shows that Enlightenment thinking had done nothing to alter the patriarchal preconceptions that governed the lives of seventeenth-century women:

To look up, to look someone straight in the eye was what girls had to avoid if they wished to give guarantee of their chastity. The proper attitude was summed up in a concept inseparable from that of maidenhood, crystallized in the *recato*. . . . The reiterated preachings of maidens' reserve stressed far more the exterior appearance of reticence than the causes leading to an unvirtuous action; what really harmed a woman's reputations was not being reserved enough. What was not seen did not exist. (72)

Cueva's sonnets both refute and endorse this attitude. Initially, in the opening line of the above-named sonnet, she indicates that the young woman fails in her *recatamiento*: "Puse los ojos ¡ay que no debiera!" (1). However, the remainder of this quartet leaves open the question as to the cause of her regretful exclamation. This may be either her failure to observe the social obligation to keep her eyes downcast, or her inappropriate gazing at a man already claimed by another. The problem then moves from the socially transgressive female to a mutually transgressive infidelity entered into by both parties: "en quien ya de las flechas de Cupido / mostraba el tierno corazón herido, / para que yo, sin esperanza, muera (2-4).

Throughout the quartets the persona accepts the culpability for her inappropriate action. Since she acknowledges her error, resulting in *desengaño*, the poet places her in a morally superior position. The persona accepts that her failure at self-control is due to female weakness: "mas fui mujer y al fin mujer ligera" (8). However, she also discloses her attempts to resist the "mirar tan atrevido" of the *galán* already promised to another. In addition, the second quartet expresses the *dama's* awareness not only of the emotional hurt that the flirtation engenders, but also of the compromised social position in which she finds herself, as *daño* serves both causes:

Huir fácil me fue de la primera
ocasión que a tal daño me ha traído,
con resistir mirar tan atrevido,¹⁵¹
mas fui mujer y al fin mujer ligera. (5-8)

The speaker blames a personified love for her predicament, for love has robbed her of reason and captivated all her senses: "Grillos amor me puso a los sentidos" (9).

¹⁵¹ In her manuscript, Cueva emphasises the gaze in this line by enclosing it in dashes, thus: *con resistir – mirar – tan atrevido*.

She yokes the mischievous boy-god to the dishonourable lover who encourages her love with gifts: “la causa cruel de tantos daños / con sus regalos aumentó mis glorias” (10-11). *Desengaño* comes with the realisation, in the final tercet, that she is being deceived by the lover’s pretence, and she finds within herself the strength to resist.

Contiguous to this sonnet in the manuscript is a companion work where the female speaker is more forceful in rejecting the fickle lover, Alcindo. From the first quartet his failings are set up against the strength and dignity of the speaker:

Alcindo, ya murió en tu desengaño
un verdadero amor, el más constante;
ya contrastó su fuerza de diamante
tu desprecio cruel para mi daño. (1-4)

Unlike the first sonnet, where the lonely, interior search of the conscience acts like a confessional, progressing from presentation of the problem to its solution, this one apostrophises Alcindo. Again, the descriptive terms applied to the fickle *galán* are those ascribed to women by male poets, playwrights and moralists, who locate female fickleness in their inferior humours. This supposed physiological inevitability gives men no reason to suppose that women learn from their mistakes. Cueva’s poetry indicates that, whether or not women subscribed to Renaissance humoral theory in their daily lives, she regards women as intelligent, rational and capable of learning through experience.

The female lover’s firmness and constancy are contrasted positively against the *galán*’s inconstancy, infidelity and deviousness in the second quartet: “Eres cual viento leve e inconstante; / ni sabes ser galán ni firme amante” (6-7). In suggesting that Alcindo behaves neither like a *galán* nor a lover, the speaker indicates some experience in this field. She attributes the cause of her suffering to her own, open declaration of her feelings, that leave her exposed to the *desprecio* of the *galán*. *Desengaño* arises from her realisation that the *galán* fails to respond appropriately because he is “prendado de otra.” Through her portrayal of his duplicity Cueva again

punctures the masculine appropriation of honourable behaviour. Moreover, as she shows women to be more experienced at the game of love than they are supposed to be, she also discloses that women are more capable of self-discipline and control than are their male counterparts.

4.4 Heroic Constancy: *La firmeza en la ausencia*

Cueva's interest in promoting the cause of female strength, loyalty and moral courage is reflected not just in isolated poems in her manuscript but also in one extant play, *La firmeza en la ausencia*.¹⁵² The female protagonist, Armesinda, successfully defends herself against the political power, wiles and physical strength of the King of Naples. She therefore defies all the norms of the patriarchal system, saving her honour and the life of her beloved, Don Juan, in the process.¹⁵³ In order to achieve the requisite degree of independence and freedom to act in her protagonist, Cueva has to dispossess her of any living male relative who could take control of her life and place her in the masculine-controlled marriage market. As Peter Stallybrass has observed, in the early modern period the category "woman" is a property category, an idea prevalent since the Commandments linked "wife, maid, ox, and ass side by side as a man's assets" (127). Cueva makes Armesinda's isolation explicit: "Desde mis primeros años, de padres desamparada" (2014-15). In the course of the play Cueva produces a suite of sonnets devoted to absence, trust and firm devotion. In Act 1 the king, who cannot control his lust for Armesinda, sends Don Juan away to war. Don Juan laments to his *lacayo*, Tristán, that absence and jealousy are the

¹⁵² The scope of this study does not permit a full discussion of the play. I focus on the four sonnets uttered by the four lovers. For treatment of other aspects of the play and Cueva's challenge to patriarchy, see Sharon D. Voros, "Fashioning Feminine Wit in María de Zayas, Ana Caro and Leonor de la Cueva," *Gender, Identity and Representation in Spain's Golden Age*, ed. Anita K. and Dawn L. Smith Stoll (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2000), 156-77; or Teresa Scott Soufas, "Absence of Desire in Leonor de la Cueva y Silva's *La firmeza en la ausencia*," *Gender, Identity and Representation in Spain's Golden Age*, ed. Anita K. Stoll and Dawn L. Smith (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2000) 142-55.

¹⁵³ Cueva's choice to name her hero "Don Juan" is surprising, given the associations of that name with the classic philanderer. However, his doubt that Armesinda will be able to resist the king, together with Cueva's choice of name may be a further, ironic tilt at male weakness. Cueva may also have enjoyed playing with the potent symbolism of names, as she gives her own name to the lower class *criada*.

death of love. Before his departure, Don Juan and Armesinda pledge loyalty in matched sonnets which are equalled in a sonnet exchange between the *criada*, Leonor, and Tristán.

These two pairs of sonnets are fascinating for a number of reasons. This is no Petrarchan interiorising of rarefied love, nor are the female protagonists chastely hidden from sight. These sonnets are delivered face to face, between the two pairs of lovers, whose eyes meet in solemnization of their vows. Moreover, in spite of the affectionate companionship that the play makes clear, between Don Juan and his *lacayo* and between Armesinda and her *criada*, distinctions of class are acknowledged and revealed through the fates the four lovers wish on themselves, should they fail to keep their word. These distinctions do not detract from the close confidences enjoyed by the servants and their aristocratic employers. Tristán's and Leonor's fate lies in the realm of the domestic, the kitchen and ever-present vermin, as Leonor's vow reveals:

en piedra dura se me vuelva el pan,
y tenga lamparones en la frente;
no halle descanso ni contento en cosa;
pulgas me piquen en cualquiera parte, (7-11)

Tristan's sonnet promise is even more fervent:

con sus ratones me persiga un gato,
con sus golpes me aturda un herrador;
ande hecho estafermo de un señor,
de mis favores haga un necio plato,
con preguntas me mate un mentecato,
y atraviésemme el cuerpo un asador;
parezca cocinero de convento, (3-9)

The vows of the aristocrats, however, revolve around disparagement, loss of honour and status, and worse, loss of chastity, as in Armesinda's vow that she may be enjoyed by a "vil esclavo," and the following lines from Don Juan show:

gócete el rey, y rompa mis despojos,
ostente los favores de tu mano,
pase mi cuerpo de esta a la otra parte
con mi espada delante de tus ojos
la mano del más rústico villano. (9-13)

The author nevertheless injects a considerable degree of emotional equality into the sonnets. The self-imposed submission to vile horrors are bracketed, in each of the four sonnets, by near-identical opening and closing lines: “Si yo olvidaré.../ Si yo dejare...” in those of Tristan and Leonor; “Si yo olvidaré... Si dejare.../ Si dejare... Si dejare...” in those of Armesinda and Don Juan. The effect of the vows, whether couched in rustic or regal terms, is the same. In all four sonnets, absence from the beloved is figured as death, and all four speakers wish ultimately for death if they do not comply with their own stringent standards. Although the early modern vision of desire as at once impossible and a kind of death is everywhere present in literature of the period, this is not the case in Cueva’s play. Nowhere does she suggest that the desire between the two pairs is impossible. Absence is artificially constructed through the malign figure of the king, who abuses his power to assuage his lust and who is, paradoxically, the epitome of the patriarchal model. Social order and the requital of desire will be achieved through the application of one woman’s constancy and intelligence.

Those whose duty it is to obey have no choice in this enforced absence, as the *caballero* has sworn fealty to his lord and the servant has no option but to follow his master into involuntary exile and war. This action reflects the appropriate behavioural codes for the patriarchal society of early modern Spain, though the *comedia* plays cynically with the hypocrisy and corrupt abuse of power by the king, who should be the model for social propriety, and who besieges Armesinda for a year and a half, before Don Juan and Tristán are finally able to return. Even when threatened with death by the king, Armesinda determines not to break her word or compromise her honour. She becomes a model that counters the traditionally misogynist view of women as unreliable and weak, and hence forms a balancing figure to the debased king.

Although the author features the king’s ignoble behaviour, Cueva does not seriously question the system from which, as a noble, she benefits. Nevertheless,

she upholds that integrity, honour and moral strength can exist in all levels of society and in both sexes, and that they are not the prerogatives of the men of the dominant class. This is a direct challenge to the gender, class and ethnicity presumptions of the ruling male elites of seventeenth-century Spain. Gerda Lerner has articulated the need for such a challenge in the writing of history because of patent contradictions in what is written and what actually happens. The traditional model is elitist, leaving out more than half of humankind, not only women, but most men, and all classes and races other than the privileged group. That is, men and women have participated actively in the world, yet we are told of a past in which men act and women are acted upon. In observing that the first known slaves were women of foreign tribes, Lerner draws together the strands of class, ethnicity and gender into a single Other whose fate is operated on by those in power: that is, those who write history (*History* 131-33). In this vein, Cueva's own dominant social position does not prevent her from observing that women are less active than acted upon within her own social milieu. However, she proves, through the play's title and plot, that women can also act: it is the strategic deployment of her heroine's ingenuity, intelligence and moral strength that resolves the social problems raised in the play.

The correct political order is re-established when the king's attentions are deflected on to an even more noble target, a French princess. Hence, Cueva achieves closure at both the political and personal levels. Although she does not seek change in the governing system, Cueva does critique the morally repugnant possibilities inherent in absolute power. In the play's sonnets Cueva foregrounds equality between men and women in terms of their integrity, ingenuity and mutual trust. In the *comedia* she proclaims an equality between men and women in their capacity to surmount problems and determine their own political and personal relationships. Furthermore, she insists that relationships of gender equality, albeit strictly within one's own class, are socially beneficial.

Conclusion

This chapter has revealed that these women were capable sonneteers of love. Furthermore, they took the opportunity, in appropriating a particularly male pastime to their own use, to defend women against the misogynists' claims of weakness, fickleness and mutability. They also express female attitudes to male failings and challenge the prevailing masculine appropriation of honour and probity. Though it would be dangerous to take the sonnets of a few educated women as representative of the whole, there are sufficient examples here, by women from a wide geographical distribution of the educated upper classes, to suggest that women's access to social intercourse with male equals was more common than is suggested in histories, or recommended in conduct manuals, and that women freely expressed their views about the social failings and successes of their male contemporaries. While in this regard they fall far short of the revenge stories of a María de Zayas, these sonnets show strong and independent women expressing themselves through their ideas and most emphatically not through their bodies. Without the colourful blazon of the adored body, these poems become a feminine manifesto about the possibilities of human love, shorn of its idealising perspective, and hence providing a lens through which to determine the realities of love and physical attraction between the sexes. The possibilities thereby released in the love lyric are taken up with even greater fervour in the relation to mystical love of the divine. It is this mystical love that will form the thematic substance of the next chapter, through a discussion of the works of Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza.

SONNETS IN THE CHAPTER IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

4.1 “Ardiente fuego”: Women and Petrarchism

Marcia Belisarda

Dándome por asunto cortarse un dedo llegando a cortar un jazmín

Filis, de amor hechizo soberano,
cortar quiso un jazmín desvanecido,
y de cinco mirándose excedido
quedó del vencimiento más ufano.

No bien corta el jazmín cuando tirano
acero en rojo humor otro ha teñido,
mintiendo ramillete entretejido
de jazmín y clavel la hermosa mano.

Atropos bella a la tijera cede
piadosa ejecución, si inadvertida,
a su mano dolor ocasionando;
que si alma con su sangre dar no puede,
en vez de muerte dio al jazmín la vida,
de amor el dulce imperio dilatando.
(Ms. 7469:88r)

Leonor de la Cueva y Silva

¿De qué sirve querer un imposible?

Glosa

¡Basta, amor, el rigor con que me has muerto!
¡Cese un poco, rapaz, tu ardiente fuego!
Pues ya del alma el señorío entrego,
por los ojos no más, a dueño cierto.

Y aunque es el bien que adoro tan incierto
que no pasa de vista, a sentir llego
tu fuerza de manera que me anego
en mil mares de amar sin hallar puerto.

Riño unas veces a mis libres ojos,
mas por respeto de lo que han mirado,
detengo el castigarlos lo posible.

Y viendo que padezco estos enojos,
digo entre mí a mi pecho enamorado:

¿De qué sirve querer un imposible?

(ms. 4127: 259-60)

Violante del Cielo

Quien dice que la ausencia es homicida,
no sabe conocer rigor tan fuerte,
que si la dura ausencia diera muerte,
no me matara a mí la propia vida.
Mas ¡ay! que de tus ojos dividida
la vida me atormenta de tal suerte,
que muriendo sentida de no verte,

sin verte vivo, por morir sentida.
 Pero si de la suerte la mudanza
 es fuerza me asegure la evidencia
 que tanto me dilata una tardanza:
 No quede el sentimiento en contingencia,
 que el milagro mayor de la esperanza
 es no rendir la vida a tal ausencia.
 (*Rimas varias* (1646) 2)

Inarda de Arteaga

Alegres horas de memorias tristes
 que, por un breve punto que durastes,
 a eterna soledad me condenastes
 en pago de un contento que me distes.
 Decid: ¿por qué de mí, sin mí, os partistes
 sabiendo vos, sin vos, cuál me dejastes?
 Y si por do venistes os tornastes,
 ¿por qué no al mismo punto que vinistes?
 ¡Cuánto fue esta venida deseada
 y cuán arrebatada esta venida!
 Que, en fin, la mejor hora fue menguada.
 No me costastes menos que una vida,
 la media en desear vuestra llegada
 y la media en llorar vuestra partida.
 (Navaro, *Antología*)

4.2 “¡Ah ingrata Clori!”: Tranvestite speakers.

Leonor de la Cueva y Silva

Introduce un galán desfavorecido de su dama, quejándose de su crueldad

Basta el desdén y bastan los rigores,
 Clori, no más crueldad, no más enojos.
 Serena un poco tus divinos ojos
 y suspende sus rayos matadores.
 Cesen desprecios, cesen desfavores,
 Que por flores no es bien que des abrojos
 a quien te rinde un alma, por despojos,
 no indigna de gozar tus favores.
 ¡Ah ingrata Clori! ¡Ah ingrata, que a mis quejas
 tienes el alma y pecho de diamante!
 y parece que vives con mi muerte.
 Mas, cruel Clori, aunque penar me dejas,
 y aunque me matas, he de estar constante,
 con tu desdén luchando hasta vencerte.
 (ms. 4127: 237)

Marcia Belisarda*Para una novela*

En suspiros y llanto arroje el pecho
la causa que ocasiona mi dolencia,
aunque tras sí con rígida violencia
se lleve el corazón pedazos hecho.

Destiérranme de Clori, a mi despecho,
celos que ésta me intiman cruel sentencia,
mas su gusto matando con la ausencia
ha de quedar mi agravio satisfecho.

Pues a otro dueño concedieron palma
de amor ¡oh ingrata, alevel!, tus favores,
a tu ruego cual áspid ser intento,
cerrando en mis oídos puerta al alma,
porque bien no se sirve a dos señores
si no es teniendo al uno mal contento.
(ms. 7469: 57v)

Violante del Cielo

¿Qué importa Lisi que mi amor ofendas?
¿Qué importa amor que mi dolor aumentes?
¿Qué importa duelo que mi sangre afrentes?
¿Qué importa llanto que mi fuego enciendas?
¿Qué importa muerte que mi fin pretendas?
¿Qué importa pena que mi agravio alientes?
¿Qué importa honor que mi venganza intentes?
¿Qué importa duda que mi ofensa entiendas?
¿Qué importa celos que abrazéis mi pecho?
¿Qué importa pruebas que digáis mi engaño?
¿Qué importa estar en lágrimas deshecho?

Si aunque de todo tengo el desengaño
está ya por mi mal el daño hecho
y no encuentro remedio por el daño.
(ms. 32353 n. pag.)

Marcia Belisarda

A consonantes forzosos sobre que habían escrito sonetos con asuntos diferentes diferentes personas, diéronme por asunto no desmayar a vista de un desdén.

Si no impide mi amor el mismo cielo,
no bastarán cuantos rigores miro
a ponerle del alma en el retiro,
porque en razón fundado toma vuelo.
Y aunque cansarte en porfiar recelo
y en querer porfiar de mí me admiro,
la causa del dolor porque suspiro
no admite de temor prisión de hielo.
Si mi gusto no logra sus antojos,
por negarles tus ojos luces bellas,
y en vez de amor me pagas con enojos,
no formaré de algún rigor querellas,

sino sólo, Jacinta, de tus ojos,
 puesto que están conformes las estrellas.
 (ms. 7469 18r)

Leonor de la Cueva y Silva

Soneto a Floris

Ausente estoy de tus divinos ojos;
 En fin, ausente y lleno de desvelos
 Si al ausencia cruel siguen los celos,
 Confieso, Floris, que me dan enojos.
 ¡Ay! ¡Quién gozara de tus rayos rojos
 sin tantos sobresaltos y desvelos!
 Pues mientras duran los nublosos velos
 ¡He de tener la rienda a mis antojos!
 ¿Cuándo se ha de acabar, Floris divina,
 La rigurosa pena de no verte
 Y el cobarde temor de tu mudanza?
 Que aunque eres en firmeza peregrina,
 vive mi amor dudoso de perderte,
 aunque más le sustenta la esperanza.
 (ms. 4127 188)

Glosa - Todo lo pierde quien lo quiere todo

Muestra Galicio que a Leonarda adora,
 y con segura y cierta confianza
 promete que en su fe no habrá mudanza,
 que el ser mudable su firmeza ignora.
 Mas de su amor a la segunda aurora
 muda su pensamiento y su esperanza,
 y sin tener del bien desconfianza,
 publica que Elia sola le enamora.
 Con gran fineza, aunque si bien fingida,
 a Leonarda da el alma por despojos,
 y luego con un falso y nuevo modo
 dice que es Elia el dueño de su vida.
 Pues oiga un desengaño a sus antojos:
 Todo lo pierde quien lo quiere todo.
 (ms. 4127 206)

4.3 “Caros desengaños: Love and self-knowledge

Marcia Belisarda

Soneto de un galán a una dama seglar:

Mal haya un apetito refrenado,
 un disimulo y un encogimiento,
 un recato, un temor, un desaliento,
 para que se interprete un hombre honrado.
 Si en el tiempo fatal se halla el cuitado
 hecho Tántalo al husmo del contento,
 agresor general de pensamiento

sin que a la parte se le dé traslado.

Yo por huir de aqueste inconveniente
digo que sois el norte de mi vida,
sois el incendio que mi amor inflama

Y en consecuencia de lo antecedente
esta alma alborozada se convida
a ser la mariposa de esa llama.

(ms. 7469 n. pag.)

Encomendóseme la respuesta, y fue por los mismos consonantes:

Bien haya un apetito refrenado,
que en ocasiones el encogimiento
no es cobardía, menos desaliento,
cuerdo reparo sí de un hombre honrado.

Presumo que de juicio está menguado
aquél que a ejecuciones el contento
atribuye, si ya de pensamiento
no es del mismo apetito vil traslado.

Para mi gusto es este inconveniente
y es conveniente, pues, para la vida
de mi amor que le temple y no le inflama.

Esto supuesto de lo antecedente
no vive, a lo primero se convida
y al fin de noble amor solo se llama.

(ms. 7469 n. pag.)

Leonor de la Cueva y Silva

Soneto a petición

Introduce una dama que se aficionó a un galán que estaba prendado de otra y dándole a entender su amor la correspondió, hasta que vino a saber que quería a otra y enojada le hace este soneto dando de mano a su amor.

Puse los ojos ¡ay que no debiera!,
en quien ya de las flechas de Cupido
mostraba el tierno corazón herido,
para que yo, sin esperanza, muera.

Huir fácil me fue de la primera
ocasión que a tal daño me ha traído,
con resistir mirar tan atrevido,
mas fui mujer y al fin mujer ligera.

Grillos amor me puso a los sentidos,
y la causa cruel de tantos daños,
con sus regalos aumentó mis glorias;
pero sabiendo ¡ay Dios!, que eran fingidos
he sepultado en caros desengaños
mi firmeza, mi amor y sus memorias.

(ms. 4127 258-59)

Soneto a petición

Introduce una dama que, aficionada a un galán se lo dio a entender, y no la correspondiendo por estar prendado de otra, hace este soneto despidiéndose de sus memorias.

Alcindo, ya murió en tu desengaño
un verdadero amor, el mas constante;
ya contrastó su fuerza de diamante
tu desprecio cruel para mi daño.

Ya he conocido por mi mal tu engaño.
Eres cual viento leve e inconstante;
ni sabes ser galán ni firme amante,
y así pienso tratarte como a extraño.

Aunque alegres, mis ojos, te han mirado,
por pagarte en lo mismo que tú vendes,
es su contento, como tú, fingido,
que pues tanto desprecias siendo amado
y un firme amor tan declarado ofendes,
tu memoria de hoy más cubra mi olvido.
(ms. 4127 257-58)

5.4 Heroic constancy: *La firmeza en la ausencia***Leonor de la Cueva y Silva***Leonor to Tristán*

Si yo olvidare, cielo, eternamente
el amor y las gracias de Tristán,
con campanas me atruene un sacristán
y beba en el verano agua caliente;
persígame un galán impertinente,
no halle flor en el campo por San Juan,
en piedra dura se me vuelva el pan,
y tenga lamparones en la frente;
no halle descanso ni contento en cosa;
pulgas me piquen en cualquiera parte,
y si durmiere, que me den enojos;
quede, cuando llorare, lagañosa,
si yo dejare, mi Tristán, de amarte,
porque eres el candil de aquestos ojos.
(1. 654-666)

Tristan to Leonor

Pues si yo te olvidare, mi Leonor,
ni borrare del alma tu retrato;
con sus ratones me persiga un gato,
con sus golpes me aturda un herrador;
ande hecho estafermo de un señor,
de mis favores haga un necio plato,
con preguntas me mate un mentecato,
y atraviésemme el cuerpo un asador;
parezca cocinero de convento,

no tenga en esta guerra buena suerte,
 un escudero goce mis despojos;
 y póngame a guardar un monumento,
 si yo, Leonor, dejare de quererte,
 porque eres las niñitas de estos ojos.
 (1. 667-680)

Armesinda to Don Juan

Si yo, ingrata, olvidare tus amores,
 ni burlare, mudable, tu esperanza,
 en un golfo de celos sin bonanza
 me anegue de tu ausencia en los rigores;
 de mi edad juvenil, las frescas flores
 marchite en mayo el tiempo y su mudanza
 haga de un envidioso confianza,
 y un vil esclavo goce mis favores;
 no tenga en cosa que procure gusto,
 penas me sean las mayores glorias,
 persígame tu sombra en cualquier parte,
 viva muriendo, en cautiverio injusto,
 y atorméntenme el alma tus memorias,
 si yo, don Juan, dejare de adorarte.
 (1. 605-18)

D. Juan to Armesinda

Pues si dejare un punto de quererte,
 ni olvidare jamás tu rostro hermoso,
 no halle en cosa que emprenda fin dichoso,
 y en flor me coja desastrada muerte;
 tenga en todas mis cosas mala suerte,
 con el rey me enemiste un mentiroso,
 no vuelva de esta guerra victorioso,
 y máteme la pena de no verte;
 gócese el rey, y rompa mis despojos,
 ostente los favores de tu mano,
 pase mi cuerpo de esta a la otra parte
 con mi espada delante de tus ojos
 la mano del más rústico villano,
 si dejare, Armesinda, de adorarte.
 (1.619-632)

CHAPTER 5

MORE MARTHA THAN MARY: LUISA DE CARVAJAL'S ACTIVE MYSTICISM

El ánima que se junta al invisible esposo por amor, ninguna
consolación recibe del presente siglo, mas de todas entrañas
suspira a aquella que ama, hierve, tiene ansia, fatígase y hácese
vil la salud del cuerpo por estar traspasada con la llaga del amor.
(Osuna 385)

In 1601, Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza wrote a letter to a friend, a nun at the court of the Archdukes of Flanders, from her small and impoverished, yet independent home in Madrid. In it, she confided that “[t]odos estos días estoy deseando que me dejen tomar la pluma en la mano para aliviarme de las pesadumbres y ocupaciones que traigo” (*Epistolario* 109). Although the relief she sought in this instance was to be found in writing to her friend, her comment indicates that, among the chosen difficulties of her ascetic life, Carvajal sought comfort in the written word. The solace she derived from this exercise must certainly have extended to poetic composition, since all her poetry was written in Madrid during the 1590s.¹⁵⁴

The circumstances of Carvajal's life are so extraordinary that it becomes impossible to read and discuss her works without taking into account the suffering she was made to endure while still a young girl, and the self-inflicted difficulties of her adult life.¹⁵⁵ I shall therefore approach my analysis of Carvajal's sonnets bearing in mind these tensions and conflicts, as well as her own, avowed determination to seek

¹⁵⁴ Abad concludes that Carvajal was too preoccupied with her mission to write poetry in London, and notes that in Madrid “hubo momentos en que su vida mística, llegada a cierta tensión, la obligó a desahogar en esa forma los afectos del alma.” Abad, “Nota,” 422. Several poems are datable, in relation to known facts of her life, to 1597.

¹⁵⁵ English Catholics have been particularly devoted to her life, which was published in the nineteenth century by Lady Georgiana Fullerton, *Life of Luisa de Carvajal*. (London: Burns & Oates, 1881). Similarly, in 1905, the Catholic Truth Society produced a pamphlet, *A Spanish Heroine in England: Dona Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza*. This was followed in 1923 by an anonymous play written by “A Nun of Tyburn”: *Donna Luisa de Carvajal: A Catholic Play*. In recent years her life and works have attracted attention in Spain and the United States, as well as England. In Spain, Pinillos Iglesias, *Hilando oro: Vida de Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza*. In the United States, Elizabeth Rhodes has produced a bilingual volume that includes a biography, Carvajal's spiritual life story, and a selection of her letters and poems, Carvajal y Mendoza, *Tight Embrace*. Most recently, a smaller volume of her writings has been published in England: Margaret Rees, *The Writings of Doña Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza, Catholic Missionary to James I's London*. Unless otherwise stated, I draw details of Carvajal's life from Abad, *Misionera*.

martyrdom. Of her fifty poems, nine are sonnets and an analysis of seven of these will demonstrate the nature of Carvajal's mysticism, and her poetic capabilities.

The foundations of Carvajal's determination to endure a martyr's death, and her desire to suffer as Christ, reside in her early life, for even in the heightened religious atmosphere of the Counter-Reformation, her childhood was excessively devout, arduous and tormented. Born into a noble family in Jaraicejo, Extremadura, in 1566, Carvajal was orphaned at the age of six, and was sent to live with her aunt, a *dama* at the court of Philip II. Here she first made contact with the Jesuits, through her aunt's confessor. On the death of her aunt she was moved to Pamplona, under the guardianship of her uncle, the Marqués de Almazán. Her exceptional piety from an early age is noted in her autobiography and in subsequent writings about her life. This attitude was assisted by her uncle, who prescribed and oversaw her unusually broad general and religious education. However, he also imposed penitential practices that were by any measure excessive, but which amount to appalling abuse when the facts of her life are known. She was only fourteen years old when the systematic torture and humiliation began, administered by two servants especially employed for the task.

Carvajal began her self-imposed religious reclusion when her uncle moved to the Court in Madrid in 1588. Until the deaths of the Marqués and his wife in 1592, she pursued the path of poverty and self-denial in a separate apartment in their house in the calle Mayor, this being the limit of her uncle's toleration of her aims. With the deaths of those in control of her life, she was free to pursue her determination to follow in Christ's footsteps, as she herself wrote, in the clearest terms:

[A]lcé los ojos a Dios y díle inmensas gracias, porque me vía del todo sola y libre para irme, sin ningún estorbo, tras los desprecios y desamparos de Cristo, que tanto deseaba mi alma . . . [Nuestro Señor] me arrojó desde donde estaba y dio conmigo en una gran soledad (aunque dentro de los límites de la babilonia de Madrid), cortándome del trato de mis deudos, amigos y conocidos . . . Yo entonces conocí su mano, y adoréla, y determiné de entrarme tras él por sus pisadas sin más dilación. (Abad, *Misionera* 69)

The fulfilment of her determination, her successful and dangerous apostolic mission to London, shows how, in spite of a solemnly sworn vow of absolute obedience, she was able to pursue her own ambitions, thus securing herself a remarkable degree of independence.

Also important in the analysis of Carvajal's poetry is her deep devotion and attachment to the Jesuits. She wrote her poetry while living in a tiny house, described by Abad as "aquella ruín casita," adjacent to their church in the calle Toledo in Madrid (Abad, "Semblanza" 27). Here Carvajal pursued a life of extreme poverty with a few companions, begging for her food at the church door, dressing in the poorest of clothing, and seeking every opportunity for self-abasement and humiliation that she felt brought her closer to the experience of Christ's suffering. Throughout her life Carvajal remained close to the Jesuits, exchanging letters with Father Creswell, vice-superior of the English Mission and administrator of the foundation created when Carvajal endowed the Society with her considerable inheritance to create an English novitiate in Louvain (Abad, "Semblanza" 71).

At the time when Carvajal was writing her poetry in Madrid, directed to Christ, or to his mystical presence in the communion bread, Spanish Christian mysticism was at its apogee, through the writings of such influential figures as Francisco de Osuna, Luis de León, Malón de Chaide, Teresa de Ávila and Juan de la Cruz. In Spain, apart from a few luminaries such as Ramón Llull, mysticism had had to wait until the Reconquest and the religious fervour of the Catholic Kings provided a suitable environment for it to flourish. This sudden efflorescence of fifteenth-century Spanish religiosity relates also to the advent of printing and the reform of the religious orders undertaken by Cisneros (Surtz 2). In this period, the Song of Songs, a source for Carvajal's sonnets, figures strongly in the mysticism of Malón de Chaide and Juan de la Cruz. For Malón de Chaide, the Song of Songs is a paeon of love between Christ and the Church that mirrors human love: "Y porque los *Cantares* de Salomón

son una égloga pastoril, en la cual se introducen un pastor, que es Cristo, y una pastora, que es la Iglesia, es menester tomar la proporción de lo que acá en los amores humanos suele pasar, a lo que pasa en los divinos” (72).

Although mysticism in the Western tradition can be traced back to Plato, the union with the One sought by Plato seeks to leave the senses aside. In *The Republic* Plato discusses the best means to approach the highest principle, the Idea of the Good, on which all other ideas depend. He advocates arousing the understanding (*nous*) by abstracting the mind from the senses, towards pure reality (Louth 8-9). Nevertheless, in the *Phaedrus*, he expresses the passion with which the soul recognises true beauty in the form of the beloved: “When one who is fresh from the mystery, and saw much of the vision, beholds a godlike face or bodily form that truly expresses beauty, first there comes upon him a shuddering and a measure of that awe which the vision inspired, and then reverence, as at the sight of a god” (251A). This imagery is very similar to the *afecto* of Carvajal’s sonnets, as will be seen below.

It was the fifth-century mystic, Pseudo-Dionysius, also known as Denys the Areopagite who first compounded an understanding of Christ’s real presence in the liturgy, the sacraments and the scriptures into a mystical theology. Grace Jantzen has argued that the more this mystical theology was united with Church liturgy (she uses the example of the Eucharist), the more it was removed from women and taken into the exclusive control of men (87). The effect of this control can be seen in Carvajal’s sonnet, “¡Ay! soledad amarga y enojosa.” Denied what was for her the unique comfort of daily communion by her male confessor, she attempts to convey the anguish this causes in verse. However, although Church-led attempts to codify mystical theology enabled a firmer control of heterodox thought and claims of mystical experiences, Carvajal’s remarkably strong character ensured that eventually she always succeeded in getting male acquiescence to her desires. In spite of all the difficulties experienced by the English Catholics, she was almost always able to take communion daily during her time in London. She was also successful in having the

Host kept on the chapel altars of Spanish, French, Venetian and Flemish embassies, an unusual achievement as the Host was normally only displayed in a church (Abad, *Misionera* 228-29). Carvajal writes of her delight in having it near her in the Spanish embassy: “Ahora han puesto en la capilla el Santísimo Sacramento, con que me hallo enriquecidísima. Cae muy cerca de mi escalera y es fácil, sin verlo nadie, ir allí muchas veces” (*Epistolario* 159).

Carvajal is known to have had the works of Teresa de Ávila and Juan de la Cruz when she was in Madrid (Abad, *Misionera* 348-49).¹⁵⁶ Her verse frequently follows the latter’s thought and that of Denys the Areopagite. Their Christian view moves beyond the Platonic “Idea” and the more universal understanding centred on the relationship of God to his hierarchical Church of Malón de Chaide, to an ecstasy shared equally by God and the individual soul. For Denys, the type of symbolic mysticism seen in Carvajal’s poetry is part of the process necessary to achieve the apophatic state.¹⁵⁷ What also becomes clear in reading Carvajal’s sonnets is that, for all her professed desire to rob herself of her body and to find shared joy between her soul and her Saviour, the body remains insistently present, both as a canvas on which to paint Christlike suffering and as a participant in the pleasure of physical union. Her attachment to this latter evocation of the body will be examined in my discussion of her sonnets, “En el siniestro brazo recostado” and “De inmenso amor a queste abrazo estrecho,” which draw on the Song of Songs for their imagery. When Carvajal found a more positive outlet for her physical and spiritual energies in England, she moved away from the quest for apophatic union. Her poetry remains in

¹⁵⁶ Isabel de Ayllón, her *aya*, first directed her spiritual reading. Later, Carvajal read books provided by her uncle. She is known to have had or read Luis de Granada, *Oración y meditación*; *Memorial de la vida cristiana* and its *Adiciones*. She also read St. Cyprian, St. John Climacus, Augustine’s *Meditations*, (probably in the original Latin), and St Teresa’s *Vida*, to which she alludes in a letter to Father Creswell from London in December 1611. From England she also wrote asking for books, as in this example: “Unos libros de *Vidas de Santos* de Basilio Santoro, que se imprimieron, aumentados y corregidos en cuatro cuerpos cuando yo partí, deseo mucho tener.” Apart from this, of course, she read the Fathers of the Church; the scriptures she had committed to memory. Abad, *Misionera* 348-52.

¹⁵⁷ For further information on Denys the Areopagite’s views on symbolic and apophatic mysticism, see Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition From Plato to Denys* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981) 146-79. Louth notes that Denys does not distinguish between *eros* and *agape*, though *eros* is “more divine.” Both unite and bind in effecting fusion in the beautiful and the good. Denys describes this fusion as ecstasy that draws the soul out of itself towards the object of its love (175).

the emotional and the symbolic, although she never abandons her devotion to the body of Christ.

For the Spanish mystic, love poetry could be turned to divine purposes in the same way that the beloved of male-authored Petrarchan-style sonnets became the ideal to be worshipped by the poet lover as a divine figure. It was then used to express the perfection of love by and for Christ, joining rapt, unitive mysticism to the artistic resources of sixteenth-century poetic practice. The mystical poetry of Juan de la Cruz and Teresa de Ávila, for example, sought to put into words the inexpressible joy of the soul's union with God in divine marriage, and the hollowness of earthly life by comparison. For this purpose, Juan de la Cruz, in particular, turned to the Song of Songs as a means to express the inexpressible in the "Cántico espiritual." These ideas were far from new, being founded on a pre-Christian platform, later amplified by such influential Christian figures as Origen and St Bernard of Clairvaux.

The third-century Alexandrian philosopher, Origen, appears to be the first influential Christian thinker to link God and the Church in the Song of Songs. Origen's argument for virginity as purgation, necessary on the path to achieving illumination and, finally, union with the divine, is detailed in the prologue to his Commentary on the Song of Songs, where he defines the difference between carnal and divine love:

[J]ust as there is one love, known as carnal and also known as Cupid by the poets, according to which the lover sows in the flesh; so also is there another, a spiritual love, by which the inner man who loves sows in the spirit. . . . And the soul is moved by heavenly love and longing when, having clearly beheld the beauty and the fairness of the Word of God, it falls deeply in love with His loveliness and receives from the Word Himself a certain dart and wound of love. For this Word *is the image and splendour of the invisible God.* (29)

With the virgin body a link between heaven and earth, erotic imagery is employed in language, but physical passion is denied; desire is to be directed away from the body and towards God.

Catholic mysticism therefore had a long pedigree in European thought, having grown out of pagan philosophy, Judaism, the earliest Christians and the monastic tradition. Medieval mystical thought occupied two inter-linked locations in the

hierarchy of piety: the intellectual and the affective. The intellectual mysticism of the most influential of the German mystics, Master Eckhart, for example, was based on a mind/body dualism in which the goal was an ecstasy of higher knowledge, achieved by detachment from the body and its demands. His discourses are described as being “directed to the intellect rather than to the will and are remarkable for their depth of mystical teaching, which only those who were advanced in the spiritual life could fully appreciate” (McMahon n. pag.). Eckhart’s mysticism is therefore gendered male, for women were assumed incapable of such higher intellectual achievement. This type of mysticism had no emphasis on Christ’s role, whereas the affective type was based on an ardent love of Christ, especially Christ crucified (Jantzen 117-23).

It was this affective mysticism that was espoused by Bernard of Clairvaux, whose Christocentric emphasis is clearly to be seen in his influential sermons on the Song of Songs. For example, when he speaks of the first verse of the Song, “Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth,” he tells the monks: “[T]he text we are going to study is the book of our own experience . . . Anyone who has received this mystical kiss from the mouth of Christ at least once, seeks again that intimate experience, and eagerly looks for its frequent renewal” (III.I.I). Nevertheless, in spite of Bernard’s insistence on the erotic imagery of the Song as a basis for his understanding of union with God, the imagery is always intended to be converted to the spiritual dimension. As Jantzen eloquently explains it, the weft of his sermons is hunger for the beloved’s presence and for sexual consummation, but the warp is a sharp denial of the body as having any part in it. The love is purely spiritual and there should be no connection with bodiliness or sexuality (128). This may be the ideal but to heighten sexual tension merely to deny it raises questions as to how sinfully enjoyable this masochistic behaviour might become. Furthermore, while men may have indulged or denied themselves thus, the extremely bodily and experiential nature of women’s *a lo divino* love poetry, Carvajal’s in particular, describes a spirituality that is highly physical and the body participates in the glorious experience.

Carvajal's poetic mysticism is of the affective type espoused by Bernard: the soul becomes the beloved of the divine lover, Christ. Her sonnets express the supernatural and transcendent transformations that take place in the heart and soul as a result of the fervent love of her persona, "Silva," for her Pastor. However, as I shall argue in greater detail below, Carvajal's emphasis lies in bodiliness and in this, her mysticism takes on a medieval flavour seen in the works of the German women mystics of the High Middle Ages, particularly Hadewijch of Antwerp. Erotic mysticism for Hadewijch is passionate, embodied mysticism; the erotic is not merely metaphorical but rather a focus for integration of the body into spiritual mysticism. The same can be said for Carvajal's divine sonnets which, unlike those of the other poets in this study, are frankly erotic in their linking of the human soul, more specifically her own soul, with Christ. She links the spiritual and the physical in her intense focus on the relationship between Christ and her persona, Silva.

In her discussion of the works of women visionaries, Ruth El Saffar has noted that the key to the mystic's encounters with Christ's image is surrender to the brokenness represented by his Passion, a masculine imaged as vulnerable rather than powerful (100). However, although Carvajal's biography and letters frequently express her desire to die for and as Christ, her visions of him are strong images of a beautiful Christ. Even as she wishes to share his torments, his wounds are displayed in her poetry as a victor's trophies. All of her poetry reflects her intensely emotional and spiritual dedication to Christ, addressed as her "pastor", her "esposo" and her "amado." Of the fifty extant poems by Carvajal, only ten percent bear some resemblance to conventional poetry of the type found in the convent and even then, her five poems on the Nativity focus on the Christ child to the exclusion of the divine mother. This is in direct contrast to Cielo's sonnets, discussed in Chapter Two, where the power of the Virgin Mary is celebrated most in her role of human mother.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁸ In spite of the personal and exclusive nature of Carvajal's poetry, in comparison with the divine poetry of the other poets in this study, Carvajal's works clearly proved of spiritual benefit to other

Christian teaching emphasised the person of Christ as the natural conduit to God the Father. Christ had expressed his love for humankind through his incarnation, his preaching and, ultimately, through his sacrifice on the Cross. Renaissance and Baroque art is filled with images of a physically beautiful Christ preaching, teaching, tending the poor and the sick, suffering, dying and returning from the dead. It is not, then, surprising that women religious, bound by spiritual marriage to Christ, should become particularly enamoured of Christ's body. Although Carvajal eschewed the restrictions of the convent in favour of dangerous independence in Madrid, Valladolid and finally, London, she wrote and adhered to her own vows and never deviated from her desire for Christ, especially his embodiment in the Host.

Carvajal expresses the love between soul and saviour as a tight and indivisible knot, in a sonnet entitled *Soneto espiritual de Silva al Santísimo Sacramento; en que habla el Divino Verbo inmenso con el alma que le está recibiendo de las manos del sacerdote*. This sonnet will be discussed more fully below, but part of the second quartet is worth noting here, because its bodily and sensual language is also used by male religious in describing the bond between the soul and God: “[Y] abrásate en amor tan abrasado, / que hasta que el fuerte nudo haya apretado, / no sea posible quede satisfecho” (6-8). The similarity of expression in her sonnet to the thoughts of Luís de León merit the following, lengthy abstract from his text *De los nombres de Dios*. Where Carvajal's interest is in the body, Luis de León utilises this same imagery in describing the tight knot of spiritual devotion:

... [Y] es nudo por muchas maneras dulce, . . . que con ser nuestro Padre, y con hacerse nuestra Cabeza y con regirnos como Pastor . . . añadió a todos ellos aqueste nudo y aqueste lazo también, y quiso decirse y ser nuestro *Esposo*. Que para lazo es el más apretado lazo; . . . y el más encendido de todos. . . . [T]oda la estrechez de amor y de conversación y de unidad de cuerpos, que en el suelo hay entre dos, marido y mujer, comparada con aquella con que se enlaza con nuestra alma este *Esposo*, es frialdad y tibieza pura. Porque en el otro ayuntamiento no se comunica el espíritu, mas en éste

women. Moreover, they provided comfort to her Jesuit male supporters, as her letter from London to Doña Leonor de Quirós on 31 August, 1607, clearly shows: “El librito de las poesías espirituales que di a mi señora la Condesa me haga merced VM de dar por algunos días al padre Espinosa, que me pide unas canciones que están allí, y no puedo ahora escribirlas.” Carvajal y Mendoza, *Epistolario* 87.

su mismo espíritu de Cristo se da y se traspasa a los justos (1.Cor.6,17).
(*Obras* 619)

For Carvajal, this tight, sweet, delightful, burning embrace of union with the divine was experienced via the communion bread. She was not alone in this notion. The importance of the Host in the divine poetry of women religious stems from its significance as the transubstantiated, real flesh of Christ, and the opportunity thus provided for women to partake of his male body. Under the hypostatic union, Christ is present both in substance and in spirit in the communion bread and it is unusual, indeed unnecessary, to receive communion under both kinds. The bread, therefore, embodies the entire spiritual experience of the communion meal.¹⁵⁹ Carvajal's close relationship with the sacrament is expressed in the several versions of her life that reveal her almost pathological need to receive communion daily.

The extraordinarily erotic nature of much of Carvajal's poetry, the dwelling on pain, piercing and flaming love, and Petrarchan tropes rendered *a lo divino*, was also apparent in works of female religious of the High Middle Ages. There was at that time a considerable difference between the erotic nature of female poetry and that of men, which was grounded in intellectual and spiritual inquiry. Women, denied higher education, were dealing at an altogether more bodily level, not based on the mystical meaning of scripture, but on an unmediated and passionate encounter with Christ. Citing medieval female mystics' relationship with the embodied Christ, Walker Bynum records that their experiences included the physical sensation of eating his flesh, playing with him as a child, feeding at his breast and, most commonly, pressing themselves to his body. Women's efforts to imitate Christ involved fusing with the body on the cross, through both asceticism and eroticism (*Fragmentation* 130-33). Carvajal's erotic fusing with Christ employs imagery of her own torture, as in

¹⁵⁹ That communion under both kinds was unnecessary was determined at the Council of Trent, Session XXI, when it was decreed that Christ was wholly and really present in both bread and wine (Trent, Sess. XXI, c., iii). P. J. Toner, *Communion Under Both Kinds*, 2003, Catholic Encyclopedia Online, Available: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04175a.htm>, 15 December 2003.

“Esposas dulces, lazos deseados.” In other sonnets, she joins with Christ in divine marriage, rendered through the language of the Song of Songs.

It is not surprising that so many sixteenth-century mystics were female, since mysticism gave them the singular opportunity to escape from a life in which their choices of action were always limited by the patriarchy that surrounded and ruled them, a patriarchy which often accused them of dangerous heresy and Illuminism. There were two ways, according to Margarita Nelken, in which to transcend one’s life; either through giving oneself totally to it, the “tipo del conquistador,” or through total denial with maximum exaltation. Rather than the conquest of life, an avenue scarcely open to them, these women sought its renunciation: “[L]a conquista de sí mismas hasta el punto más extremo, el que despoja el espíritu de la materia” (51). The ritualized torture of the young Carvajal by the Marqués inspired a similarly pain-centred personal disciplinary practice that was intended to remove spirit from matter. However, although her disciplinary practice, both voluntary and imposed, aspired to the paradigm of renunciation or conquest revealed by Nelken, her poetry and her experience reveal instead a model that seeks both. Efforts to remove spirit from matter founder in Carvajal’s poetry. It is there that she manifests her thirst for personal union with Christ and her desire for martyrdom, as well as her employment of Jesuit methods of meditation. Furthermore, when Carvajal abandoned the life of a medieval ascetic in Spain to embark instead on her apostolic mission to London, she converted her quest for Christo-mimesis into the “tipo del conquistador.” As Anne Cruz has observed, her letters show political and moral awareness and determination that belie her self-ascribed humility, and are social documents that belong to the male tradition of epistolary style (“Chains” 104).

In addition to personal experience, however painful, the appropriation of the language of love or of works of art also assists in the process of achieving the mystical state. Emilio Orozco Díaz, for example, draws a parallel between the mystical experience and the creative process of poetry writing. Discussing first the

essence of the mystic phenomenon as infused grace, he determines that there is more than one way to achieve this status. Citing Juan de la Cruz, he refers to the active and passive principles at work: the soul either works actively to enter the mystical state or it remains passive, allowing God to enter (*Mística* 60). Orozco Díaz regards the creative urge as a more earthbound miracle: “Aunque con la enorme distancia de lo humano a lo divino, pero rodeando otro misterio—en cierto modo otro milagro, pues es convertir la materia en vida y espíritu—las vías, prácticas o métodos del poeta son paralelos a los del místico.” When the mystical and the creative are combined in one soul, as they are in Juan de la Cruz, the search for mystical truth becomes one with the search for the Beloved, a fusion of “lo dado” and “lo buscado” (*Mística* 61-62).¹⁶⁰

Influence on the achievement of the mystical experience is not arrived at only through poetic inspiration. In writing of the mysticism of Teresa de Ávila, Victor Stoichita notes the importance of choral and visual imagery to her visions, despite the fundamental otherness of the sacred. On the eve of St Sebastian, in her first year as prioress of the Encarnación, at the moment of the *salve*, Teresa had a vision of the Mother of God, who appeared in the place of her painted image. Teresa describes the vision as “looking, I think, a little like the picture the Countess had given me as a present.” The vision lasted for the whole of the *salve*, which is significant, for, as Stoichita points out, it is the chanting and the adornment of holy places with symbols that are important to the visionary experience (56-57).

In the case of Carvajal, although she does not appear to have specific imagery or sounds in mind when she composes her poetry, it seems instead that she engages in a Jesuit spiritual meditation exercise, creating a picture for herself, a “composition of place” on which to focus her inner gaze. She once described a vision in her soul of the divine child, with the Virgin and St Joseph on either side, the face of

¹⁶⁰ Orozco Díaz cites the saint directly: in response to a question about the magnificent language of the *Cántico espiritual*, he replied “unas veces me las daba Dios y otras las buscaba yo” (62).

the child covered with a delicate veil of light (Abad, *Misionera* 107). This “vision” recalls many of the Nativity paintings of the Renaissance and early modern periods and may well have been prompted by such a painting. In the same manner, Carvajal writes of her experience after taking communion in February 1599, when she saw a vision of the open wounds of Christ’s head and hands as she prayed. His visualised suffering, which suggests an Ignatian meditation on the crucifixion, does not cause her pain but the feeling of gently penetrating love that she also writes of occasionally from London. Here she feels that Christ gives himself to her exclusively, but in her poetry it is she who seeks Christ and desires to press herself to his body. Carvajal herself denies any special divine treatment or mystical phenomena when she goes on to affirm that she did not take account of such sensory perceptions, preferring pursuit of the essence of virtue and a pure and strong love of God (108). This rejection supports my contention that what is regarded as her ecstatic mysticism comes rather from her own strong determination as to the course of her life and her pathologically intense focus on Christ, as well as from the influence of Jesuit meditative practices. The first power of the soul in a Jesuit meditation is memory; the memory of religious paintings would have assisted her “visions.”

The ability to create a memory or a mental picture is particularly apparent in Carvajal’s sonnet “Esposas dulces, lazo deseado,” in which she envisages her own, longed-for agony and martyrdom. The first quartet sets the composition of place on which she will form her meditation:

Esposas dulces, lazo deseado,
ausentes trances, hora victoriosa,
infamia felicísima y gloriosa,
holocausto en mil llamas abrasado. (1-4)

Unusually, “Silva” or the “zagala” do not appear in this sonnet, suggesting that the poet has emerged from behind her persona. Carvajal is transported with the pleasure of her sacrifice, willingly separated from her entranced body as she is consigned to the flames. She plays with the negative nature of “fame” for women; the “infamia” that

brings her martyrdom is exquisitely joyous. Having now established the meditative vision in her mind, the turn occurs here, rather than at the eighth line, and Carvajal adds the faculties of understanding and will to that of memory. At first she complains that this felicitous death has been denied her, but by the tercets, her reason and understanding begin to formulate an answer, although she frames the entire sestet in a question of her beloved:

¿Ha sido, por ventura, haber querido
que la herida que al alma penetrada
tiene con dolor fuerte desmedido,
no quede socorrida ni curada? (9-12)

The tercet imagery of piercing, reminiscent of Teresa de Ávila, foregrounds mystical union that denies the body. Paradoxically, however, the language brings the body forward into a prominent role. As the body suffers, the soul seeks to unite with Christ, but the insistent body intrudes, as the “afecto, aumentado y encendido” describes the ecstasy of orgasm.¹⁶¹

Although the poem begins with an explicit depiction of the martyr consigned to the flames, it ends in a determination that she is destined to die instead through the wounds of love, as the final application of will to her meditation asks: “¿y, el afecto aumentado y encendido, / la vida a puro amor sea desatada?”(13-14). The clear word-pictures that Carvajal creates in meditative sonnets like this one owe more to Jesuit practice than to an attempt to express the ineffable experience of mystical ecstasy. Her sonnets are not dialogic, as the writings of medieval women mystics about their spiritual encounters often are; the speaking voice, whether it is Silva, Carvajal, or her Pastor, is permitted to express poetic emotion, divine love, or the pleasures of the envisaged union with Christ, but without response. The single speaking voice is clearly an indication that Carvajal creates her own mental picture, rather than that she experiences visions. When the Pastor speaks in her poetry it is

¹⁶¹ As Covarrubias defines it, “[A]fecto” is “pasión del ánimo” but the symptoms he describes are demonstrated in the body, “que redundando en la voz, la altera y causa en el cuerpo un particular movimiento.”

at a distance, so that she envisages the Pastor addressing her persona, Silva. In this manner she creates a mental picture on which to focus.

In spite of her unusually thorough intellectual development and education, Carvajal does not seek an intellectual rationalisation of her experience; like the medieval female religious, communion was a direct, emotionally charged communication between her body and the body of Christ. It is therefore probable that for women religious of any period, emotional and physical expression more clearly conveyed their devotion to Christ than specific explication of the mystery of biblical texts that so occupied both the Fathers of the Church and the men who had control of Carvajal's early life.¹⁶²

As Walker Bynum has argued, the humanity of Christ, by which was meant his full, bodily participation, was central to the religiosity of late medieval women, often with erotic or sensual overtones. The change in attitude to the Eucharist between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries saw hunger for mystical union become a metaphor for desire; the emphasis moved from heavenly manna to meat and blood: "To eat God was to take into one's self the suffering flesh on the cross. . . . That which one ate was the physicality of the God-man" (*Holy Feast* 67). Margery Kempe, Angela of Foligno, and Catherine of Siena are three well-attested examples of medieval women whose intense attraction to Christ's human maleness included marriage to Christ in Eucharistic visions. A common thread in their experience is their orgasmic bliss at the joining with Christ in the Eucharist. The experience produces both sublime joy and satiation but also, as the moment fades, extreme hunger and emptiness.

Although Walker Bynum writes of women's desire for mystical union with the actual body of Christ in the medieval period, Carvajal's sonnets show that this was

¹⁶² In her spiritual life story Carvajal writes of the education she received at the hands of her uncle: "Hablaban excelentemente y con gran facilidad en materias espirituales . . . Era sabio y muy docto en la Sagrada Escritura y Santos y Doctores, y materias místicas. Hacía muy escogidas y graves poesias espirituales, de que quedó un libro curioso despues de su muerte." Abad, "Nota" 422.

not an entirely medieval phenomenon. While Anne Cruz regards Carvajal's sonnets as particularly baroque for their time, which in their fervour and excess they certainly are, they also share late medieval characteristics in the intensity of their desire for Christ's revealed body and for the sweet pain of the *imitatio crucis*.¹⁶³ Carvajal is not alone in this; another seventeenth-century poet to embrace the symbolism of Juan de la Cruz and Luis de León in her divine verse is Cecilia del Nacimiento. She, too, expresses the insatiable nature of her hunger for Christ's presence and the paradoxical feeling of satiation and emptiness that the divine meal engenders:

En una fiesta que hizo
Dios al alma enamorada
le dio una dulce comida
de sí y de su cuerpo y alma.

.....

Ella con amor le come
y nunca se ve bien harta. (qtd. in Arenal and Schlau 146)

For Carvajal and for many other religious women, love and reverence for the Host was a wholly involving experience of mutual joy and pain, caused by the real sense of Christ's bodily presence and of his suffering. Carvajal had been imbued from childhood with the requirement to purge the spirit of the body. Her sonnets were written when she was also making her vows of poverty, obedience, chastity, the pursuit of spiritual perfection, and martyrdom by any means not repugnant to God. Yet, paradoxically, her sonnets celebrate the body of Christ and the union of that body with her whole being, body and soul, as, for example, in the sonnets which begin "En el siniestro brazo recostado" and "De inmenso Amor aqúeste abrazo estrecho," to be discussed below.

Carvajal also writes two sonnets which specifically express the painful nature of love for an absent Saviour, and the keenly felt loss of Christ's physical presence. One of these, entitled "Soneto espiritual de Silva de sentimientos de amor y ausencia

¹⁶³ Cruz's remarks refer more specifically to Carvajal's imagery: "[Her poems] dwell on concrete images of wounds, shackles, and chains that evoke the material suffering of Christ's Passion. Although imagery of this kind was to appear frequently in later Baroque devotional poetry, its usage in the sixteenth century is quite uncommon and cannot be attributed merely to the poet's awareness of religious rhetoric." Cruz, "Chains" 98.

profundísimos,” holds up a mirror to her own nature, as she at once experiences the agony of absence and the transports of divine love, yet clinically observes the changes wrought in her frail body by the experience. This may, as the second sonnet assuredly is, also be specifically related to a four-year period in the 1590s, when her confessor refused to permit her to take communion more than twice a week and on principal religious feast days:

Aun en los cuatro primeros años de aquella vida heroica, su confesor—un padre de la Compañía—ateniéndose a las reglas y ordenaciones de los superiores mayores, no la permitió comulgar sino dos veces por semana . . . Obedecía ella sin replicar. . . . Esta obediencia tan sumisa era tanto más admirable, cuanto era mayor el sacrificio que le exigía del ansia de unirse con Dios en el sacramento del amor. Porque era tan grande su ardor y hambre de este divino bocado, que decía muchas veces que, si viera el Santísimo Sacramento rodeado de picas y lanzas, rompiera por medio de ellas, para ir a comulgar, aunque quedara allí muerta. (Abad, "Semblanza" 28)

Carvajal's custom of communicating daily was a practice made possible, in Abad's view, by God himself. However, there was no doctrinal reason why Carvajal should have been denied communion. The frequency of communion had been a subject for discussion at the Council of Trent following differences of opinion and practice over the centuries, but in 1587 the Congregation of the Council forbade any restriction and ordered that "no one should be repelled from the Sacred Banquet, even if he approached daily" (Scannell n. pag.). A new confessor proved kinder in granting her request, but even then she had to beg it daily and it could always be refused her.

The first sonnet begins on a note of astonishment, framed within a series of rhetorical questions in which the persona, Silva, is expressed as a monster of nature:

¿Cómo vives, sin quien vivir no puedes?
Ausente, Silva, el alma, ¿tienes vida,
y el corazón aquesa misma herida
gravemente atraviesa, y no te mueres? (1-4)

The questions reflect and elaborate on the "Muero porque no muero" theme of Teresa de Ávila's and Juan de la Cruz's poetry, and suggest the transverberation so memorably depicted by Bernini in his statue of the ecstatic Teresa.¹⁶⁴ The difficult

¹⁶⁴ Bellini's "Ecstasy of St Teresa" is in the Capella Cornaro, Santa María della Vittoria, Rome.

first line questions the nature of Silva's existence: a body that continues to live, although the soul is transported by love to seek that mystical marriage, the transcendent experience also expressed by Teresa and Juan. The beatific vision is afforded only rarely, is fleeting, never forgotten and leaves a feeling of ineffable emptiness in its wake, while the body that she addresses is an encumbrance that prevents a more permanent union of the soul with the divine. In this sonnet the "quien" without whom Carvajal cannot live is both Christ and the Host that is denied her. Given Carvajal's almost pathological need for daily communion, what she appears also to question is her ability to survive without spiritual sustenance, without the direct communication that she feels in her heart and soul as she takes the transubstantiated body of Christ into her mouth.

What begins in the sonnet in generalisation becomes more specific, as the narrative focus turns from Silva's suspended state between mortality and immortality to the absent soul and its empty case, the heart. The rational in the speaker seeks an explanation in the second quartet, surmising that the transformative nature of mystical love has wrought a metamorphosis in Silva. Now made in Love's likeness, the language expresses Silva's physical pain in imagery of cutting, forging and melting: "¿Hate cortado Amor a su medida, / o forjado, en sus llamas derretida, / que tanto el natural límite excedes?" (6-8). As will be seen below, this is not the only sonnet in which Carvajal turns from the pastoral to the industrial to express the effect of divine love on her soul. Where she employs the pastoral "Silva" to link Christ the shepherd and the soul as lamb, the tortuous imagery of the forging and cutting of metal evokes the painful tortures of Carvajal's youth, both imposed and self-inflicted and reflects the true nature of the persona as Carvajal herself.

Carvajal wishes to exceed the limits of nature, as her chosen mode of existence reveals. Deprived of the comforts of the body by her own will, the pain that her speaker feels is both physical and spiritual. Her spirit, however, is directed to the absent Pastor/Host and not to her despised body. The sonnet becomes a work of

self-examination, part of the Jesuit meditative experience functioning under the organising principles of memory, intellect and will, and here intellect and will, figured as the body, clash.¹⁶⁵ As Carvajal probes the meaning of her physical experience, both body and mind become locked in the process and the sonnet becomes part of Carvajal's perpetual struggle to dominate the body and release the soul.

It is at the beginning of the tercets that the sonnet ceases its ambiguously Petrarchan nature. Until this point, Amor could be either the son of Venus or the son of God. The heart is ritually pierced by the pain of love, and Cupid forges it to his own pattern; the soul has departed on a Neoplatonic journey in search of eternal truth embodied in the beloved object. At the turn, however, Silva's intellectual excursion determines that the heart has been divinely encoded by Amor/Christ: "Vuelto a tu corazón cifra divina / de extremos mil Amor, en que su mano / mostrara quiso destreza peregrina" (9-11). Furthermore, Christ uses Silva as a means to demonstrate this divine dexterity, converting her weak, soft, feeling and altogether human heart into his "alcázar soberano" (14). The heart of Silva becomes a model of what Christ seeks to achieve in all hearts, and this gives a purpose to her pain that enables the diamantine hardening of her breast. The imagery also suggests her knowledge of Teresa de Ávila's *The Interior Castle*.

Although she tries to deny the body, Carvajal's military imagery again reflects the parallels between the palpable, earthly world and human determinations of the divine, in a country where Catholicism imbued every part of state administration and individual daily life. As this Spanish, Catholic heart is fortified by Christ's love to defend it from the onslaught of heresy and Protestantism, so the female body is required to be the "alcázar" that protects personal and family reputations from disgrace and dishonour. Carvajal besmirched her own family's reputation in her

¹⁶⁵ Although the will is utilised as part of the meditative experience, to control the passions, it also often figures the wilful body. This is so in many of William Shakespeare's sonnets in which he puns on his own name and makes "will" a synonym for sexual power in determining to exercise his will over the beloved's body.

willing determination to abase herself in public. She justifies her stance in affirming that the “alcázar” created in her heart is divine in nature. The sonnet moves through intellectual inquiry from ignorance to clear understanding of her role as a tool of God, a self-appointed task frequently alluded to in Carvajal’s correspondence.¹⁶⁶ As the sonnet ends in the “alcázar” the heart becomes the New Jerusalem of the Revelation, set upon a fundament of stone. Her meditation has cleared all uncertainty and questioning and firmed her resolve to endure.¹⁶⁷

Despite her avowed silent obedience to her confessor’s restrictions on the Eucharist, Carvajal’s second sonnet of loss and absence explicitly confirms, in its title, that it is written in mourning for the loss of daily communion: *Soneto espiritual de Silva a la ausencia de su dulcísimo Señor en la Sagrada Comunión*. The title reveals that what she grieves for is the real body of Christ, and she repeats this in the opening lines: “¡Ay, soledad amarga y enojosa, / causada de mi ausente y dulce Amado!” (1-2). The well-known dart of the beatific experience is here turned to a weapon that evokes both Silva’s loss and Christ’s Crucifixion: “¡Dardo eres en el alma atravesado / dolencia penosísima y furiosa!” (3). For Carvajal, however, this is not the awareness of the soul leaving the impure body to fuse with the divine. As usual, it is the loss of the physical pleasure of contact with the bread of the communion that causes her pain. She is penetrated, not with Christ’s body but with the emptiness of his absence. At the same time, her terminology evokes the piercing pleasure that Communion represents for her, in receiving the body of Christ into hers: “y cifra del

¹⁶⁶ Several references appear in her correspondence shortly after her arrival in London. For example, in February 1606, she writes in a letter to a nun at the court in Flanders, Magdalena de San Jerónimo: “Si Nuestro Señor quiere que haya servido de sólo ponerme en el palenque, y desde él poderle decir: *Adsum, Domine, non recuso laborem*, yo no pretendo exceder de su voluntad y dulce gusto un solo punto.” Carvajal y Mendoza, *Epistolario* 165. This same nun appears to have written repeatedly urging her to leave England. In March 1606, Carvajal wrote informing her of her long-held desire to go to England: “que ésta de venir aquí estaba en mi pecho desde los 18 años de mi edad, aguardando abriese Nuestro Señor camino de su mano” (165). In April 1607, Carvajal wrote to her friend, Inés de la Asunción, now a cloistered nun: “No se me puede descubrir qué quiera Su Majestad de mí en Inglaterra, aunque parece querer la perseverancia en ella, hasta ahora a lo menos” (78). Like St Teresa, by claiming God’s control over her movements Carvajal was able to deflect criticism of her activities.

¹⁶⁷ Carvajal here refers to a text in the Revelation of St John about the end of the world and the creation of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 10-14).

pesar más apurado, / cuidado que no sufre otro cuidado, / tormento intolerable y sed ansiosa” (6-8).

The quartets therefore tell two stories in one: the experience of Communion and the experience of its lack. The magnitude of her suffering also appears in two ways: through the overflowing of her catalogue of grief into the tercets, and in the multitude of superlatives with which she attempts to express her inexpressible suffering: “penosísima,” “furiosa,” “terrible,” “rigurosa,” and “cifra que no sufre otro cuidado, / tormento intolerable y sed ansiosa” (7-8). That “sed ansiosa” points to the same, insatiable hungering for God’s physical presence discussed by Walker Bynum in relation to the medieval mystics (*Holy Feast* 58-68).

Silva determines that the withholding of Communion is a trial of her faith: “Prueba de amor terrible y rigurosa” (5). Figuring herself as a counter-type to Job, pierced through the heart, and with her emotions cruelly tested in the quartets, the tercets apply further torture in Petrarchan imagery of fire and water. The burning pain becomes a furnace, “fragua, que en vivo fuego me convierte” (9), breathed on and inflamed by love, and herein begins her path to understanding.¹⁶⁸ Carvajal, unusually well-schooled in the test of faith by physical suffering, discovers that the tempering of Silva’s soul in the fire of love proves her faith, and the sonnet ends in hope as she passes her test of divine love. Like the blacksmith’s burning iron, plunged into water to set its altered shape, Carvajal’s tested soul is cooled, soothed and re-formed, enabling her to survive the wild sea of despair: “Bravo mar, en el cual mi alma engolfada, / con tormenta camina dura y fuerte” (12-13). The polysemous placing of the adjectives enables Carvajal again, to double her message. The test is “dura y fuerte,” but so is she. Faith keeps Silva on course toward the source of all her desire, “hasta el puerto y ribera deseada” (14). Carvajal is not alone in regarding suffering as a trial of faith. The testing and hardening nature of physical pain on the spirit was

¹⁶⁸ Covarrubias’ description of the *fragua* illustrates Carvajal’s imagery: “La hornaza del herrero . . . está siempre ardiendo para poder domar el hierro”. For Carvajal, the “hierro” is a metaphorical rendering of the soul.

also often expressed and glorified in songs of the nuns' profession ceremonies, that celebrated physical pain as the means to rebirth of the soul in spiritual perfection (Arenal and Schlau 145).

Anne Cruz regards Carvajal's pastoral persona, Silva, as the means by which Carvajal distances herself from the pain of her lifelong submission to physical discipline ("Chains"). However, such a reading does not take in all the known facts of Carvajal's life. Rather than a "defense against painful memories," as Cruz describes it, Silva, a barely disguised anagram, makes a poor hiding place from memory. Instead, she reflects Carvajal's vision of herself as willingly possessed by the divine shepherd. Silva serves not only to figure forth Carvajal's own character, but also allows the distanced and objective self-analysis sought by the Spiritual Exercises of Jesuit religious practice.¹⁶⁹ Furthermore, when Carvajal identifies with Christ's physical torment, this is due rather to her determination towards Christo-mimesis and her recourse to the meditative composition of place, than to a commemorative linking to her youthful experience. Carvajal's "eye" and her "I" are just far enough apart to accomplish her meditative desires.

Moreover, although Carvajal's wholly admiring descriptions of her uncle imply a psychological dependence engendered by his extraordinary activities, I suggest that Carvajal did not wish to forget either her tortured youth or her determination to self-abasement and martyrdom that fuelled her determination to go to England. It was Carvajal's vow of absolute obedience and her willingness to embrace physical suffering that paradoxically released her from both her disciplinary practices and her psychological bondage.¹⁷⁰ Her mission to England afforded her an extraordinary level

¹⁶⁹ Carvajal was versed in the Spiritual Exercises, having completed them before her departure for England in 1604. However, even before this, she was urged to practise the Exercises as a young girl by her uncle. Camilo María Abad, "Semblanza biográfica de Doña Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza (1566-1614)," ed. Camilo María and Jesús González Marañón Abad, vol. 179, Biblioteca de Autores Españoles (Madrid: Atlas, 1965) 33.

¹⁷⁰ Carvajal reveals in a letter to Magdalena de San Jerónimo in March 1606 that the English Customs had confiscated her disciplinary instruments: "Tomáronme lindos cilicios y otras cosas, con que se han entretenido y reído bien; y a mí me ha sido de mortificación el verlo en tales manos." Carvajal y Mendoza, *Epistolario* 165-66.

of independence, enabling her to pursue her ambitions: to die for Christ and to succour the suffering recusant Catholic population. By claiming that she was doing God's will, she was able to deflect criticism at home of her unusually independent stance.¹⁷¹

If Carvajal's denial and punishment of the troublesome body were excessive, the healing balm provided by her spiritual union with Christ is equally strongly revealed in two sonnets expressing joy at her relationship with her Pastor. Furthermore, the degree of grief expressed in her sonnet "¡Ay soledad, amarga y enojosa!" on the withholding of daily communion, is better understood when read in the light of her sonnet on the experience of receiving Communion at the hands of the priest: *Soneto espiritual de Silva Al Santísimo Sacramento; en que habla el divino Verbo inmenso con el alma que le está recibiendo de las manos del sacerdote.*

The title fully expresses the spiritual nature of the encounter which takes place between the divine Word and the human soul.¹⁷² The only bodily contact is the mediating hand of the priest. Yet, paradoxically, the terminology of the sonnet renders the experience into an epithalamion. Silva is welcomed into the "florido y sacro lecho" of her Creator's embrace by his embodied voice; the all-powerful priest is relegated merely to the title:

De inmenso Amor a queste abrazo estrecho
 recibe, Silva, de tu dulce Amado,
 y por la puerta deste diestro lado
 Éntrate, palomilla, acá en mi pecho.
 Reposas en el florido y sacro lecho (1-5)

¹⁷¹ In England, Carvajal was regarded as an extremely successful supporter of the Catholic cause and a source of immense anger and irritation to Abbott, the Archbishop of Canterbury. Senning, "The Carvajal Affair: Gondomar and James I," 46. Certainly, she appears in a highly negative light in Abbot's correspondence with William Trumbull, English ambassador to the Low Countries: "She hath spent much time in visiting Popish priests and giving alms to prisoners, not refusing to go into Newgate itself." In the same letters he describes her arrest, ordered by him in 1613: "I privately directed Mr Recorder of London to seize on her and her young ones. Who, going thither . . . apprehended her and brought her to me, who sent her to the Gatehouse." A.B. Hinds, ed., *Report on the Manuscripts of the Marquess of Downshire Preserved at Easthampstead Park, Berks.*, vol. IV, 6 vols. (London: HMSO, 1938) 239. Her activities were also known to the king, who ordered severe punishment for the jailers who admitted her, after a suitable bribe, to take supper with the condemned priests, Roberts and Somer, in 1611. Public Record Office, *Calendar of State Papers, domestic series, of the reign of James I, King of England*. vol. VIII (Nendeln, Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint 1967, 1967 [1908]) 10.

¹⁷² Muñoz, who published the first *Vida* in the eighteenth century, insisted that "'los argumentos' o notas en prosa que preceden a muchas de ellas [las poesías], 'también son suyos.'" qtd. in Abad, "Nota" 425.

Again, Carvajal is harking back to an earlier period. For medieval women to receive the Eucharist was *imitatio crucis*; one ate the physicality of God (Bynum, *Holy Feast* 67). The experience was both extremely pleasurable and painful and the union involved all the senses. One example is the revealed experience of Hadewijch, who wrote poetry in Flemish at the beginning of the thirteenth century: “[H]e gave himself to me in the shape of the Sacrament, in its outward form . . . After that he came himself to me, took me entirely in his arms, and pressed me to him; and all my members felt his in full felicity, in accordance with the desire of my heart and my humanity” (*Holy Feast* 156).

Some two hundred and fifty years later, in her sonnet, Carvajal expresses exactly this sensation. She combines the Passion and the Eucharist, the two main foci of her prayer and meditation since childhood, in a single, passionate image of amatory union. As her Esposo’s arms are spread wide in the crucifixion, embodied in the bread of the Eucharist, they are also open to invite Carvajal’s soul, the “palomilla” into his embrace, and into the open wound in his side: “Éntrate, palomilla, acá en mi pecho” (4). Ambiguity resides in the image of the dove, which represents Christ, the Holy Spirit and Silva herself. The dove has a long history in pagan literature, both Greek and Latin, associating it with Venus/Aphrodite. This dual image continued into the medieval period; Chaucer, for example, has doves hovering around the head of Venus in the *Knight’s Tale*.¹⁷³ Hence, Carvajal simultaneously celebrates a purely spiritual embrace between the “Paloma” and the “palomilla” and the passionate embrace of physical desire.

The sonnet works throughout, therefore, on two levels: the sacred and the sexual. As Christ enters Silva in the bread, he invites her also to enter him, hence entwining two bodies, as well as the soul and the divine. The religious sacrifice of the

¹⁷³ Chaucer provides a detailed description of King Theseus’ statue: “Venus, glorious for to se, / Was naked, fleting in the large see.” She held a “citole” in her right hand, wore a rose garland on her head, and “Above hir heed hir dowves flikeringe.” Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Knight’s Tale*. Ed. A. C. Spearing (Cambridge, Eng: Cambridge UP, 1966) 117 ll. 1097-101.

Crucifixion and the corporeal sacrifice of sexual coupling become one, while the encounter is rendered in both pain and pleasure, presence and lack: “y abrástate en amor tan abrasado” (6). As the inviting Esposo declares, until husband and wife are joined, there can be no satisfaction for that burning hunger: “que hasta que el fuerte nudo haya apretado, / no sea posible quede satisfecho” (7-8). Again, the tight knot that Luis de León describes binds soul and Redeemer together, part of this same embrace. Furthermore, Christ offers himself to Silva as a divine bride, when he invites her to invade the body he offers: “éntrate, palomilla, acá en mi pecho” (4).

This imagery of surrender and the invitation to love is repeated in the sestet: “Mira cómo te entrego, amiga mía, / todo mi ser y alteza sublimada; / estima aqueste don que amor te ofrece” (9-11). Here, Carvajal recurs to the Eucharist itself, for when the Host is elevated before the altar in the mass, the bread is changed and raised into the body and blood of Christ. For Carvajal, Christ, although raised to sit at the right hand of God, still offers himself to her soul. What he promises, what Carvajal will enjoy is the divine grace of the Beatific Vision: “estima aqueste don que amor te ofrece” (11). The divine gift of himself and of sanctifying grace is accentuated by the emphatic double negative, “lo que nadie no merece,” that expresses both the unworthiness of sinful humankind and the singular qualities of Silva as Christ’s bride. It also emphasises Catholic dogma; for grace is a rare, divine gift that nobody “deserves.” Carvajal’s sonnet insists that this gift has been offered to her, bringing forth the exclusive nature of her relationship with Christ. The sonnet is a further evocation of her inner feelings and her security in her favoured status, and has none of the didactic and inclusive qualities of Cielo’s poetry.

Carvajal’s intense physical and emotional attachment to her Saviour is seen more clearly in the sonnet that begins “En el siniestro brazo recostada (1).” Silva is now securely in her Pastor’s embrace: “y con la diestra mano la tenía con un estrecho abrazo a sí allegada” (3-4). Carvajal utilises the sensual language of the Song of Songs to express her ineffable joy and certainty that she is Christ’s chosen

bride. The music of the words is important; Carvajal employs internal rhyme within the first quartet: “siniestro / diestra,” bringing both left and right arms into a continuum within which Silva is held, while recurrent *sinalefas* in the fourth line, “estrecho abrazo a sí allegada,” emphasise the closeness of the embrace.¹⁷⁴

Silva breaks the silence of the embrace, and speaks to her Pastor: “El corazón del alma mía / vela, y yo duermo; ¡ay, suma alegría, / cuál me tiene tu amor tan traspasada!” (6-8). The body sleeps but the eternal soul awakens and is pierced by love in a now-familiar image of mystical union;¹⁷⁵ the magnitude of the experience leaves her weakened physically but strengthened spiritually in her rebirth as a phoenix: “Cercadme de odoríferas manzanas, / pues me veis como fénix encendida; / y cercadme también de amenas flores” (12-14). This vision clearly evokes Carvajal’s yearning for martyrdom, that would literally enable the rekindling of her spirit into eternal life as her body is burned away but, at the same time, the inclusion of the garden as *locus amoenus*, and of the apples returns to the Song.¹⁷⁶ Sick and wounded with love though she is, the destructive principle is dispelled by the phoenix imagery. Hence, the wounds and flames bring only delight, as the phoenix also symbolises both her regenerated love and the risen Christ. Similarly, the garden imagery restores the imbalance of the Fall, with the apple becoming a positive image of the fruitful relationship between the soul and Christ. The sweetness and harmony of her imagery is reflected in the structure of evenly distributed short and long words, musical sound and rhythm. Having accepted her Esposo’s invitation to the embrace in the earlier sonnet, she now expresses her certainty in its continuing bliss.

Not content to express merely her own soul as transfixed by the dart of divine love, Carvajal demonstrates the mutuality of this relationship in a sonnet expressing

¹⁷⁴ The embrace is both given and returned in the Song of Solomon: “Oh that his left hand were under my head and that his right hand embraced me” (2:6) . . . [W]hen I found him whom my soul loves. I held him, and would not let him go until I had brought him into my mother’s house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me” (3:4).

¹⁷⁵ The dream accords almost exactly with the Song: “I slept, but my heart was awake . . . My beloved put his hand to the latch, and my heart was thrilled within me” (5:2).

¹⁷⁶ The equivalent terminology in the Song of Solomon, 2:5 is “Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I [am] sick of love.”

Christ's experience of being shot through with love for "la naturaleza humana": *Soneto espiritual de Silva del encendido amor con que Nuestro Señor deseó y esperó el día en que había de dejar restaurada la naturaleza humana, a costa de su inestimable vida temporal, acabada entre innumerables oprobios*. Its sub-text, however, remains one of love for Carvajal, for although her title suggests an inclusive redemption of humankind, the sonnet is again ambiguous, through the recurrent figures of the "zagala," and of Christ as the loving Pastor.

Role-reversal in the first stanza causes the Pastor to suffer the pangs of love: "En las ardientes llamas encendido / de amor, y de su flecha atravesado" (1-2). Similarly, the words she ascribes to the Pastor in the final tercet appear to belong not to a generalised "naturaleza humana" but to herself: "Y vuelto a la que en tanto extremo amaba, / decía: 'Qué ha por ti tu Pastor hecho, / mientras la vida y sangre no te daba?'" (12-14). Like St Bernard, who would see the Pastor's words as intended for the human soul, Carvajal's title and terminology may also embrace this image. Underlying it, however, is the insistent demand of Carvajal as an independent noblewoman, who, in giving everything away and seeking martyrdom, gained that most precious of gifts seldom experienced by women, freedom of choice.¹⁷⁷

In an age of female enclosure, when the small freedoms of the previous century had largely disappeared under the strictures of the Council of Trent, Carvajal achieved a remarkably independent existence through sheer force of her own personality and determination. Her sonnets to her "Esposo" are similarly single minded in their devotion to the person of Christ. They differ markedly from Cielo's didactic and meditative works on Christ's earthly ministry, discussed in the previous chapters. Carvajal's personal relationship with Christ is not an inclusive celebration of shared devotion, as convent poetry frequently is, nor, when she directs her sonnets to the Host, do they celebrate the mystery of transubstantiation as an important part

¹⁷⁷ In his edition of Carvajal's letters and poetry, Abad places these three sonnets consecutively. Read thus they more clearly demonstrate Carvajal's view of the divine marriage that has taken place between her soul and Christ and her body and his. Carvajal y Mendoza, *Epistolario* 438.

of Church dogma. Instead, they are further evocations of her attachment to the body of Christ.

In the sonnet entitled *Soneto de Silva al Santísimo Sacramento: ¡Hostia!*, Silva praises the Host, more specifically her divine Esposo in the form of the bread. She returns to the familiar images of fire and water, affirming that only when she partakes of Christ in the communion bread can she find peace. Nevertheless, the sonnet opens in some ambiguity: “Contra los hostes soberano y fuerte / amparo, do tu nombre se deriva” (1-2). The editors of *Tras el espejo la musa escribe* deduce that Carvajal confused the etymology of “hostia,” the Host, and “hostes,” hostile forces. Given her broad education and knowledge of Latin, and her own, unambiguous dependence on the Host, it seems more certain that she deliberately used this structure to emphasise the protection and favour it offered. For Carvajal, “hostia” is not derived grammatically from the homonymic “hostes” but semantically, from “amparo.” The Host/Christ is Carvajal’s shield and defender against all ills and enemies, who gives her divine favour at the moment of Communion.¹⁷⁸

For Carvajal, the Eucharist is the only balm that can soothe her burning, physical desire: “de cristalinas aguas fuente viva / que temple la abrasada ansia de verte” (3-4). These words reflect the Psalmist’s yearning for God: “As a hart longs for flowing streams, so longs my soul for thee, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God” (Ps 42:01). Carvajal, however, is bolstered by the New Covenant of Christian love and salvation, as is revealed in the second quartet, where the first line is a delightful layering of opposites: “Muerte eres, vida eterna, de mi muerte” (5). She re-orders the well-known words of Juan de la Cruz and Teresa de Ávila: “muero porque no muero.” Here, Christ’s death and eternal life spell the death of the eternal death with which humankind was threatened as the direct result of the fall. In the same quartet Christ

¹⁷⁸ Covarrubias describes *amparar* thus: “Favorecer y recoger los que vienen con necesidad de socorro . . . Sinifica [sic] estar aparejado para hazer favor, como el que abre los braços para recibir el niño que se empieça a soltar y va a caer.”

is portrayed as the antidote to the poisoned apple, a clever line which enables Carvajal to leave Eve and her culpability out of it completely. As Christ is the remedy to the “manzana nociva,” the curious lines “que la esquivia / fortuna nos volvió en dichosa suerte” (7-8), suggest this poet’s belief in the “fortunate fall.” Had the sin of Eden never occurred, Christ would not have entered the world; there would have been no Christianity; “Silva” would not have had her “Pastor.”

Under the influence of the transubstantiated Host, the soul becomes a sovereign goddess in the last line of the first tercet, bride again of the embodied Christ. The experience leaves the soul so inflamed with love that life without him becomes impossible: “que queda hecha soberana diosa, / y de amor encendida tan intenso / que no puede vivir ya sin su Amado” (11-13).¹⁷⁹ A poem that begins in praise of the Host becomes personal to Carvajal again by the second quartet: “Muerte eres. . .de mi muerte” (8), and ends in the certainty of her own soul’s need for the person of Christ: “ni, fuera dél, amar ninguna cosa” (14).

Conclusion

As I have attempted to show in this chapter, Carvajal’s mysticism owes more to Martha than to Mary. Although her early life of torment was enjoined on her from outside, and undoubtedly coloured her own determination towards personal suffering and martyrdom, she was able to take control of her own fate to an extraordinary degree. Her apostolic journey to England was sanctioned by Church authorities, probably, as Elizabeth Rhodes has suggested, due to the near-impossibility of getting male priests into the country, and once there she enjoyed extraordinary freedom (“Journey” 905). Once in England she was able to pursue her own aims and manage

¹⁷⁹ The similarity in approach to the flaming soul between Carvajal and other mystical writers is evident in a poem by Juan de la Cruz: “¡Oh llama de amor viva, / que tiernamente hieres / de mi alma en el más profundo centro! / Pues ya no eres esquivia, / acaba ya si quieres, / rompe la tela de este dulce encuentro.”

her own household. She also, at that point, gave away the anachronistic existence of a medieval ascetic, becoming noticeably active in her support of English Catholics.

As far as her mystical poetry is concerned, Carvajal's mysticism is, in Dionysian terms, symbolic and cataphatic, concerned with what she can affirm about God, rather than apophatic where, in the presence of God, speech and thought are silenced (Louth 165). She is never silent, never silenced, neither in her sonnets nor in her nine years in London, which included two terms of imprisonment. Her sonnets eloquently reflect her absolute devotion to Christ in body and soul, a wholly absorbing experience between Carvajal and her Saviour that has none of the didacticism and inclusiveness of convent poetry.

Carvajal wrote her poetry in what may be called her "Mary" period when she was living her determination to abase herself utterly, to live and die as Christ, seeking that apophaticism that would lead her into rapt silence before God. This is why her sonnets are introspective, meditative in the Jesuit style, precluding any other influence than that which she believed she received directly from Christ. Once able to turn her passionate devotion to more outward expression, Carvajal entered her "Martha" phase, where she comforted the condemned before the scaffold and enshrined their dismembered remains as saintly relics. She became an able apostle of Christ and an active supporter, educator and shelter to the oppressed English Catholics. It was in this active role that she finally found her martyrdom. Her death, through illness, was attributed to the trials she suffered in her imprisonments, and her body was returned with great honour to Spain. She would no doubt be astonished to know that the body she despised, mortified and so desired to leave behind is now venerated in the reliquary of the Monasterio de la Real Encarnación in Madrid.

SONNETS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE IN THIS CHAPTER

Soneto espiritual de afectos de amor encendidísimo y deseos de martirio

Esposas dulces, lazo deseado,
ausentes trances, hora victoriosa,
infamia felicísima y gloriosa,
holocausto en mil llamas abrasado.
Di, Amor, ¿por qué tan lejos apartado
se ha de mí aquesta suerte venturosa,
y la cadena amable y deleitosa
en dura libertad se me ha trocado?
¿Ha sido, por ventura, haber querido
que la herida que al alma penetrada
tiene con dolor fuerte desmedido,
no quede socorrida ni curada,
y, el afecto aumentado y encendido,
la vida a puro amor sea desatada?
(*Epistolario y poesías* 449)

Soneto espiritual de Silva de sentimientos de amor y ausencia profundísimos.

¿Cómo vives, sin quien vivir no puedes?
Ausente, Silva, el alma, ¿tienes vida,
y el corazón aquesa misma herida
gravemente atraviesa, y no te mueres?
Dime, si eres mortal o inmortal eres:
¿Hate cortado Amor a su medida,
o forjado, en sus llamas derretida,
que tanto el natural límite excedes?
Vuelto a tu corazón cifra divina
de extremos mil Amor, en que su mano
mostrara quiso destreza peregrina;
y la fragilidad del pecho humano
en firmísima piedra diamantina,
con que quedó hecho alcázar soberano.
(*Epistolario y poesías* 437)

Soneto espiritual de Silva a la ausencia de su dulcísimo Señor en la Sagrada Comunión.

¡Ay soledad amarga y enojosa,
causada de mi ausente y dulce Amado!
¡Dardo eres en el alma atravesado,
dolencia penosísima y furiosa!
Prueba de amor terrible y rigurosa,
y cifra del pesar más apurado,
cuidado que no sufre otro cuidado,
tormento intolerable y sed ansiosa.
Fragua, que en vivo fuego me convierte,
de los soplos de amor tan avivada,
que aviva mi dolor hasta la muerte.
Bravo mar, en el cual mi alma engolfada,
con tormenta camina dura y fuerte

hasta el puerto y ribera deseada.
(*Epistolario y poesías* 437)

Soneto espiritual de Silva al Santísimo Sacramento; en que habla el divino Verbo inmenso con el alma que le está recibiendo de las manos del sacerdote.

De inmenso amor aqúeste abrazo estrecho
recibe, Silva, de tu dulce Amado,
y por la puerta de este diestro lado
éntrate, palomilla, acá en mi pecho.
 reposa en el florido y sacro lecho,
y abrásate en amor tan abrasado,
que hasta que el fuerte nudo haya apretado,
no sea posible quede satisfecho.
 Mira cómo te entrego, amiga mía,
todo mi ser y alteza sublimada;
estima aqúeste don que amor te ofrece;
 tendrás en mí glorioso compañía,
y entre mis mismos brazos regalada
gozarás lo que nadie no merece.
(*Epistolario y poesías* 438)

Soneto espiritual de Silva

En el siniestro brazo recostada
de su amado Pastor, Silva dormía,
y con la diestra mano la tenía
con un estrecho abrazo a sí allegada.
Y de aquel dulce sueño recordada,
le dijo: "El corazón del alma mía
vela, y yo duermo; ¡ay, suma alegría,
cual me tiene tu amor tan traspasada!
 Ninfas del Paraíso soberanas,
sabed que estoy enferma y muy herida
de unos abrasadísimos amores.
 Cercadme de odoríferas manzanas,
pues me veis como fénix encendida;
y cercadme también de amenas flores."
(*Epistolario y poesías* 438)

Soneto espiritual de Silva del encendido amor con que Cristo Nuestro Señor deseó y esperó el día en que había de dejar restaurada la naturaleza humana, a costa de su inestimable vida temporal, acabada entre innumerables oprobios.

En las ardientes llamas encendido
de amor, y de su flecha atravesado,
el Príncipe de gloria disfrazado
en traje pastoril desconocido,
 muchos más de catorce años servido,
sin dar punto de alivio a su cuidado
por su zagala había, y no cansado,
le han poquísimos días parecido.
 Y su excesivo amor no satisfecho,
porque sangre en las venas le quedaba,
causaba angustias mil dentro en su pecho.

Y vuelto a la que en tanto extremo amaba,
decía: “¿Qué ha por ti tu Pastor hecho,
mientras la vida y sangre no te daba?”.
(*Epistolario y poesías* 438)

**Soneto de Silva al Santísimo Sacramento
¡Hostia!**

Contra los hostes soberano y fuerte
amparo, do tu nombre se deriva:
de cristalinas aguas fuente viva
que templá la abrasada ansia de verte.
Muerte eres, vida eterna, de mi muerte,
y de aquella manzana tan nociva
remedio contrapuesto que la esquiva
fortuna nos volvió en dichosa suerte.
Ambrosia y néctar, que su ser inmenso
al alma comunica en tanto grado,
que queda hecha soberana diosa,
y de amor encendida tan intenso,
que no puede vivir ya sin su Amado,
ni, fuera dél, amar ninguna cosa.
(*Epistolario y poesías* 437)

CONCLUSION: LIVING THE BAROQUE

It is another feather, perhaps the finest, in their caps.
They wrote as women write, not as men write.
(Woolf 68)

In recent decades, feminist scholarship has revealed a previously almost invisible body of work by women writers and intellectuals who wrote against or in spite of patriarchal restriction, dating back to the far reaches of the Christian era. However, as Gerda Lerner has pointed out, this development took place over hundreds of years in the form of “isolated insights by individual women, which did not reverberate in their time and were lost to future generations” (*Consciousness* 14). What comes down to us as a diffuse collection of erudite works remained, in their own centuries, atomized, unknown and largely unappreciated by the men who controlled their lives. Their works were condemned to the interior life of the household and, in a few fortunate cases, to the archives of convents and national libraries. Each generation had to begin again the unrecognised work of previous generations.

In presenting this study of the sonnets of five women of the seventeenth century in the Iberian peninsula, I have drawn together works written at the very seat of power and at the periphery in both the secular and the religious fields. Such a broad approach provides a spectrum of women’s lived experience as it is reflected in their poetic works, for the study is necessarily limited by women’s ability to leave a written trace in the record. Extant written works from this period obviously reflect only on literate women, those from the educated elite or the noble classes, accustomed to command their own servants and schooled in the niceties of social deportment, always comfortably off, and always aware of their own value as commodities in the marriage market controlled by their male relatives.

In spite of all these considerations, however, and as I have shown in this study, the works of these women are important because they offer traces of

contemporary cultural experience. They not only add to our knowledge of women's experience in early modern Spain, but also reveal some aspects of men's lives. The scope of the work has caused me to focus specifically on the sonnets, since the volume of poetry by these women is considerable. There is therefore much work still to be done in discerning the attitudes expressed in their verse. The often acerbic works of Ramírez, for example, provide a rich repository of observed quirks and foibles that were part of daily Spanish life in the upper classes. Nevertheless, my contextually-based readings of their sonnets, against the prevalent philosophical, theological and social background of seventeenth-century Spain, have broadened the existing picture of women's intellectual achievements and their social role.

These women do not rail against enforced enclosure or a restriction on their activities. Rather, they celebrate their intelligence and wit in their verse. Furthermore, they actively, often openly, criticise the failings of others, both male and female. While this is particularly evident in Ramírez's verse, Marcia Belisarda also makes a strong critique of masculine pretensions, as she does, for example, in her paired sonnets comparing the benefits of reason over appetite, discussed in Chapter Four. Similarly, Cueva's sonnet to the unfortunate *pretendiente*, explored in Chapter One, shows familiarity with, as well as criticism of the patronage system. Cueva's ironic presentation of the *pretendiente* does not disguise the fact that she fully understood the benefits of patronage, and wrote poetry that underlined her willingness to invest intelligence and effort in furthering the cause of her family within that system. As I have shown in Chapter One, patronage offered women singular opportunities for power, albeit within a limited coterie of other women, and for social advancement if they were prepared to submit to a socially advantageous marriage. However, it also brought rewards, both political and financial, as Cielo's patronage sonnets indicate. Her fame as a court poet enabled her to proffer advice to the king, as in one of the last sonnets of her life, written in 1689, where she urges the king to destroy the Turks.

This affirmation of female power within the patronage system supports my view that these women did not overtly work to prove themselves “fully human,” to borrow Lerner’s phrase (*Consciousness* 10). Their works proceed from the natural assumption that they are important members of their community and of their families. They are not apologetic about putting their thoughts and feelings into verse. They write confidently, secure in their social position and their education and they strongly affirm women’s capacity for abstract thought. This ability is particularly noticeable in the sonnets of *desengaño* that form part of Chapter Five, on the love poetry. As I have demonstrated in this chapter, they treat failed courtships as an educative experience. They learn of the duplicity and moral failings of men whom they have been encouraged to believe are of a higher order of intelligence and honour than it is possible for women to achieve, due to their supposed humoral fallibility. In this chapter we also see criticism, not of direct oppression of women by men, but of a system that permits men freedom of movement that would be unthinkable for women. The demands and opportunities of empire were available to women only as part of the train of the men who went to make new lives in the New World. For instance, when Ramírez’s brother, Lorenzo, sailed away to Guatemala he went alone, in spite of much evidence in her poetry of his willingness to pay court to young women in his immediate environs. It was Lorenzo who left behind a bastard son, Manuel, fathered on a *pastelera* or “Aminta” (Carrasco García 112-13).

In spite of the inadequacies of the less than honourable lover, which may account for the fact that none of these women wed, what remains clear in the verse explored in this work is that the family was of central importance in this period. The value of family life as an aspect of social control and financial and emotional support is well known. What is new in this study is the degree of genuine love, warmth and informality that existed between daughters and their fathers, as well as between siblings. It is commonly stated that the early modern father, as head of the household and responsible for all within it, was an austere figure who represented the earthly

and heavenly kingdoms at a microcosmic level. Such an imposing patriarch, it has been supposed, could not inspire love in daughters, who presented little more than opportunities for a socially desirable marriage. Even this possibility was always coupled with the burden of providing a dowry.

Ramírez is one poet who clearly shows her fondness for her father in her concern for his health and her delight in presenting him with poetic petitions for gifts from Madrid. While Cueva does not pen such informal poetry as Ramírez, her sad poem marking her father's death strongly suggests genuine affection. These poetic inscriptions of filial devotion are amply supported by the anecdotal evidence provided by Lady Fanshawe's memoirs and the reports of English visitors to Spain, detailed in Chapters Two and Three.

However surprising the father's role may appear in these works, in the light of historical evidence to the contrary the mother occupies a pivotal role of her own. As centre of the household the mother had full control of the children in their early years, but, at least theoretically, lost control of her sons once they reached an age where male family members took command of their education. The intention was to turn the child into a man who would be capable of demonstrating the requisite level of *hombria* appropriate to his high social status. The works of Violante del Cielo, I have contended, stand in complete opposition to this picture. Cielo shows that the strong bond of love between a son and his mother remains a constant source of moral and emotional support within the family. Cielo strengthens her argument by applying it to the unanswerable figures of the Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ. As I have argued in Chapter Two, Cielo does not make of the Virgin Mary an impossible figure of parthenogenesis, beyond the ability of ordinary women to emulate. Rather, the Virgin Mary stands in for all women, regardless of rank, and the importance of their maternal role.

Familial love is not restricted by these poets to their parents. There is ample evidence of real friendship and warmth among siblings. Furthermore, Ramírez is one

poet who does not hesitate to lampoon and criticise the behaviour of her brothers. There is no sense of rebellion in these works; she simply observes their failings and points them out in verse, surely an acceptable manner of delivering a mild rebuke. For Cueva, her brother provides yet another opportunity to further family renown, as she praises his efforts in the train of the Cardenal-Infante. Nevertheless, there is pride and affection in works that speak of a genuinely affective relationship that supersedes the advantages of rank and honour. Although Luisa de Carvajal penned no poetry to her brother, her *Epistolario* includes a number of letters to him in which she offers advice on family and spiritual matters. Similarly, she writes of her experiences in London to her cousins, and attempts through these letters to sway the foreign policy of her king in the interests of the oppressed English Catholics. The span of this study has not afforded opportunities for a detailed study of her letters, which provide much information of interest to a social historian and which merit further investigation. For all her avowed obedience and self-abasement, Carvajal's strongly worded letters do not suggest that she was in awe of her brother, who was the titular head of her family. Where in her view she saw a family member in danger of spiritual annihilation, she did not hesitate to commit her thoughts to verse, as she does in the sonnet admonition to the cousin who shared her early life, discussed in Chapter Four. This is one of only three sonnets by Carvajal that did not directly address a divine figure or event, pointing to the importance to her of maintaining the spiritual purity of her bloodline.

Notwithstanding the independent stance and proud intelligence demonstrated in these sonnets, the fact remains that women's freedom to act and think were limited in the early modern period through long-held opinions regarding women's physiological unsuitability for responsibility, or for philosophical or political thought. However much women desired independence and to have their intelligence recognised and encouraged, they too had to live within the confines of the political and philosophical system that governed everybody, rich and poor, regardless of sex.

What my investigation of their works reveals is that while these women sought avenues to express themselves and demonstrate their capacity for independent thought, this was not a politically motivated attempt to change women's status. They had to learn to live within the system which, at their elevated social level, had much to offer them in terms of patronage, advantageous marriages and social status. However slight these advantages may appear in twenty-first century terms, it would be anachronistic to suggest that the benefits they received from living within the system and manipulating it to their own ends were not rewarding to them. There were no democracies in the seventeenth century; every western European country had its own form of patriarchal and hierarchical governing system. This philosophy was particularly irksome to intelligent women, as the works of María de Zayas, or of the English writer, Aphra Behn, reveal. Nevertheless, an ability to live within the system and to make it work to the best advantage possible was the only solution available. Women retained a degree of independence by not marrying, or by entering a convent that would permit them a modicum of social intercourse, as well as the opportunity to continue with their studies, as is the case with Cielo and Belisarda. The solitary exception to this situation was Carvajal, whose extraordinary life of religious devotion and sacrifice, coupled with a frequently repeated determination to adhere to absolute obedience, granted her greater independence than any of the women in this study. However, she achieved this independence by going over the heads of the human hierarchy and citing God as her motivating force.

The greatest support to writing women, outside their own families, was their network of friendships. As I have revealed in Chapter Four, nuns like Belisarda welcomed novices into the convent with verse that stressed the communal nature of the convent life and the benefits to be derived from marriage to Christ. Similarly, sonnets written by Cielo and Cueva to friends that express longing for their companionship show that seventeenth-century women had sufficient opportunities, in spite of the often-repeated strictures of moralists like Juan de Zabaleta, or Fray Luis

de León, to meet and share confidences, to support and reassure each other. Nevertheless, as the life story of Ramírez also shows, friendship could turn to enmity when presumptions of social status within the hierarchical order, even at the provincial level, were upset. In the light of these poems, therefore, although women did not seek to upset the social order, they did make determined efforts to rise within it to a position where greater status could afford them more independence and power.

If friendship and family were two of the pillars of seventeenth-century Spanish society then religion was a powerful third support, as the appearance of religious verse in almost every chapter shows. The religious fervour of Counter-Reformation Spain was evident in the art and literature of the period and among these poets is most clearly seen in the poetry of Cielo and Carvajal. As Cielo's sonnets to the Virgin Mary celebrate motherhood and the Virgin's humanity, they also remind her readers of the exalted status of this most divine of mothers, through her position at the side of God. However, neither Cielo nor any of the poets in the study regard the Virgin as an intercessory figure. On the contrary, she is a figure of feminine power in her own right, as is clear in Cielo's sonnet on her coronation as Queen of Heaven, explored in Chapter Two. Carvajal, on the other hand, although she named her little sisterhood in London "La Congregación de la Soberana Virgen María Nuestra Señora," writes no sonnets to the Virgin. She venerated the Virgin and writes of having her at her side in London but her sonnets, indeed almost all her poems, are directed to her *esposo*, Christ. While the most erotic love poetry of all five women is that directed by Carvajal to Christ, her adaptation of Juan de la Cruz's and Teresa de Avila's poetry, as well as the Song of Songs grounds her work in writings dating back to the earliest Christians, in proposing her soul as Christ's bride.

For all her courage, determination and independence, Carvajal remains a solitary and unusual figure in the landscape of feminine endeavour in the seventeenth century. What comes through above all in the poetry of the other four

poets is a robust enjoyment of the limited opportunities available to them. Cielo saw her poetry in print and it is significant that, in spite of her large portfolio of religious verse, it was her secular works that were published in her lifetime. Similarly, the poetry that Belisarda prepared for publication included both secular and religious works. That these works were intended for a wider audience, together with the large number of sonnets written by women for *certámenes*, indicates women's pride in their literary skill and a determination to share their thoughts beyond the walls of the home or convent.

The sonnets reproduced and explored in this study represent cultural expressions of women's own sociohistorical paradigm. Furthermore, they re-write our understanding of the Baroque by presenting their own attitudes and a joyous expression of female thought and reason. These women lived the Baroque and made the most of every opportunity presented to them to show their skill. In doing so, they demonstrated that literature and art cannot be separated from other aspects of social practice. The degree of autonomy they achieved in writing their own thoughts and exercising their education and wit may be small by today's standards. Nevertheless, it is a significant demonstration that these privileged members of Spanish society found life sufficiently rewarding, varied and interesting to preserve it in verse.

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