ABSTRACT

Sor Violante do Céu was a Portuguese nun of the early modern period whose secular and religious poetry and theatre granted her considerable renown in the upper echelons of Iberian society. Her status as a woman, nun, member of high society, and as a writer who explored themes of non-normative and queer love set her as an exception to the status quo of Siglo de Oro, or Golden Age, literary canon. Her sonnets engage with gender norms in ways that at times conform and at times subvert the roles women were expected to play, engaging with conceptions of love that are romantic, platonic, reverential, and political—tones which cross each other at varying points to create an alternative perspective on the gender and romantic norms of the time period.

The first section of this thesis examines the political and religious situation of early modern Portugal and Spain, reviewing contemporary literature and culture of the convent, and offers a brief biography of the poet's life. This study also presents translations of the sonnets included in *Rimas varias*, making use of criteria which intentionally work to grant Sor Violante's words and ideas greater visibility rather than imposing a modernized conception of gender discourse onto the sonnets. By making the previously ignored women's writing more visible and situating it within the historical and social context in which it was written, this framework reinterprets the male-dominated literary canon of the Siglo de Oro while acknowledging the restraints the patriarchal and Catholic-dominated society placed on writers such as Sor Violante.

RESUMEN

Sor Violante do Céu fue una monja portuguesa de la Edad Moderna cuya poesía y teatro seculares y religiosos le otorgaron un considerable renombre en las altas esferas de la sociedad ibérica. Su estatus como mujer, monja, miembro de la sociedad alta y escritora que exploró temas de amor no normativo y queer la situó como una excepción al *statu quo* del canon literario del Siglo de Oro. Los sonetos abordan las normas de género de manera que a veces se ajustan y a veces subvierten los papeles que se esperaba que desempeñaran las mujeres, abordando las concepciones de amor románticas, platónicas, reverenciales, e políticas–tonos que se entrecruzan en diversos puntos para crear una mirada fascinante a una perspectiva alternativa de las normas de género y amorosas de la época.

La primera sección de este trabajo examina la situación política y religiosa de Portugal y España de la Edad Moderna, repasa la literatura y cultura contemporáneas del convento y ofrece una breve biografía de la vida de la poetisa. Este estudio además presenta las traducciones de los sonetos en *Rimas varias*, haciendo uso de criterios que buscan intencionadamente conceder a las palabras e ideas de Sor Violante una mayor visibilidad, en lugar de imponer a los sonetos una concepción modernizada del discurso de género. Al hacer más visibles la escritura de la mujeres, anteriormente ignorada, y situarla en el contexto histórico y social en el que fue escrito, esta marco reinterpreta el canon literario del Siglo del Oro, dominado por los hombres, al tiempo que reconoce las restricciones que la sociedad patriarcal y católica impuso sobre las mujeres como Sor Violante.

‘Yo tomaré la pluma y de tus glorias coronista seré’:

An Edited Translation of the Secular Sonnets of Sor Violante do Céu

by Eva Ridenhour

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To Dad, Mom, and Ian—y'all are my rocks through the good and the bad. I would not be here today without you. To Dan Buck and Blue Savedge, at home. To Abby Nigro, Meadow Meredith, and Annabeth Loftman, here at school. I love you all from the bottom of my heart.

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PREFACE

This project originated from a lens of translation. My discovery of Sor Violante do Céu (or *del Cielo*, in the Spanish, translated to English as "of the Sky" or "of Heaven") began in a book of essays on women's writing in the Spanish Siglo del Oro edited by Julian Olivares entitled *Studies on Women's Poetry of the Golden Age: Tras el espejo la musa escribe* (2009). The essay in question, written by Amanda Powell and entitled "'Oh qué diversas estamos,/ dulce prenda, vos y yo!' Multiple Voicings in Love Poems to Women," takes its title from one of the Romances featured in *Rimas varias* by Sor Violante. I had never read the name Sor Violante do Céu prior to this essay, but Powell's discussion of her sonnets intrigued me, particularly as they pertained to the ways that women worked around societal restrictions on female voices by using their poetic voices to express non-normative ideas and behaviors. From its original conception as a project to edit and translate the twenty-six sonnets featured in her inaugural publication of secular poetry, my focus lent itself increasingly to the author herself. Sor Violante's poetry, while lesser known in today's academic spheres, was well renowned during her lifetime in Portuguese society. Her status as a writer, woman, nun, member of high society, and as a writer who explored themes of non-normative and queer love set her as an exception to the status quo of Siglo del Oro literary canon. To understand the significance of her role as a poet-nun as well as the significance of her poems themselves, an introduction will provide some context by exploring the ways in which Sor Violante simultaneously fitted into and set herself apart from Portuguese high society from which she originated and maintained her place even from inside of

the convent. Her work, in content, intention, and publication, demonstrates the ways women created intellectual spaces for themselves and made their voices heard in a society that otherwise marginalized them. In my introduction I am going to discuss the historical context of the Iberian Peninsula in the 1600's as it relates to women's conventual life, religious and secular poetry writing, and their implication in politics. I will also provide a more in-depth biography of Sor Violante herself and continue with a brief analysis of her poetry, how it relates to the literary norms of the period as well as how they subvert them. While these translations only come from her secular body of work, she was also a prolific writer of religious poetry, which lends itself to a rather well-established literary tradition of nuns' poetry. In this vein, her work, both secular and religious, plays with gender norms in ways that at times conform and at times subvert the roles women were expected to play. I chose to focus on the secular sonnets of *Rimas varias* as I was particularly interested in how Sor Violante engaged with love in all its many forms as a common theme through her poetry. Though her sonnets draw from the Petrarchan tradition, they dialogue with the gender politics of the period and by doing so, they step distinctly outside that same tradition. The love Sor Violante discusses in her sonnets reads at times as romantic, at times platonic, at times reverential, and at times political—these tones cross each other at varying points to create a fascinating look into her individual conceptions of love, allowing for an alternative perspective on the gender and romantic poetic ideas of the time period. I hope that both components of this work–the translations and the contextualization–will bring Sor Violante to a more visible space within the academic world and contemporary audience and allow her voice to be more readily heard, contributing to a history of non-normative and women's writing.

INTRODUCTION

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Sor Violante's poetry was written at a unique historical moment for the Iberian Peninsula: she lived at a time of religious conflict and Catholic counterreformation, gender discrimination, and remarkable political change. She was born in 1607 in Lisbon (Portugal) to a family of nobles in the midst of the 60 years of the Iberian union, a time during which the entire peninsula, including her home country of Portugal, was under the control of Spanish sovereignty.

Lasting from 1580 until 1640, the Iberian union began following a succession crisis in Portugal after the disappearance (and likely demise) of King Sebastian I of Portugal and his successor, Henry I, a few years later.[1] The succession crisis featured a number of players, including King Philip II of Spain, António, the Prior of Crato, and Catherine of Portugal, the Duchess of Braganza, among others. Amidst these many claims to the throne, the subsequent War of Portuguese Succession was ultimately fought between King Philip II of Spain and António, Prior of Crato between the years of 1580 and 1583. Both figures were grandchildren of King Manuel I of Portugal, although António was an illegitimate son whereas Philip was not. While António held the popular support of the Portuguese people, Philip had the support of the upper classes

[1] For a more detailed account on the history of the Portuguese monarchy during this time, see A.R. Disney's *A History of Portugal and the Portuguese Empire Vol 1* 172-218. Chapter 9, The Tarnished Age, discusses the period of decline leading up to Sebastian's disappearance. Chapter 10, Habsburg Portugal, covers the Iberian Union up until its dissolution.

and clergy. This was in part due to his familial ties to Portugal–prior to the actual unification, Philip II of Spain had been attempting to unite the two countries through more diplomatic means. His first wife, Manuela of Portugal, was the daughter and expected heir of King João II of Portugal until she died after childbirth in 1545. Apart from Philip himself, by the time that King Sebastian disappeared, there was already a cultural and linguistic Spanish presence in the Portuguese court caused by other marriages between the two nations. This included King Sebastian himself, who was married to Juana of Austria, the sister of Philip II. Though the war of succession was ultimately the impetus for the Iberian union, it had been a goal of Philip II's for many previous years.

Thanks to the inter-marrying and upper-class diplomacy, Philip II had support from the Portuguese nobility, but it was António, the Prior of Crato, who held the favor of the majority of Portugal. Philip's acquisition of Portugal was not without conflict. António was crowned king of Portugal in Santarém in 1580, which prompted Philip to enter Portugal and defeat António in the Battle of Alcântara. António's rule was brought to an end by this battle only thirty-three days after his crowning, and Philip II became Philip I of Portugal. This temporarily united the two countries under the same crown. Though a geo-political union, their boundaries and laws remained separate. Portugal's position under the rule of Philip I and his successor Philip II (III of Spain) was one of considerable autonomy–they were still largely self-governing by way of a multi-faceted system of councils, and many Portuguese nobles were granted positions of power within the new system of governance.

The 15th and 16th centuries had seen an economic boom in Portugal, prompted by the development of an empire by way of naval exploration and a booming spice trade. Their colonies in South America and Africa established Portugal as a colonial force on the world stage. However, that empire began to deteriorate following the establishment of the Iberian union. There was relative autonomy and contentment under the first two Spanish kings, but the sudden unification of the two countries meant changing alliances. England, a longtime ally of Portugal, became an enemy with the occurrence of the Anglo-Spanish war. As their wealth lessened, they began to lose control of a number of their colonies as England and the Netherlands launched an increasing number of attacks. Under the Spanish crown, Portuguese resentment towards the Spanish king grew stronger when the Dutch-Portuguese War (nicknamed the Spice war) began officially in 1598. Spanish forces were predominantly focused on the protection of Spanish colonies, and Portuguese colonies were left underprotected and vulnerable, leading to the further decline of the empire's wealth and influence.

Portuguese resentment towards Spain culminated after a more dramatic shift in Spain's policy towards Portugal's self-governance. Philip II's successor, Philip III of Portugal (Philip IV of Spain) was crowned in 1621, and his policies regarding Portugal were distinctly less favorable. The years following saw increased taxes for Portuguese merchants, and Portuguese nobles lost power within the government when the king attempted to make Portugal into a royal province in place of the relative autonomy they'd grown accustomed to. Between the sudden loss of influence and the gradual but devastating deterioration of their economy and empire, upper class resentment towards Philip III (IV of Spain) and Spanish rule grew. The country united particularly under the banner of Dom João II, the 8th duke of Braganza and descendant of

Catherine of Braganza, who had made claims to the throne during the succession crisis several decades before. The culmination of this unrest was a coup carried out in 1640, the same year that João II was crowned King João IV, marking a formal end to the Iberian union.

Spain would not recognize Portuguese independence until the Treaty of Lisbon in 1668. The time between the 1640 revolution and the Treaty is known as the Portuguese Restoration War, or the Guerra da Restauração, during which Spain unsuccessfully attempted to bring Portugal back under its banner. The war itself consisted predominantly of minor border conflicts, with a few decisive Portuguese victories in larger battles which resulted in Spain's ultimate admission of Portuguese sovereignty in 1668.

Sor Violante would live through the dissolution of that union and the crowning of D. João IV as the monarch of Portugal. As a woman of high society herself, she was very much involved in the political environment of the time and her poems often took on political themes which engaged extensively with the role of the monarchy and what she described as the divine and superior character of Portugal. Sor Violante's poetry must then be understood within the context of a shifting climate and emerging sense of national identity reflected in not just her writing, but the writing of many other Portuguese cultural figureheads.

Culturally, this time period was marked by a renewed sense and definition of Portuguese nationalism, particularly seen in the literature produced by Portuguese writers either in the Spanish or Portuguese language. Portuguese would remain the official language of Portugal following the Iberian unification of 1580, but it was generally more common during this time

period for Portuguese writing to be written in Spanish due to the language's larger cultural prominence. Put simply, Spanish-language writing could reach a larger audience than it could have if written in Portuguese. There had already been a cultural and linguistic presence of Spanish prior to the annexation due to the presence of three Castilian-born queens at court between the late 15th and early 16th centuries. Globally speaking, there was little in the way of a market for works written in Portuguese, which further incentivized the use of Spanish in literature. This cultural presence intensified following the actual control of Portugal by the Spanish crown. The linguistic and cultural presence of Spanish within the Portuguese literary canon did not, however, indicate an acceptance or embrace of the Iberian Union.

National identity was a common theme of Portuguese poetry and prose even before the Iberian union–most well-known is Luís Vaz de Camoẽs' *Os Lusíadas* of 1572, an epic poem often considered to be the most important work of literature in the Portuguese language. The poem glorifies Portuguese expansion in a fantastical retelling of 15th and 16th century Portuguese voyages of discovery which established Portugal as a world power at the forefront of exploration and cartography. *Os Lusíadas* praises Portugal as being destined for a divine greatness, predicted by the fates and confirmed by Jupiter, above other nations. Camoẽs' work influenced other writers who later made arguments, either explicitly or covertly, for Portuguese independence from Spain on the grounds of the country's self-sufficiency and overall superiority.

Nationalism and questions of identity remained prevalent in Portuguese literature, particularly in the years leading up to and immediately following the restauração in 1640. The writers that came out of this time period very often were answering a question, implicitly or otherwise, about what

a Portuguese national identity meant in "an exploration, celebration, and restoration of the *patria*" (Wade 3). Along with Sor Violante herself, another writer who defended a Portuguese national identity was António de Sousa de Macedo and his book *Flores de España, Excelencias de Portugal* (1631), written in Spanish.[2] The book highlights a Portuguese nationalism during the continued existence of the Iberian union with the somewhat flimsy rationale that to praise Portugal is to praise Spain, as Portugal is merely a part of the larger empire. This point is somewhat undercut, however, by Sousa de Macedo's consistent praise of the Portuguese monarch, who he specifies in the dedication of the book as "soberana" [sovereign],[3] a full nine years before the coup which would incite the restoration war. Like Camoẽs, Sousa de Macedo positions Portugal as superior to the rest of the world not only in its monarch, but in its geography and culture as well. He makes reference to Camoẽs' work, thereby invoking the divine status of the country within the context of what was increasingly perceived as the annexed condition of Portugal under Spanish rule.

As mentioned earlier, many works of Portuguese literature at this time were written in Spanish, though, and *Flores de España* is no exception, which could be read as counterintuitive to the book's Portuguese nationalist themes. Indeed, it is difficult to read the choice of Spanish as the language of writing as anything other than intentional. Retrospectively, the prevalence of Spanish within Portuguese early modern writing has led to an academic disavowal of 16th and 17th century Portuguese writers on account of their perceived willingness to linguistically abandon their national culture. In his book on the linguistic composition of early modern

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[2] *Flores de España* is widely referenced in other Portuguese writings of the time, including one of the sonnets featured in this translation: Sonnet 18, "Cuando de Portugal las excelencias…".
[3] All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

Portugal, Jonathan Wade argues against this conception, rejecting the idea that literary canons are entirely monolingual.[4] Many Portuguese writers, Sousa de Macedo included, would preface their Spanish-language works with a sort of apology, featuring the argument for Spanish writing on the basis that "whereas writing in Portuguese would be, in effect preaching to the choir, writing in Spanish offers the possibility of a wider readership and a deeper impact" (Wade 5). Similarly to Sousa de Macedo, Sor Violante was one of these writers who made use of Spanish in her writing while simultaneously discussing and extolling the virtues of Portugal and Portuguese nationalism. A little under half of the sonnets featured in *Rimas varias* are written in Castilian Spanish, but out of the entirety of the poetry collection, the majority are in Spanish rather than Portuguese.

The political works of Sousa de Macedo and Sor Violante are also examples of a more specific form of nationalist expression: the divine superiority of Portugal was highlighted by descriptions of the king as divine, perfect, and made by God. Considering that D. João IV was not recognized by Spain as the king of Portugal until the Treaty of Lisbon, the establishment of a direct alternative to Philip III of Portugal's rule became an explicit endorsement of Portuguese identity as separate from its union with Spain. The monarch figure–often named explicitly as the King Dom João IV of Portugal–is referenced in several of the sonnets, painting a picture which entwines Portuguese independence and identity with the King himself. In the cases of Sousa de Macedo and Sor Violante, the hyperbolic and divine descriptions of the king establish a God-given superiority–a nationalism justified and even in some ways led by God himself.

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[4] This is particularly the case in this time period of the Iberian Peninsula. Perez Isasi explores this further in his essay 'Entre dos tierras y en tierra de nadie,' making the compelling argument for a reconfiguration of academic understanding of Portuguese and Spanish Siglo de Oro literary canon as a multilingual one.

In the midst of the upheaval of these years politically defined by a succession crisis, war, and the dissolution of a 60-year union between countries, writers like Sor Violante became critical in the formation of a new conception of Portuguese identity. Another factor contributing to the overall instability and uncertainty of the era was the role of the Catholic church, an institution which was central to the political and social structures of both Spain and Portugal. Sor Violante was positioned within that institution as a member of the convent—writers from the convent provide a unique perspective and contribution to that national identity as active participants in religious structures and the social structures surrounding them.

Living and Writing from the Convent

Within the context of this study, it is also crucial to emphasize the importance of the church in Iberian early modern society. Catholicism was a centerpoint of society in both Spain and Portugal at the time, and it too was in a state of upheaval.[5] Following the Protestant Reformation of the early fifteen hundreds, the character of the Catholic church was forced to change as a result of intense criticism and decreased popularity in a number of nations. Spain and Portugal did not become Protestant countries, but the changes brought about by the Council of Trent (1545-1563) and the Catholic Counter-Reformation nevertheless influenced them enormously as both countries, Spain in particular, became major defenders of the Catholic church. This was especially the case with the role that women played in religious and secular society.

Rather than cooperate or engage with the changes the Protestant Reformation advocated, the Council of Trent served predominately to reinforce the Catholic position and ideology against corruption and towards a more controlled reality of Catholic life. This had a direct effect on how women interacted with society in Spain and Portugal, which remained strongly Catholic. Before the council, conventual responsibilities were somewhat undefined, allowing for greater freedoms and interactions between convent and secular life. Spiritual and religious women were even able to wield influence and power outside the direct control of the church altogether. One of the many changes the Council of Trent initiated was convent reform. Post-counter reformation convents

[5] For more context on the interplay between government and religious reform of the era, see Lewandowska's *Escritoras Monjas: Autoridad y autoría en la escritura conventual femenina de los Siglos de Oro*, specifically the chapter "Condiciones de recepción y producción literarias" 75-208.

were entirely enclosed, enforcing a physical seclusion from society. It also pushed for a greater emphasis on humility as a foundational tenant of nunhood.

In the midst of this turbulent landscape, it became increasingly rare for women to participate in intellectual discourse in any meaningful or at least, explicit/open capacity, yet Sor Violante and many other women nonetheless found ways to do so.[6] This was in part thanks to the same institution that was responsible for a fair amount of the repressive gender norms so prevalent in the society in the first place: the Catholic church. By joining the convent, Sor Violante and many other women found an alternate space within which to create and participate in the traditionally male-dominated political and religious structures that governed.[7]

Sor Violante was born with the turbulent ideological shifts of the Protestant Revolution and the Catholic Counter Reformation as backdrops to the religious landscape of which she was a part. Within that society, women did not enjoy much in the way of freedom of expression or self-determination—even outside of the religious context, women were viewed as inferior to men, both physically and intellectually. This dynamic was exacerbated by the lack of access to education and low literacy levels, placing women at a societally inferior position with little ability to change their status. Educated women were somewhat vilified, even amongst higher socioeconomic classes, and were largely barred from economic and political development of the time. This exclusion extended into the structure of the church, where women found some power

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[6] Baranda and Cruz give an in depth look at the range of conventual writing in *The Routledge Research Companion to Early Modern Spanish Women Writers* (2021), particularly section II, 60-130. Of particular note is Poutrin's essay on autobiographical writing, which examines the cultural and political effects of such writing and contextualizes the importance of conventual autobiographical writing to the advancement of the Counter-Reformation.
[7] For a review of the academic approaches to monastic life, see Atienza 89–108 and Arenal and Schlau 1-17.

as mystics who conveyed the voice of God through visions and writings, but not based on their own educations and voices, rather, explained as 'infused knowledge' coming from God (Arenal and Schlau 2-6). It is little wonder, then, that the majority of the literary canon that comes out of the Siglo del Oro is written by men.

Given the church's increased reinforcement of these gender dynamics following the Council of Trent, the role of the convent in the development of women's education and writing during this time is somewhat ironic. In the shadow of women's lack of agency, the convent functioned for some as an alternative to traditional gender roles and an intellectual space in which women were provided some protection from the judgment otherwise levied at them by society. It was not a universally liberating space—many women were not given the choice to join the convent but rather had the decision thrust upon them by their families. For those who used the convent to their advantage, it could provide a fair number of benefits: access to education and study was one, but also the forgoing of the dangers of traditional family life and the desire for independence and privacy that could only be found in the convent. It also provided an opportunity at an alternate life for women considered unfit for marriage. Within the convent, women's writing and intellectual development flourished, creating a "crisol de heterogeneidad," (Lewandowska 182) [melting pot of heterogeneity], which brought together women of all different walks of life and backgrounds. Not all nuns joined the convent with the sole reason of education, but it was one motivator. Conventual life offered, in many cases, freedom to explore creative and intellectual development, supported by access to libraries and connections to nobles and other intellectuals that came with the community provided through the church (Lewandowska 180-89).

This precedent of intellectual and creative freedom allowed nuns to enact change within their own system. Perhaps most notable in her implementation of change was Saint Teresa of Ávila (1515-1582), whose work as a mystic and a reformer of the Carmelite Order aided immensely in establishing a female literary tradition in the early modern Iberian Peninsula. She used her position to criticize perceived hypocrisies within the church and promote an inner religiosity which would encourage a more sincere and orthodox perspective on religious ideology. This work actually reinforced and, in some cases, defined our understanding of the reforms initiated by the Counter Reformation. Her work in promoting this inner religiosity–practices that included the exploration of "visions, ecstasies, theological interpretations of personal and mystical experiences" (Arenal and Schlau 10)–worked to reform the church without coming across as overly or needlessly rebellious, legitimizing a space which would be led predominantly by nuns seeking religious reformation. As Elena Arenal and Stacy Schlau describe it in *Untold Sisters*:

> Teresa of Ávila bent her needs to the wishes of the Church in a complex mix of submission and subversion. While bowing to and praising the Rules of silence and of 'holy ignorance' for women promulgated by the Council of Trent, she pioneered a persuasive, down-to-earth, 'homely' yet spiritual style that would pose no threat to men. (10)[8]

By making intentional choices regarding which religious and gender norms to comply to, Teresian reform set the stage for other nuns to continue crafting and shaping a legitimized intellectual space for women to influence the religious and political stage of the time period with

[8] For more on Saint Teresa's tactics used to subvert the male-dominated Catholic church, see Weber's *Teresa of Avila and the Rhetoric of Femininity*, particularly the introduction 3-16, which gives a good overview of her use of linguist and literary tactics and their interactions with power structures.

minimized, though still present, restrictions based on their gender and related expectations. The changes in women's roles within the church that Saint Teresa initiated allowed for many other nuns, including Sor Violante, to push that norm further. While none were free of scrutiny from the church, their works did build off of each other, using similar strategies to legitimize their writing and voices.

In spite of the increased seclusion and isolation of post-Trent convent life, nuns were not fully removed from secular society. This was particularly the case for upper class women who entered the convent, and often maintained their connection with their social circle after joining.[9] Many nuns managed to work within and around the framework that the Counter-Reformation instituted by maintaining contact with the world outside through family and political connections. Among other methods, they would also accomplish this by writing poetry and prose to engage with intellectual spheres, courtesy of the education and extensive library access the convent provided them. They could also be recipients of patronage, as was a common practice for many poets and writers of the time. This led to the generation of more non-religious poetry by nuns writing in praise of their patrons or writing in alignment with political goals held by those patrons or, in some cases, themselves.

It was thanks to one such patron that Sor Violante was able to publish her first poetry collection sixteen years after she joined the convent in 1646. To place *Rimas varias'* publication in its political context, this was a mere six years after the dissolution of the Iberian union. The publication itself did not take place in Portugal, rather, in Rouens, France, during a treaty of

[9] For more on social interactions between encloistered nuns and the world beyond the convent walls, see Lehfeldt (2005).

alliance between the two countries which lasted from 1641 until 1659. Inés de Noronha, the Countess of Vidigueira, was one of the driving forces behind the publication, as her husband was the ambassador of Portugal to France at the time. She was a patron to Sor Violante and the poetic recipient of two of the twenty-six sonnets translated here, under the pseudonym Nise. Although the sonnets feature many addressees, listed explicitly or otherwise, Inés de Noronha is perhaps the most obvious example of patronage allowing for monastic influence to extend into the secular world.[10]

[10] The relationship between female conventual poet and female patron is not unique even to this time period. McCash explores female patronage in the medieval context, discussing female patrons supporting and contributing to the writings of female and male writers in need of financial assistance (27-43).

Foremothers of the Convent

This section will examine a number of other nuns who wrote around the time as Sor Violante, discussing their methods of participation as well as relevant themes they engaged with in their poetry–from Teresa of Ávila's work to legitimize the convent as an intellectual space, to María de San Alberto and Cecilia del Nacimiento's utilization of that space to enact further administrative and political change in the church. Less overtly political is the example of Marcela de San Félix, whose exploration of eroticism spoke, somewhat paradoxically, to the virtues of encloisterment and a life lived closer to God, which presents an argument for a view of the convent itself as an erotic space. From the perspective of secular poetry (like the poetry translated here), Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz engaged in many of the same practices of patronage and connection with women of higher political status as Sor Violante, which serve both as an example of a woman's reclamation of power and as an expression of love, albeit a non-normative one. The themes explored by her contemporaries weave intermittently throughout *Rimas varias*, and to properly examine the complexity of these sonnets, it helps to understand the complexity of the context in which they were written.

By the time that Sor Violante del Cielo became an active writer within convent culture, other authors had set the precedent of nuns producing intellectual discourse that influenced not only the microcosm of female religious spaces, but also the wider context of the Catholic church's politics and intellectual beliefs. While Saint Teresa remains to this day the most well-known of these nuns, she was by no means the only voice to use the convent space both as a platform for

political and religious activism and as a space to engage in creative pursuits.[11] Among others, sisters María de San Alberto (1568-1640) and Cecilia del Nacimiento (1570-1646) joined the convent in Valladolid in pursuit of education opportunities and freedoms. The two of them are considered disciples of Saint Teresa's writing. Known for their collaboration on poetry, translations, and archival work, the sisters embraced the Rules set out by Teresa of Ávila in her writings and encouraged connection with God and the aversion of melancholy via the creation of religious art. While María de San Alberto's poetry made use of a number of Teresan poetic traditions, including mysticism as a poetic mode, Schlau argues that she was able to write in a more confident and self-assured style even while establishing her virtuous tendencies towards obedience and humility (Schlau 219). Her works placed a strong emphasis on the interrogation of how power should be distributed in the church, as well as which virtues made one worthy of wielding that authority. These virtues included an inherent obedience and subservience to divine will, and she even detailed a list of specific behaviors that should be associated with holding religious office, all of which she herself respected. This in turn further strengthened her position of authority, justified under the banner of God's will. Also in María de San Alberto's collective works are a number of poems extolling the virtues of her spiritual teacher, which worked to advocate for the canonization of Saint Teresa as well as celebrate her work as a driving force behind the movement of religious reform. By working within the legitimized female intellectual space of the convent pre-established by writers like Saint Teresa, she was able to engage in church politics and further strengthen both the positionality of herself and of other women

[11] Though this study focuses on poetry, this was by no means the only method of expression women used. For more on women writers in early modern Spain, see Nieves Baranda and Anne J. Cruz's *The Routledge Research Companion to Early Modern Spanish Women Writers*, which provides a comprehensive overview of different forms of women's writing done by women in vastly different contexts. This includes the convent as well as secular world, along with comparisons of public and private spheres of writing.

writing for similar purposes within that structure. Ideas which would normally be considered as outside the female intellectual purview were justified as being a more or less direct conveyance or reflection of God's will.

The sonnets of *Rimas varias* translated and discussed in this study often concern themselves with love in a variety of forms. While they come from a secular collection of poetry, some religious poetry of the time period did also engage with similar themes, albeit through different modes. Sor Marcela de San Félix (1605-1688), born Marcela del Carpio, discussed the liberation of religious life and conventual identity within the context of sex and class through her religious poems and exploration of eroticism through God. Being the illegitimate daughter of well-known poet Lope de Vega, her pre- (and post, to some extent) conventual life was defined by the complexities of gender and class structures of her time period. Georgina Sabat de Rivers suggests that Marcela de San Félix's decision to join the convent was likely not purely for religious reasons, citing her difficult relationship with her father and the attractive prospect of leaving a cramped and unhappy home situation (593). Sor Marcela experienced a kind of freedom by taking religious vows, being suddenly allowed an independence that Lope de Vega's other daughters were not privy to and even able to create her own space in his profession. As for her poetry itself, much of her writing serves to teach those around her. This is even the case for her more erotically charged poems, which speak to a kind of liberation found through the removal from contemporary class and gender structures. She advocates for nunhood in spite of the necessary forgoing of erotic and romantic connections, arguing that a close, conventual relationship with God provided a more valuable freedom and spiritual wholeness than the fulfillment of traditional gender roles could offer. By writing more explicitly erotic poetry about

God, she teaches her readers about an alternate view of these earthly connections and suggests that much greater pleasures can be found through a close connection with God and, by extension, nunhood.

Another aspect of Sor Marcela's writing particularly relevant to the understanding of Sor Violante's work is her interaction with gender. Her writing reclaims more traditionally masculine language in a way that reiterates the concept of freedom from gender norms. Eroticism and the expression of sexuality in poetry was a space usually reserved for male poets, and the gendered traditions of poetic voice and recipient surrounding those poems was correspondingly gendered: the male voice would write to a female recipient, who archetypally had no agency or voice of her own. Many women poets of the time would subvert those norms either by writing from an explicitly stated female voice or by adopting a male one. In her essay exploring class and sex in Sor Marcela's love poetry, Arenal discusses this phenomenon's appearance in what she argues to be Sor Marcela's most erotic poem: "'Jaculatorias…' has an especially engaging agility that comes as much from its rhythmic beat and irregularity as from its appropriation of a salacious tone more common to men's expression" (253). This alternate gender structure, while still holding a distinctly feminine voice, plays off of the traditional view of nuns as brides of Christ, with religious vows mirroring the vows taken by a bride at the altar. With God as the recipient of the traditionally masculine form, Sor Marcela and many other female religious poets of the time created an alternative paradigm for gender structures–women, having forgone contemporary marital norms by devoting themselves to God, were able to reclaim voice and agency through the typical poetic forms normally inaccessible to them.

In spite of the period's restrictions for them, women's creative expression was not exclusively confined to religious poetry. Even within the conventual community, secular poetry had a role in developing a platform for women's voices. Born some years after Sor Violante, another, perhaps better-known contemporary is Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1648-1695), a nun recognized today for her feminist positionality as it was conveyed through her secular poetry and theatre. Sor Juana is another example of a nun who joined the convent not to begin, but rather to continue her education originally provided through an upper-class upbringing. She became a Hieronymite nun at the age of 21, in part to avoid a number of marriage proposals. Though Sor Juana lived in New Spain and not in the Iberian Peninsula, she too used her writing to wield political influence in the higher echelons of New Spanish society. Sor Juana, like many nuns, wrote a combination of religious and secular poetry, with a variety of motivations. In the introduction of his book *The Politics and Poetics of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz* (2012), George Antony Thomas discusses Sor Juana's occasional poetry–that is, poetry written for a specific occasion–and its ability to argue for political change (1-8). He cites a romance written in 1684 for the birthday of the toddler José María Francisco de la Cerda, the child of a viceroy and vicereine. The poem, which is in content a celebration of life, also featured a plea to stop the execution of a prisoner. Much of her writing holds similar mirrored motivations–what is on the surface a congratulatory poem to celebrate a birthday also allowed Sor Juana to deliver her political opinion to the viceroy, thus ingratiating herself with him while simultaneously attempting to sway him on matters of state.

This is not, however, the only example of Sor Juana's use of occasional poetry to change a perspective, be it political or relating to her own position in society. A number of her poems today featured in her *Obras Completas* are poems dedicated to specific individuals, often

influential women of the court who, in two specific cases, served as Sor Juana's sponsor by providing financial and verbal backing to her work. Poems of patronage of the early modern have been written about in some length, particularly by scholars interested in queer studies.[12] Poets would often write poems addressed to their patrons which read as quite romantic or even erotic–examples range from Sor Juana's love poems to vicereines María Luisa and Leonor Carreto to William Shakespeare's sonnets addressed to an unnamed male patron. There is one reading of this form of poetry which is romantic, which I will address below. Another reading, however, relates to power dynamics. By writing to please a patron, poets like Sor Juana were provided protection similar to the protection nuns found through the church. Gwyn Fox writes about these dynamics at length in her book *Subtle Subversions*, underlining the importance of patronage for Spanish writers in obtaining financial and status stability, as well as exposure (21). In the case of Sor Juana, patronage meant security–with that protection, she was able to push the boundaries of what was considered appropriate or acceptable in terms of philosophies put forth by her poetry and essays. It was only after María Luisa left New Spain that Sor Juana's more radical ideas were subject to the fullest extent of the criticism it would receive nearer to the end of her life. Without that protection, her more feminist leaning ideas prompted gradual deterioration of her reputation and name, prompted by the Archbishop of Mexico. Before the end of her life, she was forced to renew her vows, sell her books, and swear her silence by no longer writing. The protection she had previously been privy to did not last, but it was significant in allowing her voice to be heard, if only for a time, and subsequently rediscovered by modern scholars.[13]

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[12] For more on a queer reading of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, see Galván 122-125 (2016) and Esquivez 66-90 (2006).
[13] Octavio Paz is credited as rediscovering Sor Juana in the modern-day academic sphere, with the publication of her biography *Sor Juana, o, las trampas de la fe* (1982), and she has since been the subject of a substantial amount of academic discussion surrounding the Spanish-speaking Baroque.

A reading of Sor Juana's love poetry as transactional, of course, has a contrasting argument that is important to consider as well: her love poetry to patrons can also very easily be read as a genuine expression of a non-normative love. Like Sor Violante, many of Sor Juana's poems engage with love as a thematic throughline. Contrastingly to Sor Marcela's amorous poetry dedicated directly to God, Sor Juana's love poetry was often addressed to specific individuals, many of whom were female. A recurring figure in her sonnets is that of "Lysi" (or "Lisi") who is referred to with a kind of reverence one would expect from religious poetry:[14] at one point she is referred to directly as "Lysi divina," (Sor Juana, 304) [Divine Lysi]. Just as a play for political power can be viewed as a claim to agency, romantic expression to women falls under the purview of the subversion of gender norms and expectations.

Though Sor Violante's poetry was written at a time when women were generally discouraged from writing and women's roles were traditionally domestic, many nuns found their voices through their poetry, with the convent as a safe space within which to create that poetry. Writing from religious and secular perspectives, they used a variety of strategies to legitimize that space and make it as safe from censorship as possible. Sor Violante's writing is unique, but it was not entirely unprecedented. The themes she explores through these sonnets are present in works of the other nuns discussed above, allowing her to add to a feminine literary canon of the early modern Iberian Peninsula, rather than create one. The following section will discuss her contributions to that canon, as well create a general understanding of her life and positionality within Portuguese society.

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[14] The pseudonym of Lysi is a reference to María Luisa, the condesa de Paredes, and one of Sor Juana's sponsors and close friends.

Life and Impact of the Poet

Sor Violante do Céu was born Violante Ávila da Silveira Montesino(s) on May 30, 1607 (or 1601) in Lisbon, Portugal to a noble family.[15] Her mother was Helena da França de Ávila, and her father was Manoel da Sylveira Montesino, an attorney. Her family's higher social status allowed her to gain access to an education, and though she received no formal training in poetry, she began writing verses from a young age. Her poems won her a number of literary competitions in her teenage years[16]–this is particularly notable as it was quite unusual for women to compete in such competitions. She gained a fair amount of literary renown prior to joining the convent, and Mendes cites one of her comedies, *La transformación por Dios*, as being performed for King Philip III of Spain when he visited Lisbon in 1619.[17] She first began writing under the name Violante do Céu in 1629, a year before she actually joined the convent.

Though the details of her relationships with other literary figures of the time are somewhat scarce, Mendes suggests she was an established part of the Portuguese literary community as evidenced by a number of the poems written in praise of Sor Violante's writing and ingenuity featured in the antetextos of *Rimas varias*, including works penned by Antonio Henriquez Gomez, Leonardo de S José, and Miguel de Botelho de Carvalho (Mendes 13). She was also seemingly the inspiration and muse of a number of poems written by Paulo Gonçalves de

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[15] Scholars differ on the date of birth due to typographical confusion on the birth certificate. I'm inclined to agree with Pociña López and Vieira Mendes' belief in the 1607 date, as they cite documentation of her baptism in June of the same year–it would have been quite odd for her to have been baptized six years after being born. Similarly, the surname of Montesino(s) has been written with and without the "s" depending on the documentation.

[16] This was in and of itself unusual, and gained her a fair bit of criticism from critics on account of her competing in traditionally masculine competitions as a woman.

[17] Unfortunately, the manuscripts for *La transformación por Dios* and the other two *comedias* she allegedly wrote were lost following the Great Lisbon Earthquake and subsequent fire in the convent in 1755.

Andrade in his collection *Várias poesias*, published first in 1629. These poems used the poetic names of Lauso and Sílvia to refer to Paulo de Andrade and his muse–Mendes and other scholars agree that Sílvia was very likely a referent to Sor Violante, in part due to her use of the same names in her *Rimas varias*. Paulo de Andrade also placed a repeated emphasis on the word "cielo" (which would translate to "Céu" in Portuguese) in his poetry, and made common references to "*uma dama que* nasceu em Maio" (Mendes 11) [*a woman who* was born in May], all of which would again point to Sor Violante as a source of inspiration. In addition to his poetry, evidence points to the pair having a romantic relationship prior to Sor Violante's entering the convent. Though the date and specific details are unknown, Mendes states that the two sought to marry according to João Soares de Brito's *Biblioteca lusitana de autores portugueses* from 1665, but were unable to due to objections by Sor Violante's grandfather, a lawyer named Gonçalo Nunes de Ávila. Shortly after this, Paulo Gonçalves de Andrade left Portugal.

As for her own writing, Andrés José Pociña López compiles a list of all conserved publications of Sor Violante's work in his 1998 biography of her (24-27). The majority of these works were published during her lifetime, with the exception of *Parnaso lusitano* and various appearances of her poetry in anthologies published in later years. Among other works, he cites one of her sonnets as appearing in the *antetextos* of the first part of Paulo Gonçalves de Andrade's *Várias Poesías*. He also discusses previous editions of the poetry featured in *Rimas varias* that was published prior to the actual collection, including a *canción* dedicated to Félix Lope de Vega y Carpio in 1636. Among her publications were two collections, and her individual poems were regularly published throughout the course of her lifetime, and were overall well received by her contemporaries. The reception was not universally positive: she received some criticism from

writers such as D. Francisco Manuel de Melo, who accused her of impropriety on account of her competing alongside men in poetry competitions (Mendes 13).[18] He also characterized her religious life as being improperly dedicated to writing in place of contemplation. Though he and others were somewhat critical of her outspokenness, it seems that the majority of the literary circles she operated in had great respect for her and her contributions to the literary world.

Sor Violante's precise reasons for entering the convent remain uncertain–scholars tend to disagree on how religious her motivations actually were. However, more recent scholarship has argued against her joining as a matter of pure religious devotion. In the introduction of her edition of *Rimas varias*, Mendes cites her relationship with Paulo de Andrade as a complicating factor in the oft-embraced narrative of the purity of the nun's love for God driving her to the convent (11). Pociña López cites her more erotic poetry published both before and after her joining the convent as additional evidence for a more complex relationship with God (21). As has been previously mentioned, however, many women joined the convent in the pursuit of intellectual engagement and participation in literary spheres, which could also be argued of Sor Violante as she was already participating in such circles before entering the convent. Regardless of her exact motivations, she joined the Dominican Convent of Nossa Senhora da Rosa da Ordem do Grande Patriarca Santo Domingos on August 29th of 1630, where she lived and wrote until her death on January 28, 1693. This convent was one of the oldest in Lisbon at the time, first founded in 1519, and hosted an active literary salon that allowed Sor Violante to share her work with the outside world. Like many of the nuns discussed in the previous section, Sor

[18] It was not unheard of for women to participate in contests, but unusual. Rodríguez explores women's role in literary academies, contests, and tournaments in early modern Spain in chapter 10 (153-167) of *The Routledge Research Companion to Early Modern Spanish Women Writers*.

Violante remained an active member of society from behind convent walls. Manuel Serrano y Sanz's *Apuntes para una biblioteca de escritoras españolas desde el año 1401 al 1833* (1903) affirms that her life was more or less the same post-encloisterment, and other writers have suggested that her poetry, both religious and secular, allowed her to improve her position within Portuguese society by maintaining a social and cultural network of support.[19]

In addition to the authors previously mentioned, Sor Violante held connections with other authors and members of the Portuguese nobility. Most notable was D. João IV, the king of Portugal following the dissolution of the Iberian union. She addressed a number of poems to him including several of the sonnets translated here. Some of these may have been commissioned (Álvarez-Cifuentes 249-250), but still stand as examples of direct political advocacy on Sor Violante's part. Her work praising the Portuguese monarch places some of her work in the category of restoration poetry–that is, political poetry directly advocating for the separation of Portugal from Spanish rule. The other poetic recipients of her poems, when explicitly stated in dedications or the poems themselves, were largely influential writers, members of the nobility, or both.[20] Her writing, published or otherwise, was circulated through a variety of means, including the convent's own literary salons which attracted other educated noblewomen, poetry competitions such as the *jogos florais* [floral games], and in and out of ecclesiastical settings. Mendes describes conventual writing as passing easily in and out of the physical convent walls, and Sor Violante's work was no exception (16).

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[19] See Fox, Chapter 1, "Politics, Patronage, Parentage" (21-72) and Álvarez-Cifuentes, "Dentro y Fuera de la Corte: Los destinatarios de las *Rimas varias* (1646) de soror Violante do Céu" (2024) to understand her networks.
[20] Among them, some of these people are Paulo Gonçalves de Andrade, Mariana de Luna e Eça, and António de Sousa de Macedo.

The actual publication of her poetry collection allowed for an even wider reception. As mentioned in a previous section, it was these higher political and patronic connections that aided in the facilitation of the publication of *Rimas varias*, under the full title of *Rimas varias de la madre Soror Violante del Cielo, religiosa en el monasterio de la Rosa de Lisboa. Dedicadas al Excelentísimo Señor Conde Almirante, y por su mandado, sacadas a luz* [Various rhymes of the mother Soror Violante del Cielo, nun in the monastery of the Rose in Lisbon. Dedicated to the most Excellent Señor Count Almirante, and by his mandate, taken to the light], under the publishing imprint of Maurry in Rouens, France in 1646. The publication was in part orchestrated by the efforts of Miguel Botelho de Carvalho and Vasco Luis da Gama, the Portuguese ambassador to France at the time. As mentioned before, Vasco Luis da Gama was married to Inés de Noronha, who was a patron of Sor Violante's and the poetic recipient of two of the sonnets in *Rimas varias.*

Rimas varias was the only poetry collection published by Sor Violante during her lifetime, but it is not the only collection of her work that exists. In 1733, a collection of her religious poetry was published in Lisbon, a full forty years after her death. Like *Rimas varias,* the majority of *Parnaso lusitano de Divinos e Humanos Versos* was written in Castilian, and contains a variety of poetic forms including sonnets, romances, and villancicos. Interestingly in the context of this study, Sor Violante voices regret over writing more amorous and secular poetry in this collection, suggesting a shift in attitude at some point during her life. Mendes cites one particular stanza from *Parnaso lusitano* as denouncing her previous work, and suggests that the human object and love Sor Violante denounces is primarily represented in *Rimas varias*:

Si escreví, si canté de objeto humano,

Y no sólo de vos, Divino objeto,

En la publicidad de tal defeto

Bien castigado está mi error profano. (Mendes 15)

[If I wrote, if I sang of the human object,

And not only of you, object Divine,

In the publication of such a defect

Punishment is well my profane error.]

Parnaso lusitano has gone understudied by modern scholarship when compared with *Rimas varias*–one notable exception is Halling's edition of the villancicos of the collection. Pociña López suggests that this may be because "La verdad es que debemos reconocer que la poesía religiosa de nuestra autora es mucho menos original, interesante y, desde luego, bastante menos conmovedora que la amorosa" (36) [The truth is that we must recognize that our author's religious poetry is much less original, interesting and, of course, rather less moving than the love poetry]. In short, according to critics, the poetry featured in the posthumous collection is simply less engaging than the more secular love poems of her first collection. Regardless, this later denouncement of her own work is interesting when analyzing the poetry of her youth.

Sor Violante's cultural impact seems to have been stronger during her actual lifetime as opposed to the modern day. As scholars turn their gaze towards the world of early modern nun writers, however, there has been more study of her work and a slow but steady revitalization of the understanding of her impact. I have made reference to a number of these projects, but I particularly would like to highlight Margareida Vieira Mendes' modernized edition of *Rimas varias* from 1994. This new edition provides a vast amount of contextual information on Sor

Violante's life, as well as on the recipients of a number of the poems. With a few exceptions, I have based the translations on her modernized versions of the sonnets. Further scholarship has examined motivations and messaging behind the creation of the collection's publication.[21] While there has been no comprehensive English translation of *Rimas varias*, several sonnets have been translated individually in the interest of academic analysis.[22]

When discussed within the larger literary canon, Sor Violante is generally recognized as an important figure among Portuguese writers of the early modern, and Thereza Leitão de Barros describes Sor Violante as "um dos mais completos representantes da poesia mística ou ascética" (123) [one of the most complete representatives of mystical or ascetic poetry] of the seventeenth century.

[21] See Álvarez-Cifuentes, Baranda, Martos Pérez, and Powell, among others.
[22] Dugaw and Powell, "Sapphic Self-Fashioning in the Baroque Era: Women's Petrarchan Parody in English and Spanish" (2006), translates sonnet no. 8. See also Fox, *Subtle Subversions: Reading Golden Age Sonnets by Iberian Women* (2008), which translates a total of 7 of the sonnets.

Poetry Analysis

It's impossible to really analyze Sor Violante's work without taking gender into account. At first glance, the sonnets of *Rimas varias* seem to match many conventions of the early modern Iberian sonnet. This holds true in form as well as tone, and even content. As was typical of the Baroque, Sor Violante's poetry is dramatic and bold, embracing floral and hyperbolic language and engaging with themes such as love, death, and politics. Literary conventions, however, are codified by the people who make up literary canons, and the Renaissance and Baroque periods of the Iberian Peninsula were predominantly masculine. That meant an assumed male perspective for much of the poetry of the time, particularly in the case of the sonnet which thematically tended towards heteronormative, masculine-voiced love narratives.

Before addressing the specifics of her poetry, it is worth acknowledging the significance of the sonnet form itself. More closely resembling the widely popular Petrarchan sonnet form, the sonnet tradition in both Spain and Portugal was well developed by the time that Sor Violante began writing. In terms of form, Petrarchan sonnets are composed of 14 lines, divided into an octave and a sextet with a rhyme scheme of ABBA ABBA in the octave and variants such as CDE CDE or CDC CDC in the sextet. Narratively, the poem would feature a turn, or volta, after the octave–traditionally, the octave would present an abstract question or theme, and the sextet would resolve it or provide a different perspective on the theme presented in the beginning of the piece. Spanish sonnets are distinct from Petrarchan by being made of two quatrains and two tercets, and are composed of hendecasyllable lines (eleven syllables). The volta occurs after the

two quatrains. Sonnets engaged with a variety of themes–most well-known is that of love and the neo-platonic, though they also reflected on nature and politics.

Sor Violante's sonnets were not unique solely in that they were sonnets–they followed these traditions quite closely, in both structure and in theme. Many of her sonnets muse on love, both romantic and platonic, and many others praise her contemporaries, either other authors and religious figures or her patrons. What stands out as a subversion is her depictions of gender in poetic voice and recipient, as she consistently breaks the norm of male speaker/female addressee. The gender of the poetic voice and poetic recipient in her poetry has been the subject of some study—though she herself was a woman, many of the sonnets do not explicitly define a female poetic voice, rather, leaving the gender undefined entirely.[23] Her recipients varied as well, from masculine to feminine, and from defined (sometimes specific historical figures) to undefined. The choice to represent one gender or another reads as intentional because of that variation across the many themes she writes about.

The importance of gender is particularly pronounced in Sor Violante's love sonnets. Love was generally conceived in the early modern as strictly heteronormative, and love poetry was by and large written from the masculine perspective and addressed to the feminine addressee.[24] Sor Violante's love sonnets are of particular note because they subvert that expectation by virtue of the gender of their author. Whether or not she was attempting to make some form of commentary on gender's interaction with love norms of the time period, her depictions of love present an

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[23] See Martos Pérez for an in-depth study of gender schemes in the entirety of *Rimas varias*.
[24] In the introduction to the anthology of early modern Spanish women's poets, Olivares and Boyce (1993) explore the early modern understanding of love discourse through the lens of love poetry and discuss how a number of women conformed or subverted that discourse through their writing (16-44).

alternate perspective to a typically male presentation. Her conception of love is far from monolithic–she writes of love that is romantic, platonic, and reverential, and often those categories overlap from sonnet to sonnet.

A common theme in her more romantic sonnets is absence. Of her many recipients, academics are only really certain of her romantic involvement with one, the aforementioned Paulo Gonçalves de Andrade, who she refers to with the pseudonym Silvano.[25] The name Silvano appears in two of the 26 sonnets, with one of these focusing on him not as a recipient but as a third person addressee. This sonnet, 22, is most easily recognized for its repetition of the words "morte" [death] and "vida" [life] as the last word of each line. She also repeats the name Silvano in each line of the second stanza:

> "Não quero sem Silvano já ter vida,
> pois tudo sem Silvano é viva morte,
> já que se foi Silvano venha a morte,
> perca-se por Silvano a minha vida."
> [Without Silvano, I no longer want life,
> since all without Silvano is living death,
> as Silvano is gone let come death,
> let for Silvano be lost my life.]

[25] The dynamic between the perspective of the author and the poetic voice is difficult to navigate. This section of the analysis draws connections between Sor Violante and her poetic voice relatively directly, based on academic knowledge of her personal connection with the explicitly named addressees (as well as ones referred to with pastoral names, like Nise). It is worth acknowledging, however, potential poetic choices that may differ from the reality of her connections with these individuals.

She does not chastise him for his absence, but rather laments his absence as rendering her life meaningless, and worthy only of death. The constant repetition in this stanza as well as the rest of the poem emphasizes and intensifies her emotions, comparing the pain of romantic loss to a complex depiction of the dichotomy between life and death. The final stanza underlines the complexity by writing "bem sei que se me tarda tanto a morte, / que é porque sinta a morte de tal vida." [well I know that I am delayed such from death, / it is because death feels so much life.] In other words, death does not come to her in spite of Silvano's absence because life still exists in her feelings, even when those feelings are so difficult as to inspire death in her. Other than the dichotomy between life and death, much of Sor Violante's more romantic poetry makes use of the play between love and torment. This sonnet features a defined female poetic voice, and while it does not address Silvano in the second person, the object of affection is defined as masculine. By those terms, this poem presents a rather traditional gender makeup of a romantic relationship–the subversion of the genre here lies not in the genders themselves, but who in the relationship is doing the writing. By writing from the female voice, Sor Violante takes agency for the traditionally subservient position, allowing the woman's voice to be heard in an unhappy situation.

Though Sonnet 22 is an example of a heterosexual poetic relation, Sor Violante makes use of different genders and different, non-normative object-subject relationships in various other sonnets. Sonnets IV and VI are both addressed to the same pseudonym, Nise. Like Silvano, the name Nise refers to the real person Inês de Noronha, the Countess of Vidigueira and patron of Sor Violante's. Neither poem has an explicitly stated gender for the poetic voice, but the tone is undeniably romantic. Poets often adopt voices distinct from their own in their poetry, but

considering that Sor Violante had her own personal relationship with the real Inês de Noronha, it is reasonable to read her writings to her as coming from a similarly personal place.[26] The similarities between Sonnet 6 and Sonnet 22 (addressed to Silvano) emphasize this point: the theme of absence is central through both poems. Where Sonnet 22 merely laments the poetic voice's love's absence, Sonnet 6 actually chastises Nise for her silence, likening her to Venus in both her beauty and goddess-like manner as well as the fickleness she displays in her absence. The poem expresses desperation over both how lovely (literally calling her "Nise la divina" [Nise the divine]) Nise is, as well as how tyrannical in her ill-treatment of the poetic voice. Though there is a fair bit more blame cast on the romantic interest in Sonnet 6 than in the sonnet addressed to Silvano, the trope of absence as pain in romantic poetry holds consistent throughout both sonnets.

Sor Violante gives a more specific definition of one type of love in Sonnet 9, which deals directly with female friendship–naming it directly in the first line, "Belisa el amistad es un tesoro" [Belisa friendship is a treasure]. This poem grants a similar emotional weight to the friendship connection as others do to more romantically charged relationships, which fits into an extensive tradition of the importance of female homosocial bonds as expressed through women's writing of the time (Vollendorf 1-2). As suggested by that first line, this sonnet is characterized by its connection between friendship and value, and spends its stanzas defining what friendship

[26] Fox describes the friendship between Sor Violante and Inês de Noronha as "long-lasting and beneficial" (33), though it is difficult to completely characterize the relationship, as the patron structure usually implies some power dynamic. That being said, Sor Violante was already of a high social standing, so that power dynamic was likely more complex than a purely monetary transaction. Regardless, the relationship between Sor Violante and Inês de Noronha warrants further study.

is or should be. In an interesting comparison to the more romantic poetry, the second stanza describes friendship as strong in the face of absence:

> 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.
> [Friendship is a just decorum,
> that is protected in absence, and in presence,
> and with which one friend feels the other's
> sadness, remorse, laughter, weeping.]

Vollendorf presents the trope of female friendship as an alternative to the heteronormative ending of most homosocial relationships depicted in early modern literature–in the convent this is particularly the case as, with the exception of God, men are forgone in importance entirely in the woman's life (431-432). As a narrative device, the culminating "heteroerotic alliance" (431) is removed from the equation, allowing for women's needs and bonds to take precedence in poetry and other works of literature. In the case of Sor Violante's sonnets, this is demonstrated both through this poem, which specifies friendship as the characterization of the relationship, and also through other poems which leave the exact nature more undefined.

As discussed about Sonnet 6, however, much of her poetry to women did take on a more romantic tone. Sonnet 4, which is likewise addressed to Nise, similarly uses language which seems to go beyond the scope of friendship. Sonnet 4 presents an alternative to Sonnet 6 and 22's pained romantic relationship. Rather than chastising her, the poem extolls Nise's virtues in spite

of a habit worn for the absence of her husband, praising her glory as not reliant on clothing and finery. Where she mourns the absence of Silvano, this first sonnet addressed to Inês de Noronha adopts a more reverential tone, describing her as "hermosa" [beautiful] and "victoriosa" [victorious]. Her beauty is described as divine and radiant, all the more so because of its existence in the midst of the darkness cast by her mourning garb. This sonnet is the closest Sor Violante comes to playing into the sonnet tradition of praising the physical beauty of a woman as a way of expressing one's love to her–even this sonnet, however, which is based around the physical appearance of Nise dressed in brown, focuses more on a metaphorical light shining through clouds rather than a physical description of her beauty. Though it shies away from the objectification typical in a lot of romantic sonnets of the time by way of the blazon tradition, her romantic writing still makes use of the hyperbolic praise, focusing instead on the emotions and personality of the object of affection.

Inês de Noronha is not the only female object of affection Sor Violante writes about in her sonnets–the opening sequence of poems, specifically 1-4 and 6-8, have been analyzed for their depictions of queer love and expressions of intense devotion to female addressees.[27] While not all are explicitly addressed to women, none are addressed to men and, like the previously discussed romantic sonnets, make use of language that is biblical and reverential to describe the poetic recipient. Many of these poems, like the two previously analyzed, play with Petrarchan themes and metaphors surrounding love while centering the female voice as both the speaker and the addressee. Sonnet 8 is one such example, with an explicitly defined addressee of the

[27] See Dugaw & Powell's "Sapphic self-fashioning in the Baroque era: Women's petrarchan parody in English and Spanish" for a more in-depth discussion of Sor Violante's and other contemporaries' queer sonnets. See also Powell's essay "'Oh que diversas estamos, dulce prenda, vos y yo!' Multiple Voicings in Love Poems to Women" featured in the collection *Studies on Women's Poetry of the Golden Age: Tras el espejo la musa escribe* (51-80).

Condessa de Penaguião. While it lacks a defined gender of the poetic voice, this sonnet is an example of what Martos Pérez calls the "yo no-ficticio" (431) [non-fictional I]–a first person which indicates a more direct connection between the poetic voice and the actual poet. This sonnet discusses admiration held for the countess in a tone that approaches the erotic, describing the poet's feelings as being an "exceso feliz con que deliro" [excess joy with such delirium]. The depths of her affections, it seems, cannot be encapsulated by mere sanity, as emphasized in the final stanza:

> "Pues admirando al paso que sintiendo,
> si ofende la cordura delirando,
> Acredita el ingenio conociendo."
> [Since I admire all while I feel,
> if my delirium offends good sense,
> Knowledge affirms my ingenuity.]

As a poem attributed directly to another female member of high society written from a female voice, Sonnet 8 along with sonnets like 1, 4, and 6 (among many others, as well as many other non-sonnet poems included in the later sections of *Rimas varias*) place Violante's depiction of female expressions of love and romance as undeniably queer,[28] centering women and affection between women as important and legitimate within high-society Portugal. This fits with the other non-normative elements of her writing–her subversion of Petrarchan and patriarchal gender paradigms goes beyond her female voice and into non-heteronormative conceptions of devotion.

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[28] I use the term queer here acknowledging the complexity of such categories in the early modern context. Terms like *lesbian* or *bisexual* were not codified or used at the time–*queer*, I hope, encapsulates the expression of non-normative gender paradigms more generally.

Arguments against reading Sor Violante as some level of queer take a number of tactics, the most effective of which is based in the question of authenticity. Martos Pérez makes the strong argument against a queer reading of Sor Violante in her essay "La enunciación lírica en las Rimas Varias" which gives an in-depth analysis of the genders of the poetic voice(s) and addressees featured in the poems. This argument is based around authenticity and the role of poetry, particularly focusing on her use of Petrarchan conventions and casting her participation in that literary tradition as performative. As Dugaw and Powell put it, this type of argument states that the significance of such poems can be cast as "purely literary" (131), and the centering of women in the midst of the Petrarchan poetic norms can be viewed not as an authentic expression of women voicing love for other women, but as merely a de-centering of men from that narrative. This view still sees the Sapphic mode of poetry as liberating, but exclusively on the level of gender and not of sexuality. Questions of authenticity are further raised when considering that many of the female addressees of the poems were patrons of Sor Violante, including Inês de Noronha whose husband, as mentioned, was instrumental in orchestrating the publication of *Rimas varias* in France. Ultimately, speculations on the authenticity of Sor Violante and other writers' queer expressions of love through poetry are very likely to remain speculation–as discussed previously, details on Sor Violante's personal life are scarce and there are no records detailing whether she was or was not romantically involved with women. Arguing against the authenticity of her emotions on the basis of it being expressed through poetry is valid–much of her writing may have been performative. However, that line of logic would also invalidate the authenticity of heterosexual sonnets, as they too are following in the footsteps of a poetic tradition. This is a double standard, as this argument is rarely levied towards men writing love sonnets to women. Dugaw and Powell go on to refute that manner of argument by asking

the simple question: “But what is a concept that is ‘purely literary’?” (131). Even if elements of her writing were written inauthentically, the emotions are still explicitly expressed–authenticity and performativity are not mutually exclusive concepts, and invalidating one in the name of the other is to ignore one of the components of her writing that makes its existence so remarkable. Even if it exists in the performative mode, poetry like Sor Violante’s still points to a “markedly erotic sapphic sensibility across the culture of baroque Europe” (131).[29] By refusing to acknowledge all of the subversive facets of these sonnets, a level of representation and significance is erased.

A queer reading of Sor Violante goes beyond the simple consideration of the actual genders featured in her poems. Queer as a word can have a number of interpretations, and scholars have been forming connections between queer and the concept of the “rara avis,” which translates directly to “rare bird” in Latin. The word “rara” specifically has a basis in queer culture and queer conceptions of identity. At the time, “rara” held a number of meanings. Writers referred to by that adjective were considered unique, marvelous, or even monstruous—in some cases, the term indicated a certain inability to define an individual and their ability to escape or exceed categorization. This unwillingness or inability to define the “rara” individual—the queer individual—was not seen as universally negative, rather, deviant in the sense that they strayed from the norm in a way considered to be remarkable. Sor Violante’s non-normative gender paradigms hold another level of queerness in that they present a form of “ingramaticalidad” (Olivares and Boyce, 43) [ungrammaticality] which refuses to conform to the romantic standard

[29] Dugaw and Powell’s study points to a number of baroque female poets in Spain, Portugal, and England, including Sor Violante and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, which expands the scope of sapphic desire expression beyond simply Spain and Portugal.

of such poems. The uniqueness of such forms and insistence on breaking with the norms of the period casts Sor Violante as a "rara" voice, and holds its own elements of queerness.[30]

Not all of the sonnets featured in this translation are love sonnets. One of the more well-defined themes of the sonnets is that of politics. Some of these pieces could be categorized as reverential love, but it's worth considering much of her work as objectively and at times overtly political. Of particular note are the sonnets 10, 13, 16, and 18. 10 and 16 are addressed directly to King Dom João IV, 13 is addressed to the king's doctor, and 18 is addressed to Antonio de Sousa de Macedo, whose book *Flores de España, Excelencias de Portugal* offers a survey of what Macedo considered to be every excellent thing about Portugal and Portuguese culture nine years before the dissolution of the Iberian Union. All four of these sonnets adopt a more reverential tone, offering hyperbolic and nearly biblical praises of all three men and embracing a more nationalist, superior view of the country as a whole. To position *Rimas varias* within its historical context, these poems were published only six years after João IV took the throne.[31] Her treatment of João IV is as consistent as it is worshipful–she describes him as "quasi-deidade" [nearly God] and "ser por Deus feito" [being made by God] in sonnet 10, and says that having gained him as monarch, Portugal has transformed from "um laberinto" [a labyrinth] to "um firmamento" [a firmament]. There are a number of ways to interpret her idolization of the king–one is the betterment of her own status in the court. Though encloistered, Sor Violante still wielded a fair amount of influence, and her writings to and about the king would have endeared

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[30] Stabile makes the connection between the "rara avis" and queered conceptions of gender in her thesis, which explores singularity and the writings of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. She places particular emphasis on the trope of the phoenix, to whom Sor Juana is often compared, as a rare bird which exists outside of sexuality and gender in Chapter 3, "The Phoenix: Resisting the Norms of Language" (131-184).

[31] Mendes notes that it is impossible to know exactly when Sor Violante may have actually penned the poetry in *Rimas varias* (10).

her to him along with the rest of the royal family. Like her patrons discussed in the previous section, Sor Violante maintained a relationship with the royal family which was advantageous to her and her social standing within the wider context of Portuguese society.

Alternatively, her pro-monarchical writing could be interpreted from a more genuine perspective–there was an entire genre of restoration poetry at that time period as Portuguese writers began to establish a unique identity as a new country distinct from their years as part of the Spanish empire. Her praise of João IV is not necessarily unique, but her position as a nun provides an interesting counterpoint to writers like Macedo who similarly praised Portugal in divine terms. The comparison between the newly crowned monarch and God is made more effective when considering the nun's position as a metaphorical bride of Christ. In her devotion, the connection between divine providence and Portugal's independence grants an authenticity to her words which establish with some legitimacy Portugal's status as "firmamento" [firmament]–divinely superior to other countries by virtue of its deity-esque leader and other heavenly qualities. She invokes language of servitude in sonnet 16, arguing that Portuguese subjects should serve their monarch greatly so as to bestow greatness back upon their leader. Sonnets 10 and 16 both make the comparison, directly or indirectly, between João IV and God.

Violante may have had alternate goals in writing her more nationalist poetry. While the poetry itself is overtly sincere, it is worth acknowledging the evidence that were likely direct incentives for writing works that praised the monarchy.[32] The publication of the work itself in Rouens was a part of a cultural movement by Portugal to generate more pro-Portuguese writing under the new

[32] Álvarez-Cifuentes also points to records that Sor Violante received a pension of thirty thousand réis for the composition of a canción dedicated to D. João IV (250).

king and kingdom now separated from Spain, specifically initiated by the ambassador to Paris, the Conde da Vidigueira. She did maintain a social relationship with members of the monarchy throughout the early years of its reinstitution, but it is easy to see the incentives provided by writing their praises in a time when propaganda was sorely needed amidst the ongoing Restoration War. Reading her nationalist poetry as disingenuous (or even just some level of disingenuous) paints an interesting picture, and one that plays into her using her position and the desires of other members of high society for her own benefit. Baranda Leturio presents a fascinating case study which makes this argument–Portugal was by no means the idyllic firmament Sor Violante describes in her poetry after João IV's crowning, being newly in the midst of the Restoration War. The juxtaposition between the divinely governed Portugal of Sor Violante's poetry and the more chaotic reality of its actual political landscape allows for her writing to be read as an intentional use of the creation of poetry to curry influence among the nobility: "Sor Violante conoce bien las reglas del juego que practica, las sabe aplicar con pericia y le proporcionan una máscara que le permite mantenernos alejados de su auténtico sentir, que … se manifiesta más por los silencios que en las palabras." (Baranda Leturio 149) [Sor Violante knows well the rules of the game she practices, knows how to apply them with skill and provides a mask which permits her to maintain them far from her authentic being which … manifests itself more through silences than through words.] By writing to further the aims of nobility and upper-class figures, she would have gained financial compensation as well as a platform by way of international publishing, allowing her voice to be heard by more people. This is not, of course, the only reading of her political poetry–it is entirely possible that she truly believed that João IV was a savior figure for Portugal, especially considering that the majority of anti-Spanish sentiment leading up to the 1640 coup came from the upper classes. It is also possible that she

was truly nationalist and also used that belief to gain standing in the court. As discussed previously, authenticity and performativity in the interest of accomplishing a goal are not mutually exclusive.

Her nationalist writing extended beyond writings dedicated to the King. Sonnet 18 directly addresses Antonio de Sousa de Macedo and specifically his book *Flores de España, Excelencias de Portugal*. This book provides an interesting counterpoint to the political poetry of *Rimas varias*, as it too extols the virtues of Portugal, though it was published nine years before the dissolution of the Iberian union and was thus not able to advocate for Portuguese excellence as openly as Violante was in her collection published in 1646. In spite of this, Wade writes that *Flores* "may very well be the culminating expression of Portuguese literature dedicated to the praise of Lusitânia during the Iberian Union, considering that it offers readers a comprehensive assessment of all things Portuguese" (177). *Excelencias* is interesting, as the preface of the book states that praise of Portugal only serves to bring glory to Spain since it is a part of the empire. This message is undercut, however, by the consistent emphasis on the kingdom and king of Portugal, rendering the former statement disingenuous.

Sor Violante's sonnet 18 is a direct response to *Flores de España*, and praises Macedo's writing for its praise of Portugal and the codification of the "divino lauro" [divine triumph] of the country as a whole. The poem shifts to focus again on the praise of Portugal more generally, and like *Flores de España*, focuses more on the country as a whole rather than sonnet 10 and 16's focus on the monarch. It is worth noting here too that *Flores de España* mentions Violante directly: "Violante del Cielo, monja en el Monasterio de la Rosa en Lisboa, con el grande

ingenio con que haze comedias, y otras admiribles obras en verso va dando a Portugal nuevas alabanças" (Macedo 70) [Violante del Cielo, nun in the Monastery of the Rose in Lisbon, with the great ingenuity with which she makes comedies, and other admirable works in verse will grant Portugal new heights]. This makes the sonnet from *Rimas varias* a reciprocation of another occasional piece directed towards her. In addition to speaking well of her reputation amongst her contemporaries, the reciprocal relationship stands as an example of how praise of Portugal and the monarchy–generally engaging with the genre of Restoration poetry and the establishment of a new Portuguese nationalism–cast her in a positive light and more generally developed a community of writers working towards cultural identity and expression.

Flores de España provides another dimension as a point of comparison with *Rimas varias* when considering the language of choice. As discussed previously, Portugal of the Iberian Peninsula had a harmonious bilingualism that meant the common usage of both Castilian and Portuguese in literature and poetry.[33] *Flores de España* was written in Castilian, with an explicit justification for Macedo's choice in language given in the preface. He writes the following: "Y perdonad si dexada la excelente lengua Portuguesa escrivo en la Castellana, porque como mi intento es pregonaros por el mundo todo, he usado desta por mas universal, y porque tambien los Portugueses saben estas excelencias, y assi para ellos no es menester escrivirlas" (*Flores de España, Excelencias de Portugal*) [And pardon if the excellent Portuguese language is left behind for my writing in Castilian; as my intent is to proclaim these excellences to all the world, I have used this as the more universal language, and also because the Portuguese people already

[33] This is also discussed in Paul Teyssier's *História da língua portuguesa*, which offers a broad overview of the history of the Portuguese language. Chapter 3 focuses on the relationship between cultural versus linguistic relations between Portugal and Spain between the fourteenth century up until the modern day, with one section (3a, "Ás influências estrangeiras") specifically mentioning the Iberian union and the *Siglo de Oro* (32-33).

know these excellences, and so for them it is not necessary to write them].[34] This implies that although many writers used Castilian as a more accessible and universal language, there was a nationalist understanding of the connection between language and identity as of 1631. In contrast to Sousa de Macedo's justification of Castilian as his language of choice to write of Portuguese glory, Violante seems to opt for Portuguese particularly in sonnets engaging with Portuguese nationalism and politics. Though there is no written explanation for her choice in language for each sonnet, it is quite easy to interpret these decisions as intentional given this consistency. The majority of poems across the whole of the collection are written in Castilian, but just over half of the sonnets are written in Portuguese: 17 out of the 26 sonnets are Portuguese, compared with 36 out of the 97 poems in the entire collection. Still, considering how common Castilian was to use in the broader genre of Restoration poetry, Sor Violante's use of the Portuguese language to extoll Portuguese virtues is a rather interesting expression of national identity through linguistic strategies.

Sor Violante's sonnets conform to many literary norms of the time–from their play with Petrarchan romantic tropes to the discussion of the divine nature of Portugal and its newly crowned king commonly featured in Restoration poetry. What makes her voice remarkable in the midst of these literary canons is its subversion of gender norms. Her writing centers women in much of the love poetry, voices political opinions and wields influence in the patriarchal system of governance in the political poetry, and overall normalizes the existence of female voices in a society which generally ignored such voices. By engaging with the norms established by male

[34] Wade discusses *Flores de España, Excelencias de Portugal* at length in Chapter 5: "Anticipating and Remembering the Restoration" (175-191), detailing the breadth of Portuguese excellences that Macedo describes in his lengthy text, as well as their somewhat sarcastic praise of Spain as Portugal's governing body.

writers of the time, she was able to present an alternate conception of what women and their writing should be.

EDITION CRITERIA

In the interest of transparency, this multilingual edition offers the sonnets of *Rimas varias* in their original language (Spanish or Portuguese, depending on the sonnet), as well as translations into English. The sonnets in their original languages primarily make use of the version edited by Margareida Vieira Mendes (1994). Her edition was researched and backed by a study done by Morujão and Martelo in 1987 on orthographic differences across the different editions of *Rimas varias*, working within the parameters of standardized Portuguese and Castilian and accounting for the typographic irregularities found in the original Rouens publication of 1646. The edits that Viera Mendes makes in the modern publication do not make changes to the sound, rhythm, or meaning of the poems, rather adjusting to the more standardized phonetic system that we would see in modern Portuguese and Castilian. These alterations serve to make the poems in their original languages more readable without detracting from tone or meaning. In the rare case that I decided to change from Mendes' modernizations, I have based the decision by comparing them with the originals in Rouens edition from the Biblioteca Nacional de España and made note of the change in footnotes. These changes mostly consisted of what I suspect were typographical errors made in the editing process, and are quite minor.

Only a few of the sonnets from *Rimas varias* have been translated. These are largely used as the source of some academic studies focusing on their relation to convent culture and conceptions of female friendship and love in the early modern Iberian Peninsula. Sections of a number of the

sonnets, particularly 1-4 and 6-9, are analyzed in English in the collection of essays *Studies on Women's Poetry of the Golden Age: Tras El Espejo La Musa Escribe* (2009)—specifically Powell's essay "Oh que diversas estámos, vos y yo!" which discusses Petrarchan poetic conventions in women's poetry of seventeenth century Spain and Portugal. Seven sonnets (six from Castilian and one from Portuguese) have been translated into English by Gwyn Fox as a part of her book *Subtle Subversions: Reading Golden Age Sonnets by Iberian Women*. As a part of his analysis of Portuguese Restoration poetry, Jonathan Wade translated two sonnets (10 and 16) from their original Portuguese. In the research process, I noticed that most study of Violante has focused on either her Spanish or Portuguese poems–a more complete representation of her poetry will, I hope, offer a more rounded view on the many facets of what makes her writing unique. As discussed earlier in the introduction, this includes the bilingualism of the poetry itself as well as a more comprehensive understanding of the diverse themes she was interested in.

The translator's note discusses more of the specifics regarding translation choices and the rationale behind them. Generally, I prioritized meaning and tone over the rigidity of the sonnet structure, as attempts to implement the entirety of the sonnet form meant the sacrifice of the creative freedom necessary to adequately encapsulate the content and overall feeling of the piece. The overarching structure, that is to say, the organization into two quatrains followed by two tercets, was maintained in all sonnets, and I attempted to keep meaning mirrored from line to line as much as possible without losing the poetic flow. Also in the interest of maintaining flow and rhythm, I have tried to preserve elements such as punctuation while still allowing for English's different norms regarding elements like comma placement. In cases where the preservation of these elements would interfere with the comprehensibility of the poem, I made the syntactical

shifts as minor as possible. I have also included footnotes to provide context in specific places, prioritizing understanding of gender and relationships between Sor Violante and her addresses, be they specific references to real-life figures or more fictionalized characters. There are a few places where Mendes provided contextualizing footnotes in the modernized edition that already did this work–I have translated and cited a few of these in the sonnets as well.

For the sake of transparency, which remained a priority throughout this process, this edition features the poem in its original language across from the translation–even if the language isn't understood by the reader, this allows for some maintenance of the sonnet structure and the original is left intact alongside the translation.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

In the very early stages of this project, I participated in a study abroad program in Granada, Spain with the intention to immerse myself in the Spanish language as well as begin research on Sor Violante's poetry and life. One of the first conversations I had there was with one of the program leaders. We ended up discussing Lorca's poetry–Lorca, another, admittedly very different queer poet who wrote in Spanish. The program leader laughed at one point and said to me "but you can never really translate poetry. It's fruitless because you're never going to get it all down." Well, yes, I thought, but that doesn't mean it isn't worth the attempt. The dynamic between the voice of the poet and the voice of the translator is one I grappled with extensively throughout this project. My intention with this project was to amplify the voice of a poet I admired and who had apparently gone untranslated and understudied in the academic world. The preservation of her voice was the number one priority for me. It still is, though my understanding of that has changed a bit as the project progressed. For quite a while, I had an inherent reluctance to allow my voice to be heard at all. I wanted to portray Sor Violante's version of (poetic) proto-feminism, and my impulse told me that that meant I had to eradicate any influence I may inadvertently impose on the writing.

Of course, I did not get very far this way. At its core, a translation is a transformative process. Metaphors abound for how translation impacts writing–one of the ones I hear more often is the reading of translation as violence against the original text. It's a fair reading, and was the source

of a lot of my fear in beginning this project: by moving a text from one language to another, the very words are lost, replaced by the other language. The level of nuance, intricacy of connotations, meaning of form, rhyme, structure, all of it–it is impossible to maintain it all. And perhaps such transformation does render translation as harmful–to categorize it exclusively as such, though, is to risk stopping communication altogether. I would argue for the importance of acknowledging and representing a translation as what it is, with the translator as a visible part of the process.[35] I made far more progress on the project after acknowledging and accepting that while I can make attempts at authentic representation of Sor Violante's work, my voice will and should be present alongside it.

Sor Violante's voice is important as an example of proto-feminist and non-normative writing in a time period which did not yet even have definitions for those concepts. I felt somewhat seen in her writing, temporally removed from her as I am, as I read the intensity of her emotions, the expression of queer devotion and love, political passion–all from a voice that is undeniably female. Being a queer academic, representation in historical writing is remarkably difficult to find. I wanted to translate Sor Violante as a queer and feminist project featuring a queer and feminist writer.

What makes a translation feminist? This is a question I grappled with extensively as the project progressed. For me, it comes back to representation of queer and female existences in fields that are all too ready to ignore them altogether. Translation of writers like Sor Violante is one way to move these types of historically suppressed voices into a wider academic and cultural context–

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[35] See Venuti's *The Translator's Visibility* (1995) as a foundational text about such theories.

quite simply, if more people can read queer poetry, then it becomes better represented in discourses that often ignore and erase their significance. There are myriad ways to go about creating a feminist translation—I read theorists like Luise von Flotow who proposed a more interventionist method, arguing for the alteration of a source text to depict a more modernized feminism in the pursuit of a modern feminist project. It's a different way of interpreting the relationship between author and translator, and one that didn't sit right with me for this project as I grappled to understand what Sor Violante's proto-feminism might have meant. What was radical for her, in her context, would not be radical today, but as I read more about her life and context I wanted to preserve the struggles that she herself may have been facing. My intention is not to make an absolute statement on Sor Violante's intentions, life, sexuality, or poetry, but rather to allow more people to read and interpret her words for themselves, providing what context I can through the introduction and what I hope are translation choices that reflect her authentic voice as much as they are able. I do acknowledge, however, the undeniable influence my translations have had on the pieces and have tried to indicate what my perspective is and the impact it may have on the sonnets. I do think the goal of amplifying female voices is worthwhile, and now more than ever–the existence of writers like Sor Violante, like the existence of writing like hers, is inherently political and should not be ignored.[36]

The most drastic change I have made going from Spanish/Portuguese to English is the loss of the sonnet form itself. In *Second Finding* (2007), Barbara Folkart states that "Form, in any poem worthy of the name, is not only a part of the meaning but itself inevitably engenders meaning"

[36] I want to take a moment here to provide some of the readings that influenced me in developing these translations: Barbara Folkart's *A Second Finding* (2007), Luise Von Flotow's *Gender and Translation* (1997), and an article by Carolyn Shread called "On Becoming in Translation: Articulating Feminisms in the Translation of Marie Vieux-Chauvet's *Les rapaces*" in Luise Von Flotow's edited collection *Translating Women* (2011).

(124). This is especially true of the sonnet, which has a history that is unequivocally gendered–as discussed previously, sonnets have a deep-rooted tradition of a male poetic voice addressing the female object of interest, and Sor Violante's writing stands as a direct subversion of that trope. The sonnet also has a very strict form, one that requires quite a bit of wordplay and rhyme consistency. Sor Violante plays with the sonnet form beautifully, featuring repetition and rhyme heavily. Both Spanish and Portuguese lend themselves to rhyming consistency in a way that English does not–my attempts to preserve meter and rhyme early on in the translations led to the loss of tone and meaning in ways that I felt did a greater disservice to the poetry. As a result, I abandoned them. I decided not to shift to the Shakespearean sonnet, which is more generally used in English-language sonnets, as I did want to maintain some connection to the tradition to the Spanish sonnet tradition which Sor Violante used. In that interest, I did keep the wider skeleton of the Spanish sonnet structure–two quatrains followed by two tercets–which I hope still evokes the overall feel of the sonnet in its original form. I would be remiss not to acknowledge the loss of the standardized meter and rhyme, however, as the finished translations are not themselves sonnets.

One of the more specific challenges I ran into in translating these poems came from my desire to place gender at the center of this study. In a form as concise as the sonnet, the linguistic markers so prevalent in romance languages allow for a much more efficient establishment of gender in poetic voice as well as recipient. Sor Violante makes regular use of that in her sonnets–something as simple as an adjective can establish the speaker as a woman. English struggles to maintain that without coming across as blunt. The most overt preservation of this in the translations is in Sonnet 9, with the word *amigas*. Because the poem is emphasizing the

importance of friendship between women, I opted to translate this word as *female friends*, which similarly places an emphasis on the gender. In many other cases, however (Sonnets 12 and 22 come to mind as being particularly troublesome), the female first-person has been clarified by way of footnotes. There is at least one case (Sonnet 11) which specifies a certain word (in this case "fementido") as masculine, which similarly to the female poetic voice posed an issue. Attempts to convey the gender in the poetry itself resulted in an over-emphasizing effect that pointed far too obviously to the gender. Rather than interrupt the tone and feel of the poem, I decided that making a paratextual note of the gender would suffice.

The desire to immortalize another by way of writing their praises can be a form of love—Sor Violante writes of this in the first sonnet of *Rimas varias.* I hope my translations have worked towards a similar goal in preserving and amplifying the voice of a poet whose work stands as a testament to the existence of powerful queer, female voices in a time generally considered to be exclusively patriarchal.

SONNETS

Soneto I

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.

Dulces serán por ti, por mí notorias
las ansias que Silvano inmortaliza,
si tus mismas vitorias soleniza
quien debe su dolor a tus vitorias.

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!

Sonnet I – *from Spanish*[37]

I will take up the pen, and be the chronicler
of your glories, blissful Elisa,
for the one who immortalizes your memory
would hold in your memories my chronicle of love.

Sweet for you, for me notorious,
the yearning that Silvano immortalizes,
if the one who your same victories solemnizes
is they who owe their pain to your victories.

I will sing, señora, of that which I mourn
since love orders, and fate wishes
that my pen be, at last, my murderer.

Ay cruel decree of the beloved whom I adore,
that you, possessing, give me death,
and that I, writing, give you life!

[37] Elisa is a feminine pastoral name, used to indicate a fictional (or fictionalized) character.

Soneto II

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 propria 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.

Sonnet II – *from Spanish*[38]

Whoever says that absence is a murderer,
knows not of such harsh rigor,
for if unyielding absence were to give death,
my life itself could not then kill me.

But alas for being separated from your eyes
life torments me in such a way,
for in dying from feeling of not seeing you,
without seeing you I live, feeling that I die.

But if fluctuation of fate
is as strong as evidence assures me
for such a lengthy delay,

Let affection not remain in contingency,
for the greatest miracle of hope
is not to surrender life to such an absence.

[38] This poem's intended recipient remains undefined, though this poem is given the title "*A una ausencia*" ("To an absence") when it appears in the *Fénix Renascida*.

Soneto III

Yendosele la sangre de una sangría

Oh no reprima no, piedad impía,
el purpureo raudal de aquesta fuente,
que a quien recelos de un agrabio siente,
dilatarle la vida, es tiranía.

Lleve, lleve esta vez lleve la mía,
el furioso caudal de una corriente,
que si pudo el amor hacerla[39] ardiente,
también pudo el temor volverla fría.

Salga pues a la sangre vinculada,
por la pequeña puerta desta herida,
la vida, que presumo desdichada.

Que mejor es (ay Dios) rendir la vida
al poder de una muerte averiguada,
que al rigor de una ofensa presumida.

Sonnet III – *from Spanish*[40]

Letting go the blood of a bloodletting

Do not repress, o no, ungodly pity,
the crimson torrent of this fountain,
to whomever feels the fear of an affront,
to prolong one's life, is tyranny.

Take, take this time take mine,
furious flow of a current,
if love could make it ardent,
so too fear could turn it cold.

Leave, then, blood bonded,
by the narrow gate of this wound,
life, which I presume wretched.

It is better (ay Dios) to surrender one's life
to the power of an ascertained death,
than to the rigor of a presumed offense.

---

[39] This is a discrepancy from the Mendes edition and the original from the Biblioteca Nacional. The original Rouens publication writes this as "hazerla," while Mendes says "harcela." I've opted for hacerla as it feels the more accurate modernization.

[40] Sonnet III is one of the rare cases in which one of Sor Violante's poems has no explicitly stated recipient, in either the second or third persons. It does have an explicitly stated poetic voice, or first person.

Soneto IV

A la Señora Condesa de la Vidigueira vestida de pardo, por la ausencia del Conde

Ostenta la mayor soberanía,
en la misma humildad, Nise la hermosa,
quedando por bizarra, victoriosa,
sin dever a las galas bizarría.[41]

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.

Oh 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 escura, luz tan clara,
en traje tan grosero, amor tan fino.

Sonnet IV – *from Spanish*

To the Señora Countess de la Vidigueira dressed in brown, for the absence of the Count

Showing the greatest sovereignty,
through the same modesty, Nise the beautiful,[42]
remains glorious, victorious,
not owing her glory to elegant garments.

So her Sun does not bring such happiness,
when she is troubled by some sorrow,
dull clouds she accepts with rigor,
yet in dull clouds, her day further shines.

Oh you, who being rare in all things
admitted contradictions in the divine,
how well your intention declares your wit.

Then show of your Sun to the Pilgrim,
in a cloud so dark, a light so clear,
in a habit so coarse, a love so fine.

---

[41] This is how Mendes has modernized the Rouens "deuer," This poem has been transcribed in academic articles that use "deber" instead, but I've also seen dever used to mean "to owe" which I feel works better in this context.
[42] Nise is consistently used as a pseudonym for the Countess of Vidigeuira, whose given name, Inês de Noronha, is an anagram for Nise. Inês de Noronha is considered somewhat responsible for the initial publication of *Rimas varias* in Rouens, France, as her husband (whose absence is discussed in this poem) was the Portuguese ambassador to France.

Soneto V

Aunque de mi salud el detrimento
indicia de mi pena lo excesivo,
quién duda que es ofensa del motivo
no terminar la vida el sentimiento?

Frágil demonstración de lo que siento
es de una enfermedad lo executivo,
si no es, que por matarme con lo vivo
se transforma la vida en el tormento.

Vivo de tantos males combatida,
muero de tanta vida atormentada,
que muerte viene a ser la propria vida.

No quede pues mi pena mal juzgada
que para se abonar de bien sentida
basta ser por sentida eternizada.

Sonnet V – *from Spanish*

Although the detriment to my health
accuses my pain as excessive,
whoever doubts offends my motive
the sentiment not end my life?

Fragile demonstration of that which I feel
is the height of illness,
if not, to kill me with the living
life transforms into torment.

I live combatted by so many harms,
I die tormented by so much of life,
that death comes to be life itself.

Let not then my pain be misjudged
as to be credited with good affection
it is enough to be eternally affected.

Soneto VI

Prendas de aquella Diosa soberana
que Sol abrasa, cuando estrella inclina,[43]
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 tyrana.

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!

Sonnet VI – *from Spanish*

Tokens of that sovereign Goddess
that Sun ignites, when morning star sets,
relics of a hand, dignified,
as divine grants terror, and as human inspires.

What pleasure, what joy, what vain glory
I would have, if Nise the divine[44]
would not bind signs of tyranny
to the same actions of benevolence.

She denies me letters, ay Dios, for greed
I'd accuse not only her starlight
but also her rare thoughts.

Ay what does it matter in faith of punishing you
glory would concede I have you,
if life would not grant I reach you!

---

[43] 1-2 Venus, evening star and goddess of love. (Mendes)
[44] Nise makes reference to Inês de Noronha (see Sonnet IV).

Soneto VII

A la muerte de la Duquesa de Avero[45]

Aquí yace sin luz el Sol de Avero
muerta su claridad, su día obscuro,
que pudo de la Parca el rigor duro
dejar sin esplendor tan gran lucero.

Tú que mirando estás (oh pasajero)
en la presenta pira el mal futuro,
sabe, que en un valor tan santo, y puro,
principio fue del bien el mal postrero.[46]

Juliana murió, mas de tal suerte
siguió de la virtud el mismo paso,
Que vive, porque es muerta eternamente.

No te desmayes pues, que en esta muerte
si fue para tal Sol el mundo Ocaso,
También es de tal Sol el Cielo Oriente.

Sonnet VII – *from Spanish*

On the death of the Duchess of Avero

Here lies lightless the Sun of Avero
dead her clarity, her day darkened,
that the hard rigor of the Reaper
could leave such starlight without splendor.

You who seeing are (oh passenger)
the unhappy future in the present pyre,
know, in a valor so saintly, and pure,
the unhappy end was made first of goodness.

Juliana died, but of such fortune
followed the same path in virtue,
She lives, as it is her death eternal.

Despair not then, that in this death
if for such a Sun the world were Twilight,
So too is such a Sun of the Western Sky.

---

[45] Refers to D. Juliana de Lencastre, deceased 1636, the wife of the third duke of Avero.
[46] This is a change from Mendes' edition: I opted for the Rouens edition which writes Mendes' "prostero" as "poſtrero."

Soneto XIII

A la Señora Condesa de Penaguião[47]

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 en vos admiro.

Mas ay que a tanto bien en vano aspiro,
oh rara suspensión del pensamiento,[48]
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.

Sonnet XIII – *from Spanish*

To the Señora Countess of Penaguião

If as I admire in you, what in you I see,
I could've explained for myself what I feel in me,
there would be no detriment in the guarantee
what I feel in me, and what I admire in you.

But ay that in vain I aspire to such good,
o rare suspension of thought,
would explain admiration, and sentiment,
the excess joy with such delirium.

Whoever contemplates such an object
as though in an immense sea is lost
where meaning is silence, straying is wisdom:

Since admiring all while feeling,
if my delirium offends good sense,
Knowledge affirms my wit.

---

[47] The Señora Countess de la Penaguião could be one of two people according to Mendes and Álvarez-Cifuentes: the second Count de la Penaguião had two wives, Joana de Castro and, following her death in 1634, Brites de Lima. Regardless, both were members of the nobility.

[48] Mendes writes this as "suspención," coming from the Rouens edition "ſuſpenſion." Most other editions of this poem (see Dugaw and Powell 147, Fox 43) use the modern Spanish spelling used here.

Soneto IX

Belisa el amistad es un tesoro
tan digno de estimarse eternamente,
que a su valor no es paga suficiente
de Arabia, y Potosi 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.

Sonnet IX – *from Spanish*[49]

Belisa friendship is a treasure
worthy of such eternal esteem,
the silver of Potosi, and Arabian gold,
are insufficient payment for its value.

Friendship is a just decorum,
protected in absence, and in presence,
where of one friend the other feels
sadness, remorse, laughter, weeping.

Call not friendship what is violent,
rather what is formed in kindness
by one who holds loyalty until death:

This is the friendship, I would hope to find,
this which between female friends is sustained,
and this, Belisa, at last, is friendship mine.

[49] Mendes and Fox suggest that Belisa is an anagram for D. Isabel de Castro, to whom Sor Violante also dedicated an epistle (Parnaso lusitano, I, p. 202). Olivares and Boyce as well as Vollendorf believe Belisa to be Bernarda Ferreira de la Cerda.

Soneto X

A el Rei D. João IV de Portugal[50]

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? ũa só sinto,
qual é? não ser um mundo, ou não ser cento,
para ser mais capaz de tal Monarca.

Sonnet X – *from Portuguese*

To the King D. João IV of Portugal

SONNET IN DIALOGUE

What do you gain Portugal? a perfect King,
What makes him so? sacred compassion,
What did you achieve with him? liberty,
What liberty do you have? to be his subject.

What do you gain as his subject? honor, and profit,
What is the new King? nearly God,
What does he display through actions? joy,
And what gives him joy? to be made by God.

What were you before him? a labyrinth,
What do you think you are now? a firmament,
Do you fear someone? I fear not even the Reaper.

Do you feel any sorrow? I only feel one thing,
What is it? not to be a world, or not to be complete,
so as to be more worthy of such a Monarch.

---

[50] Monarchal praise is discussed at length in the introduction of this translation. This is not the only poem Sor Violante wrote to the King of Portugal–she received some amount of economic compensation for her writing in praise of him, which Álvarez-Cifuentes suggests could indicate the King's having commissioned the poetry (249-250). This is one possible explanation for her consistent praise of the monarchy.

Soneto XI

Se por não me lembrar de um Cocodrilo,
que matar-me intentou com falso pranto,
pudera sujeitar-me a rigor tanto,
que habitara c'os mais no Egípcio Nilo.

Se por não me acordar daquele estilo,
que foi já por meu mal infausto encanto,
pudera padecer, causando espanto,
quantos tormentos inventou Perilo.

Tudo passara em fim, tudo fizera
por não me vir jamais ao pensamento
quem fingindo chorou, matou fingido.

Mas que raro tormento não quisera,
quem julga só pelo maior tormento
a lembrança menor de um fementido.

Sonnet XI – *from Portuguese*

If so I'd not remember a Crocodile,
who attempted to kill me with false weeping,
I'd be able to subject myself to such rigor,
so I could live with the rest in the Egyptian Nile.

If so I'd not recall such a style,
that once before bewitched me,
I'd endure, causing astonishment,
as many torments invented Perillus.[51]

All had passed in the end, all had been done
so I would never come to the thought
of whoever feigning wept, feigned murder.

But that rarer torment I would desire,
who judges only the faintest memory of a deceiver[52]
would have the greatest torment.

---

[51] Referencing the Greek myth of Phalaris and the bull of Perillus–though he was the inventor, Perillus was also the first victim of the bull.

[52] Deceiver comes from "fementido" which translates specifically as masculine–this is invisible in the English translation.

Soneto XII

Amor, se ~~ua~~a mudança imaginada
é já com tal rigor minha homicida,
que será se passar de ser temida
a ser como temida averiguada?

Se só por ser de mi tão receada
com dura execução me tira a vida,
que fará se chegar a ser sabida?
que fará se passar de suspeitada?

Porém se já me mata, sendo incerta,
somente imaginá-la, e presumi-la,
claro está (pois da vida o fio corta),

Que me fará despois, quando for certa?
ou tornar a viver, para senti-la,
ou senti-la também despois de morta.

Sonnet XII – *from Portuguese*[53]

Love, if an imagined change
is hard enough to be my murderer,
what if it passes from being feared
to being fear verified?

If only for my being so frightened
with hard execution I am taken from life,
what then if it comes to be known?
what then if passes from suspicion?

But if now it kills me, being uncertain,
merely imagining, and presuming,
clearly it is (since the short thread gives life),

What will it do to me then, when certain?
I will return to life, to feel it,
or feel it too following death.

[53] This sonnet's original Portuguese confirms a female poetic voice which could not be maintained in the translation.

Soneto XIII

Ao Doutor Duarte Madeira Arrais

Ó tu, que oposto sempre à dura Parca,
conservas em teu ser, o ser humano,
pois por ser Esculápio soberano
menos por seu respeito a morte abarca.

Tu, que Arrais deves ser, da vital barca,
que navega no mar do mal tirano,
novo Galeno, Apolo Lusitano,
médico, em fim, do Português Monarca,

Logra de singular a feliz sorte,
tanto a pesar da intrépida homicida,
que sejas do mais douto imortal Norte.

Pois vitória será bem merecida,
que quem opor-se sabe à mesma morte
sabia dar a seu nome imortal vida.

Sonnet XIII – *from Portuguese*

To the Doctor Duarte Madeira Arrais[54]

You, in eternal opposition to the unyielding Reaper,
conserve in your being, the human being,
since for Asclepius's sovereignty
death's embrace is lessened for his respect.

You, who Arrais must be, grant the vessel vitality,
who navigates the sea of ill tyranny,
new Galen, Lusitanian Apollo,
doctor, at last, to the Portuguese Monarch,

You achieve a singular happy fate,
so much despite the intrepid homicide,
you'd be of the most learned immortal North.

Since victory will be well deserved,
for whoever knows how to oppose the same death
would know to give their name immortal life.

[54] Duarte Madeira Arrais, as the poem suggests, was King João IV's doctor. Álvarez-Cifuentes points to a potential connection between this sonnet and sonnet III, as the doctor had a particular interest in the practice of sangría, or bloodletting (250).

Soneto XIV

A Dona Mariana de Luna

Musas que no jardim do Rei do dia
soltando a doce voz prendeis o vento;
Deidades que admirando o pensamento,
as flores aumentais que Apolo cria;

Deixai, deixai do Sol a companhia
que fazendo envejoso o firmamento,
ũa Lua, que é Sol, e que é portento,
um jardim vos fabrica de harmonia.

E porque não cuideis que tal ventura
pode pagar tributo à variedade,
pelo que tem de Lua a luz mais pura,

Sabei que acreditando a Divindade,
este jardim canoro se assigura
com o muro imortal da eternidade.

Sonnet XIV – *from Portuguese*

To Dona Mariana de Luna[55]

Muses who in the garden of the King of daylight
freeing the sweet voice you captivate the wind;
Deities admiring the thought,
the flowers you grow Apollo nurtures;

Leave, leave of the sun the company
that making envious the firmament,
you, Moon, which is Sun, and which is portent,
a garden you craft of harmony.

And because you'd not care for such fortune
that can pay tribute to the assortment,
so to have the Moon's light more pure,

Know that accrediting to Divinity,
this melodious garden assures itself
to the immortal wall of eternity.

---

[55] Mariana de Eça e Luna was a member of high society, the wife of the conde-duque Olivares' favorite. More importantly, several of her brothers held loyalty to the Spanish crown even after the 1640 coup. She published *Ramalhete de Flores a felicidade deste Reyno de Portugal em sua milagrosa restauração por sua Magestade Dom João IV do nome, & XVIII em numero dos verdadeiros Reys Portuguezes* in 1642, which Álvarez-Cifuentes suggests could have been to clear her family's name and assure her loyalty to the Portuguese crown (250). Regardless, the garden and "flores" referenced in this poem likely refer to this text, which spoke highly of the Portuguese monarch. The repeated references to the moon also make reference to her name, Luna, which translates in Spanish to moon.

Soneto XV

A um livro intitulado Chorosos cantos da paixão de Cristo

Com tanta erudição, com valor tanto,
dous opostos unis, Cisne canoro,
que nos parece canto, o mesmo choro,
que nos parece choro, o mesmo canto.

Este de vosso afecto objecto santo,
que choroso cantais, chorais sonoro,
acha no melhor pranto, o melhor coro,
quando no melhor coro, o melhor pranto.

Chorai pois, e cantai, que se o cantado
basta para fazer-vos eminente,
para agradar a Deus basta o chorado.

Cantai pois, e chorai ditosamente,
chorando, alcançareis o eterno agrado,
cantando, elevareis a humana gente.

Sonnet XV – *from Portuguese*

To an untitled book of Weeping songs of passion for Christ

With such erudition, with such valor,
two opposites you bind, sonorous Swan,
what would seem to us song, the same weeping,
what would seem to us weeping, the same song.

This saintly object of your affection,
weeping you sing, weep sonorous,
finding in the best tears, the best chorus,
when in the best chorus, the best tears.

Weep then, and sing, for if the singing
is enough to make you eminent,
the weeping is enough to make God grateful.

Sing then, and weep joyously,
weeping, you would reach eternal gratefulness,
singing, you would elevate humankind.

Soneto XVI

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 uma fineza[56]
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.

Sonnet XVI – *from Portuguese*

To the King Dom João IV de Portugal

One single sorrow feels the Lord at will
in this excess of Portuguese glory
and is unable to keep your grace
from seeming convenience.

Whoever serves you, reaches liberty,
whoever adores you, shows subtlety,
to serve you more, is to denote greatness,
to die for you, to find eternity.

All graces are but of such a mode
they seem only conveniences, how many
graces there are, each one paid by you.

And so for all, the only remedy
is to make for you such graces,
perhaps they too might seem conveniences.

---

[56] *Fineza*, from the Vocabulário de Bluteau: *Action done with perfection, with galantry, with courtesy*. Finezas were the most refined and intense manifestations in the medieval time and particularly in the Baroque, extending to the divine, in works of religious poetry, in mysticism and in the Mandate sermons. (Mendes)

Soneto XVII

Qué decís vos, indigno entendimiento,
en esta acción en que de vos me fío?
Que pues vive cautivo el albedrío
solicite piedad el sentimiento.

Vos voluntad, que a tan gentil portento
sujetáis para siempre el gusto mío,
qué me decís también? Que es desvarío
no procurar remedios al tormento.

Memoria, vos que la pasada gloria,
y el agrabio también tenéis presente,
qué me decís? Que quien siente olvida.

Ay qué importa que estéis tan dividida
si adonde el alma va, van juntamente
entendimiento, voluntad, memoria!

Sonnet XVII – *from Spanish*

What say you, unworthy understanding,
in this action I trust in you?
Since freewill lives therefore captive
solicits mercy from the sentiment.

You, free will, that to such gentle portent
subject my pleasure for eternity,
what more do you say to me? That is delirium
not to procure remedies to torment.

Memory, you who the past glory,
and affront too you have present,
what say you to me? That whoever feels forgets.

Alas, what import that you be so divided
if wherever the soul goes, they go together
understanding, free will, memory!

Soneto XVIII

A António de Sousa de Macedo en el libro que hizo de las Excelencias de Portugal

Cuando de Portugal las excelencias
explicas singular, sabio describes,
con la misma excelencia con que escribes,
vuelves las descripciones, evidencias.

Los tropos, los conceptos, las sentencias
con que a divino lauro te apercibes,
las excelencias son, con que prohibes,
al Asia con Europa competencias.

Oh feliz Portugal, pues juntamente
adquiere por tu causa mil vitorias,
y mil veces por ti queda excelente!

Una por ser asunto a tus historias,
otra por ser de ti patria eminente,
y muchas porque vive en tus memorias.

Mas entre tantas glorias,

Sonnet XVIII – *from Spanish*

To Antonio de Sousa de Macedo in the book he wrote on the Excellences of Portugal[57]

When the excellences of Portugal
you extraordinary explain, you wisely describe,
with the same excellence with which you write,
you turn the descriptions, into evidence.

The tropes, the concepts, the sentences
which you recognize as divine triumph,
are those excellences, with which you forbid,
between Asia and Europe competitions.

Oh felicitous Portugal, since together
acquires a thousand victories for your cause,
and a thousand times remains excellent for you!

One to be subject to your stories,
another to be for your eminent homeland,
and many because it lives in your memories.

But among so many glories,

---

[57] António de Sousa de Macedo and the text referenced in this sonnet is discussed at length in the introduction to this translation (49-51).

cuantas le da por ti tu feliz suerte,

quién duda es la mayor, oírte, y verte?

all those your happy fortune offers for you,

who doubts it is greatest, to hear you, and see you?

Soneto XIX

A um Religioso que fez um libro intitulado

Cavalarias do Céu

Com pena tão sutil, com voz tão clara
triunfos escreveis, cantais vitórias,
que aumenta a vossa pena eternas glórias,
que excede vossa voz à voz mais rara.

Se só nestas histórias se empregara
quem rende o pensamento a vãs histórias,
fingidas narrações, falsas memórias,
a justo esquecimento condenara.

Sois Coronista em fim da Santidade,
com tanta erudição, com saber tanto,
que gosto produzis, e utilidade.

Oh mil vezes felice vosso canto,
pois já co'a perfeição, já co'a verdade
doutrina singular, deleita santo!

Sonnet XIX – *from Portuguese*

To a Religious man who made an untitled book on

the Chivalries of the Heavens

With pen so subtle, with voice so clear
triumphs you write, you sing victories,
your pen increases to glories eternal,
the rarest voice your voice exceeds.

If these stories were only employed
by one who'd surrender thought to vain stories,
pretended narrations, false memories,
they'll be condemned to a just oblivion.

You are the Chronicler at the end of Sanctity,
with such erudition, with such knowledge,
you produce pleasure, and utility.

Oh a thousand times joyful your singing,
since already with perfection, already with truth
singular doctrine, saintly delight!

Soneto XX

A Manuel de Faria Severim em louvor dos seus Discursos

Parar do pensamento o veloz curso,
ser do mesmo saber modelo honroso,
suspender o discurso mais famoso,
pode de Severim qualquer discurso.

Quanto mais considero, e mais discurso
em louvor deste engenho portentoso,
mais vejo que é portento no engenhoso,
por quem a suspensão não tem recurso.

Oh feliz Severim, pois admirando,
não só fica os da pátria enriquecendo,
mas fica os mais estranhos obrigando.

Pois um, e outro Pólo suspendendo
se os próprios enriquece discursando,
obriga os estrangeiros escrevendo.

Sonnet XX – *from Portuguese*

To Manuel de Faria Severim in praise of his Speeches[58]

To stay the swift course of thought,
to be an honorable model of the same wisdom,
to suspend the most famous speech,
could be any speech of Severim.

The more I consider, and the more I speak
in praise of this portentous ingenuity
the more I see it is portent in ingenious,
for whom a suspension does not have recourse.

Oh felicitous Severim, since admiring,
not only enriches those of the homeland,
but even more compels the foreigner.

Since one, and another Polo suspending
he enriches his own by speaking,
he compels the foreign by writing.

[58] Manuel de Faria Severim was a contemporary writer and thinker. Notably, he published *Discursos Varios Politicos* in 1624, which Álvarez-Cifuentes notes made specific mention of the excellence of the Portuguese language (251).

Soneto XXI

Será brando o rigor, firme a mudança,
humilde a presunção, vária a firmeza,
fraco o valor, cobarde a fortaleza,
triste o prazer, discreta a confiança.

Terá a ingratidão, firme lembrança,
será rude o saber, sábia a rudeza,
lhana a ficção, sofística a lhaneza,
áspero o amor, benigna a esquivança.

Será merecimento a indignidade,
defeito a perfeição, culpa a defensa,
intrépido o temor, dura a piedade.

Delito a obrigação, favor a ofensa,
verdadeira a traição, falsa a verdade,
antes que vosso amor o peito vença.

Sonnet XXI – *from Portuguese*

The hardship will be gentle, the change constant,
the presumption humble, the conviction variable,
the valor weak, the strength cowardly,
the pleasure saddened, the confidence modest.

Steady remembrance, will have ingratitude
the wisdom will be crude, the crudeness wise,
the fiction affable, the affability sophisticated,
the love acidic, the avoidance benign.

The indignity will be worthy,
the perfection defective, the defense culpability,
the fear intrepid, the compassion harsh.

The obligation crime, the offense favor,
the betrayal true, the truth false,
before your love vanquishes my heart.

Soneto XXII

Se apartada do Corpo a doce vida,
domina em seu lugar a dura morte,
de que nace tardar-me tanto a morte
se ausente d'alma estou, que me dá vida?

Não quero sem Silvano já ter vida,
pois tudo sem Silvano é viva morte,
já que se foi Silvano venha a morte,
perca-se por Silvano a minha vida.

Ah suspirado ausente, se esta morte
não te obriga querer vir dar-me vida,
como não ma vem dar a mesma morte?

Mas se n'alma consiste a própria vida,
bem sei que se me tarda tanto a morte,
que é porque sinta a morte de tal vida.

Sonnet XXII – *from Portuguese*[59]

If from the Body is taken sweet life,
in its place dominated by harsh death,
what is born to delay me so from death
if I am absent from the soul, that gives me life?

Without Silvano, I no longer want life,
since all without Silvano is living death,
as Silvano is gone let come death,
let be lost for Silvano my life.

Ah absent sigh, if this death
would not oblige you give me life,
how could it then not give me death?

But if in the soul consists life,
well I know that if I am so delayed from death,
it is because death feels so much like life.

[59] The second stanza of this poem mentions Silvano in each line. Silvano is almost certainly a reference to Paulo Gonçalves de Andrade. See page 30-31 of the introduction for more on him and his significance as a writer as well as his relationship to Sor Violante.

Soneto XXIII

Que suspensão, que enleio, que cuidado
é este meu, tirano Deus Cupido?
pois tirando-me em fim todo o sentido
me deixa o sentimento duplicado.

Absorta no rigor de um duro fado,
tanto de meus sentidos me divido,
que tenho só de vida o bem sentido,
e tenho já de morte o mal logrado.

Enlevo-me no dano que me ofende,
suspendo-me na causa de meu pranto,
mas meu mal (ai de mim) não se suspende.

Oh cesse, cesse, amor, tão raro encanto,
que para quem de ti não se defende
basta menos rigor, não rigor tanto.

Sonnet XXIII – *from Portuguese*

What suspension, what confusion, what care
is this mine, tyrant God Cupid?
for taking from me at last all meaning
I am left with duplicated feeling.

Absorbed in the rigor of a harsh fate,
I am so divided in my feelings,
all I have of life is the good I feel,
and I already have achieved the evil of death.

I am taken from the pain which offends me,
I am suspended in the cause of my weeping,
but my evil (ai me) does not end.

Oh cease, cease, love, such rare enchantment,
for those who cannot defend against you
less rigor is enough, not so much rigor.

Soneto XXIV

Vive no original deste treslado,
que venera constante amor rendido,
o valor mais capaz de ser querido,
o saber mais capaz de ser louvado.

Se pudera o valor ser retratado
se pudera o saber ser esculpido,
rendera a copia só todo o sentido,
vencera a copia só todo o cuidado.

Mas quem quiser emfim render-lhe a palma,
tendo o melhor treslado por motivo,
e vendo tudo junto no apparente,

Veja, se pode ser, de Celia a alma,
vera tudo pintado tanto ao vivo
como vivo o pintado eternamente.

Sonnet XXIV – *from Portuguese*

The original lives in this rendition,
that constantly venerates vanquished love,
the valor more capable of being desired,
the knowledge more capable of being praised.

If valor could be portrayed
if knowledge could be sculpted,
all affection would yield the copy,
all caution would defeat the copy.

But whoever would yield at last the palm leaf,
having the better rendition for motive,
and seeing all together as apparent,

See, if it can be, the soul of Celia,
all the rendition will be seen painted as alive
as though alive painted eternally.

Soneto XXV

Vida que não acaba de acabar-se
chegando já de vós a despedir-se,
ou deixa por sentida de sentir-se,[60]
ou pode de imortal acreditar-se.

Vida que já não chega a terminar-se
pois chega já de vós a dividir-se,
ou procura vivendo consumir-se,
ou pretende matando eternizar-se.

O certo é, senhor, que não fenece,
antes no que padece se reporta,
porque não se limite o que padece.

Mas, viver entre lágrimas, que importa?
se vida que entre ausências permanece
é só viva ao pesar, ao gosta morta.

Sonnet XXV – *from Portuguese*

Life that does not cease in ceasing
already you arrive at departing,
it is left felt by feeling,
or can be immortal by accrediting.

Life that never arrives at ending
since already you arrive at dividing,
it is left to consume itself by living,
or intends to eternalize itself by killing.

What is certain, senhor, is that nothing decays,
rather what is suffered is reported,
because what is suffered has no limits.

But, to live through tears, what does it matter?
if life between absences endures
is only living in sorrow, in loving death.

[60] "de" in this line is transcribed in Mendes as "se". I have changed it to "de" to keep consistent with the Rouens edition.

Soneto XXVI

Quem despois de alcançar o que pretende
da mesma obrigação delito forma;
quem em castigo o galardão transforma,[61]
ou aborrece muito, ou pouco entende.

Mas do nome de ingrato se defende,
bem c'o de presumido se conforma
quem, quando mais feliz queixoso informa,
quem em vez de premiar, ingrato ofende.

Porém, quando o juízo é levantado,
quem duvida que a queixa é fingimento
de quem não se quer dar por obrigado?

Este o motivo foi do vosso intento,
Porém não se logrou, que o meu cuidado
tem por prémio melhor este escarmento.

Sonnet XXVI – *from Portuguese*

Whoever after achieving what he claims
of the same duty forms a crime;
whoever transforms accolades to punishment,
vexes much, or understands little.

But if you defend the name of the ingrate,
and as well presumptuous accept
whoever, when happier to complain informs,
whoever in place of rewarding, ingrate offends.

Though, when judgement is raised,
whoever doubts the complaint is claiming
of whoever does not want to feel thankful?

This was the motive of your intent,
Though not achieved, as my caution
has this disillusion for better reward.

[61] This is a change from Mendes based on the Rouens edition–Mendes writes "trasforma."

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