

Iberian Daughters of Sappho: Female Friendship in Early Modern Spain

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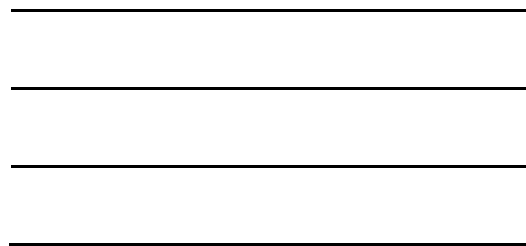


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“Por amor y amistad”: An Introduction to Friendship in Early Modern Spain

While visiting a Carmelite convent in Puçol, Spain, I mentioned a female relative who, against Church doctrine prohibiting women from being ordained, wanted to become a priest. One of the sisters slammed a fist on the table and declared, “¡Dile que las hermanas de Puçol están con ella! ¡Tenemos que luchar!” Struck by this show of solidarity for another nun they had never met, I asked each one of the sisters why she had joined the Carmelite Order over any other. Among a variety of responses, the one that stayed with me was “por amor y amistad.” As the spiritual daughters of Teresa of Ávila, these thirteen women were united in an intimate community of devotion and friendship. Yet early modern female friendship was either ignored or trivialized, not just by the classical and Renaissance theorists who believed that women were incapable of sustaining the bond between friends but also by current scholarly discourse. Two seventeenth-century Spanish playwrights, María de Zayas and Ana Caro, who often praised and supported each other’s work, expressed concern over women’s marginalized position in society. Addressing men, Zayas writes:

Yo aseguro que si entendierais que había en nosotras valor y fortaleza, no os burlarais como os burláis; y así por terneros sujetas desde que nacemos vais enflaqueciendo nuestras fuerzas con temores de la honra, y el entendimiento con el recato de la vergüenza, dándonos por espadas ruelas, y por libros almohadillas.
(qtd. in Camino 3)

For the high-achieving women writers of early modern Spain, friendship with their peers may have helped them realize a potential beyond mere spindles and pincushions. The aim of this project, therefore, is to revise critical and historical narratives about female friendship in early

modern Spain and to uncover the discourse of women's relationships in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century cultural production. Finally, I will suggest how women may have helped one another survive—and even flourish—within male-dominated tradition.

Studies of male friendship have enjoyed an extensive scholarly tradition beginning in Antiquity and continuing into twentieth- and twenty-first-century philosophy and literary criticism. In 1960, C. S. Lewis's *The Four Loves*, following and revising the models proposed by classical philosophy, develops a discourse for varied forms of human love: affection, friendship, *eros*, and charity. Friendship manifests itself differently from *eros* because while lovers frequently discuss their love, friends rarely deliberate friendship. From Lewis's perspective, it is erroneous to argue that serious friendships are "really homosexual" because the erotic element is separate from friendly interactions (90-92). Similarly, men and women cannot form friendships because they have no shared activities; only affection and *eros* may exist between them (107). Even into the later twentieth century, Lewis proposes a gendered model of friendship inexorably separate from heterosexual desire and essential contrasts between the sexes. Beyond this philosophical background, scholars of early modernity have continued the dialogue on what friendship during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries implied for their respective societies. Contrary to Lewis's views on friendship and *eros*, Eve Sedgwick, Marc D. Schachter, and Harriette Andreadis deal specifically with homosocial and homoerotic desires and how they evolve in life and literature. Although the prevailing post-modern tendency has been to conflate friendship with *eros*, a panoramic investigation of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century discourses of friendship unveils an entirely different understanding of personal relationships that do not—and cannot—correspond to a twenty-first century perspective.

An early modern approach to friendship depends heavily on the intellectual climate of Spain toward the beginning of the sixteenth century, marked in part by the diffusion of humanism throughout Europe. W. Michael Mathes discusses the political atmosphere of late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Spain and its implications for the spread of humanist tendencies. After it was introduced in 1481 by Elio Antonio de Nebrija with his *Introductiones Latinae*, Fernando and Isabel promoted the diffusion of humanism through the efforts of Cardinal Francisco Ximénez de Cisneros, who created a strong base of humanist scholars in Iberia (Mathes 412-13). As Spain assumed a leadership role in the defense of the unity of the church, humanism at times was subsumed under the general rubric of philo-protestant heterodoxy. The works of Erasmus, for example, which had enjoyed great popularity in the early decades of the sixteenth century, were banned in 1559.¹ Although the printing of humanist works was widespread throughout Europe, censorship of Lutheranism prevented the extensive circulation of these texts within the Peninsula (413-14). Thus, humanism as a program of study based on rhetoric and philology formed a significant part of intellectual culture in early modern Spain, but Erasmian humanism, because of its emphasis on interior spirituality and implied criticism of the clergy, was also kept in check by ecclesiastical authorities.²

In some cases, classical Greek and Roman moral treatises could be appropriated into Catholic ideology, but many such works were received ambivalently in Spain. A. R. D. Pagden explains that, particularly within the context of medieval Spain, moralists found that Aristotle's ideas did not lend themselves to a "scissors and paste treatment; they were not easily divorced from their context and lacked the obvious simplicity of the Roman moralists" (289). Although Aristotle's works were difficult to adapt for Christian readers, between 1460 and 1600,

¹ See Homza, *Religious Authority in the Spanish Renaissance*.

² On vernacular humanism, see Lawrence, "On Fifteenth-Century Spanish Vernacular Humanism." On the ambivalent reception of Erasmus, see Homza.

Aristotelian ideas became more widely diffused, facilitated by the spread of printing, in both learned and popular circles. The Italian humanist Leonardo Bruni's translation of the *Ethics* was released from a Barcelona press in 1474 and 1492 and six different editions subsequently appeared in Aragon. Furthermore, Castilians often came into direct contact with Italian humanists, which would have exposed them to Aristotle, even if they were unable to access his works directly (289-93). The popularity of Bruni's translations depended on their appeal to the aristocracy by claiming that the *Ethics* taught a moral basis for action, *Politics* developed the principles of good government, and *Economics* dealt with the means of acquiring wealth, which was essential to achieve any form of greatness (294). Certainly, the Aristotelian tradition of noble interest survived well into the sixteenth century, serving as one of the many inspirations for Antonio de Guevara's 1539 *Reloj de príncipes* (296).

The theme of social alliances appears repeatedly in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, a collection written around 350 BC, which expounds on how to live a virtuous life and thus serves as an arena for developing a classical model of so-called good friendship. Aristotle's tripartite view of friendship—that all social bonds are based on goodness, pleasure, or utility—explores the nature of various human alliances and evaluates the worthiness and endurance of each. For the Greek philosopher, friendships founded on utility are the most ubiquitous, but true and complete friendship must be motivated by similarity, equality, and affection. Aside from good friendships between individuals of equal social status, personal bonds may develop between persons of unequal status, such as those between fathers and sons, elders and youths, men and women, and rulers and subjects. In these cases, the affection between the two friends must be proportionate to their position (220). The Aristotelian concept of friendship, for all of its moral and practical applications, functions as a foundation upon which early modern moralists, poets,

and playwrights were able to construct models of behavior for noblemen in their various conduct manuals, political treatises, and fictional works. Aristotle's diverse forms of friendship figure into the discourse and representations of early modern companionship, whether referring to Garcilaso's "amistad perfecta" in his epistle to Boscán or the numerous friendships that develop in the *comedia*.

Cicero's *De amicitia*, as a foundational classical text on friendship, presents another vision of virtue-based social ties that influenced early modern beliefs about the importance and proper execution of friendship. The Roman philosopher held a privileged position in Spanish intellectual culture during the medieval period and beyond, particularly in the study of rhetoric. Equating good rhetoric with virtue, Cicero's *De oratore* enabled Spanish humanists to inherit all of his "fobias y filias," which conflate rhetorical virtue with moral virtue and therefore salvation (Ynduráin 219-25). *De amicitia* continually expresses rhetorical preoccupations as Laelius waxed philosophical about friendship to Scaevola and Fannius. As witnessed in Aristotle, friendship for Laelius is the most valuable of all human possessions, but only the principles of honor and virtue can sustain true friendship. Similarly, he defines friendship as "a perfect conformity of opinions upon all religious and civil subjects, united with the highest degree of mutual esteem and affection" (Cicero 176-77). Aside from analogous views on concord and affection as those presented in Aristotle's *Ethics*, Cicero's text also differentiates among various "species of amity" that are inferior to true friendship. The philosopher explains that because people engage in alliances based on pleasure and advantage, one cannot depend on those most inclined to initiate such auxiliary alliances, especially women, who are more susceptible to them than men (179-91). As a result, Cicero too warns against friendships for utility and pleasure, since they are easily dissolved and cannot fulfill the true needs of companionship. In a practical sense, Cicero advises

that a friend should never “appear sensible of his superiority” if he is of a higher social standing (200-01). With regard to helping a friend achieve his ambitions, a man should only help his friend as much as his power will allow and as much as the friend’s ambition matches his talent (202-03). Ciceronian friendship therefore reflects the central principles of Aristotle’s model for worthy social bonds because they are both based on virtue and mutual admiration; however, the two philosophers differ in their practical applications because *De amicitia* recognizes a more utilitarian role within the realm of good friendship and suggests how a man can support his friends, how companions of different social status should interact, and how and when friendships should come to an end.

Paul Burton discusses the concept of *amicitia* in Roman society by developing a processual approach to friendship that focuses on the dynamic model of human interaction. The four stages of friendship practice, according to Burton, include: the beginning of friendship, the development of trust, the mutual performance of favors, and the termination of friendship (211). Though there are similarities, friendship in Roman society was different from that of modern society because it was highly differentiated and class-conscious. Competition for honor was often a “zero sum game,” and Burton argues that the term *amicus* can be applied more widely to encompass relationships motivated by political advantage. Furthermore, friends in ancient Rome did not simply “fall out,” but instead suffered violent break-ups. Such passionate feelings within friendship reflect that personal relationships in Roman society were turbulent. Following the socio-historical eminence of companionship in ancient Roman culture, Platus’s *amicitia* plays unveil a vision of friendship as “a precious social bond, but one fraught with paradox and ambivalence and generative of tensions, anxieties, and asymmetries” (240). Because anxiety over friendship permeated both the classical imaginary and its corresponding social reality, Cicero’s

De amicitia reflects these concerns about human relationships while simultaneously offering guidance on how to maintain them. Early modern humanists, as a result, may have inherited more than mere rhetorical “fobias y filias” from Cicero; they may have also acquired a very real sense of disquiet with regard to their individual friendships and wider social networks.

The French humanist Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592), inspired by his classical studies, devotes a chapter of his *Essais* to the question of friendship. Barry Weller explains the development of friendship through the epistolary mode, which was crucial to the expression of homosocial affection in early modern Europe:

In the fourteenth century, Petrarch naturalized the classical form of friendship in the literary consciousness of Western Europe, largely through the publication of his familiar letters in conscious imitation of Cicero.... As letters became, through Petrarch’s example, the institutional literary form of friendship, distance came to seem a permanent, almost a constitutive, element of friendship.... While the ancient ideal of friendship expounded by Aristotle had offered men a living mirror of their lives, an extension of the psychological space of consciousness, the epistolary character of Renaissance friendship substituted a "memorial" mode, signifying at once the pathos of distance and distance overcome. The eternizing properties of written discourse compensate the lost immediacy and fluidity of a living friendship (504).

Although Petrarch’s familiar letters created a model of friendship that lost its temporal “immediacy” in sixteenth-century cultural production, the epistolary nature of friendship that Weller describes certainly provokes new concerns for personal relationships during the early modern period. No longer confined to momentary interactions, people now etched their friendly

affections onto history and historiography with indelible ink and thus became preoccupied with subjectivity and the very nature of friendship itself. For Weller, one of the distinguishing features of Montaigne's philosophy is the "shifty and contingent character" of friendship in his works (505). Montaigne defines friends as souls that "se meslent et confondent l'une en l'autre, d'un mélange si universel qu'elles effacent et ne retrouvent plus la couture qui les a jointes" (224). This vision of friendship supports the Aristotelian notion of virtue and alliances formed by sameness and mutual affection, but it also goes further by suggesting a spiritual connection between friends that necessarily marginalizes material concerns. From the French humanist's perspective, the mind remains separate from the body, even in the complex realm of social bonds.

Relatedly, Montaigne's essay illustrates the difference between friendship and erotic love. These two forms of affection cannot be compared because, "En l'amitié, c'est une chaleur générale et universelle, tempérée au demeurant et égale, une chaleur constante et rassise, toute douceur et polissure, qui n'a rien d'aspre et de poignant" (221). Montaigne's gendered view of companionship develops further when he argues, "Joint qu'à dire vray la suiffance ordinaire des femmes n'est pas pour respondre à cette sainte couture; ny leur ame ne pressé et si durable" (222). Whereas the classical philosophers would agree that women are more susceptible to friendships motivated by usefulness, Montaigne carries the argument further in his belief that the female soul is not strong enough to carry such a "holy bond." By the sixteenth century, Christian humanists generally rejected the Pauline notion of women's spiritual inferiority (Weber, *Teresa* 16-17). Nevertheless, for Montaigne, the sacred bond between friends could not be entrusted to women. In his essay on Virgil, Montaigne further expounds on his doubts over friendship with women:

On ne se marie pas pour soy, quoi qu'on die; on se marie autant ou plus pour sa postertité, pour sa famille.... Aussi est ce une espece d'inceste d'aller employer à ce parentage venerable et sacré les efforts et les extravagances de la license amoureuse, comme il me semble avoir dict ailleurs. Il faut dict Aristotle, toucher sa femme prudemment et severement, depeur qu'en la chatoullant trop lascivement le plaisir la face sortir hors des gons de raison. (950)

Not only are women allegedly incapable of friendship but initiating such a sacred bond with one's wife amounts to incest because friendship has no place among the "extravagances" of sexual love. Montaigne cites Aristotle when he states that a man must exercise prudence and severity with his wife because if he gives her too much pleasure, she will lose the capacity for reason. Montaigne's questionable marriage advice reveals anxieties over the threat that women posed to male homosocial bonds. If women could prove to be both friends and lovers, the value of male friendships would inevitably decline.

Though ideal friendship was difficult to attain in Montaigne's view, especially for women, he supports the notion of "common friendships" in certain circumstances. Montaigne legitimizes different forms of friendship in a variety of situations by stating, "A la familiarité de la table j'associe le plaisant, non le prudent: au lict, la beauté avant la bonté; en la société du discours, la suffisance, voire sans la preud'hommie" (229). Although it is advisable to found a friendship on love instead of pleasure and utility, unlike Aristotle, the sixteenth-century humanist recognizes the greater importance of compartmentalizing social interactions according to one's needs. Montaigne thus carries the philosophy of friendship across the threshold of modernity by considering the shifting needs and nature of human relationships during a time in which friendships formed part of complex social networks.

Montaigne's ideas about friendship arrived in Spain through Francisco de Quevedo's allusions to his work and Diego de Cisneros's translation of Montaigne's political essays (c. 1635) (Marichal 259-60). By the end of the 1640s, there was a small but significant group of *montaignistas* in Spain after Cisneros translated and disseminated the *Essais* in order to spread the knowledge of French culture to the Peninsula (264-66). Yet, Cisneros believed that only an orthodox version of the *Essais* should exist in Spain because Montaigne's original work would prove unacceptable due to the different "spiritual conditions" of early modern France (271).

With regard to Montaigne's view on friendship in particular, Cisneros writes, "Las leyes de la amistad particular deben estar subordinadas al bien de la religión y culto de Dios, y al público, o a lo menos no ser contrarias" (274). Cisneros thus required that special friendships be subordinate to the wellbeing of religious and secular communities, rather than detract from them. By including this additional rule, Cisneros places Montaigne within the boundaries of Catholicism and revises the French humanist's philosophies for orthodox readers in Spain. Cisneros further explains:

En el mismo cap., § 22, [Montaigne] dize: 'La única y principal amistad rompe por todas otras obligaciones. El secreto que he jurado de no descubrir a otro, lo puedo comunicar, sin ser perjuro, al que no es otro, que es yo'. No es pequeño error, pues quiere que la unión de la amistad rompa todas las demás obligaciones, aunque sean como la del Juramento de secreto, que es para con el mismo Dios, cuya violación es gravísimo sacrilegio. (274)

Though Montaigne advises that the sacred friendship bond should come before all other obligations, Cisneros deems it sacrilegious to do so if the relationship between two people is placed above God. In this case, alliances between individuals become secondary to religious

authority, despite the growing secular need for a variety of social interactions during the early modern period. Montaigne's ideas were thus appropriated into Spanish intellectual culture by the seventeenth century, even if they were modified to fit Catholic doctrine and ultimately marginalized friendship when it entered into conflict with one's obligations to God.

From classical Antiquity to sixteenth-century France, theories of friendship have endured throughout the ages, providing a foundation for intellectual and practical understandings of personal alliances in early modern Spain. Certainly, sixteenth-century humanism, although perhaps not as prevalent throughout the Iberian Peninsula as in Europe north of the Pyrenees, brought classical philosophy to Spanish intellectual culture. Aristotle and Cicero, both fundamental within the humanist tradition, wrote prolifically on the nature of friendship, arguing that strong social ties are those based on virtue. Although friends may be chosen on the basis of utility or pleasure, Aristotle and Cicero agree that lasting friendship must be motivated by mutual affection and admiration. From Aristotle's perspective, utilitarian friendships should be limited because they are too difficult to maintain, but Cicero does not see usefulness and goodness as mutually exclusive. Instead, a true friend can help another achieve his ambitions within his power. Since Roman society operated through a system of collective networks that often determined a person's status within society, friendship represented an area of anxiety in many classical texts. Similarly, this concern was inherited by sixteenth-century humanists, especially Montaigne, whose vision of friendship not only expresses the need for different kinds of friendship in various social situations, but also demonstrates the epistolary nature of early modern relationships that must cover more temporal and spatial distance than those of their classical counterparts. Though the *Essais* were not circulated in Spain until the seventeenth

century or later, Montaigne's ideas on friendship were certainly woven into early modern humanist culture, whether or not they were directly referenced in Spanish texts.

Male theorists from Antiquity to the Renaissance did not consider the possibility of any emotional depth in women's relationships, but several scholars have recently explored female relationships in early modern Europe. For all of the work that has been accomplished on female alliances in sixteenth- and seventeenth- century Europe, much remains to be said about Spain in particular. In 2011, Sherry Velasco published a provocative and innovative study entitled *Lesbians in Early Modern Spain*, which explores the legal, medical, and religious implications of what it meant for women to transgress social norms by engaging in erotic behavior with other women. Aside from the affirmation that "sodomy," defined as any sexual act that would not result in procreation, was certainly a concern for ecclesiastical authorities and sometimes resulted in harsh punishment, Velasco argues that representations of female homoeroticism were readily available to cultural consumers in the early modern world (5-6). However, these depictions of same-sex desire between women served more as fuel for the fires of heterosexual male fantasy than as evidence of sexually and emotionally fulfilling relationships *per se*. Velasco's work points to a cultural anxiety and conflict over love between women: on the one hand, their desire was perceived as fruitless or simply just practice for later encounters with men, but on the other, Inquisitorial tribunals occasionally imposed harsh punishment on women convicted of same-sex sodomy, although the death penalty was rare (35-67).³ Although Velasco's chapter on special friendships in the convent highlights spiritual intimacy among the women religious, the book focuses on the erotic element of early modern female relationships; however, the emotional alliances that women formed and the support they provided to one

³ Ordinarily sexual transgression did not fall under the Inquisition's jurisdiction, but sodomy was considered heretical since it was viewed as an offense against the sacrament of marriage.

another remains to be explored. My approach seeks to bring the female relationships between women from behind the closed doors of the private sphere to determine how women's emotional and political bonds helped them to survive and thrive in the public realm.

Marianne Legault takes on similar issues in her 2012 book, *Female Intimacies in Seventeenth-Century France*. This study affirms that affection between women certainly existed in early modern France, but it was frequently mocked by male writers who held the long-established belief that women were either incapable of friendship or more susceptible to rivalries over male love interests (12-36). Male writers like Claude Le Petit criticized female literary activities and the *précieux* movement. For example, his verse: “Ce livre en long roulé, bien égal et bien roide / vaudra bien un godemichi” compares the transgression of writing to that of enjoying artificial phallic devices. (129) While the male imagination ridiculed women's literary activity by alluding to deviant sexual practices, women writers such as Madeleine de Scudéry push the boundaries of women's textual and sexual limits (129). These texts “offer landscapes that are clearly dominated by female characters, utopian locations in which the heroines are free to feel a range of emotions and desires, whether they be heterosexual or homoerotic (as in Scudéry), or to explore physically their sexual leanings, within heterosexual relationships, sexual relations before marriage, or lesbian relationships (as in La Force)” (Legault 209). Though the patriarchal system demanded that non-heteronormative female identities be erased in order to maintain early modern France's heterosexual economy, Legault points out that these male-centered perspectives allow us truly to appreciate the transgression of female intimacy as presented by authors such as La Force and Scudéry (210).

Crossing the channel, Harriette Andreadis explores themes of female homoeroticism in *Sappho in Early Modern England: Female Same-Sex Literary Erotics 1550-1714* (2001). This

study is devoted not only to representations of Sappho as an empowering figure for other women writers, but also to how erotic alliances between women are articulated in female-authored poetry. Andreadis aptly observes that because the concept of binary sexual identities was not established until sometime during the eighteenth century, “the historical moments just before its consolidation are an ideal, and challenging environment in which to examine its emergence” (xi). Andreadis therefore codifies the concept of women whose sexuality lies somewhere between homoeroticism and heterosexuality with the term “erotics of unnam[ing],” that is, a silent approach to sexual practice that allowed them to explore erotic desires while maintaining a heteronormative lifestyle (1-2). Because most of the language used to describe female same-sex relations focuses on specific forbidden actions, relationships between “respectable” women are eroticized through highly codified discourse (53). Katherine Phillips, for example, employs the poetic conventions of her male contemporaries in order to express homoerotic possibilities, whereas Margaret Cavendish directly highlights the physicality of passionate friendships between women (58-84). Ultimately, the literary possibilities for women to express their desire in early modern England allowed for both “overt and covert transgressiveness” (176).

These recent studies on female relationships and intimacy in early modern Europe have made tremendous contributions to women and gender studies by initiating a dialogue on a previously marginalized issue: same-sex desire between women.⁴ Velasco, Legault, and Andreadis recognize that female homoerotic behaviors were considered the “silent sin” of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and women therefore employed a variety of strategies to develop erotic discourses. These studies diagnose a conflicted attitude toward female affection in early modern patriarchies. Whereas representations of homoeroticism were available and likely

⁴ In the second chapter, I will refer to a number of important articles by Dugaw and Powell that explore the topic of same-sex love and desire in seventeenth-century Hispanic poetry.

tantalizing to men, they were also trivialized or deemed dangerous to the heterosexual economy and therefore censured. Despite the strides made through recent scholarship, I argue that by focusing almost exclusively on the erotic element of women's relationships, ironically, we risk trivializing them, ignoring their emotional depth, or denying a more profound motivation behind women's homosocial rhetoric. When considering female friendship, Adrienne Rich's notion of the "lesbian continuum," which includes anything from emotional attachment to sexual behavior, is useful for dismantling binary sexual identities (135). Without unduly deemphasizing the erotic, we must concede that not all women harbored same-sex desires to encode in their texts. Often, friendship means something other than latent sexual longings.

Lisa Vollendorf's article "The Value of Female Friendship in Early Modern Spain" recognizes forms of affection by extending beyond the erotic and focusing on themes of female solidarity. From friendship on Ana Caro's and María de Zayas's stages to women's alliances in the convent, the importance of female social bonds cannot be ignored. For Vollendorf, women's self-representation in early modern texts affords us a glimpse into their homosocial environments and how they affected their everyday lives (437). The title of Vollendorf's essay, as well as its conclusions, suggest that female friendship was valuable in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain, but there has not yet been a book-length study to explore the nuances of—and perhaps tensions within—female alliances in early modern Iberia. Furthermore, we are still left with the question of if and how women's relationships with one another allowed them to flourish in a society in which their voices and written works were typically marginalized. In an essay on literature by women religious, Alison Weber poses the question, "What networks of friendship and patronage made it possible for women to overcome their anxiety of authorship and usher their [texts] into print?" (41). My project seeks to explore this issue by examining the poetics of

female friendship in early modern texts—both literary and epistolary—in order to discover how and why women’s alliances develop.

Throughout this study, I argue that the discourse of women’s social ties in early modern Spain is grounded in particular understandings of the female body, which are often twisted in unexpected ways by female authors. By demonstrating that friendship between women was formed, sustained, and sometimes disturbed through a discourse of the body, this study will revise certain critical and historical narratives about female friendship during the early modern period. The first chapter provides a framework for discussing social bonds in literary texts by exploring how two male poets, Garcilaso de la Vega (1501-1536) and Francisco de Aldana (1537-1587), construct a narrative about friendship between men in their epistolary poetry. Garcilaso and Aldana express an attitude toward friendship that is similar to that found in Michel de Montaigne (1580): friendship between men is a tranquil pleasure and heterosexual love can be turbulent. Both poets create an idealized homosocial space nourished by intellectual and literary activity. However, they portray women and sexuality as an affront to their exclusively male alliances and wield the power of their pens to intimidate any woman who poses a threat. Accordingly, the second chapter turns to female poets and how they devise their own aesthetic of friendship contradicting prevailing theories, such as those of Montaigne, who believed that women were constitutionally incapable of such bonds. Sor Violante del Cielo (1646), a Lisbon-born Dominican nun, composes a sonnet outlining ideal relationships between women. Curiously, however, both this poet and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1561-1595) write poems about female affection that do not follow the guidelines elaborated in Sor Violante’s sonnet. Both express turbulent same-sex relationships that approach erotic love rather than the tranquil bonds of friendship. The images of corporeal violence between the speaker and addressee in these

poems promote both affection and conflict through the female body. Whereas the male poets in the first chapter employ verse to defend themselves against women and the disconcerting effects of the erotic female body, Sor Violante and Sor Juana adopt the sexualized language of war and conquest in a register that fluctuates between playful and deadly serious.

The third chapter explores how friendship develops in—and is limited by—an honor-driven society. Whereas a tragedy by Calderón de la Barca (1637) reveals that honor initially unites men in friendship and is later strained if one friend's honor is called into question, the works of two female playwrights, María de Zayas (c. 1618) and Ana Caro (c. 1640), promote a view of friendship strengthened by women's shared views about their reputations. In the event that a woman's honor is besmirched by an offending man, female friends unite with the goal of restoring her honor. Far from the ideal model of friendship, however, Zayas and Caro depict female alliances based on utility and leave us with the troubling notion that women's solidarity comes second to marriage. The final chapter takes a blended literary and historical approach to the notion of female communities in the sixteenth-century Carmelite convent. Initially, I examine how the Jesuit priest Baltasar Álvarez (1533-1580) embraces the ideals of Christian Stoicism to imagine the monastery and the relationships within it as the communal body of Christ. Álvarez's view of the male religious as a stoic body provides a point of departure for the perspectives of Teresa of Ávila (1515-1582) and María de San José Salazar (1548-1603), both of whom understand the convent in terms of the Galenic female body. As the spiritual daughter of Teresa, María develops the Discalced foundress's Galenic language and seeks to achieve balance within—and limit the permeability of—the female monastic community to offer women spiritual opportunity and protection. The women I will explore in the following pages, among them poets, dramatists, and religious leaders, embody the intellectual spirit of the seventh-century Greek

lyric poet Sappho, who expressed her love for women in verse and was thought to have lead a coterie of female protégées.⁵ I will suggest how these Iberian daughters of Sappho formed female bonds that enabled them to develop their own language of affection and protection within the limits of early modern Spanish patriarchies.

⁵ See Klinck.

Chapter 1

Love and War: The Poetics of Friendship in Male-Authored Lyric

In the “Epístola a Boscán,” Garcilaso de la Vega (1501 - 1536) celebrates his “amistad perfecta” with Juan Boscán (c.1490 – 1542), whose affection sustains the poet throughout his arduous journey from Barcelona to Naples. Such a laudatory verbal portrait of the relationship between the two writers paradoxically invites doubt over whether friendship can truly be perfect in early modern consciousness. From the modern critic’s perspective, do Garcilaso’s hyperboles offer an accurate portrayal of an unshakable bond between men or do they represent mere rhetorical embellishments for the purpose of crafting skillful verse?

Since classical Antiquity, male friendship has been a recurring theme in political, philosophical, and literary texts. From Plato’s *Republic* to Montaigne’s *Essais*, true friendship in the humanist tradition requires virtue and equality; yet such alliances were often difficult to maintain both in the classical period and in early modern Europe. As I have argued in the introduction, anxieties surrounding friendship abound in the early modern Spanish imaginary, revealing that social bonds between men were informed not only by classical ideology, but also by hierarchy, honor, heterosexual love, homosocial desire, homosexual panic, and a variety of other forces relevant to particular sixteenth- and seventeenth-century societies. Especially in the poetic genre, male writers enjoyed a codified literary space to express their affection for one another through epistolary poems such as Garcilaso’s “Epístola a Boscán” and *Ode ad florem Gnidi* or Francisco de Aldana’s *Carta a Galanio*. This chapter therefore seeks to unveil a narrative of friendship first, by determining how the poems represent the formation of affective ties and second, how they figure the viability of those friendships.

As explored in the introduction, classical theories of friendship postulate that true social bonds must be formed by virtue and without ulterior motives. Aristotle divides friendship into three categories—goodness, pleasure, and utility—and advises against utilitarian relationships (220-39). Cicero later recognizes that true friendships can indeed be practical, as long as they are made in good faith and participants experience “a perfect conformity of opinions upon all religious and civil subjects, united with the highest degree of mutual esteem and affection” (176-77). Inspired by these theories of Antiquity, the French humanist Michel de Montaigne argues that friendship should be an end rather than simply a means and, moreover, male relationships are a phenomenon of the soul, not the body. Based on this premise, Montaigne clearly distinguishes between friendship and heterosexual love: “En l'amitié, c'est une chaleur générale et universelle, tempérée au demeurant et égale, une chaleur constante et rassise, toute douceur et polissure, qui n'a rien d'aspre et de poignant” (221). Thus, for Renaissance thinkers, male companionship was considered a tranquil pleasure, whereas sexual love often produced emotional turbulence.

In a study on what he designates “the poetry of friendship” in seventeenth-century France, John Lyons distinguishes between heterosexual love poetry and verse composed for friends. The poetry of friendship “[offers] the friend the present of shared humanity, a sharing that supposes equality. Love poetry, on the other hand, almost invariably presents the speaker in a subaltern position, regardless of social condition.” Both the inequality of love and the egalitarian bonds of friendship, however, are entangled with poetic convention; the social structure created in the poem thus may not reflect the actual relationship between the two friends (20). Despite the apparent differences in love and friendship poetry, Lyons has observed that both genres suggest a fusion between the speaker and the addressee. Significantly, in amorous

verse, this union is either a demand of the poet, or it is figured as a theft in which the beloved despoils the speaker's very being and transforms the lover and his lady into adversaries. On the other hand, "[the] poetry of friendship, in direct address, does not present the friend as an adversary or as having deprived the speaker of some good. Instead, the poet offers advice, in effect reminding his correspondent of a truth already known to both" (21). Informed by Montaigne's philosophies of friendship, Lyons's study explores the early modern French consciousness of non-erotic bonds in poetry and reveals that, at least within the fictitious realm of verse, friendship is satisfying and pleasant whereas sexual love can often be antagonistic.

Throughout his verse, Garcilaso develops his own theories on friendship that generally correspond to Montaigne's views on same-sex relationships and erotic love and, in many instances, support a similar perspective as the later French poets. According to Matthew A. Wyszynski, Garcilaso was likely aware of Renaissance theories on friendship because he wrote the dedicatory epistle to Boscán's translation of Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano*, a conduct manual that briefly deals with the topic of personal relationships. Furthermore, Garcilaso's humanist education would have exposed him to the classical ideas of friendship and virtue (401-02).⁶ Garcilaso's second eclogue, a pastoral poem written between 1533 and 1534, explores the complexities of human relationships from the perspective of three shepherds, one of whom suffers from unrequited love for Camila. Apart from Albanio's amorous woes, Garcilaso dedicates much of the poem to contemplating the bond among Albanio, Salicio, and Nemoroso. Wyszynski recognizes that the relationship between Albanio and Salicio closely resembles the friendship described by Renaissance theorists, based on their unfailing duty to one another through good times and through hardships. Still, the most significant relationship in the poem—that of Albanio and Camila—reveals conflicting discourses of Neoplatonic love and friendship.

⁶ Boscán's translation of *Il Cortegiano* appeared in 1540. I will quote from his translation.

Their amorous relationship, to be sure, is temporal and predicated on the Neoplatonic appreciation of beauty, but the longevity of their bond is typically only emphasized in theories of friendship rather than love (401-02). When reminiscing about her relationship with Albanio, Camila complains, “No quiero / menos un compañero que yo amaba, / mas no como él pensaba” (vv. 747-49). Albanio’s unwitting beloved laments the confusion of friendship and *eros* and accuses Albanio of violating the terms of their alliance, “quiriéndola torcer por el camino / de la vida honesta se desvía” (vv.818-19). While the bond between the unhappy lovers dissolves, Salicio announces to his friend, “yo seré dulce más que sano amigo / y daré buen lugar a tu tristura” (vv. 414-15). Although the relationship between Camila and Albanio is volatile, male friendship in the second eclogue remains constant. The complicated webs of affection woven in these verses therefore suggest that the clearly defined notion of friendship against that of erotic love as presented by humanist thinkers such as Montaigne holds true for male alliances. However, friendship inevitably unravels within the context of Neoplatonic, heterosexual love. For Garcilaso, men can develop true friendships in the classical sense with other men, but they cannot sustain such a sacred bond with women.

While Garcilaso constructs an apparently fictional narrative about friendship in the second eclogue,⁷ the first-person narrator in his epistolary poetry raises questions over whether the poet provides a genuine description of his friendships or whether it conflates a fictional persona with a historical subject. Daniel L. Heiple has employed the term “rhetoric of sincerity” to explain that the impression of sincerity that results from the first-person narrator’s exquisite analysis of his emotional states, sensual imagery, and poetic techniques that de-emphasize rhyme—characteristics that he had borrowed from Petrarchan poetry and introduced into Spain.

⁷ It has been debated, in all three eclogues, whether the characters are fictional representations of Garcilaso’s autobiographical relationships. For example, Fernando de Herrera has posited that Salicio is Garcilaso himself and Nemoroso is the husband of Isabel Freire, Garcilaso’s unrequited beloved (Heiple 15).

Rather than endlessly questioning Garcilaso's sincerity, Heiple advises that scholars instead focus on how a text creates the impression of authenticity (17). Although the so-called rhetoric of sincerity applies to Petrarchan love poems, that is, to the suffering of the scorned lover in a heterosexual context, it is worth considering whether the "rhetoric of sincerity" is applicable to Garcilaso's apparent candor in his epistolary poetry. When Garcilaso writes to Boscán about their "amistad perfecta," is he writing as a friend or as a poet? Perhaps more relevantly, how does Garcilaso use poetry to create an aesthetic of male friendship?

As Petrarchan poets in sixteenth-century Spain, Garcilaso de la Vega and Juan Boscán were a power couple in developing "new poetry" in the Iberian Peninsula. Whereas the Middle Ages and early Renaissance preferred epic verse, the conceptual word games of fifteenth-century court poetry, and the narratives of the *romancero*, Garcilaso and his contemporaries promoted a more lyrical, Italianate verse form with a poetic voice representing the contemplative, suffering lover. Furthermore, Garcilaso and Boscán wrote during a time in which traditional models of Spanish masculinity were evolving and alternate paradigms of male friendship began to coalesce. Leah Middlebrook argues that the new lyric of the early sixteenth century represents "a clash of two Spanish cultures": the traditional order of Castile and the development of the modern courtier (7). While the poetic genre as a whole became a "virtual emblem of state and imperial power," the sonnet form specifically refigured the noble Spanish masculine ideal (11-59). Therefore, writers were caught between the traditional epic, imperial function of poetry as the privileged transmission of culture and the lyric poetry of the courtly lover. Garcilaso, a man of arms and letters *par excellence*, occasionally incorporates bellicose themes in his poetry, but his lyric is particularly known for its various, sometimes contradictory discourses of love. Although Garcilaso often follows the Petrarchan mode, a number of his amorous poems experiment with

classical epigrams, Neoplatonic love, and even Ovidian themes (Heiple 201-31). Through a variety of approaches to love, Garcilaso mostly dedicates his verses to a female object of desire, but he also directs some of his poetic affection to his friend, Juan Boscán. Clearly, male-female desire served as a driving force for Garcilaso's pen and Boscán too wrote poetry for his wife, Ana Girón, the presumed inspiration for heteroerotic love. Interestingly, however, Middlebrook observes that Renaissance friendship was more privileged than heteroerotic desire because it was a desexualized, "rare and beautiful phenomenon, one that was capable of transforming its participants in a manner similar to Neo-platonic love" (95-96). While embracing a new ideal of what it meant to be a Spanish nobleman toward the beginning of the sixteenth century, Garcilaso also promotes models of friendship that reflect the pressures of life as a modern courtier and soldier.

During his return to Naples in 1533 at the mandate of Charles V and after a brief stay in Barcelona to visit his friend, Garcilaso drafted the "Epístola a Boscán" in *verso suelto*.⁸ The poem begins by addressing his friend directly and thus figures Boscán as a fictional reader, as well as the implied historical figure. With a metapoetic exordium, the narrator discusses the style of his own composition and emphasizes that he does not need to adorn his verses with excess rhetoric. While Garcilaso's poetic voice recounts pleasant memories of Boscán, the poet's musings about verse form and rhetoric give way to contemplation of their friendship, which Garcilaso deems exemplary. The tone of the final stanza suddenly shifts to air grievances about the endless journey to Naples, including the acrid wine, ugly women, and deceit that he encounters in France. The poem's tripartite structure—poetry, friendship, and complaints—although seemingly mismatched, is quite telling of Garcilaso's vision of his relationship with

⁸ An unrhymed verse form alternating between verses that may or may not rhyme.

Boscán. These three themes ultimately coalesce to form a particular aesthetics of friendship between two male poets.

With a less-structured style of verse than in any of his other work, Garcilaso liberates himself from the strictures of the sonnet form to express his affection. He writes, “ni será menester buscar estilo / presto, distinto, d’ornamento puro, / tal cual a culta epístola conviene” (vv. 4-7). Elias Rivers has rightly observed that Garcilaso adopts a satirical tone to dismiss the “culta epístola” as a possible genre for addressing Boscán. Rather than following the learned version, the poet instead uses the informal Horatian epistle as his literary model (30-31). During the 1520s and 1530s in Naples, interest in Horace flourished in intellectual circles, which motivated Garcilaso’s classical “third period.” The Spanish poet and admirer of Garcilaso, Fernando de Herrera (c. 1534-1597), however, grouped the Horatian odes with Garcilaso’s other *canciones* (Heiple 342-43). Despite any scholarly doubts over the genre of Garcilaso’s epistles, the poet clearly writes to Boscán with striking familiarity. Even from the beginning, the poetic voice reveals that his “amistad perfecta” with Boscán permits him to write with “suelto y puro” informality (vv. 11). Whereas courtly poetry typically requires the lover to craft his amorous sentiments into meticulous verse, the homosocial bond between Garcilaso and Boscán permits a less restrictive form of expression. In this case, the poet delights in *verso suelto* because it represents the appropriate modern equivalent of Horace’s dactylic hexameter, a metrical form employed specifically for familiar letters (Rivers 64-66). Furthermore, Rivers also notes that, with respect to other classical writers, Horace was unique because his work was intended for a reader rather than for performance (19). By imitating the Horatian epistle, Garcilaso rejects the performativity of other verse forms and thus gives the impression of unaffected familiarity with Boscán.

Even though the “Epístola a Boscán” closely resembles the Horatian epistle, the epistolary genre was far from established in the Renaissance. Like the new lyric of sixteenth-century Spain, the identity of the verse epistle was being defined in contrast—and parallel—to verse satire and the elegy (Rivers 72). Garcilaso’s poem to Boscán thus incorporates a variety of elements, many of them overlapping with the elegy and satire. At the same time that the poet composes a letter to his friend, he takes a satirical approach to the “culta epístola” and implicitly criticizes its pretentious “estilo / presto, distinto, d’ornamento puro” (vv. 5-6). Garcilaso further departs from the learned epistle by complaining about France at the end of the poem, thereby eliminating any formality from his versified missive. The “vinos acedos” and “camareras feas” that trouble him, however, serve a greater purpose than simply to deride excessive formality in the epistle. In a particularly unpoetic way, Garcilaso uses the bitter wine and unattractive ladies as a bonding moment with Boscán, who likely would have commiserated with his friend over these disagreeable travel encounters. For Rivers, Garcilaso’s grievances “[establish] in Spanish a new level of discourse, as close to prose as versification will permit” (67). In both style and content, the end of the poem represents a new moment in the epistolary genre and, consequently, in the way two men could relate to one another through the written word. Garcilaso’s familiar “new level of discourse” thus offers a literary space through which male friendship can develop and be sustained.

Satire and informality aside, however, the “Epístola” also expresses deliberate appreciation for a friend. By using the familiar “vos” form to address Boscán, Garcilaso’s verse displays tendencies toward the Horatian elegy (Rivers 25). The poem thus oscillates between the epistle, based on friendship, and the elegy, which deals with the absence of a loved one (31). To be sure, Garcilaso’s words seem to extend beyond the mere courtesies of friendship and delve

into more profound feelings of *placer*, *amor*, and *deleite*. Curiously, as Mark Edward Clark has argued, Horace criticized the love elegies of his contemporaries because “expressions of complaint over a lost love arose out of an improper perspective on love, nature and the changing cycle of human life” (3). However, the feelings of endearment associated with the love elegy seem to fit the homosocial context of this particular poem, in which Garcilaso has not lost Boscán as a friend. Garcilaso’s language of friendship approaches that of love rhetoric, yet the elegiac nature of his verses seems to allow more permissiveness with regard to male affection. The competing—yet complementary—genres explored in the “Epístola” allow Garcilaso to experiment with an assortment of ideas and emotions about his relationship with Boscán while the poet simultaneously examines his own mode of expression.

Just as Garcilaso releases the reins of his rhetoric and metrical structure, he also loosens “a su placer la rienda / mucho más que al caballo, al pensamiento” (vv. 17-18). While his thoughts run freely, Garcilaso considers themes such as poetry and the nature of friendship. The candor with which the poet composes his missive not only provides a means for expressing affection, but it also represents an escape from the artifice of the court, thus allowing their friendship to speak for itself in this poem. Nevertheless, Garcilaso paradoxically draws attention to the act of writing when speaking of his love for Boscán. He muses, “Es hacer el bien que el recibille; / así que amando me deleito, y / hallo que no es locura este deleite mío” (vv. 63-65). In this epistle, the act of loving is equivalent to that of writing because the poet offers his affection to Boscán in the form of penned words. Because it is better to give than to receive love, Garcilaso’s written affection becomes his “deleite.” Significantly, the poet conceives of their friendship as an unbroken bond, formed by their mutual “genio”:

El gusto y el placer que se me sigue

del vínculo d'amor, que nuestro genio,
 enredó sobre nuestros corazones,
 son cosas que de mí no salen fuera. (vv. 52-55)

In his 1580 *Anotaciones* to Garcilaso's works, Fernando de Herrera clarifies, "Genio es una virtud específica [...] El genio platónico es el que se ofrece a los ingenios divinos i se mete dentro para que descubran con su luz las intelecciones de cosas secretas, que escriben" (581). Boscán and Garcilaso, both enlightened by poetic *genio*, construct their friendship through verse. Despite the freedom that the *suelto* style offers to his expression of homosocial desire, Garcilaso bonds with his friend over their mutual ability to cultivate knowledge through artful poetry. Moreover, their *genio* weaves a "vínculo d'amor" over their hearts, and thus introduces the metaphor of friendship as a series of ties drawn with a poetic pen. The affective diction of the poem reveals that early modern male friendship is represented by a net cast much wider than modern non-erotic relationships. The poet employs words such as *amor*, *gusto*, *placer*, and *deleite*, which suggest emotional and physical intimacy, to form his bond with Boscán. The hyperbolic affection that Garcilaso expresses in this text unveils the process of creating and nourishing male friendship in the epistolary mode.

Intertwined with his discourse on poetry, Garcilaso's thoughts on male relationships in the "Epístola" appear to follow the precepts laid out in Antiquity, yet they also evolve to reflect modern Renaissance sensibilities. The narrator ponders:

Iba pensando y discurriendo un día
 a cuántos bienes alargó la mano
 el que del amistad mostró el camino,
 y luego vos, del amistad ejemplo,

os me ofrecéis en estos pensamientos,
 ...
 es que, considerando los provechos,
 las honras y los gustos que me vienen
 desta vuestra amistad, que en tanto tengo,
 ninguna cosa en mayor precio estimo
 ni me hace gustar del dulce estado
 tanto como el amor de parte mía. (vv. 28-41)

These verses echo Ciceronian mutual reciprocity and Aristotelian virtue through Garcilaso's description of Boscán's exemplary friendship in terms of the honors and pleasures that he receives in exchange for his love. Richard Helgerson reads this passage instead as evidence of an asymmetrical relationship between Garcilaso and Boscán, "a love that finds satisfaction not so much in reciprocity—there seems to be little expectation of that—but rather in its own expression" (61). I would argue, on the other hand, that these words do not reveal an asymmetry in the friendship so much as the poet's creation of an aesthetic of *sprezzatura* in giving. Baldassare Castiglione, whose work was undoubtedly familiar to Garcilaso through Boscán as the translator, defines *sprezzatura* in *Il Cortegiano* (1528) as a virtue with which a man "se encubra el arte y se muestre que, todo lo que se hace y se dice, se viene hecho de suyo sin fatiga y casi sin habello pensado" (107). Garcilaso's seemingly one-sided love for Boscán reflects Castiglione's view of courtly behavior: an ideal friend should offer his love "sin fatiga" and without any expectation of return. Just as the poet conceals the art and artifice of his composition with informal blank verse, he also strives to obscure the struggles of sustaining affective ties.

Garcilaso's view of friendship thus draws from classical theory, but it also adapts to fit the perspective of sixteenth-century Europe.

Although the "Epístola a Boscán" overflows with a sense of emotional closeness between the two friends, the poem reveals yet another facet of Renaissance friendship because it essentially depends on the physical distance that separates them. Since Garcilaso maintained an active military and intellectual life in Naples, he and Boscán spent most of their time apart and therefore developed an epistolary relationship. As Barry Weller explains:

While the ancient ideal of friendship expounded by Aristotle had offered men a living mirror of their lives, an extension of the psychological space of consciousness, the epistolary character of Renaissance friendship substituted a "memorial" mode, signifying at once the pathos of distance and distance overcome. The eternizing properties of written discourse compensate the lost immediacy and fluidity of a living friendship. (504)

Although friendship may have lost its temporal "immediacy" in the sixteenth century, the epistolary nature of friendship that Weller describes certainly provokes new concerns for personal relationships during the early modern period. For the Renaissance man, distance transforms social interactions, carrying them from instantaneous exchanges over to the realm of memory. Garcilaso's reminiscence of Boscán along his path to Naples allows him to forget past hardships and instead focus on "[el] discurso / del gusto y del ingenio" and Boscán's friendship (vv. 25-31). The poet's distance, rather than burdening the relationship with his friend, permits him to reflect and reinforce his love through lyric. The demands of Garcilaso's intellectual life in Naples thus do not stand between him and Boscán, despite absence. Instead, the friendship flourishes as the two connect with each other over their talent for poetic invention and pleasant

memories of past encounters. Contrary to Petrarchan love, distance is not an impediment to male friendship.

Garcilaso's military endeavors enabled him to explore a different mode of male friendship in verse. When he embarked on the Tunis expedition in 1535, Garcilaso was not joined by Boscán because of the latter's retirement from court (Helgerson 60). The harrowing experience of the Conquest of Tunis provides the frame for Garcilaso's exploration of male friendship in his sonnet "A Boscán desde la Goleta." At the beginning of this sonnet, the poet experiments with an alternative kind of friendship formed through martial masculinity.

Garcilaso's sonnet begins by invoking the Roman Empire:

Boscán, las armas y el furor de Marte,
 que con su propria fuerça el africano
 suelo regando, hacen que el romano
 imperio reverdezca en esta parte

han reduzido a la memoria el arte
 y el antiguo valor italiano,
 por cuya fuerza y valerosa mano
 Africa se aterró de parte a parte

Aquí donde el romano encendimiento,
 donde el fuego y la llama licenciosa
 sólo el nombre dejaron a Cartago,

vuelve y revuelve amor mi pensamiento,
 hiere y enciende el alma temerosa,
 y en llanto y en ceniza me deshago. (vv. 1-14)

The *octavo* suggests that Garcilaso plans to share an imperial victory with his friend and connect with him over the rebirth of Rome in La Goleta. Similar to the “Epístola a Boscán,” this poem brings forth the concept of memory. In this case, the revival of Italian art and military achievement are to be remembered, whereas in the epistle, the bonds of friendship and *genio* are glorified in the poet’s memory. Although Boscán’s and Garcilaso’s mutual *genio* played a significant role in the renewal of Italianate verse, this model of friendship extends beyond the two poets and imagines bonds formed not by their literary talent but by their identity as Spanish men participating in an imperial conquest.

Richard Helgerson posits that, by writing in Castilian verse, “Garcilaso and Boscán are of necessity made the companions of empire” (7). Indeed, the epic theme of this poem echoes a more traditional model of masculinity that celebrates “el furor de Marte,” yet the sonnet form in typical Garcilaso fashion, including a conflicted poetic voice and a powerful *volta*, challenges previous masculine values. For José María Rodríguez García, “Garcilaso reflects on the writing of poetry as he evokes a war that he alternately glorifies and erases from his consciousness” (152). Though the poet rejoices in the leveling of Africa at the valorous hand of Rome, he laments that imperial flames have erased everything in the city except its name: Carthage. Furthermore, the fact that the word *Cartago* in the first tercet corresponds in both rhyme and position to *deshago* suggests that Garcilaso identifies not with the victor but with the vanquished. As a topic of much scholarly commentary, the poet’s identification with Dido has been read as a cry of abandonment. Helgerson suggests that Garcilaso, bereft of Isabel Freire and separated

from his best friend,⁹ assumes the position of the abandoned lover because Boscán has stayed behind with his wife instead of joining his friend in battle (60). In the “Epístola a Boscán,” distance does not strain the ties of friendship, yet in this sonnet Garcilaso changes his tone. Though by the end of the poem affection resurges in the poetic voice’s memory just as in the epistle, Rodríguez García points out that “love returns to Garcilaso’s consciousness at the moment he is close to undertaking an epic composition” (162). Therefore, victory, unlike poetry, has little meaning for the poet when his friend is not by his side. Instead, Garcilaso is alone and jealous because his friend’s love and attention are with his wife rather than in La Goleta with the poet. Ultimately, this paradigm of courtly friendship that Garcilaso undertakes fails utterly with the poet’s own undoing. Engulfed by abandonment, jealousy, and hardship, the poetic voice annihilates himself and his affective ties on a pyre of imperial achievement.

One sonnet written by Boscán after Garcilaso’s demise further emphasizes that the friendship between these two poets ultimately fails in war and in death. The first stanza eulogizes Garcilaso’s success:

Garcilasso, que al bien siempre aspiraste
y siempre con tal fuerça le seguiste,
que a pocos passos tras él corriste,
en todo enteramente l’alcançaste. (vv.1-4)

In other words, Garcilaso has “en todo enteramente” fulfilled his virtue through death in battle. From an outside perspective, he died as a hero for the greater good of the Spanish empire, yet Boscán too feels abandoned when his friend leaves him behind on Earth. He cries, “Dime: ¿por qué tras ti no me llevaste / cuando de ‘sta mortal tierra partiste?” (vv. 5-6). When the late poet

⁹ Isabel Freire was the alleged inspiration for Garcilaso’s Petrarchan poetry as the result of his unrequited love for her.

ascends to the heavens and leaves Boscán “en esta baxeza,” it is no longer Garcilaso who is undone through abandonment. Boscán reassures himself that if his friend had been given a choice, Garcilaso would have at least said a proper goodbye. Through the use of the subjunctive in the sextet, however, these mournful verses recognize that Boscán cannot receive a response from Garcilaso. Death thus concludes the epistolary and poetic nature of their friendship and Boscán is left alone with no one to share his *genio*. In the Renaissance courtier’s dichotomy of arms versus letters, the new lyric of the sixteenth century allowed male alliances to flourish despite the physical distance between friends. Nevertheless, the military aspect of a man’s life at court strained social bonds because of the pressure of conquest and the inevitable threat of death. For Garcilaso and Boscán, and especially for their friendship, it was decidedly preferable to make love, not war.

Garcilaso’s *Ode ad florem Gnidi* also deals with themes of war and friendship, but in this case, the poetic voice speaks on behalf of a lovesick friend. Daniel Heiple attributes this change in perspective to the influence of Garcilaso on Bernardo Tasso’s adaptation of the Horatian ode to the vernacular (339). Concerned more with the greater social good than with the poet’s individual feelings, the Horatian ode provides a social background to the poem and serves as a model for Garcilaso’s plea to help his male companion. Garcilaso’s early commentators suggested a biographical reading of this ode. The sixteenth-century Spanish humanist Francisco Sánchez de las Brozas (El Brocense) argued that Garcilaso’s unnamed friend represented Fabio Galeota and his love interest was Violante Sanseverino. Fernando de Herrera, on the other hand, believed the two referred to Mario Galeota and Catalina Sanseverino, but modern critics have settled on Mario Galeota and Violante Sanseverino (356). For the purpose of this study, I will refer to the friend as Mario and the Neapolitan lady as Violante, though, as I suggested in

Garcilaso's poetry to Boscán, it remains possible—and necessary—to read compositions directed toward a historical reader with careful attention to their artifice.

As in the “Epístola a Boscán,” Garcilaso begins this ode by drawing attention to his poetic style and invoking the musicality of his verse:

Si de mi baja lira
 tanto pudiese el son, que en un momento
 aplacase la ira
 del animoso viento
 y la furia del mar y el movimiento
 ...
 no pienses que cantado
 sería de mí, hermosa flor de Gnido,
 el fiero Marte airado,
 a muerte convertido,
 de polvo y sangre y de sudor teñido. (vv. 1-15)

The poetic voice wishes that his “baja lira,” referring both to the lyre and to the lira verse form, would calm the wind and the sea's fury like Orpheus and his musical instruments. The association of poetry with music, as well as its ability to control nature, establishes the narrator's authority over the intended reader-listener of the *Ode ad florem Gnidi*, Violante Sanseverino. Garcilaso's *lira* is not “baja” in a humble sense, but the word is used ironically because although lyrical poetry was considered a lesser verse form than epic poetry, the poet attributes great power to his instrument through false modesty.¹⁰ Clearly, Garcilaso is capable of writing epic verse, but

¹⁰ Bienvenido Morros points out that the adjective *baja* does not connote humility because a humble style of verse would not fit with the genre of the Horatian ode (160).

in this instance, perhaps the female addressee is unworthy of such effort. Thus, in organizing a poem on behalf of his friend, Garcilaso first builds his authorial voice by referring to his own poetic style, an opening typical of the Horatian ode. In the “Epístola,” Garcilaso points to his lack of artifice when writing to Boscán in order to promote an aesthetic of intimacy between two male friends. Here, however, he chooses to emphasize his possibilities for poetic craftiness—with a hint of self-mockery—when addressing a lady whom he deems a threat to Mario and his friendship. Throughout this poem, Garcilaso draws from Castiglione’s Renaissance views on love and friendship. As a dialogue in which men unite to discuss the ideal courtier, Castiglione’s text reaffirms a tradition of men uniting to complain about love and women. Although young men may be pardoned for sexual misdeeds since they suffer “trabajos y congojas,” beautiful women “son causa de muchos males, enemistades, guerras, muertes y otros cien mil daños” (426-28). Because women wreak so much destruction, Castiglione and Garcilaso allow for male homosocial bonding over female cruelty.

After Garcilaso boasts of his lyrical skill in the first two stanzas, an ironic side-effect of his playful self-deprecation, he holds Violante responsible for Mario’s failings as a soldier and friend. As a result of his erotic fascination with Violante, Mario has been neglecting his duties. Although surrounded by the “polvo y sangre” of war, he is only stirred by Violante’s beauty and “el aspereza de que [está] armada” (vv. 15-25). Heiple articulates the role reversal between Violante and Mario by arguing that Venus, who is supposed to be soft and embody love, takes on the characteristics of the hard, warrior-like Mars, who is now debilitated (361). In Garcilaso’s estimation, Violante follows in the tradition of women who allegedly sap the energy of warriors with their destructive sexuality (382-92). As evidenced in Lyons’s study on the poetry of friendship in France, women were sometimes perceived as thieves who robbed a part of the

lover's soul and rendered him incomplete. Similarly, Violante as Venus has fused with Mario—Mars—in a sexual encounter, leaving him deprived of his essence. Not only has Mario become weak, but Garcilaso also likens his friend to a captive, “al remo condenado, / en la concha de Venus amarrado” (vv.34-35). Rather than being taken prisoner of war, Mario is ensnared by his desire for Violante and symbolically by her female anatomy, and he consequently spends most of his time crying instead of picking up a sword to defend his fellow soldiers.¹¹ Moreover, Mario has not only lost interest in arms, but also in letters. In place of the usual melodies from his “cithera sonante,” the scorned lover now only produces sounds of weeping. Mario is emasculated not just as a result of his apathy toward war, but especially because his musical instrument remains silent and he therefore does not participate in artistic activity with the poetic voice. Particularly in this ode, Garcilaso celebrates poetry as a uniquely masculine art and implies that Violante has silenced Mario's cithara and, by correlation, his pen. Throughout his *liras*, the poet plays on the conflict between reason (arms and letters) and sexual passion when he complains that his friend has been incapacitated by Violante and her body. Here, passion proves to be the adversary of a male alliance dependent on reason in order to survive and flourish. In his epistle to Boscán, Garcilaso promotes a vision of male friendship built on intellect and poetry, rather than on the praise and privileging of heteroerotic desire. To be sure, their relationship suffers in the *La Goleta* sonnet when Boscán chooses to stay at home with his wife instead of accompanying his friend on the Tunis expedition. Similarly, Mario is on the verge of abandoning his friends in battle and in verse, not with physical absence like Boscán, but with his emotional preference for a woman and the effeminizing effects of desiring her. This time, however, the poetic voice does not threaten to extinguish himself in the ashes of Pyrrhic victory. Instead, by directing his

¹¹ Fernando de Herrera notes the erotic pun in the “concha de Venus”: “Fingen que Venus va en concha por el mar, dejando la causa principal, que no es tan honesta que la permita nuestra lengua; porque el mantenimiento de este género conmueve el incentive de la lujuria” (quoted in Heiple 362).

grievances toward Violante's body and her sexuality, Garcilaso portrays women and heteroerotic love as a direct threat to male homosocial bonds, poetic creation, and to their military project in Naples.

In order to force Violante to surrender, Garcilaso again invokes classical mythology as an instrument of authority. He advises, "Hágate temerosa / el caso de Anajárete," a reference to the maiden turned to marble as punishment for rejecting her lover, Iphis (vv. 66-70). The narrator thus reminds the interlocutor of the myth's disturbing outcome in which Anaxarete was forced to gaze upon her unrequited lover's hanged corpse while her body fossilizes to stone. However, the poet's threat extends beyond the literal reading of the Anaxarete myth and into the symbolic realm of poetry. He warns Violante:

baste que tus perfectas
obras y hermosura a los poetas
den inmortal materia,
sin que también en verso lamentable
celebren la miseria
d'algún caso notable
que por ti pase, triste, miserable. (vv. 104-10)

These verses unveil the two sides of Violante's role as a "blanda musa." On the one hand, her beauty will be immortalized in literary production, but on the other, her misdeeds also will be etched indelibly in verse. In both cases, the muse is not equipped with a voice to supplement her physical beauty or to defend herself against men's accusations. Anaxarete may be cast physically in stone in Antiquity, but Garcilaso's Renaissance reworking of the myth petrifies Violante's reputation with the immortalizing power of poetry. Although intended as a mere threat, the poet

in fact has already carried out the punishment by maligning Violante in this particular ode. In a broader sense, this poem unveils a deeper narrative about the gendered power of the pen. Scholars of women's history, such as Giselda Bock and Mary Spongberg, have consistently pointed to the masculinist discourse of history and its exclusion of women until relatively recently. Garcilaso's pen and lyre, as instruments of immortality, embody the notion that men hold command of the written word and by extension, history. The absurd premise of this poem—that Violante's withholding sexual favors from Mario is harming the community—complicates the tone. Fluctuating between parody of the Horatian ode and sincere aggression, the poem treats the topic of female intrusion in a different way than the *La Goleta* sonnet. In both, however, women and their sexuality may pose a threat to friendship between men, but they are ultimately powerless to win the battle of wits in poetry when their male counterparts control the pen.

The theme of friendship and the female intruder in epistolary poetry, however, is not unique to Garcilaso. Francisco de Aldana (1537-1577), a Valencian-born poet raised in the court of Florence, has been neglected by scholars for the most part, but he enjoyed considerable popularity during his own time (Walters 1-2). Like Garcilaso, Aldana performed active military service from 1557-1577, though many of his compositions were lost in the war. The collections we have recovered, nevertheless, can be attributed to the efforts of Aldana's brother, Cosme, who published much of his work (Crawford 51-52). Several of Aldana's epistles treat the topic of friendship and love, among them the *Carta a Galanio*, a blank-verse missive in which Aldana adopts the pastoral name Aldino to address his lovesick friend. The poetic voice opens the letter by exploring the depth of his friendship with Galanio and emphasizing intellectual activity as a "virtud fantástica del seso" (vv. 30). Aldana then dedicates the majority of the poem to Galanio's broken relationship with Merisa, first outlining how her letter to Galanio makes him feel, then

comparing love to a battlefield, and finally convincing Galanio that Merisa's words must be sincere. After offering his friend advice for getting past heartbreak and putting down the pen, Aldana changes his mind and writes a scathing postscript that instructs Galanio on how to address the cruel lady. Similar to the *Ode ad florem Gnidi*, this poem focuses on a woman whose disdain is destroying a friend and allows for male bonding over her cruelty. In this case, nevertheless, Aldana does not write to Merisa directly and instead chooses to speak to her through Galanio. As will be explored, this poet too bonds with his friend over the alleged evils of female desire and silences Merisa's voice by the end of the postscript.

Aldana's expression of male friendship at the beginning of the *Carta a Galanio* echoes Montaigne's belief that the souls of friends "se meslent et confondent l'une en l'autre, d'un mélange si universel qu'elles effacent et ne retrouvent plus la couture qui les a jointes" (224). The poet similarly theorizes that Aldino and Galanio "dos nombres son y sola un alma vive / en Galanio y Aldino solamente" (vv. 1-5). As one soul in two bodies, Aldino and Galanio represent the Renaissance ideal of male bonding. D. Gareth Walters identifies this epistolary trope as a Neoplatonic union of souls, while still recognizing the Aristotelian and Horatian inspiration of the poem. For Walters, Aldana shifts from an Aristotelian view of friendship based on "virtud" to a Neoplatonist perspective of "verdad" in the *Carta a Galanio* (83-84). This blend of philosophical viewpoints introduces a poet who values male relationships both for their virtue and for their ability to transcend the body to exist on a spiritual level. To be sure, Aldino recounts an almost religious experience in which Galanio appears to him as an angel. During this encounter, the poetic voice relies on his memory to maintain ties with Galanio:

Entonces la memoria (tesorera
de aquella y de esta inmaterial riqueza)

del ángulo interior donde hospedeas
 las desamadas y amistades formas
 según la voluntad se las ofrece,
 como tocada fué, como la hiere
 relámpago de luz tan repentino. (vv. 62-68)

Here, Aldino alludes to the Neoplatonic view of memory in which the mind draws light from the cosmos to form images, in this case of former love interests and present friendships. His reference to memory as the treasurer of “inmaterial riqueza” reveals not only Platonic idealism but also the more profound implication that his memories are infallible because they arrive in the form of “relámpago de luz” from the realm of absolute truth. The consequences of Aldino’s understanding of memory in this epistle suggest that, on the one hand, the images of Galanio as an angel undeniably imply perfect male friendship. On the other, however, memories of “las desamadas” are equally irrefutable and the women of these failed relationships cannot defend themselves against the lasting power of Aldino’s memory. The Neoplatonic influence on the poet’s model of friendship thus reinforces the homosociality of the poem; male friends can exist as one soul in two bodies, but women, relegated forever to the “desamadas” of the male mind, cannot compete with the angel.

Much like Garcilaso, Aldana reaches beyond his theories on friendship and dedicates a number of verses to displaying the significance and power of knowledge as a whole, yet he chooses to connect intellectually with Galanio quite differently from Garcilaso and Boscán. The speaker explains at length the emotional and corporeal damage that Galanio’s love misfortune has wrought on him as a bystander, specifically feeling “de entrambos ojos / caliente humor buscar salida al aire / de estos mis ojos nunca a tal usados” (vv. 78-80). Despite his apparently

visceral reaction to a friend's lost love, Aldino launches into a pedantic discourse on Galenic theories to explain his tears. Rather than focus on the topic at hand—Galanio's severed ties with Merisa—he seizes the opportunity to remind his friend about humoral imbalance and its physiological effects on the body. Walters adds that the poet “assumes the role of the experienced, worldly, slightly skeptical adviser who counsels the unfortunate Galanio by a blend of specific observation and more general philosophizing” (86). As the keeper of knowledge in the relationship, Aldino does not bond with Galanio through shared intellectual activity like Garcilaso and Boscán. Even though the poet uses his enlightenment to offer advice in place of initiating a scholarly dialogue with his friend, he creates an aesthetic of generosity analogous to Garcilaso's desire to give love rather than receive it. In the present epistle, though the modern reader may perceive Aldino's philosophic musings as condescension toward the addressee, the poet instead veils his affection for Galanio in intellectual discourse and friendly guidance.

After successfully fighting off his tears, the poetic voice digresses to themes of war and eventually compares heterosexual love to a battle in mythological terms. Aldino describes the violence of combat with one man taking up his lance, another his sword, and “ese otro el instrumento / qué relámpago, rayo y trueno junto / echa de sí con daño de mil vidas” (vv. 187-89). Likewise, Cupid brandishes his arrows “para después herir de lleno en lleno / vuestra alma y penetrar de claro en claro” and love thus becomes a “lucha no entendida” (vv. 262-68). In war, a thousand lives may be lost for a greater cause, but Cupid's amorous attacks mortally wound men's souls for no good reason. Furthermore, Aldino draws attention to Venus's “furia a Marte” and the resulting new cosmic order “por quien la universal va gobernada, / un espiritual confuso al mundo / y un puesto en su lugar distinto Caos” (vv. 282-84). In this poem, Venus's implied sexual fury condemns Mars to a fate comparable to his defeat in Garcilaso's *Ode ad florem*

Gnidi. Female sexuality drains the warrior of his martial energy and gives rise to chaos by reversing masculine and feminine roles. With the cosmos in gendered disorder, Merisa “esperó por esta vía / otro Cupido ser con arco y flechas” (vv. 297-98). The lady adopts the masculine role of Cupid to declare a love war on the poet’s unwitting friend. In a broader sense, Aldana employs bellicose imagery and mythological allusions to help Galanio understand his emotional pain and the danger women pose to male homosociality. Although Aldino does not charge the lady with interrupting male friendship in the same way that Garcilaso accuses Violante, the poet perceives Merisa’s disloyalty toward Galanio as a direct affront to his own heart. Both wounded, Aldino and Galanio—one soul in two bodies—remain united in friendship, but Merisa is cast as the offending outsider.

Aldino compares Merisa to Cupid, yet his characteristic bow and arrow merely symbolize the beloved’s true weapons of choice: pen and paper. Through her love letter to Galanio, Merisa is represented in the unusual role of female writer and Aldino becomes the reader with the power of interpretation. The poet’s textual analysis reveals:

Así no puede ser que no sintiese
 Merisa lo que escribe que es de modo
 que de necesidad antes de escrito
 fué la misma Verdad la notadora,
 como suele decirse: que a la estatua
 precede la materia de que es hecha. (vv. 312-17)

As I have argued in the “Epístola a Boscán,” Garcilaso gives the impression of sincerity when writing to his friend, but he celebrates their shared ability to create poetic artifice. Aldino’s reading of Merisa’s letter suggests that she is not capable of such passionate words without

equally passionate feelings toward her lover. Like a statue containing only the marble from which it is created, Merisa's words emerge from already existing material: her true feelings. In the male poet's Neoplatonic view of truth, women especially do not possess the literary skills to create art and artifice with their own original material. When Aldino dismisses Merisa's authority over her pen, he reassures Galanio that his beloved truly adored him and thus mitigates the threat she poses to Galanio's heart. Because Aldino plays the role of literary critic when writing about her letter, his interpretation of Merisa's words is the last voice to be heard. Ultimately, the woman cannot defend herself against Aldino's reading of her own text.

Upon offering Galanio the advice of dressing in fine silk and eating well in order to overcome his broken heart, Aldino puts his pen to rest but later decides to have one last word. In his postscript, the poet launches a ventriloquistic attack on Merisa through Galanio and accuses her of being unfaithful. Though Aldino previously mentions Merisa's steadfastness ("las raíces / en voluntad plantadas amorosa" [vv.368-69]), he now implores Galanio to pronounce, "tan castigada estás de tu pecado" (vv. 584). Since the pastoral version of Merisa is allegedly involved with another shepherd, Aldino uses her infidelity to explore further the perils of female sexuality. From the poet's perspective, his friend has been utterly ruined at the hands of his beloved and should inform her, "Ya que tu condición fué tan mudable, / ya que mi voluntad fué tan constante, / ya que no pude reparar mi daño" (vv. 555-57). The irreparable damage he suffers, reminiscent of a woman's lost virginity, results in a gendered role reversal between lover and beloved. Galanio must therefore charge his lady with "la pérdida inmortal de [su] inocencia" (vv. 592), but even more than a simple loss of innocence, the scorned lover has been emasculated by Merisa's cruelty. Much like Mario's silent cithara in Garcilaso's ode, Galanio suffers from his "líricas y dulces cantilenas / en ronca voz de dolorosa endecha" (vv. 625-29). No longer able to

carry a tune, Galanio's instrument—his voice—is impotent. Aldino furthermore launches into the following enigmatic lines: “no puede más conmigo la inconstante / que la estéril ceniza en poco humo; / cual poca estopa en Etna me redroxo” (vv. 631-33). The sterile ash ejected from the volcano Etna evokes images of impotence and exhaustion and reflects Galanio's powerlessness as a lover to hold Merisa's interest. When he encourages the interlocutor to fire these harsh words at Merisa, Aldino pairs his complaints over Galanio's frail state with concern for his friend while simultaneously railing against the catastrophic power of female sexuality.

In part, the epistle assigns Merisa erotic and verbal power as both Galanio's seductress and the author of the passionate love letter addressed to him. Yet, the postscript uncovers the danger she presents to male friendship and thus attempts to remove her authority through a discourse of bodily possession and literary silence. When Aldino, still through Galanio's hypothetical speech, mentions “un nuevo sucesor de [sus] riquezas” (vv. 642), he figures Merisa's body as a material object to be passed from one man to the next. The poetic voice inquires, “¿Qué te faltó, Merisa, en mi cuidado / para que ajena boca y mano ajena / entrase en posesión de mis tesoros?” (vv. 669-71). These sexually charged verses object to the fact that another man has his hands in Galanio's figurative treasures, but even more harshly, he denounces the lady's purported ingratitude:

...¿Pues cómo en hora breve,
 En breve punto—¡ay Dios!—pudiste tanto,
 Merisa ingrata, que tan caras prendas
 fuesen duro olvido sepultadas? (vv. 686-89)

These verses clearly allude to Garcilaso's sonnet “Oh dulces prendas,” in which he speaks to his deceased lady's love gifts: “juntas estáis en la memoria mía, / y con ella en mi muerte

conjuradas” (vv. 3-4). Garcilaso’s pain surges from the memory of his beloved, yet Merisa’s “prendas” evoke images of death for entirely different purposes. Galanio’s lavish love tokens should have sufficed to hold Merisa’s attention rather than being quickly thrust in a forgotten tomb. This passage stands out because it implies not only male ownership of the woman’s body, but also the assumption that it can be bought with expensive gifts. Merisa’s particular brand of ingratitude is thus sexual; from the poet’s view, she has committed a grievous infraction by not reciprocating his friend’s gifts with unlimited access to her body. In the greater context of the poem, Aldino’s passionate appropriation of Galanio’s voice to protest volatile female sexuality suggests that the poet has become erotically entangled with Merisa vicariously through his friend’s pain. The woman’s intrusion and sudden withdrawal from Galanio has offended both men, who represent, as Aldana describes earlier in the letter, the same person with two separate names. Because Merisa threatens their homosocial relationship, Aldana employs metaphors of treasure and possession both to bemoan her transgression and to limit her subjectivity.

As a final punishment for hurting his friend, Aldino condemns Merisa to authorial silence analogous to Garcilaso’s threat to Violante in the *Ode ad florem Gnidi*. Instead of turning her to stone, however, Aldana elects to malign her reputation in this epistle and forbids her ever to speak Galanio’s name. He cries, “Antes yo muera que Merisa nunca / nombre Galanio ni él hombre Merisa /... ¡Vete pues, desleal, sin más nombrarme!” (vv. 695-98). Even more than silencing her with regard to his friend’s name, Aldino has already muted her voice when his reading of her letter to Galanio becomes the enduring interpretation of her meaning. At the end of the postscript, however, the poet sentences Merisa to social oblivion by removing her from both his and Galanio’s collective memory. The speaker announces, “yo verdaderamente me creía

/ Galanio mismo ser” (vv. 713-14), again emphasizing that the two have fused into one person and that Merisa’s misdeed destroys both of them. Inflamed by their mutual pain, Aldino advises:

Lo que me queda agora deciros
 es que borréis del todo la memoria
 de esa ingrata y cruel, con fuerza haceros.
 Fué muy pesada burla la que os hizo,
 fué ciertamente un grave desacato
 de esa mudable y mal regida hembra:
 dejadla, pues, correr a la fortuna. (vv. 718-24)

Whereas Garcilaso decides that Violante’s disdain will be immortalized by poets to come, Aldino pleads with his friend to purge the ungrateful Merisa from his mind and in so doing, condemns her to oblivion. He thus erases not only the female voice, but her entire existence as far as the two men are concerned. The final verse, “dejadla, pues, correr a la fortuna,” serves to comfort Galanio, as well as the poet, because it implies that if they sever ties with Merisa, her fate will ultimately punish her atrocities. Undeterred—and even strengthened—by the damage that Aldana has suffered vicariously through Galanio, male friendship triumphs at the end of the epistle. With the woman’s cruel love arrows successfully redirected, the homosocial relationship between Aldana and Galanio can be left to regenerate.

In the epistolary poems explored in this chapter, Garcilaso and Aldana experiment with various modes of male bonding based on courtly and martial masculinity. In the “Epístola a Boscán,” Garcilaso fabricates a poetics of male friendship with *sprezzatura* and outward sincerity, though he celebrates their shared skill in veiling intellectual thought beneath complex verse forms. “A Boscán desde la Goleta” and the *Ode ad florem Gnidi*, on the other hand, reveal

that war and women interrupt male homosociality, while simultaneously allowing them to commiserate over female cruelty. The sonnet to Boscán recounts the failure of friendship between men when one abandons the other for a woman during a military conflict and induces the poetic voice's self-elimination. When Garcilaso directly addresses the lady responsible for Mario's shortcomings in war and friendship in the ode, however, he amplifies his poetic artifice and employs it as a weapon to force Violante into silence and erotic submission. With the female body figured as a site of destruction for male friendship, Garcilaso assumes the power of literary production to preserve men's sacred bond. Similarly, Aldana connects with Galanio on a spiritual level, which he reinforces by offering philosophical and practical advice. When a woman interrupts their seamless relationship, Aldana denies her ability to produce insincere love rhetoric, tropes her body as a treasure to possess, and erases her from consciousness. From classical Antiquity to Montaigne, Garcilaso, and Aldana, male writers have exercised their intellectual talents not only to deny the possibility of friendship between women but also to portray female sexuality as a danger to their homosocial community. Female authors were thus tasked with proving their poetic abilities within a masculine tradition, as well as defending the legitimacy and emotional depth of their same-sex friendships.

Chapter 2

Embodying Laura: The Poetics of Friendship and the Female Body in Sor Violante del Cielo and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz

From the perspective of several poets of sixteenth-century Spain, women did not hold power of the pen. Indeed, Garcilaso de la Vega and Francisco de Aldana employed their literary skills to intimidate women who entered male-dominated spaces. Although Garcilaso, Aldana, and other theorists such as Montaigne believed that women were essentially unable to form friendships or to display their talents within the confines of the Petrarchan mode, the female poets of early modern Europe revised these narratives in their lyric. Gordon Braden explains that female participation in Petrarchan tradition was a struggle and female literary activity “carried a sexual taint” (120). Yet, despite these difficulties, women were certainly involved in Petrarchan convention (120-21). For instance, the sixteenth-century French poet Louise Labé combines both Neoplatonic eroticism and restraint when she implores her lover, “Baise m’encor, rebaise moy et baise...Jouissons nous l’un de l’autre à notre aise” (cited in Braden 117). However, she then cries, “Tousjours suis mal, vivant discrettement” (118). For Braden, “The imaginative enclave of Petrarchan love is not being dismissed but rather made the site of a heightened form of erotic solace” (118). By reveling in the thought more than in the act of sexual consummation, the poetic voice both imitates Petrarchan convention and rewrites it with a feminine perspective. Rather than merely replacing a male speaker with a woman in an identical expression of sexual desire, Labé’s poetic self explores the social confines of female sexuality, while still revealing that women experience erotic passion. Consequently, poetic convention did not always silence

women; instead, many female writers picked up their own pens to explore—and to fight against—Petrarchan tradition.

Scholarship has recently directed its attention to early modern women poets in the Iberian Peninsula, examining their anxiety of authorship and observing the twisting of traditional tropes and rhetoric present in the verses of their Petrarchan fathers. As Amanda Powell observes, “Like their counterparts elsewhere in early modern Europe, Spanish and Portuguese women poets redirected Petrarchan conventions in order to critique gender inequities and to discard the mute, passive role assigned to women on and off the page” (“Multiple Voicings” 51). One of these seventeenth-century Iberian female poets, Sor Violante del Cielo (1601-1693), a Lisbon-born Dominican nun, published various books of poetry, some of which include love poems written to both men and women. These compositions often demonstrate a kind of poetic ventriloquism through multiple, ambiguously-gendered poetic voices.

By taking up her pen against—while simultaneously adhering to—convention, Sor Violante writes herself into a poetic world from which she would otherwise be excluded. She displaces masculine authority by inverting the lover-beloved paradigm, transforming the man into the object of love, while the woman becomes an active subject. The male poet’s monopoly on desire is further upset when Sor Violante replaces her male love object with a woman, thus introducing a homosocial or homoerotic element into her poetry. Through Sapphic verse,¹² Sor Violante creates a world in which men do not always play a role, ironically within a context where they traditionally dominate. Therefore, by examining the poems of Sor Violante written to a female addressee, I will determine the poet’s ideal model of friendship between women and how this paradigm plays out in her *romances*. Furthermore, I will explore female affection in the poetry of the Mexican nun Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1651-1695). In doing so, I ultimately hope

¹² See Dugaw and Powell, “Baroque Sapphic Poetry.”

to place these poets within a tradition of early modern women's networks, which may have strengthened and invigorated the female voice in the face of patriarchal suppression.

Renaissance poets like Garcilaso and Boscán, as I argued in chapter 1, occasionally put aside Petrarchan tropes to celebrate male friendship. However, male authors for the most part neglected female friendship as a literary subject. Montaigne, for example, went so far as to deny that women were even capable of friendship. Ironically, Montaigne's views on erotic love and friendship can nevertheless illuminate Sor Violante's sonnet to Belisa, who is presumed to represent the Portuguese playwright and scholar Bernarda Ferreira de Lacerda (1596-1644). Montaigne explains, "En l'amitié, c'est une chaleur générale et universelle, tempérée au demeurant et égale, une chaleur constante et rassise, toute douceur et polissure, qui n'a rien d'âpre et de poignant" (221). In her sonnet, Sor Violante unveils a model of companionship advocating the gentleness and constant warmth that Montaigne observes between friends:

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

Es la amistad un lícito decoro
 que se guarda en lo ausente y lo presente,
 y con que de un amigo el otro siente
 la tristeza, el pesar, la risa, el lloro.

No se llama amistad la que es violenta,

sino la que es conforme simpatía,
de quien lealtad hasta la muerte ostenta.

Ésta la amistad es que hallar quería,
ésta la que entre amigas se sustenta,
y ésta, Belisa, en fin, la amistad mía.

In the first quatrain, the poet defines the nature of female friendship with the metaphor of a treasure valued much more than silver and gold. Sor Violante's reference to precious metals evokes their common usage in Petrarchan verse to emblemize female beauty. Garcilaso consistently compares women's hair to gold, particularly in Sonnet XIII when he describes Daphne's "cabellos qu'el oro escurecían" and in Sonnet XXIII, in which the addressee's hair "en la vena / del oro se escogió" (vv. 5-6). In "Mientras por competir," Luis de Góngora (1561-1627) too writes that burnished gold, in competition with his lady's locks, "al sol relumbra en vano" (vv. 2). In these sonnets, gold is employed as a metaphor for a woman's youthful but transitory beauty, which inevitably fades, in Góngora's words, to silver, shadow, and nothingness: "no sólo en plata o viola troncada / se vuelva, mas tú y ello juntamente / en tierra, en humo, en polvo, en sombra, en nada" (vv. 12-14). When the beloved's hair turns to silver and her violet lips wilt, she is no longer valuable without her beauty. Sor Violante's sonnet thus reclaims the gold and silver of masculine tradition by transforming it from a metaphor of fleeting physical allure to one that expresses not only their value and splendor but also the idyllic permanence of female bonds.

Sor Violante explains, "Es la amistad un lícito decoro / que se guarda en lo ausente y lo presente." Sebastián de Covarrubias defines *decoro* as "el respeto y mesura que se debe tener delante de los mayores y personas graves." The poet's concept of friendship involves mutual

respect but also suggests certain emotional and physical boundaries that fall within the realm of permissiveness. Sor Violante insists that social decorum between friends is licit moderation, thereby distinguishing friendly affection from the illicit and frenetic bonds of erotic love. Furthermore, as with Garcilaso, physical distance ideally does not strain women's relationships. Rather than forgetting obligations to one's friend when she is away, the nun declares that the bonds between women hold even in absence. Just as true companionship is difficult to find, it is equally difficult to erase in Sor Violante's model of female affection. For the poet, friendship functions like a mirror "con que de un amigo el otro siente / la tristeza, el pesar, la risa, el lloro." In this stanza, Sor Violante seems to universalize friendship by employing the masculine form *amigo*. The poet also follows the advice of classical philosophers by suggesting equality and mutual reciprocity and she even conforms to Montaigne's view that friends are souls that "se mêlent et confondent l'une en l'autre, d'un mélange si universel qu'elles effacent et ne retrouvent plus la couture qui les a jointes" (224). This sonnet therefore suggests an intimacy that allows one woman to experience the emotions of the other, ideally forming two parts of the same soul. In keeping with humanist tradition, then, Sor Violante proposes that perfect friendship between women involves fulfilling one another's needs and remaining loyal unto death.

Aside from what female companionship should be, the poet outlines what it is not, that is, "no se llama amistad la que es violenta." Here, Sor Violante repudiates violent emotions, such as jealousy as described in male-authored texts about heterosexual love. By rejecting violence between friends, the poet rewrites masculine narratives about female bonds. Whereas Garcilaso and Aldana suggest female cruelty, Sor Violante contradicts the stereotype of spiteful women through her own poetics of female friendship. Paired with the significance of *decoro*, Sor Violante's dismissal of turbulent emotions in an ideal relationship resonates with Montaigne,

Garcilaso, and Aldana's views of courtly friendship. Sor Violante closes the sonnet by announcing that she had hoped to find such a pleasant bond with Belisa. However, the tone of the poem shifts surprisingly in the second tercet. The poetic voice passive-aggressively states, "ésta la amistad es que hallar quería." Despite the poet's discourse of female friendship based on equality and moderation, the last stanza reveals the possibility that the speaker did not find such a bond with Belisa and suggests that perhaps a balanced friendship between women is difficult, if not impossible to achieve.

Although the poet promotes the idea of a "toute douceur" paradigm of friendship with *decoro* and without violence in the sonnet to Belisa, her *romances* often include the physical and emotional cruelty that the sonnet posits as antithetical to friendship. The exchanges between the poetic voice and her female addressee in these poems often reflect eroticized violence and seem much more analogous to the intense craving, or at least emotional turbulence, of sexual love. Sor Violante's passionate language in poems addressed to women thus raises the question of whether this language represents a rhetorical appropriation of masculine discourse or rather alludes to same-sex erotic experiences or desires. Indeed, this question has occupied a number of scholars. Exploring Adrienne Rich's notion of the "lesbian continuum" in which the category of "lesbian" includes all forms of love between women, including female friendships, Adrienne Martín observes that it is impossible to know whether these friendships were intense emotional attachments or whether they indicated physical intimacy (67). However, she concludes that "whether or not overt sexual expression was a part of female friendships in the Golden Age, their intensity, passion, and seriousness should not be discounted" (68). Alternatively, Julián Olivares and Elizabeth S. Boyce support the posture that Sor Violante works within—and subverts—the construct of masculine authority by wielding her discourse within the convention of masculine

rhetoric (193). For Olivares and Boyce, Sor Violante does not express lesbian desire, but rather creates a purely literary poetic world in which “man is cast to the periphery, if not relegated to the role of the intruder” in order to liberate herself and other women from masculine superiority (196).

Diane Dugaw and Amanda Powell also note that women writers who were breaking into a male-dominated field often used homosocial friendship tropes in order to display their command of poetic discursive practices (“Sapphic Self-Fashioning”). Furthermore, it may be considered anachronistic to think of these poems in terms of our modern view of homosexuality, a concept that was not linguistically or conceptually codified until much the nineteenth century. Dugaw and Powell aptly describe the concern in dealing with Sapphic verse, stating that “we pilot perilously between a Scylla of distorting anachronism in applying our own categories where they do not fit, and a Charybdis of erasing or denying kindred friends and lovers whom we need and want to know” (145). Despite possible anachronism, Dugaw and Powell argue against the erasure of passion between women in decidedly Sapphic poetry, powerfully claiming that “encountering the homoerotic display and innuendo in the poems, one cannot avoid imagining women romancing women, and it is perverse to pretend that one can” (132). Therefore, although scholarship remains in disagreement over Sor Violante’s poetry and whether it demonstrates literary convention, friendship, or homoerotic passion, it will become evident that the feminine speaker in her poetry expresses an intense level of affect for other women, and that desire is just as relevant in these poems as in the Petrarchan mode.

Sor Violante’s *Romance XVI*, addressed to an unnamed woman, describes an emotionally violent homo-affective love triangle whose drama unfolds throughout the poem, as two women unite through their mutual rejection by the divine Nise. Dugaw and Powell have read

this poem as a burlesque twist on heterosexual jealousy in standard love lyric that, at the same time, unveils tensions particular to women's relationships ("Sapphic Self-Fashioning" 134). From the beginning, Sor Violante addresses the woman with the pronoun *vos* instead of dignifying her with a name. Carlos Benavides has pointed out that by the sixteenth century, the use of *vos* as a second-person pronoun implied three possibilities: an insult, a high level of intimacy, or elevated social status (613). But by the seventeenth century, *vos* was amassing derogatory connotations while in competition with *tú*. Sor Violante skirts insult and intimacy with this ambiguous pronoun. Her surprising choice of address for her beloved furthermore suggests an element of irony; these verses, which appear to imitate a Petrarchan love poem, are distorted into an imperfect, almost comical friendship reinforced by the speaker's playful disdain. She describes *vos* as an

amada prenda del alma
a cuyo raro valor
es fuerza que corta venga
la mayor estimación. (vv. 1-4)

Regarding her lady as a material possession from the beginning, the love triangle is apparently driven by a discourse of value. Although clearly a precious object, *vos* descends to the poetic voice from the "zona del cielo de Nise" (vv. 5), and as a result, her value exists because of her proximity to the third, truly desired woman. The speaker describes her friend as the

planeta que en el firmamento
tal vez en sí deseó,
por deber más que a sus luces
glorias a la imitación. (vv. 9-12).

In the poetic voice's estimation, *vos* owes her light to the reflection of the sun (Nise), because she merely reflects the divine celestial body. By portraying *vos* as a simple reflection of Nise, Sor Violante suggests that her new companion is a derivative version of a greater woman.

Noticing an ironic duality between the feminine speaker and her lady, she describes the two women as “diversas,” though their rejection balances them, and crafts a paradoxical situation in which love and hate are fused. The poetic voice, delighting in the addressee's misfortune, places herself in an elevated position of power. Yet, despite their differences, Nise as a yet higher power casts the two women down the same level with her rejection. The speaker further explains, “pues para vos fue castigo / lo que para mí favor” (vv. 23-24), thereby announcing that her pleasure lies in the pain and punishment of *vos*. That is, the addressee is now available for emotional or erotic purposes—and everything in between—because Nise no longer has any use for her. The sadistic poetic voice therefore establishes a hierarchy, elevating herself above *vos*, but remaining under the power of “la deidad más superior,” Nise.

Sor Violante's triangle of desire results in an erotic transaction between Nise and the female voice when she divulges, “Después de su pecho / a mi mano os trasladó” (vv. 49-50). Transferred as a material object from Nise's breast to the speaker's hand, *vos* acquires value from her origin as Nise's possession. Furthermore, she becomes eroticized in the verses, “Por reliquia os juzga el alma, / el deseo por favor” (vv. 57-58). In Garcilaso de la Vega's sonnet “Oh dulces prendas,” the poet laments the pain that his lady's love tokens evoke after her death. Sor Violante instead plays with the traditional Petrarchan trope of *prenda* to associate Nise's belongings or *favores*—*vos*—with more ironic and eroticized feelings. These verses figure the beloved as a relic, defined in a religious context as a part of the body or an object having been used or touched by the saint. Consequently, *vos*, having been used and touched by the divine

Nise for purposes left unspoken, is now quite valuable for the speaker because as a love token and a contact relic, her worth lies in her association with the object of the poetic voice's true desire. Finally, she adopts a more conciliatory tone toward *vos*, "Todo, en fin, sois, prenda mía; / pues hallo junto en vos, / si premios para el deseo, / lazos para el corazón" (vv. 61-64). With the affectionate epithet, "prenda mía," the poetic voice not only reaffirms that her love object is a prize for her desire, but she also playfully suggests she and *vos* should unite to enjoy their mutual status as rejects. The "lazos para el corazón," while referring to metaphorical affective ties, also allude to literal love tokens such as hair ribbons. Still, the *lazos* recall the morbid expression "Echado ya el lazo a la garganta," which Covarrubias glosses as "estando para ahorcarle" (s.v. "lazo"). The ominous—and perhaps erotically masochistic—imagery of the *lazos* in the last lines, as disturbing as it is humorous, unveils the complexity of women's affective bonds. Sor Violante ironically employs the emotional violence that she initially rejects in her sonnet in order to bond with *vos*. As Dugaw and Powell argue,

Just as formulaic vestimentary codes enabled some women to act transgressively as men, both in life and in literature, so the framework of petrarchan address allowed women poets to articulate a sapphic eroticism that functioned in a paradoxical combination of conservative and liberatory ways. ("Sapphic Self-Fashioning" 127)

The deliberate paradox of Petrarchan language thus permits female poets a mode of expression while simultaneously constraining them and complicating their affective rhetoric. The female relationships depicted in this *romance* therefore cannot rest on the equality and conformity required by the classical philosophers of friendship. Instead, through an imperfect triangle of rejection and affection, Sor Violante's vision of female relationships departs from models of

male friendship. Whereas Garcilaso de la Vega and Francisco de Aldana bond with their male addressees by intimidating the women who reject them, Sor Violante does not seek to berate Nise into submission as much as she attempts to maintain proximity through *vos*—and perhaps enjoy *vos* as well. The three women in this poem thus remain entangled sentimentally, if not erotically, even if their ties result in emotional chaos.

In *Romance XVII*, a violent struggle unfolds between two female friends, who, unlike the poetic voice, Nise, and *vos*, are perhaps excessively equal to one another. In her sonnet to Belisa, Sor Violante decrees that one friend should feel “la tristeza, el pesar, la risa, el lloro” of the other, yet the notion of reciprocal pain is pushed to the extreme in this poem. Sor Violante parodies the discourse of nuptial mysticism, reminiscent of San Juan de la Cruz’s “La noche oscura,” in which the hand of the night breeze wounds the neck of the beloved, sending her into ecstasy: “en [su] cuello hería / y todos [sus] sentidos suspendía” (vv. 34-35). Instead of the breeze, however, love’s arrows become Menandra’s weapon of choice, but the speaker advises her, “pues cuando me tiras flechas, / hallas en ti las heridas” (vv. 3-4). The bi-directional arrows wound both ladies because, even though Menandra throws them, the poetic voice returns the aggression. Allowing Menandra to be hurt by her own arrows, Sor Violante’s speaker symbolically redirects her attack, thus taking her own pain and inflicting it on her friend. In contrast with the poetic convention of nuptial mysticism, the speaker claims the power to return Menandra’s emotional incursions rather than simply reveling in the pain as in the “Noche oscura.”

The arrow and wound imagery, suggestive of sexual penetration, opens a power discourse throughout the poem, since the women struggle to determine who is wounded and who has the penetrative power. Menandra, holding her friend’s soul in her blood-stained hand, is the

aggressor, yet the speaker explains, “bien sabes tú que estaría / para verter sangre, muerta; / para sentir flechas, viva” (vv. 30-32). In order for her blood to spill, the speaker must be dead, but feeling the pain of Menandra’s arrows requires her to remain alive. Playing these mind games with her friend, the speaker evades Menandra’s aggression and renames it, “dulce hechizo de las almas, / dulce muerte de las vidas” (vv. 36-37). The “muerte” she describes represents the symbolic climax of the poem—in every sense of the word—since its sweetness indicates erotic undertones and the possibility that the ladies’ reciprocal penetrative attacks are pleasurable, despite the violence. Furthermore, Menandra treats her friend with severity, which becomes evident when the poetic voice threatens her:

si el rigor con que me tratas
no quieres ver en ti misma,
no tires más flechas tantas
al blanco del alma mía. (vv. 39-42)

She thus promises Menandra that her rough treatment will be met with equal hostility, and by asking her to drop her arrows, the speaker seeks to end the battle with the aggressive Menandra. However, she unwittingly participates further in the conflict by revealing her friend’s wounds and weakness. For all of its corporeal and mental violence, this poem’s parody of masculine convention results in conflicting tones of playfulness and distress. Sor Violante wields traditional tropes in an ironic way to express the unique pressures of female relationships, especially when the language of male love and friendship is the only resource available. In this *romance*, Sor Violante is certainly not an innocent writer of feminine friendship and desire. Although Menandra may grasp the speaker’s wounded soul, Sor Violante writes this poem with a hand stained by Menandra’s blood. Contrary to the Petrarchan poets who rarely, if ever, allowed their

ladies an active role, Sor Violante permits the object of her affection to take action; nevertheless, she punishes her for her subjectivity by redirecting her attacks, thus shifting the power and transforming the speaker into the aggressor.

Sor Violante therefore develops contradictory ideas about female affection. In her sonnet to Belisa, she suggests that true friendship should be established through equality, conformity, and moderation, yet in her *romances*, female relationships reveal turbulent eroticism through the corporeal transaction between Nise's breast and the speaker's hand. Furthermore, although the sonnet declares that friends feel mutual pain and pleasure, Menandra and the poetic voice feel each other too profoundly when both women are left wounded and bleeding from their reciprocal severity. Sor Violante's poems confirm that the discourse of female friendship develops through the body. With the recurring mention of Nise's breast, Menandra's blood, bleeding wounds, and beautiful (yet cruel) hands, the poet highlights the physicality of female bonds. Simultaneously, however, treachery and violent humor between women also take place on a corporeal level. Whereas male poets such as Garcilaso and Boscán bond over their mutual poetic *genio* and spill their affection for one another outwardly in the epistolary genre, Sor Violante unveils a vision of love between women that turns inward as the poetic voice declares war—a “dulce muerte”—against her own body and that of her female companions.

Poetry composed by women religious about passionate female friendships was certainly not limited to Sor Violante. The seventeenth-century Mexican nun and poet Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz too displayed a complicated relationship with the female body and her bonds with other women in her lyric. Though she desired—and was certainly able—to compete with poets such as Garcilaso de la Vega and Juan Boscán with her own literary skill, Sor Juana, like Sor Violante, was tasked with negotiating her biological status as a woman within masculine convention in an

ecclesiastical culture that was at times overtly hostile to female intellectuals—a struggle she famously described in her autobiographical “Respuesta a Sor Filotea.”¹³ Scholars such as Octavio Paz have placed Sor Juana in a Neoplatonic or Cartesian tradition in which the mind is privileged and opposed to the body—or in which the body is neglected altogether. However, Tamara Harvey questions the way in which Sor Juana deals with the body:

Is she critiquing fixed and arbitrary notions of gender or is she making herself a special case? Can this strategy be understood as empowering women, bodies and all, or does it reflect either a separation between body and soul or a third gender state between man and woman, virgin and sexually experienced wife, that leaves intact assumptions about gender identities and women’s bodies as abject and weak? (53)

Harvey asserts that for the poet, the body supports the activities of the mind and soul without the need to figure the flesh in purely symbolic terms, especially in *Primero sueño* (55). Even in her most intellectually profound piece, Sor Juana’s narrator provides graphic descriptions of internal organs and corporal processes that assist the soul in its ascent to the “piramidal punta” of scholarly enlightenment. Curiously, the entire poem passes without mentioning the gender of the poetic voice, which is only revealed in the final line: “el mundo iluminado y yo despierta” (vv. 975). The poet’s gender trick exhorts the reader to recognize the equality not only between the feminine and masculine soul, but also between the male and female body. Surely the vapors of a woman’s stomach allow her to dream through the same process as that of male organs. For Sor Juana, the body clearly mattered and was not to be suppressed, despite her female form.

Beyond displaying her poetic and intellectual skills, Sor Juana’s work includes love poetry written to both men and women. Though it was perhaps unseemly for a cloistered woman

¹³ See Arenal and Powell, eds., *The Answer/ La respuesta*.

to compose amorous lyric, Stephanie Merrim observes that her poems could demonstrate genuine affection, but she also admits that they could be an exercise of courtly lyric. Many of her titles reveal attitudes of repugnance toward love, but some critics such as Octavio Paz propose that her love lyric is merely an experiment with literary tradition. Irving Leonard asserts that some of Sor Juana's love poetry could have allegorical meaning, but Merrim proposes an alternative: whereas in *Primero sueño* Sor Juana explores reason and knowledge, in her love poetry the nun discovers that which she cannot know and departs from the realm of reason (Merrim 53-54). Because this chapter is devoted to same-sex bonds, I will not offer a lengthy discussion on Sor Juana's love poems for men. Nevertheless, as a point of comparison, Merrim reveals that the poet creates a world in which male-female love is figured as a battleground, ending only in suffering and strife. Particularly in *Décima 99*, the stereotypical *belle dame sans merci* becomes a warrior who is "still in the throes of amorous struggle, waging successful war against a very present enemy" (Merrim 63). By presenting her poetic self as an Amazon, Sor Juana revises the figure of the cruel—yet powerless—lady and provides her with the agency to survive and defeat men's amorous incursions. Like Garcilaso, Sor Juana employs bellicose imagery when dealing with the challenges of heteroerotic love. However, whereas Violante Sanseverino, the presumed addressee of Garcilaso's *Ode ad florem Gnidi*, is petrified into silence for disrupting masculine martial activity and male friendship, the *belle dame sans merci* cries:

Invicta razón alienta
 armas contra tu vil saña,
 y el pecho es corta campaña
 a batalla tan sangrienta.
 Y así, Amor, en vano intenta

tu esfuerzo loco ofenderme:
 pues podré decir, al verme
 expirar sin entregarme,
 que conseguiste matarme
 mas no pudiste vencerme. (vv. 41-50)

Sor Juana's poetic voice thus becomes the warrior who announces to her lover-enemy that even though he metaphorically kills her, he cannot defeat the speaker by forcing her into submission. Unlike Violante Sanseverino, Sor Juana is not silenced by a male lover because she holds the power of the pen. For the female poet, love between men and women is therefore a bloody battle, but not one that can vanquish the feminine voice.

Sor Juana's affectionate lyric written for women, though perhaps surprising, was not unusual in the early modern Hispanic world. Amanda Powell explains that poems in which women address each other in "passionately erotic terms" were fashionable in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century court culture. These texts both satirized the silencing of women in Petrarchan convention and provided a space for the expression of homoerotic passion. Although many scholars view the tenderness in Sor Juana's woman-to-woman poetry as a sign of friendship or gratitude for patronage, Powell emphasizes that the Renaissance model of *amicitia* is often inadequate when dealing with these texts. Rather than adhering to the minimum requirements for expressing gratitude to a patroness, Sor Juana's poetry tends to exceed these guidelines ("Baroque Flair" 155). Even a critic like Octavio Paz, who rejects the idea that these poems refer to sincere erotic passions, concedes that Sor Juana's poems addressed to other women seem more genuine and less disembodied than her verse composed to male recipients (262). However, as Merrim points out, Paz suggests that through her use of amatory language directed at her

patronesses, Sor Juana feels less affection for the female body than she does for the body politic (68). Though the sincerity and motives of her emotion may be contested, the female object of her love is certainly tangible, and similar to Sor Violante's poetry, bonds between women are formed and sustained on a corporeal level. George Antony Thomas views Sor Juana's poems to her patronesses as evidence of a relationship that extends beyond mere flattery for a superior. Instead, "the symbiotic nature of this relationship and the author's ability to initiate poetic projects demonstrate that occasional words are not simply obligatory compositions devoid of literary creativity" (*Politics and Poetics* 59). In the three poems I will explore, "Divina Lysi mía," "Lo atrevido de un pincel," and "Sobre si es atrevimiento," Sor Juana employs Petrarchan tropes ironically to codify her affection for her female patronesses and to point out their inadequacy for creating and sustaining female bonds.

Two of the more striking features of Sor Juana's lyric to her patronesses are her hyperbolic formality and violent hierarchies that seem to parody the abject position of the lover in Petrarchan tradition. In "Divina Lysi mía," the poet writes to María Luisa Manrique de Lara y Gonzaga, the vicereine and Countess of Paredes, who reigned from 1680 to 1688 and was responsible for Sor Juana's fame and privileged position in the New World (Merrim 33). She begins her address to the vicereine, whom she calls Lysi, by excusing her boldness:

Divina Lysi mía:
 perdona si me atrevo
 a llamarte así, cuando
 aun de ser tuya el nombre no merezco.

A esto, no osadía

es llamarte así, puesto
 que a ti te sobran rayos,
 si en mí pudiera haber atrevimientos. (vv. 1-8)

The first line initiates a play between *mía* and *tuya*, which establishes an intimacy that contradicts her later profession of abjection. For Sor Juana, writing represents an act of audacity, which she emphasizes with ironic humility. By begging Lysi's forgiveness for her boldness, the speaker undoes any self-assurance she originally demonstrates. Moreover, the poetic voice claims that she is unworthy of calling Lysi by name, a burlesque twist because Lysi is supposedly her only name, yet both poet and addressee know that this pseudonym has been created only for poetic purposes. She cannot even call Lysi "mine" because she professes to be unworthy of being called "yours." At the same time, her daring decision to address her lady suggests that perhaps Lysi is a secret name that the two women share. Her professed anxiety over boldness notwithstanding, the speaker resolves to call Lysi by her name because the latter will strike her down if she oversteps her boundaries in doing so. Her relationship with Lysi is then constructed in terms of king and vassal, prison and prisoner, and master and slave. By fabricating these violent hierarchies, Sor Juana touches on the delicate balance of friendship and decorum, given the vicereine's higher social standing. At the same time, these hyperboles draw attention to overwrought poetic convention and its inability to represent effectively the relationship between the poetic voice and addressee. Lysi must certainly hold the speaker in higher esteem than a slave or prisoner, yet the latter cannot express their bond in other terms.

Behind these hierarchies, however, the poet unveils the erotic abjection of the speaker as Sor Violante does in *Romance XVII*. Whereas the poetic voice in the *romance* delights in the painful penetration of Menandra's arrows, Sor Juana writes:

En fin, yo de adorarte
 el delito confieso;
 si quieres castigarme,
 este mismo castigo será premio. (vv. 33-36)

As a prisoner, slave, and vassal, the speaker confesses a crime to her superior, but ironically, her transgression is simply love for the addressee. Magnifying the eroticized violence, the poetic voice informs her lady that if she wishes to punish her, the very punishment would be a reward. Throughout the poem, Sor Juana shifts between variations of *mía* and *tuya* to indicate mutual possession between the two women, a linguistic erotic play whose climax arrives when the speaker implores the addressee to punish her. In this poem, hierarchies thus serve both to distance herself by acknowledging her lady's superior social status and to bring the two women closer by eroticizing these hierarchies.

Similarly, violent, hierarchical relationships also unfold in Sor Juana's *romance* entitled "Lo atrevido de un pincel" written for María Elvira de Toledo, Countess of Galve from 1688 until 1696. Elvira was the daughter of the seventh Marquis of Villafranca, who was elected viceroy for New Spain in 1672, and the second wife of the seventh Count of Galve (Rubio Mañé 260). Sor Juana writes to the addressee Filis, "que tu deidad reverencio, / que tu desdén idolatro / y que tu rigor venero" (vv. 30-32). These words, which border on blasphemy with the insistent repetition of the speaker's idolatrous love for Filis as a goddess, represent the parody behind Sor Juana's rhetoric. The speaker's reverence for her love object seems to recall Calisto's sexually charged creed in *La Celestina*: "Melibeo soy y a Melibea adoro, y en Melibea creo y a Melibea amo" (93). Whereas Calisto expresses his desire both to worship and to consummate erotic desire with his deity, Sor Juana magnifies her rhetorical genuflection before the seemingly divine

woman. The fact that the poetic voice masochistically idolatrizes Filis's disdain and venerates her severity reveals that perhaps at some level, she finds her lady's rough treatment pleasurable. In this poem and in "Divina Lysi mía," Sor Juana blazes a path between parody and sincerity, intertwining excessive formality and hierarchy tropes both to explore differences of authority between the two women as members of distinct social strata and to reveal the inadequacy of masculine language to accurately represent their relationship.

While navigating social hierarchies, Sor Juana preoccupies herself with her boldness or *atrevimiento*, which represents different degrees of playfulness and transgression in each poem. In "Lo atrevido de un pincel" and "Sobre si es atrevimiento" the speaker takes a more self-conscious, yet playful turn when Sor Juana dares to address Filis and Elvira, respectively. In "Lo atrevido," the poetic voice claims:

Lo atrevido de un pincel,
 Filis, dio a mi pluma alientos:
 que tan gloriosa desgracia
 más causa corrió que miedo. (vv. 1-4)

The beginning of the poem reveals that she has previously painted a verbal portrait of Filis, but, at least from the speaker's perspective, her creation is inadequate. Her first attempt at rendering her lady in the artifice of verse constitutes *atrevimiento*, but the poetic voice's failure invigorates her pen's "segundo arriesgado vuelo" (vv. 10). Playfully, she decides to try again, but after her parodic declaration of Aristotelian desire, she withdraws: "Pero, ¿para qué es cansarse?" (vv. 57). Though the speaker demonstrates self-consciousness about her excess of words up until this point, she continues for another twenty-seven lines, which culminate in the poetic voice's self-erasure when she cries, "que vivo asegura sólo / en fe de que por ti muero"

(vv. 83-84). Sor Juana's *atrevimiento* simultaneously reaches its climax and dissolves in these verses when the speaker boldly—and hyperbolically—states the paradox that the proof that the poetic voice is alive is that she is dying for her lady, both the ultimate expression of confidence in their relationship and a statement of the poetic voice's abjection. The last line recalls Garcilaso's "A Boscán desde La Goleta" in which he proclaims, "en llanto y en ceniza me deshago" (vv. 14). Although Sor Juana has not been abandoned by her patroness in this poem as Garcilaso has by his friend in La Goleta, her cry of martyrdom emblazons the speaker's artistic failure. If her daring paintbrush unsuccessfully produces an image of Filis, she reminds us that socially, if not literally, her life—and death—belong to the addressee.

Throughout her lyric addressed to women of power, Sor Juana manipulates other conventions of Petrarchan language beyond mere humility to explore female affection. In "Lo atrevido de un pincel," the speaker praises Filis's beauty:

Pues siendo tú el más hermoso,
grande, soberano exceso
que ha visto en círculos tantos
el verde torno del tiempo... (vv. 69-72)

With florid language, Sor Juana declares that Filis is the most beautiful woman of all time. The excessive attention to her physical beauty, typical of Petrarchan love verse, reveals that the speaker indeed finds Filis attractive, yet she also ridicules poetic convention. As Dugaw and Powell explain, "In the erotics of the petrarchan schema, the poet lover is suppliant before the mighty beloved; Sor Juana thoroughly occupies her role as wooer" ("Sapphic Self-Fashioning" 143). They then argue that the addressee will understand that she is receiving praise while she remains aware that Sor Juana is mocking the tradition of extreme flattery (143-44). Among her

many compliments, the speaker also explores the Petrarchan meanings behind the word *prenda* when she cries, “¿Por qué mi fe te encarezco, / cuando es cada prenda tuya firma de mi cautiverio?” (vv. 74-76). By enslaving the poetic voice in the addressee’s graces, Sor Juana plays upon the concept of *prenda* as love token, just as Sor Violante does in *Romance XVI*. Here, however, Filis’s *prendas* neither cultivate painful memories of a deceased beloved as in Garcilaso, nor do they represent triangles of eroticized rejection as in Sor Violante. Instead, these *prendas* refer to the favors that her lady has bestowed on the speaker, forming a bond of love and obligation, which Sor Juana figures as captivity. Whereas in Sonnet X, “Oh dulces prendas,” Garcilaso is bound to physical objects that slowly drag the poetic voice into the realm of the dead with his beloved, Sor Juana’s *prendas* as immaterial favors relegate her to the captivity of a living woman. As such, their particular relationship exists as a continual series of interactions rather than as a memory frozen in time, a dynamic that the tradition of unrequited love poetry is unprepared to address.

In her poem for Elvira de Toledo, “Sobre si es atrevimiento,” Sor Juana plays with Petrarchan parody. When looking for the perfect colors—or words—with which to paint Elvira, the poet consults Petrarch himself:

En Petrarca hallé una copia
de una Laura, o de una duende,
pues dicen que ser no tuvo
más del que en sus versos tiene. (vv. 33-36)

Despite the fourteenth-century Italian poet’s model for praising a lady in verse, Sor Juana deems Laura an inadequate comparison because she is a mere copy and thus does not exist outside the poem. Here, Sor Juana points out the suppression of female voices in Petrarchan poetry by

reminding her that Laura's beauty and reputation have been filtered by—and quite possibly invented by—a patriarchal pen. Since she finds Petrarch useless as a model, the poetic voice searches even further back in literary history with a copy of Homer, which is “cubierta, como de polvo, / de Griego” (vv. 37-38). In this text, covered in Ancient Greek, the speaker encounters the example of Elena, but ultimately she, along with the book, is “olvidada en un retrete” (vv. 40). Because she has been relegated to a forgotten room, Elena is irrelevant to Sor Juana's present task of painting a verbal portrait of the countess. Turning to Claudian's Proserpine, a maiden who was abducted by Pluto and forced into marriage, Sor Juana cannot even look upon her because Proserpine lost her beauty as a result of the cruelty committed against her. Whereas Claudian describes the woman's tired face as “exhaustusque gelu pallet rubor” (Book III, vv. 88), Sor Juana renders the image grotesque when speaking of her “condenada faz, / llena de hollines y peces” (vv. 47-48). Because Pluto dragged the lady into the water to force her into erotic submission, her face is covered in soot and fish, an image that evokes both visual and olfactory repulsion. Proserpine's sea-weathered face that displays the soot of Pluto's crimes also represents an inappropriate model for Elvira. As an example of the ravaged female body, Proserpine is juxtaposed to Petrarch's Laura, who has no body other than the features that the poet assigns her. Elvira instead exists between Laura and Proserpine: she is a woman incarnate unlike Petrarch's beloved, but Sor Juana cannot describe her body in terms of the physical deformation too often wrought by men.

Among a litany of other female characters, Sor Juana alludes to Florinda, daughter of count Julian, who was raped by the Visigoth king Rodrigo while her father traveled to Ceuta. According to the legend preserved in ballads and in Alfonso X's *Historia general*, while Julian returned to Toledo to reclaim his daughter, the Moors had mobilized to occupy the Iberian

Peninsula in his absence. Visigoth Spain thus fell as a result of the dishonored female body, which Sor Juana ironically figures as vain:

Florinda vana decía
a los moros alquiceles:
Tanto como España valgo,
pues toda por mí se pierde. (vv. 53-56)

In this stanza, the poet criticizes male literary discourse on the destructive power of female sexuality. Despite the sexual offenses committed against her, Sor Juana's Florinda enjoys bragging rights for the Muslim conquest of Iberia because, according to the legend's logic, her worth is equal to that of Christian Spain. George Antony Thomas has argued that Sor Juana's preoccupation with the female body in her representations of the vicereines of New Spain is part of a larger feminist strategy that contests the negative portrayal of ruling women and extends the notion of the queenly body beyond the Iberian Peninsula and into the New World ("The Queen's Two Bodies" 418-19). By ironizing the Florinda legend, Sor Juana refigures the association between the female body and geographical territory. Florinda thus joins the ranks of insufficient models for Elvira because the latter's body is not to be conquered like the Iberian Peninsula. As a vicereine in the New World and a progeny of one of the most aristocratic families in Spain, her body instead occupies a position as conqueror. Sor Juana's difficult task, then, is to determine how to praise a living woman of power in literary terms that express not only her authority, but also the affection that exists between them as women.

After her continued search for suitable female models in Ariosto and Ovid turns up empty, the speaker jests:

y hallé a escoger, como en peras,

unas bellezas de a veinte,¹⁴
 a lo que ¿qué queréis, pluma?
 que están diciendo comedme. (vv. 73-76)

Like pears that are cheap, examples of beautiful women abound in verse and tempt Sor Juana's pen to choose one. The poet, having "pasado pensativa" (vv. 5), however, already seems to have digested these metaphorical pears. Nevertheless, because these fictional women never age, they cannot be eaten and from the poet's perspective, time "que todas las cosas muerde / con los bocados de siglos, / no les puede enterrar el diente" (vv. 110-12). Once again, Sor Juana observes that literary women have no substance, but Elvira is a woman in the flesh. Sor Juana thus navigates the traditional course of Petrarchan convention while also exploring the uncharted territory of feminine poetic discourse. In doing so, she demonstrates mastery of masculine language while at the same time revealing its inadequacy for expressing female friendship, especially when same-sex affection crosses class boundaries.

Despite the fact that, unlike the ladies of classical and Petrarchan poetry, the poet's addressees exist in corporeal form with bodies of power rather than of victimization, Sor Juana's poetics of female friendship seems to support a spiritual over a physical bond. In a frequently-cited stanza from "Lo atrevido de un pincel," the speaker declares spiritual love for her soul sister:

Ser mujer, ni estar ausente,
 no es de amarte impedimento;
 pues sabes tú que las almas
 distancia ignoran y sexo. (vv. 61-64)

¹⁴ One possible translation of "de a veinte" would be "a dime a dozen." For Sor Juana, both pears and examples of beautiful women in literature are so common that they have little value.

Dugaw and Powell remind us that critics often cite this passage as evidence of “safe,” Neoplatonic love (“Sapphic Self-Fashioning 145). Indeed, these words erase gender boundaries and close the distance—whether physical or social—between them. When it comes to friendship, the two women are not bound by their biological constitutions or by their respective social classes. Earlier in the poem, the speaker regards Filis as a lady on whose divine altars “ni sudor arde sabeo, / ni sangre se efunde humana, / ni bruto se corta el cuello” (vv. 18-20). Through this conspicuously New-World description of Filis’s metaphorical altars, Sor Juana employs corporeal terms to praise the lack of physical or emotional violence between the speaker and the beloved. She continues:

pues del mismo corazón
 los combatientes deseos
 son holocausto poluto,
 son materiales afectos,

 y solamente del alma
 en religiosos incendios
 arde sacrificio puro
 de adoración y silencio. (vv. 21-28)

Michael J. Horswell asserts that in Sor Juana’s drama *Los empeños de una casa*, “the historical body of the Aztec sacrifice ceremony is subjugated to the Christian notion of symbolic sacrifice” (79). This poem for the Countess of Galve carries out a similar process of transforming blood-soaked brutality to “sacrificio puro / de adoración y silencio.” In doing so, the poet legitimizes the speaker’s same-sex affection for Filis in the same way she codifies the hybrid culture of New

Spain. By removing the element of physicality, Sor Juana enters the symbolic realm. Just as Aztec ceremonies can be appropriated into “religiosos incendios” that burn the soul rather than human flesh, the speaker’s love for Filis ideally sheds all “combatientes deseos” to become a Neoplatonic, spiritual bond. The poet thus crafts a model of female friendship analogous to Sor Violante’s paradigm in her sonnet to Belisa because both rest on classical ideas of balance, conformity, and strength in absence. Also similar to her Dominican counterpart, however, these virtues merely represent an ideal that seems to unravel as the poem continues.

Sor Juana’s ideal model of female bonds notwithstanding, Dugaw and Powell point to the lack of the silence the nun’s paradigm of friendship seems to require in this poem, given that the speaker provides a lengthy articulation of her love in physical terms (“Sapphic Self-Fashioning” 145). Her relationship with Filis is not just a luxury but rather a necessity, “como a lo cóncavo el aire / como a la material el fuego, / como a su centro las peñas” (vv. 49-51). The speaker codes her love for Filis in concepts of early modern physics: just as a vacuum craves air and fire requires material to burn, the speaker needs Filis. Their mutual attraction is compared to a body falling earthward, a force as strong as it is inevitable: “como a su centro las peñas” (vv. 51). Furthermore, Sor Juana both adopts and parodies Aristotelian discourse when she muses:

bien como todas las cosas
 naturales, que el deseo
 de conservarse, las une
 amante en lazos estrechos... (vv. 53-56)

Though seemingly strange words for a religious woman, the poet follows the example of earlier male poets by uniting natural philosophy with religion to excuse sexual desire. The author(s) of the *Libro de buen amor* (c. 1330-1343) employ Juan Ruiz, the fictional Archpriest of Hita, as the

narrator who claims, “Digo muy más del omne que de toda creatura: / todos a tiempo cierto se juntan con natura” (vv. 74 *a-b*). The Archpriest, a man of the cloth, invokes Aristotle to explain that humans, like all other animals, experience the natural urge to reproduce. In her own burlesque way, Sor Juana correlates the poetic voice’s feelings for Filis to the biological need to consummate sexual desire. Ironically, any such activity between the speaker and her addressee would not be procreative because they are women. The poet thus offers yet another instance in which male discourse cannot articulate female same-sex affection.

Significantly, Sor Juana undoes her own model of purely spiritual female friendship by discussing love not just with similes of the material world, but also with specifically corporeal images. The speaker becomes a child who “aplica incauto los dedos / a la cuchilla, engañado / del resplandor de acero” (vv. 38-40). She is captivated by the addressee as if the latter were a brilliant blade and, despite the danger, her fingers are compelled to touch. The injury aside, the poetic voice presses on:

y herida la tierna mano
 aún sin conocer el yerro
 más que el dolor de la herida
 siente apartarse del reo. (vv. 41-44)

The child’s and, metaphorically, the speaker’s tender hand is the protagonist of this passage, suggesting that her perilous cross-class affection for Filis can best be conceived in bodily terms. The physical pain she feels from her bleeding wound, however, is obfuscated by agony of separating herself from the culprit, Filis. Resembling the wound imagery in Sor Violante, the lacerated hand in “Lo atrevido” recalls the blurred line between pain and pleasure. Unlike the Neoplatonic ideal of a silent and pure bond between souls, the speaker’s relationship with Filis

includes violent emotions and desires. In “Sobre si es atrevimiento,” the multiple representations of literary women and their bodies play into the culmination of the poem in which Sor Juana struggles to inscribe her lady’s body in verse. Building on the concept of the portrait, the poetic voice cries, “postrada beso mil veces / la tierra que pisas y / los pies, que no sé si tienes” (vv. 143-44). As I have argued, the poet protests that masculine literary convention presents women as either inviolable bodies or the body violated. She therefore cannot rely on any previous model to portray Filis’s living, authentic, and powerful constitution. In a humorous twist, she kisses her lady’s feet, while at the same time expressing her uncertainty that they exist because women in the artifice of painting and poetry do not have feet. In “Lo atrevido,” Sor Juana draws attention to the speaker’s body, whereas in “Sobre si es atrevimiento,” the corporality is directed toward her lady. Both instances, though seemingly unrelated, expose the impossibility of purely spiritual bonds when both women are living bodies rather than literary abstractions and when social circumstances, such as class, present the danger of overstepping one’s bounds.

Through her masterly parody of masculine discourse in these poems, Sor Juana displays a sense of self-consciousness about her own writing and consequently about her relationship with her patronesses. In “Sobre si es atrevimiento,” the poetic voice dedicates a great deal of time to pondering whether she would be too bold to respond to Elvira. She wonders:

Sobre si es atrevimiento,
 bella Elvira, responderte,
 y sobre si también era
 cobardía el no atreverme,
 he pasado pensativa,

sobre un libro y un bufete
 (porque vayan otros sobres),
 sobre el amor que me debes. (vv. 1-8)

Alternating between audacity and cowardice, Sor Juana's poetic self allocates five stanzas of this poem for pensive purposes. Once her mind is "cansado asaz de pensar / y de revolver papeles" (vv. 15-16) and she resolves to write to Elvira, Sor Juana reveals that she handles intellectual activity quite differently from her male contemporaries. As I establish in the first chapter, male poets such as Garcilaso and Boscán sustain their friendship with literary skill and exclude women from their homosocial, intellectual space. Sor Juana, though an accomplished poet on par with Garcilaso, professes to be nearly paralyzed by the thought of composing verse for Elvira. For two men of equal social status, poetry represents the ideal vehicle for expressing affection, but for Sor Juana writing to a woman of higher standing, poetry constitutes an act of *atrevimiento*. Notably, the poet does not adopt the Renaissance language of friendship as in Garcilaso's "Epístola a Boscán," a balanced "amistad perfecta" that offers "descuido suelto y puro" (vv. 9-10). Instead, because of her vertical social ties with her beloved, Sor Juana is compelled to imitate the abjection of the Petrarchan lover. In doing so, she boldly subverts masculine discourse while self-consciously exploring her own relationship with her pen and her patroness.

As I have shown, Sor Violante and Sor Juana challenge prevailing ideas not only with regard to women's literary skill, but also about their ability to form and sustain friendships. Both poets display command of masculine literary discourse while simultaneously undermining it to unveil rhetorical shortcomings in articulating female same-sex affection. Despite Sor Violante's decree that friendship between women should include "lícito decoro" and strength in absence,

female relationships in her *romances* parody masculine love rhetoric to become turbulent and corporeal. Sor Juana too pages through male-authored texts to inspire her poetic bond with the addressee, but she discovers that the assortment of fictional women only offers examples of either immaterial love objects or female bodies penetrated by patriarchal cruelty. Although she proposes a poetics of friendship that requires “sacrificio puro” and “adoración y silencio,” this paradigm gives way for the same reason that Petrarch’s Laura is an inadequate model: in a material world where María Luisa Manrique de Lara and Elvira de Toledo reside, powerful female bodies matter. Whereas Sor Violante does not seem overtly self-conscious about her poetic skills, Sor Juana divulges particular insecurities with respect to her lyric and its power to reach women of authority. In “Sobre si es atrevimiento,” she resigns herself: “Y en fin, no hallo qué decirte” (vv. 133). However, the poet’s loss for words and self-doubt over her literary style with the peril of *atrevimiento* do not expose Sor Juana’s impotent pen but rather affirm her position as a woman in a male-dominated tradition, a poetic convention that deifies Petrarch’s disembodied Laura yet does not provide refuge to mortal women, their sexuality, or their friendships.

Chapter 3

Staging the Female Body Politic in Early Modern Spanish Theater

In the tragedies of the early modern Spanish stage, the alleged honor code often interrupts homosocial relationships and condemns protagonists to their catastrophic fates. In Lope de Vega's *El castigo sin venganza* (1631), an illicit kiss between Federico and Casandra signs the death warrant not only of the Duke of Ferrara's adulterous wife, but also of her lover, in this case the Duke's own son. After orchestrating his private revenge by having the offending couple murdered, the Duke laments, "Quien en público castiga / dos veces su honor infama... pero dar la muerte a un hijo, / ¿qué corazón no desmaya?" (vv. 2854-69). At least within the confines of seventeenth-century *corrales*, the requirements of honor eclipsed familial and spousal affection by severing these bonds with bloodshed. As the Duke of Ferrara points out, a loss of honor was not simply a private concern. Instead, it frequently involved authority figures and even friends, such as in Pedro Calderón de la Barca's *A secreto agravio, secreta venganza* (1637), a tragedy as much about male friendship as it is about the pressures men face in an honor-driven society. Female-authored plays such as Ana Caro Mallén de Soto's *Valor, agravio y mujer* (c. 1640) and María de Zayas y Sotomayor's *La traición en amistad* (1632) also take up the issue of honor and interpersonal relationships, yet even a cursory reading of these comedies reveals that Caro and Zayas offer perspectives on reputation and friendship that diverge from those of their male contemporaries. All three plays, however, raise the question of homosocial bonding in the honor play and ask whether the culture of honor is ultimately antithetical to friendship. Furthermore, how do gender and genre inform the dramatic representations of social bonds? This chapter thus

seeks to uncover how male and female playwrights conceive of solidarity within the margins of the page, stage, and society.

Scholarly interest in honor and its implications for male relationships in Calderón is certainly not new. James E. Maraniss and Alexander A. Parker emphasize that honor is essential for maintaining social order and restraining sexual impulses. Parker's earlier essay initially argued that honor was consistent with the notion of poetic justice that predominated in the *comedia* as long as one recognized the shared responsibility of multiple characters in the tragic outcome ("Toward a Definition").¹⁵ Maraniss goes further than Parker in attributing a tragic vision to Calderón, maintaining that the dramatist maintained a bleak vision of humanity in which happiness and social order could not be reconciled. Indeed, as Maraniss puts it, "the best that can be done on Earth is to relate means to ends in order to ensure the provisional rewards of stability" (64). Parker's later, less moralistic essays on the tragedy of honor and the king as the center of political life also observe that the characters "accept as justice what in reality is a travesty of it, because their society upholds the legitimacy of private vengeance for honour's sake" ("The King as Center" 226). Occasionally, the private interests of the monarch lead to social disorder when in *comedias* such as *Saber del mal y del bien* (c. 1634), "the innocent are struck down and the guilty are rewarded for one reason only: the arbitrary will of an all-powerful king who need consult no law other than their own desires or inclinations" (245). Significantly, both scholars focus on how the culture of honor represented a burden for the men charged with upholding it, but they do little to explore how the demands of honor affected women.

¹⁵ See Parker. "Towards a Definition of Calderonian Tragedy." Parker's essay appeared in the context of debates over whether a Catholic cosmivision, that promised eternal rewards for the good and punishment for the wicked, could create authentic tragedies. Parker had earlier argued that poetic justice prevailed in the majority of Spanish Golden Age plays ("The Spanish Drama of the Golden Age"). In "Towards a Definition", Parker developed the notion of Calderonian tragedy, in which the tragic outcome is the result of shared responsibility, and individual characters suffering is both merited and unmerited.

Melveena McKendrick's later essay on honor in Calderón departs from previous studies by asserting that honor functions both as a social and political concept and even as an instrument of government. As McKendrick explains, "The idea that the image of a monarch or nation is important, not only to an appearance of strength but to a nation's actual strength and health, was a largely new, key factor in seventeenth-century political thought" (136). Because the husband was understood to be the king of his own house, this reason of state mindset was relevant to dramatists and the theme of honor in their plays (136-39). As a result, dishonor—or even suspicions thereof—amounted to social death and emasculation for the male protagonist (140). Many studies on Calderón deal primarily with the questions of whether the playwright supported or criticized the culture of honor and how it reflected men's attitudes toward women. This chapter alternatively explores what the representations of honor on stage reveal about how playwrights imagined same-sex friendships and the political implications of these bonds. Whereas Parker and Maraniss view honor as a sacrifice of personal happiness—in terms of love and marriage—I focus on how honor requires the sacrifice of same-sex friendships. The culture of honor itself is not at odds with social order on Calderón's stage, but I argue that societal stability in fact depends on privileging male bonding over honor. Dishonor, however, not only severs the bond between husband and wife but also threatens to disintegrate the male social body.

The dynamics of male friendship in Calderón's plays is the subject of a number of critical studies. For example, Anne Cruz and Jeremy Robbins have explored the interactions between men in *A secreto agravio, secreta venganza* (1637), but arrive at quite different conclusions. Both question what the relationship between the two protagonists, Don Juan and Don Lope, reveals about how men interact within the constraints of honor. Cruz argues that the

early modern Spanish concept of honor in fact serves as the binding force between Juan and Lope within their patriarchal society. Even if honor necessarily divides the two, the fact that Don Juan reveals Lope's dishonor to the king so that he may be pardoned for his wife's murder closes the final act by highlighting the conflictive tensions among male friends (165). Jeremy Robbins, however, asserts that the broader male bonds formed and strained by honor are entirely different from the classical male friendship epitomized by Juan and Lope. Instead, society attempts "to prevent men's friendships which are based upon mutual similarity and identification by imposing a model of relationships which rests entirely upon distrust and otherness" (12). Two different paradigms of male relationships thus emerge here: Cruz emphasizes one based on equality, similar to Ciceronian ideals of friendship, and Robbins affirms that male friendship is incompatible with the culture of honor (21). The critical question is therefore whether Calderón pits honor against classical friendship and what role this opposition plays in the tragedy.

Ryan Prendergast, too, has investigated homosocial relations in Calderón, examining *El médico de su honra* (1637) to understand honor and social bonds in terms of the body politic. This tragedy plays out how male and female bodies in various states of injury relate to the healthy functioning of the state:

The play critiques the self-interested and politically driven means by which the aristocratic male characters, in particular Pedro, Enrique and Gutierre, negotiate their own relationships and form the basis of the political body. These characters attempt to establish, defend or further solidify their status and power, despite the cost to themselves and other subjects (i.e., all of the body politic's "parts"), and, as a result, to the well-being of the kingdom as a whole. (31)

The concept of the body politic, not unique to this play, has permeated European consciousness since the Middle Ages. Though it originated in ancient Greece under the unity of the Athenian *polis*, David George Hale argues that the metaphor of the body politic flourished in Renaissance England, beginning with Henry VIII's break with Rome or "the figurative dismembering of the universal *corpus ecclesias*" (12-18). The body politic endured considerable pressure during the Renaissance as a result of religious schism, a problem that Abel Alves addresses by examining sixteenth-century solutions for healing the Christian social organism. Contrary to Machiavellianism, which views the poor and powerless as inconsequential members of society, Juan Luis Vives, Ignatius Loyola, and John Calvin developed solutions to provide relief for the poor because, despite their social standing, they still form part of Christian society (4). Alves points out that "the three men in question all based social corporatism on their conception of the human individual, an individual who was both spirit and flesh" and all Christians form part of the same mystical body of Christ (6). Hale further explains the connectivity behind the body politic metaphor: "Rather than continuity, which emphasizes the relationship of one link in the chain to the next, the idea of a body politic stresses the unity which permeates the whole body" (16). In sixteenth-century European consciousness, the proper functioning of society meant much more than the head of state and his chain of command—all members must achieve organic unity. Considering these early modern views of social order, Prendergast's study on *El médico de su honra* reveals not only that bodies are tied to a healthy state, but also that the honor code to which the aristocracy is desperately clinging results in the decaying body politic (43). Yet in *A secreto agravio, secreta venganza*, honor is the force that seems to drive male friendships and sustain organic order as expressed by Calderón.

An honor play with similar themes as *El médico de su honra*, Calderón's *A secreto agravio, secreta venganza* echoes its ideology of the body politic. This tragedy dramatizes the difficulties between two Portuguese friends, Don Juan and Don Lope, when the latter's honor is called into question. The cast of characters departs from the traditional honor play with the introduction of Juan as Lope's friend, but perhaps even more surprisingly, King Sebastián assumes a central role in the action, unlike the typical *comedia*, in which the monarch only appears at the end to restore order.¹⁶ As soldiers in the king's sixteenth-century conquest of India, Lope and Juan form their bond through their service to the monarch. In the first act, Juan describes his friendship with Lope:

A la conquista famosa
de la India, que eligió
para su tumba la noche
y para su cuna el sol,
amigos, y tan amigos,
pasamos juntos los dos,
que asistieron en dos cuerpos
un alma y un corazón. (vv. 83-90)

This description of their dynamic evokes Michel de Montaigne's decree that the souls of friends "se meslent et confondent l'une en l'autre, d'un mélange si universel qu'elles effacent et ne retrouvent plus la couture qui les a jointes" (224). Lope and Juan shared one heart and soul during their time as soldiers in India. The corporeal and spiritual imagery in this passage not only recalls Montaigne, but also resonates with the organic unity of the body politic. By collaborating

¹⁶ King Pedro has an important role in Calderón's *El médico de su honra*, which has the same date of composition as *A secreto agravio*. In both plays, Calderón explores interpersonal loyalties in relation to loyalty to the king and state.

as members of the Portuguese state, the two friends, both figuratively and politically, have become one body. As I demonstrate in chapter one, several early modern writers displayed concern with male bonding at war, particularly Garcilaso de la Vega, who expressed feelings of abandonment by male friends in his sonnet “A Boscán desde la Goleta” and in the *Ode ad florem Gnidi*. Garcilaso’s lyric subject expresses feelings of inadequacy because his friends desert him in the face of war. In contrast, in Calderón’s play, the idyllic vision of male friendship flourishes during imperial conquest. Although war heralds the failure of male bonds in Garcilaso’s poetry, Juan’s friendship with Lope holds firm through their mutual military service to Sebastián. Even when Lope takes a sabbatical as a result of his father’s death, Juan extols that their friendship has grown stronger in absence:

Bien sabéis con cuánta fama
de amigos y de opinión,
que ahora perdidos hacen
el sentimiento mayor. (I. vv.115-18)

Now that the two highly esteemed friends have reunited, Juan aspires to solidify his bond with Lope through shared honor and fame. Curiously, the fame of their friendship puts even greater expectations on the permanence of their bond and the necessity for an outward expression of harmony. In the third act, Juan goes so far as to suggest that their friendship forms a new model for homosocial relationships:

Yo de don Lope lo soy
tanto, que no ha celebrado
amigo más obligado
la antigüedad hasta hoy. (III. vv. 11-15)

Juan's obligation to Lope echoes a Ciceronian sense of reciprocity. *De amicitia* (44 BC) presents friendship as a valuable human possession that can only be sustained by virtue and honor. In accordance with the Ciceronian paradigm, Lope and Juan experience "a perfect conformity of opinions upon all religious and civil subjects, united with the highest degree of mutual esteem and affection" (Cicero 176-77). Yet Juan points out that since Antiquity, no friends have been more obligated to one another than Juan to Lope. Their relationship essentially exceeds the mere requirements of classical friendship to produce a better model. Calderón dedicates a considerable number of lines in the first act to emphasize the interdependence and inseparability of these two friends, drawing not only on corporeal imagery to describe their bond, but also on the classical precepts of mutual reciprocity to stress the healthy functioning of their relationship as part of a greater body politic.

The omnipresence of the monarch in this play underscores Calderón's concern with testing the relation between male friendship and political viability. Sebastián's active role, as well as his interest in the wellbeing of his people, reinforces his position as head of the body politic while also stressing the value of honor as essential to the health of that body. Lope's impending marriage to Leonor prevents him from enlisting in the king's Africa expedition, a military endeavor in 1578 in which Sebastián assisted the Moroccan king Abu Abdallah in his effort to recover the throne after he was deposed by his uncle with the support of the Ottoman Empire. When Lope forgoes military duty, Sebastián addresses his subject:

Yo estimo vuestro gusto y vuestro aumento,
 [y me alegro de vuestro casamiento;]
 y a no estar ocupado
 en la guerra que en África he intentado,

fuera vuestro padrino¹⁷

....

Estimo en mucho vuestra persona. (I. vv.15-23)

Rather than brooding over his soldier's absence, the king feels delighted for Lope's good fortune and, if not for the schedule conflict, Sebastián would serve as a godfather figure in the wedding. The king not only offers his support but also wishes that he could play an active role in the marriage between Lope and Leonor. Even in the third act when Lope changes his mind and implores Sebastián to let him fight in Morocco, he replies, "¿No estáis casado? /...¿Cómo, recién casada, / quedará vuestra esposa?" (III. vv. 183-88). As head of state, the king does not simply concern himself with his military project and expansion of the empire but also invests in the health of his subjects at home because each bond between individuals forms part of the greater political body. By asking Lope to consider whether he should leave his wife so soon for battle, the king attempts to ensure that his subject's honor—and maybe even his happiness—remain intact.

In *A secreto agravio*, honor initially is compatible with homosocial bonds and at least at the beginning of the play, honor as fame is represented as a consequence of ideal male friendship. However, as the play progresses, we see that it only sets the stage for a tragic outcome. Upon Juan's return from his military activities, Lope assuages his friend's concern about arriving impoverished:

No os dé temor, no os dé pena

venir pobre; rico soy:

mi casa, amigo, mi mesa

¹⁷ Covarrubias defines *padrino*, "El que haze el oficio de padre en el bautismo, o confirmacion, y en los velambres, y Missas nuevas, y los padres se llaman entre si compadres" (s.v. *padrino*).

mis caballos, mis criados,
 mi honor, mi vida, mi hacienda
 todo es vuestro. (vv. 340-45)

Lope bestows generous gifts on his friend in order to play out a Ciceronian fantasy in which he, the wealthier friend, never “[appears] sensible of his superiority” (*De amicitia* 200-01). Lope’s decree that “todo es vuestro” offsets any differences—economic or otherwise—between them. As friends who share the same heart and soul, Lope offers his friend everything: his house, his servants, up to and including his life and honor. In this sense, the discourse of honor explicitly ties the two male friends, and following the vein of Renaissance friendship, their alliance seems even stronger than Lope’s relationship with his wife. Indeed, the offer of sharing a household recalls the vows of matrimony, yet the absence of a wedding scene between Lope and his wife privileges his commitment to Juan rather than to Leonor. Lope’s grand gestures bind Juan so closely to him and his household that Lope has created, if only rhetorically, a three-member marriage. Now that Lope, Leonor, and Juan are united in a three-way honor relationship, their interdependence fuses them as an organic whole, but it also renders them vulnerable if one member brings dishonor to the household.

Upholding the culture of honor may ensure the proper functioning of the male body politic, but dishonor engenders chaos, and the dynamics among men devolve from idyllic Renaissance friendships to anxiety-ridden mistrust. After Leonor’s former suitor, Luis, penetrates Lope’s home, the latter implores his servant Sirena, “No digas / lo que entre los tres nos pasa / a ninguno, ni a don Juan” (II. vv. 900-02). Despite his earlier declaration that he will share everything including honor with Juan, Lope decides, by keeping secrets, to sever the bonds

of trust. By the second act, Lope anguishes over the possibility that his dishonor will spread throughout the public. The paranoid husband now perceives honor as a monstrous body:

¡Que tenga el honor mil ojos

para ver lo que le pese,

mil oídos para oírlo,

y una lengua solamente

para quejarse de todo!

...

...Lengua, deténte,

no pronuncies, no articules

mi afrenta; que si me ofendes,

podrá ser que castigada,

con mi vida o con mi muerte,

siendo ofensor y ofendido,

yo me agravie y yo me vengue.

No digas que tengo celos...

Ya lo dije, ya no puede

volverse al pecho la voz. (vv. 215- 43)

The thousand eyes of honor conjured up by the protagonist imply that those who uphold the culture of honor synecdochically represent its eyes and ears. The disfigured social body, endowed with thousands of eyes and ears, only requires one tongue to metathesize Lope's besmirched reputation. Through this metaphor, Lope affirms that the tongue can betray the body in which it resides, putting both the individual and political bodies at risk. The aggrieved

husband thus becomes suspicious of every tongue, including his own, because his voice becomes irrepressible once it leaves his chest. Lope discovers the chilling reality that any voice, even that of a servant, can broadcast his dishonor. He declares in panic:

Y si llegara a creer...,
 ¿qué es creer?, si llegara
 a imaginar, a pensar
 que alguien pudo poner mancha
 en mi honor... ¿qué es mi honor?,
 en mi opinión y en mi fama,
 y en la voz tan solamente
 de una criada, una esclava. (II. vv. 856-63)

Because the slaves and servants are members of his household, a microcosm of the body politic, they too play a crucial role in the wellbeing of social order. Notwithstanding their position as lowest in the collective hierarchy, they possess equal power to ruin Lope's reputation. Lope's distressed cry, "¿Tan pública ya es mi afrenta, / que ha llegado a los oídos / del rey?" (vv. 205-07), emblazons the diffusion of Lope's shame throughout the political body until it reaches the head with the fear that the rumor has already arrived at the king's ears. The distrust and suspicion born from dishonor thus begin to strain homosocial bonds and debilitate the male body politic.

Even Juan's supposedly model friendship with Lope suffers under suspicion of Leonor's adultery. In a fretful soliloquy, he ponders:

Quien dice que no le tiene
 es quien le quita el honor.
 ¿Qué debe hacer un amigo

en tal caso, pues entiendo
 que si le callo, le ofendo,
 y le ofendo si castigo
 su agravio? Yo fui su espejo:

¿Por qué bien no le aconsejo? (III. vv. 49-57)

Calderón's interest in casuistry may in part explain Juan's paradoxical predicament in which Lope's questionable honor has placed him: if he doubts his friend's reputation, he will ultimately be the one to destroy it. On the other hand, if he ignores the offense against Lope, Juan will perhaps hurt him even more. Juan's dilemma is casuistic in the sense that he must apply moral principles to a concrete situation. Hilaire Kallendorf proposes that casuistry

offered an escape valve for dramatists seeking greater autonomy within this admittedly hegemonic system. Although the social atmosphere in Catholic Spain at the time was in no way conducive to privacy or interiority, there was in fact a kind of subversive movement toward moral autonomy on the part of the playwright. (332)

Not only does Calderón assert moral autonomy by asking such difficult questions, but within the text, Juan also declares his independence from the body politic by challenging the culture of honor. The first moment in which Juan distances himself from the ill member of the social body, in this unfortunate case his best friend, leads him to question the very survival of their relationship. Juan's description of his earlier, pleasant bond with Lope in classical terms—specifically that they were mirror images of each other—is juxtaposed to Juan's current predicament, which prevents him from counseling Lope on matters of honor. The doubts concerning Lope's reputation therefore force Juan to reconsider whether he can reflect Lope's

image or share the same soul as when they previously shared honor. On Calderón's stage, Ciceronian friendship is illusory when dishonor infects the social body.

For Lope, the remedy for dishonor is to remove the cause, in this case Luis, and to amputate the ailing member of the figurative body, Leonor. As Anne Cruz points out, "When it threatens to disrupt the harmonious relationship among men, man's love of the 'other' thus needs to be brought under control or eliminated altogether, since as the weakest link of the social chain, woman offers the least resistant means by which men may be dishonoured" (157). Leonor's penetrable body confirms her fate as the most vulnerable part of the social organism that must be removed. After quarantining and murdering Luis out at sea, Lope sets fire to his house with Leonor still inside. When he produces his wife's body from the ashes, Lope feigns grief and proclaims for all to hear that she is "noble, altiva, honrada, honesta, / que en los labios de la fama / deja esta alabanza de la fama" (vv. 939-41). His solution for curing the household of dishonor is to send it up in flames entirely and to deny that anything was amiss. Lope's multiple affirmations that his honor remains intact are ultimately ineffective when, in an act of apparent betrayal, Juan turns to Sebastián and says:

Pues óigame vuestra alteza
 aparte; porque es razón
 que sólo este caso sepa.
 Don Lope sospechas tuvo
 ...
 porque el que supo el agravio
 sólo la venganza sepa. (III. vv. 967-81)

Although it certainly appears that Sebastián believes Leonor's death was an accident, Juan elects to reveal the truth now that his friend is going off to battle. By telling the king that Lope murdered his wife because of her alleged offense against him, Juan betrays his bond with the disgraced husband with a motivation that Calderón never truly clarifies. Because his friendship with Lope can never return to its Ciceronian ideal, Juan delivers the *coup de grâce* that severs their bond and instead allies himself to the head of the body politic, earning his trust—and ensuring his survival—by apprising the king of internal disorder.

Despite Lope's incendiary efforts to contain the offense against him, the male body politic never truly heals. During his theatrical performance of disbelief over Leonor's death, Lope discovers newfound freedom, as well as his own demise, when he decides to fight with the king in Morocco after all:

Aunque un consuelo me deja,
y es, que ya podré serviros;
pues libre desta manera,
en mi casa no haré falta.
Con vos iré, donde pueda
tener mi vida su fin. (III. vv. 953-58)

On this expedition, Juan will not be joining his friend in battle and their martial bond now echoes those that Garcilaso imagined in terms of abandonment. Even more significantly, although Lope declares allegiance to the king, he also recognizes the possibility of his imminent death. Anne Cruz points out that seventeenth-century audiences would have known the battle of Alcazar-Kebir was a military disaster resulting in Sebastián's death and decimation of the Portuguese nobility (164). In this sense, Calderón's decision to close the curtain with impending destruction

suggests that the events of this tragedy are underscored by—if not the cause of—the death of the male body politic. As evidenced by the events of this play, the culture of honor ensures society's wellbeing and offers men the opportunity to connect with one another, but dishonor strains male friendships, leading to the inevitable disintegration of the social body.

If honor invigorates—and dishonor destroys—the male body politic in Calderón's view, how would women imagine a female body politic and its relationship with honor? Two dramatists, María de Zayas and Ana Caro, craft their own theatrical universes in which women's social structures are quite different from the male hierarchies and friendships in Calderón, whose *comedias* stress the importance of the king as authority figure. Departing from the phallogocentric paradigm of authority and the body politic, Zayas and Caro envision a network of alliances among women that regulate honor and dishonor throughout the female social body.

María de Zayas's *La traición en amistad* develops the central conflict around female friendship when one woman, Fenisa, attempts to rob her friends of their respective suitors. This play has been read traditionally as a paradigm of women's solidarity because the female characters unite with the common goal of exiling the promiscuous Fenisa from their group. This play thus directly challenges the Renaissance notion that it is impossible to form group friendships.¹⁸ In contrast to *A secreto agravio, secreta venganza*, Zayas's play features no discernable authority figure, a characteristic typical of the *capa y espada* play. The comedic nature of Zayas's work, as opposed to the Calderonian tragedy, may offer some explanation for the playwright's alternative view of social structures. For Aristotle, comedy differed from tragedy as an inferior art form that focused on the ridiculous rather than on serious matters. To be sure, "The aim of tragedy is to represent men better than we are today, and the aim of comedy is

¹⁸ Ullrich Langer cites Plutarch and Aristotle to emphasize that classical and Renaissance theorists maintained that friendship was exclusive because of the length of time spent together, the similarity between two friends, and the idea that the friend is another self (19).

to represent men worse than we are today—worse, yes, but not utterly bad” (14). In his *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias en este tiempo*, Lope de Vega admits that both comedies and tragicomedies are a legitimate art form because they please a paying audience. The plot of these plays takes place amidst a carnivalesque atmosphere, but Lope advises the playwright, “Guárdese de imposibles, porque es máxima / que sólo ha de imitar lo verosímil” (vv. 284-85). In this sense, the world-upside-down quality of the comedy may have offered refuge for the female playwright to explore a dramatic space in which male authority does not play a role. Fenisa’s suggestion that “¡... no hay gloria como andar / engañando pisaverdes!” (vv. 1593-94) reveals just how little control men have in *La traición* because they are easily manipulated by the female characters. Despite the humorous power dynamics in this play, Lope’s prescription to keep the plot within the realm of possibilities still allows for the audience to imagine a trace of reality behind a female-dominated stage that, to a certain extent, promotes collective friendship among women.

The question of female solidarity, particularly when read in comparison with the classical models of friendship, has interested critics such as Monica Leoni, who argues that the relationships in this play are based, in Aristotelian terms, entirely on utility. Leoni affirms, “Zayas is prepared to showcase the less than idyllic politics upon which certain alliances, be they male or female, are founded” (65). Instead, the friendship among Belisa, Marcia, and Laura can best be described as “a delicate political relationship” (66). Matthew Wyszynski alternatively views *La traición* as a departure from Aristotelian models. Although Marcia’s and Fenisa’s initial friendship resembles the theoretical paradigm for male bonds, especially because love is cited as the antithesis to friendship, the relationship among Laura, Belisa, and Marcia invokes a discourse of Neoplatonic love to affirm woman-to-woman affection. Wyszynski argues that

despite the erotic undertones of their dialogue, the emphasis instead rests on physical beauty as moral goodness rather than on homoeroticism (24-25). Laura, Belisa, and Marcia are almost indistinguishable from one another and “this deliberate blurring of identities becomes an important aspect of this friendship. Each of these three women, to a certain extent, loses her individual identity and is part of a group, in this case a network with a specific goal in mind” (26). Whether these women join together for utilitarian reasons, as Leoni suggests, or whether they form a community based on mutual admiration, female homosocial bonds in this play forge their own model of a woman-governed society.

Whereas Calderón’s tragedy begins with the idyllic friendship between Juan and Lope, Zayas opens *La traición* with the crippled relationship between two women. Marcia appears on stage with Fenisa and discloses her desire for a man with “más gala que Narciso” named Liseo (vv. 3). Once Marcia shows Fenisa a portrait of her love interest, the latter also becomes enamored with him and hypocritically tries to persuade Marcia to protect herself from the dangers of unchecked desire. In response to her friend’s suspicious advice, Marcia warns:

Si tú pretendes que crea
que eres mi verdadera amiga
no me aconsejes que deje
esta impresa que a me obliga,
no la razón, sino amor. (vv. 39-43)

Love is immediately cast as the enemy of friendship when Fenisa sees Liseo’s portrait and tries to dissuade Marcia from pursuing him. Pretending to be offended by Marcia’s suspicions about her motives, Fenisa replies:

Mal dices, siendo mi amiga,

poner duda en mi amistad;
 mas si a lo cierto te animas,
 justo será, Marcia amada,
 que temas y no permitas
 arrojar al mar de amor
 tu mal regida barquilla. (vv. 44-50)

Fenisa thus feigns concern for her friend's wellbeing while secretly aspiring to capture Liseo for herself. She describes Marcia's alleged unpreparedness for love in terms of instability that reproduce Juan Huarte's view of the irrational female body: Marcia should not cast her unsteady boat in the sea of desire. Just as women are leaky vessels from an early modern medical perspective, Fenisa warns her friend that her figurative love boat is permeable to heartbreak and perhaps even to dishonor. Fenisa therefore not only introduces the concepts of imbalance, irrationality, and vulnerability when love between men and women comes into play, but she fuels them with her own duplicitous desire for Liseo. When Fenisa decides to pursue Liseo, she recognizes her own sexual cravings strain her friendship with Marcia. While deliberating her amorous options, Fenisa considers, "¿Soy amiga? Sí. Pues, ¿cómo / pretendo contra mi amiga / tan alevosa traición?" (vv. 163-65). At the same time, she is powerless because love and friendship "furiosos golpes se tiran; / cayó el amistad en tierra / y amor victoria apellida" (vv. 172-74). Caught in a bind between two modes of affection, the seemingly concerned friend realizes that her actions constitute betrayal, but love has thrown friendship to the ground in defeat. In *A secreto agravio* the play ends when Lope leaves to die in battle after Juan reveals his dishonor, but here Fenisa declares in the beginning that treachery has already slain friendship,

primarily because she has placed her desire before female friendship. The suspense of the play thus emerges from whether or not she will be able to get away with this behavior.

Besides the obvious threat of Fenisa's unbridled sexuality, both men's and women's desire create the possibility of dishonor in the female social body. Fenisa's infatuation with Liseo produces tension with Marcia but has even more dire implications for Laura, Liseo's previous paramour. Since Laura has already surrendered her virginity to Liseo, if he decides to marry Marcia despite his previous commitment to her, Laura will be irredeemably dishonored. As she laments to her faithful servant, Félix,

¡Ay de mí!
 mi honra le entregué, Félix,
 joya hermosa, y que nací
 solo obligada a guardarla,
 y con esto me perdí
 cuando pretendió mi amor. (vv. 762-67)

Here, Laura points out that the only obligation is to protect the "joya hermosa" of her honor, but Liseo's deceitful offer of matrimony led her to surrender her virginity. While lying in Laura's arms, Liseo announces, "Marcia y Fenisa me adoran" (vv. 789). After having penetrated her body during sex, he leaves only dishonor behind when he reveals his plan to choose Marcia or Fenisa. Laura conceives of their sexual union in terms of a permanent bodily merger, but Liseo's plan was simply to enter and withdraw. Beseeking her lover's eyes to kill her, she laments:

Que rinda yo a tus ojos por despojos
 mis ojos, y ellos en lugar de amarme,
 pudiendo con sus rayos alumbrarme,

las flores me convierten en abrojos. (vv. 853-56)

If she relinquishes herself to Liseo's eyes, her own eyes will become the spoils of the destruction he wrought upon her. His eyes, instead of loving and illuminating her, turn her metaphorical flowers into thistles. Laura's plea encapsulates the damage she endures through her attempt to fuse with Liseo, not just with regard to her physical form, but also in relation to her social body. Liseo's disdainful gaze effectively reduces Laura to infertility, symbolized by thistles. Although she is not physically sterile, Laura loses any prospect of restoring her reputation through marriage to Liseo. Particularly in the comedic genre, Laura would be unlikely to suffer literal death for her dishonor as Leonor does in Calderón's tragedy, yet as an injured member of seventeenth-century society, Laura would undoubtedly experience social rejection—at least according to the conventions of the *comedia*—because her value has declined, making her ineligible for marriage to another man. Thus, although Liseo carries out his carnal offense on her body, the ramifications extend to her membership in the female collective.

Just as in Calderón's vision of the male body politic, dishonor in one individual is felt by the entire social organism, even if on a smaller scale. María de Zayas's female body politic, however, consolidates to repair itself rather than undergoing dismemberment as a result of dishonor. Unlike Lope in *A secreto agravio*, who attempts to conceal his disgrace, Laura chooses to confide in Marcia and Belisa, a decision that enables the three women to bond on a corporeal, almost erotic, level. Upon Laura's arrival, Belisa informs Marcia that a lady, "bizarra y de lindo talle," wishes to speak with her (vv. 878). Laura, too, addresses Marcia:

Marcia hermosa, perdonadme,
que es vuestro talle extremado;
me ha turbado, y casi estoy

muerta de amores en veros;
 no hay más bien que conoceros;
 dichosa en miraros soy. (vv. 899-904)

Each woman directs her gaze to the other's body, particularly captivated by her beautiful figure, but even more significantly, Laura hyperbolically professes to be dying of love for Marcia.

Wyszynski reads this scene in a Neoplatonic context in which the eroticism behind Laura's words only serves to emphasize Marcia's moral integrity, yet the homoerotic undertones of their conversation should not be dismissed as solely indicative of a spiritual connection. The use of courtship language between Marcia and Laura suggests that these women bond in a corporeal manner to build solidarity while recognizing their mutual vulnerability to men. When Laura divulges, "El alma, señora, os doy, / tomad el rostro también" (vv. 913-14), she surrenders her soul and body to her new friend through the act of caressing her face. In the *Constituciones* drafted for the Discalced Carmelite convents she founded, Teresa of Ávila writes, "Ninguna hermana abrace a otra, ni la toque en el rostro ni en las manos" (616). This prohibition, although it applies to enclosed nuns suggests that an early modern audience would have understood Marcia's gesture as an intimate one and quite possibly erotic. Rather than representing an Aristotelian bond based primarily on virtue, the eroticized exchange here serves the greater purpose of uniting these women, both spiritually and corporeally, in a collective female social body. Furthermore, because Laura is completely veiled except for her eyes when she arrives, Marcia asks her to reveal her full face: "Descubríos, que los ojos / me tienen enamorada" (vv. 909-10). Her focus on the eyes is reminiscent of Laura's grievances against Liseo. In this case, Marcia becomes enamored with Laura's eyes, but does not seize them as spoils of war as does Liseo. Marcia thus recognizes her friend's eyes as the site of her vulnerability: she loses herself

in the same part of Laura's body that Liseo used as a point of entry to destroy her honor. Unlike the philandering Liseo, Marcia does not stop at Laura's eyes but also kisses her face, caresses her, and nearly undresses her.¹⁹ The encounter between the two women evokes much more intimacy than Liseo's disenchanting pillow talk with Laura. Zayas employs the language of corporeal merger in her expression of female bonds, especially when male-female unions fail. Far from a declaration of friendship in the classical sense, the dialogue in this scene reinforces the solidarity among Marcia, Laura, and Belisa through their understandings of the unprotected female body.

The physical bond among these women extends beyond a mere awareness of female vulnerability and ultimately serves to protect the social body. After Laura discloses her dishonor, Belisa announces, "Si hombre fuera, yo empleara / en vuestra afición mi fe" (vv. 919-20). Her desire to defend Laura's honor—if she were a man—criticizes the view that only men can restore honor with bloodshed and demonstrates her willingness to take up arms for a fellow woman. Although Marcia is infatuated with Liseo, she decides that female friendship eclipses desire and promises Laura:

...puedo jurarte
 que no le he dado a Liseo
 favor que no pueda al punto
 quitársele; yo confieso
 que le tengo voluntad;
 mas Laura hermosa, sabiendo
 que te tiene obligación,

¹⁹ There is no evidence that *La traición* was ever performed for a public audience (Soufas xii). The eroticism of this scene reinforces the idea that it was not meant for public performance, though it may have been performed during private gatherings.

desde aquí de amarle dejo,
 en mi vida le veré.
 ¿Eso temes? Ten por cierto
 que soy mujer principal
 y que aqueste engaño sienta. (vv. 994-1006)

Unlike Laura, Marcia has not provided Liseo with any irrevocable favors, and by offering to abandon her sexual desire, she affirms that the wellbeing of the group takes precedence over her own wishes. Marcia declares that she is first and foremost a woman and Liseo's offense against Laura also affects her as part of the same social body. Marcia feels Laura's pain and presumably wipes away her tears when consoling her: "No llores, / que ya he pensado el remedio" (vv. 1031-32). She is therefore compelled to heal the ailing member of the group not just with a plan for revenge, but with physical touch. Since they cannot directly confront Liseo, the three women craft a plan to restore Laura's honor. Although Marcia spearheads the strategy, she emphasizes the egalitarian nature of her newfound friendships. Before Laura enters the house, Marcia implores—and perhaps helps—her to undress further by removing her cloak. Symbolically, the removal of Laura's clothing extends beyond bodily intimacy and implies a level of trust and transparency that cannot be achieved with the men in this *comedia*. When Laura kneels before Marcia to kiss her feet, the latter responds, "Alza, amiga, que no quiero / que gastes tanta humildad" (vv. 1054-55). Though the stage directions are not explicit, Marcia likely takes Laura in her arms to raise her from the floor, an act that would indicate further physical contact between them. On Calderón's stage, the king represents the head of the male social body, but Zayas's female body politic does not require a queen. Marcia helps Laura, at the very least verbally, rise to her level instead of wasting misplaced humility, a performative—and intimate—

act that would visually accentuate the equality throughout the group. Wyszynski's observation of the "deliberate blurring of identities" among Marcia, Belisa, and Laura as part of "a network with a specific goal in mind" reinforces not only the nonhierarchical, collective mentality of these women, but also their unity as one body for the explicit purpose of protecting the vulnerable member of the female social organism. Unlike male friends who bond during war, Zayas's women share moments of tenderness and connect corporeally with eroticized language and gestures, recognizing their penetrability and achieving organic unity to heal the female body politic from the destruction of men—and Fenisa.

Although Marcia and Belisa manage to cure Laura's tainted reputation, female friendship in *La traición en amistad* is far from idyllic. Fenisa's punishment in particular establishes that just as women demonstrate affection through corporeal intimacy, so too they carry out cruelty through the body. At the end of the second act, Juan loses patience with Fenisa and slaps her. As he describes the act to Belisa:

Dejé sangrientas venganzas,
y para mayor afrenta
con la mano de su cara
saqué por fuerza vergüenza. (vv. 1744-47)

The black humor in this scene threatens to disrupt the comedic ending of the play, so Belisa lightly protests Juan's violence by pointing out, "Es mujer al fin; me pesa; / que no hiciera estas locuras" (vv. 1761-62).²⁰ Belisa's reprimand seems to condemn physical abuse against women, but she does not belabor the point and Juan does not suffer any consequences for his action.

At the end of the final act, Marcia, too, confronts Fenisa with the threat of violence, "Calla, necia / que sólo por ser mujer / no te echo por la escalera" (vv. 2844-46). Fenisa's sex

²⁰ The double negative here should be translated as "I am sorry that you did such a crazy thing."

supposedly prevents Marcia from throwing her down the staircase, yet the rhetorical violence and silence that the other women impose on her body, despite her misbehavior, are nonetheless disturbing, especially when the play seemingly promotes female unity and protection. The desperate Fenisa turns to each man asking him to marry her, but when she exhausts her options, Marcia coldly states, “Pues de tu mal nadie tiene / la culpa, sino tú mesma” (vv. 2899-900). With these words, Marcia exiles her former friend from the group. With regard to this outcome, Wyszynski argues:

In light of this concept of the female friendship as a mutually interdependent network of several women, Fenisa’s isolation from women is more important than it may at first appear. The women have completely ostracized her, not because she has assimilated herself into the norms of the predominant (male) culture, but because of the consequences of this assimilation: the betrayal of her friends.

Fenisa no longer enjoys the comfort and solace of friends. (31)

Fenisa, the illness in the female body politic, is not condemned to death as Luis is in *A secreto agravio*, but her excision from the community constitutes an undesirable fate, as Wyszynski’s observation would suggest: social demise. Fenisa is no longer permitted a respectable position in society, and Zayas ensures that she remains forever penetrable when León addresses the audience:

Señores míos, Fenisa
cual ven, sin amantes queda;
si alguno la quiere, avise
para que su casa sepa. (vv. 2911-14)

León summons the audience to pervade the theatrical space by breaking the fourth wall and moreover, he invites male spectators to enter Fenisa's home—and her body. Though the sick member of the female political body, Laura, is healed at the end of the play, Fenisa remains open to further injury.

Despite their best efforts to protect the group from additional harm, Marcia, Belisa, and Laura are still susceptible to male deceit. Even though Liseo and Juan have both been promiscuous with Fenisa, they go unpunished, and the women, undeterred by their suitors' misdeeds, marry them. As Zayas explores in her *Desengaños amorosos* (1649), marital relationships did not always ensure women's safety. Though she delves deeper into these issues in her later collection of exemplary tales, *Desengaños amorosos* (1649), Zayas also alludes to the imperfections of marriage in *La traición* when Belisa confesses to Juan, “La mujer más altiva / rendirá fuertes de honor / si acaso escucha caricia” (vv. 1226-28). Both instances of female sexual desire imply that women's metaphorical fortresses easily give way to men's seductive incursions. Whatever scheme they contrive to resist temptation and restore honor, the female social body remains vulnerable, not just because of men's power but because women's desire also contributes to their downfall. Monica Leoni's assertion that the network of women in this play represents “a delicate political relationship” comes to the fore at curtain close, particularly because it remains unclear whether Belisa, Marcia, and Laura maintain their friendship after reaching their desired goal. At the end of the play, the women do not reaffirm a permanent alliance. Rather, the implied stage directions indicate that women dissolve into the hierarchical male social body when each stands beside her new husband. Therefore, the disquieting undertone of the final scene subverts the lighthearted ending of the comedy by challenging the survival of the female body politic.

Ana Caro's *Valor, agravio y mujer* (c. 1640) differs significantly from that of her contemporary because the protagonist, Leonor, a seduced and abandoned noblewoman, cannot depend on a strong network of women willing to defend her reputation and she thus must take matters into her own hands by masquerading as a man. The notion of a female body politic is not as clearly established in *Valor, agravio y mujer* as it is in *La traición en amistad*. Nevertheless, in Caro's imagination, Leonor still manages to form bonds with other women, despite her masculine attire, and uses them to heal her own ailing honor rather than vengefully dismembering the male social body. Unlike Zayas, whose female body politic rejects hierarchy, Caro creates a dramatic space in which the Countess Estela, the highest-ranking member of court, may exercise her authority over the other women. The countess, however, does not simply represent the female analogue of the Calderonian king, because her power is not absolute. Estela remains continually under the influence of both the male characters and the ploys of the cross-dressed protagonist. Throughout their *comedias*, Ana Caro and María de Zayas unveil a pressing concern over honor and how it dictates female relationships, whether or not they are hierarchical. Interestingly, Caro and Zayas themselves developed an intimate friendship unlike the often uncivilized exchanges among their contemporary male counterparts who were competing against one another at the time. In the words of Antonio de Castillo Solórzano, Zayas and Caro intimidated "las más valientes plumas de nuestra España" (Maroto Camino 1-2). As women within a male-dominated tradition, the playwrights may have forged their own female support network to overcome men's attitudes toward women both on stage and behind the curtain.

The first scene of Caro's *comedia*, which features the countess Estela and her cousin Lisarda facing an impending storm while hunting in the woods, alludes to the inexorable vulnerability of early modern women. Although they wield weapons, Estela dedicates a great

number of lines to express fear. Her description of the ominous weather conditions creates an equally menacing start to the play and foreshadows their encounter with the three bandits. When Tibaldo, Rufino, and Astolfo arrive on scene, the women entrust them with their safety, stating, “Vuestra cortesía es norte / que nos guía” (vv. 94-95). Taking advantage of their trust, the men restrain Estela and Lisarda to steal their jewels, an act of robbery that portends a loss of virginity. Just as Laura is concerned with her metaphorical jewel in *La traición en amistad*, it is implied that the bandits will rape these women after taking their material possessions. Once this becomes clear, Lisarda urges the men to kill them instead, but Rufino confirms their fear: “No aspiramos a eso, reina” (vv. 157). Don Juan de Córdoba, Leonor’s former suitor, arrives on cue to save Lisarda and Estela, but even though their honor remains intact, Estela feels a profound obligation—and perhaps desire—to display gratitude to Juan and even marry him for his heroic act. Upon returning home, Estela exhorts Leonor’s brother:

No borres
 con ingratitud, Fernando,
 mis justas obligaciones;
 vida y honor le debemos. (vv. 199-201)

Later, she complains to Lisarda, “La obligación de don Juan, / bien solicita en mi intento / forzoso agradecimiento” (vv. 912-14). Estela has managed to escape the bandits’ sexual aggression, but she remains susceptible to Juan because she feels obligation and desire to reciprocate his kindness with her most desirable offering: her body. Thus, from the beginning, Caro emphasizes that the female form is permeable and men become both a source of protection and of penetration.

Having been ensnared sexually by Juan, Leonor's honor rests on whether he fulfills his promise of marriage. In order to ensure her self-preservation, Leonor determines that she can no longer maintain her femininity. Now that Leonor is dressed as "Leonardo" and verbally rails against Juan, her friend and servant Ribete comments, "El nuevo traje te ha dado alientos" (vv. 506), to which she replies:

Yo soy quien soy.
 Engañaste si imaginas,
 Ribete, que soy mujer;
 mi agravio mudó mi ser. (507-10)

From Leonor's perspective, the *gracioso* Ribete mistakenly believes that these fancy new clothes—which still display her seductively feminine figure—are the source of her masculine aggression, but the true reason for Leonor's new persona is Juan's offense against her. Because this man has taken her virginity, Leonor must serve as her own advocate and thus can no longer be a woman until she restores her honor. She further declares:

Ya pues, me determiné
 y atrevida pasé el mar,
 o he de morir o acabar
 la empresa que comencé,
 o a todos los cielos juro
 que nueva amazona intente,
 o Camila más valiente,
 vengarme de aquel perjuro
 aleve. (vv. 496-504)

If she is not successful in her endeavor to force Juan into marriage, Leonor will die socially, if not literally, because like Laura in *La traición*, she will be worthless on the marriage market without honor. The afflicted protagonist invokes mythological women warriors, Camila and the Amazon, to announce plans to avenge her reputation, yet Leonor infiltrates the masculine sphere by performing as a man. In full appreciation of her new power as a sword-wielding gentleman, Leonor is tempted to redress her grievances with Juan's blood. Ribete inquires whether she plans to kill her lover and she exclaims, "Mataré[le] / ¡vive Dios!" (vv.517). She even goes so far as to demand that Juan unsheathe his sword in preparation to fight his new enemy "Leonardo." Regardless, to Juan's confusion, she suddenly withdraws from her violent approach: "¡Que tan resuelto jurase / darne muerte, y que en un punto me defendiese" (1539-40). Despite Leonor's desire—and certainly her ability—to kill Juan, she is unable to exact Calderonian-style revenge because removing a member of the male community would not be conducive to restoring her honor. As a woman defending her own interests, Leonor does not mutilate the male body politic. Instead, she attempts to reestablish balance from within.

Throughout her male impersonation, Leonor develops an intense affective bond with Estela, which affords her protection. From the audience's perspective, the relationship between Estela and Leonor closely resembles utilitarian friendship because the latter manipulates Estela in order to use her as a pawn against Juan. Indeed, she imitates female solidarity when disguising herself as Estela to berate Juan for his misdeeds. Leonor, disguised as the countess, scolds her lover, "Volved, volved a España, / que no es honrosa hazaña / burlar una mujer ilustre y noble" (vv. 1785-86). Though without Estela's consent, Leonor envisions a world in which one woman would defend the honor of another. Simultaneously, Caro is able to explore homoerotic themes by allowing the audience to imagine two women seducing one another. As I discuss in the

second chapter, Sor Violante del Cielo and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz master and subvert masculine love rhetoric when composing poetry to female addressees in order to achieve their own form of expression. Similarly, Leonor grasps the language of courtship when flattering Estela:

Que es lengua el afecto mudo
que está confesando ya
los efectos que esos ojos
sólo pudieron causar. (vv. 961-64).

Leonor-Leonardo continues to compliment her eyes: “Aurora sois celestial, / dos soles vuestros ojos, / un cielo es vuestra beldad” (vv. 1066-69). For Barbara Mujica, “Caro’s female characters show an awareness and rejection of the artifices men use to charm women. At the same time, they demonstrate that women are as capable as men at manipulating rhetoric” (28). Juan’s seductive rhetoric has not been effective on Estela, but Leonor’s focus on Estela’s eyes duplicates the female bonding of Zayas’s comedy. Just as Marcia recognizes Laura’s eyes as the site of women’s beauty and vulnerability, so too does Leonor connect with Estela through her eyes. Because Leonor displays such rhetorical mastery, Estela truly believes Leonardo is a gentleman and replies, “¡Qué bien sabéis persuadir!” (vv. 1073), thus initiating an infatuation—one which the protagonist does nothing to diminish—that endures until the final scenes of the play. Leonor empowers Estela, again through her eyes, when she speaks as Leonardo with excessive humility:

Yo, aunque sé que estás en mí,
en fe de mi amor no creo,
si en tus ojos no me veo,

que merezco estar en ti. (vv. 2044-47)

Whereas the other men refer to Estela as “esquiva e ingrata” (vv. 1878) for not responding to their advances, Leonardo parodies masculine love rhetoric to suggest that if he does not have a place in Estela’s eyes, then he does not deserve her. The language of corporeal merger in these words echoes that of *La traición en amistad*. Here, the protagonist indicates his desire to unite with Estela in body and soul, but only if she deems him worthy. Ironically, Leonor-Leonardo implies that women are not obligated to surrender to male advances while at the same time exaggerating men’s language of seduction. The unlikely relationship between Estela and Leonor-Leonardo might well have been intended to amuse and perhaps have titillated the audience, but it also offers a narrative of women’s relationships on stage. Though their bond does not constitute an ideal model of female friendship, it offers mutual support as much as their predicament will allow.

By the end of *Valor, agravio y mujer*, Leonor cures her own body of dishonor and restores balance to the female body writ large when she reappears in women’s garments. Leonor takes ownership of herself and her reputation when, as Leonardo, she pretends to be her own suitor. Displaying a portrait of Leonor to Juan, Leonardo implies that he possesses her, which in turn affirms Leonor’s ultimate self-control. Leonardo proclaims, referring to Leonor, “He merecido / sus brazos y sus favores” (2241-42). While Leonardo has possessed Leonor sexually—a rhetorical strategy she uses to spark Juan’s jealousy—Leonor in reality merits control over her own body. She cunningly forces Juan to fulfill his obligation to her through triangulated desire by making herself attractive to other men. Once Leonardo cries, “Yo la adoro,” the jealous Juan responds, “Yo la quiero” (2649). Now that he has announced his promise to Leonor in front of the other characters, she is free to assume her previous identity and

reenter the female community. Even considering Leonor's lies, Estela easily adapts to her lover's gender change with her excuse, "Fue fuerza, Estela" (vv. 2731). Clearly, the countess has internalized the demands of female honor because instead of reprimanding her would-be lover for deceit and her besmirched reputation, Estela utters words of solidarity: "Quedemos / hermanas, Leonor hermosa" (2731-32). Her cry of sisterhood seemingly affirms the survival and security of their bond, yet Estela's erotic desire for Leonardo is not only easily dissolved into purely spiritual terms, but it is also transferred to Fernando. When Estela turns away from Leonor to address Fernando, "¿De esposo y dueño / me dad la mano?" (vv. 2733-34), this visual effect mirrors the staging of Zayas's final scene as each woman stands beside her chosen husband. Though marriage may be presented as a more desirable outcome for women than in *La traición*, Caro still emphasizes that marriage takes precedence over female same-sex affection. The festive wedding atmosphere at the end of the play is undermined because Juan evades punishment for his earlier bad behavior and his marriage to Leonor is born out of jealousy and deceit rather than tenderness. For both playwrights, women form a collective body to protect each of its members when one of them is injured, but ultimately, they cannot escape the allure of the patriarchy.

Valor, agravio y mujer, while promoting a strong female community, subtly subverts its own happy ending because it does not insulate this community from male cruelty. Leonor's amorous troubles suggest that men seduce and abandon women in Seville, while, in the beginning, Estela's and Lisarda's foreboding encounter in the mountains emphasizes the threat of physical violence against women. Estela's female-governed court thus promotes female solidarity and offers women the protection and freedom to explore their sexualities, both by choosing their own male sexual partners and by capitalizing on the opportunity for female same-

sex flirtations. As in *La traición en amistad*, however, the female body politic remains as unstable as it is violable. Caro and Zayas supposedly celebrate marriage in their final scenes but do little to reassure the audience that these partnerships will ensure women's physical and emotional security or that intimate female alliances survive beyond a marriage proposal.

Calderón, Zayas, and Caro highlight the prominence of honor culture on stage, yet recent historians such as Scott K. Taylor and Allyson Poska have revised prevailing beliefs about the presence of honor in seventeenth-century Spain. As Taylor observes, "Honor was not a trap that forced early modern Spaniards to act in certain tragic and bloodthirsty ways. Instead, it was a tool, used equally by men and women to manage relations with their neighbors and maintain their place in the community" (7). Poska, too, stresses that honor depended heavily on demography, class, economy, and regional culture (135). Taylor and Poska determine that honor, as an occasional concern of the elite, either did not play a significant role in the daily life of many Spaniards or it involved much more than simply female chastity. Although honor plays of the seventeenth century did not necessarily reflect social reality, they certainly provided entertainment for an audience who spent scarce resources to see them. The public's evident fascination with discourses of honor challenges the belief that honor did not, at least in some way, factor into early modern daily lives. Georgina Dopico-Black traces previous scholarly readings of honor plays, such as those of Américo Castro and Merveena McKendrick, in the historical context of *limpieza de sangre* or blood purity. Building on Castro's and McKendrick's views that Spanish social anxieties and obsession with blood purity were dramatized through the concept of honor on stage, Dopico Black adds that sexual impurity was nearly indistinguishable from blood contamination not just because *converso* heritage could be inserted into a man's bloodline through infidelity, but because both his wife's body and his perceived bloodline

represent a violation over which he has no control (112-13). Following in this approach, if honor was a place-holder for social anxieties about purity of blood, then dishonor likely represented a very real political threat coursing through the veins of the body politic.

In these plays, honor dramatizes the tensions between the desire for—and fear of—intimacy and social connectivity. In *A secreto agravio, secreta venganza*, when two men develop an intimate friendship to the point that they share mutual honor, dishonor necessarily severs their bond, and the loss of social and physical control portends the impotence of the male body politic. Zayas and Caro, too, cast dishonor as a threat to the female social body. The early modern women on their respective stages, however, form connections with their vulnerable bodies rather than through the culture of honor. An affront to one woman's reputation thus affects the entire female network. Like Calderón, the women playwrights recognize that the female constitution is permeable, but rather than allowing dishonor to consume a woman, they imagine an egalitarian female social body that protects its injured member. Women may unite as a social body to heal a member ailing of dishonor, but the female body politic, like the individual body, inevitably can still be vulnerable to the privileges of patriarchy.

Chapter 4

Flesh Made Word: Spiritual Friendships and Communities in Carmelite Convent Writing

In her painting *Y el almendro floreció* (2008), Sor Isabel Guerra commemorates the death of Teresa of Ávila on October 4, 1582 by depicting the saint lying peacefully in the arms of her closest companion, Ana de San Bartolomé. At the moment of Teresa's passing, an almond tree miraculously blooms in the background and Ana lovingly gazes at her sister's soul—symbolized by the glowing light on her face—as it ascends heavenward. The intimacy of this scene, based on the artist's interpretation of accounts from early modern Carmelite texts, captures a vision of the spiritual friendship between a nun and the founding mother of her order. As cloistered women removed from the obligations of marriage, the female religious of early modern Spain undoubtedly had experiences of friendship different from the characters of Ana Caro and María de Zayas, whose same-sex alliances were rendered unstable by their marriages at the end of the final act. In Zayas's novellas entitled *Desengaños amorosos* (1649), several of the female characters in the frame narrative even reject heterosexual love and male cruelty in favor of refuge in the convent. Yet in the final paragraph of the text, Zayas subverts the security of the cloister when she addresses a previously unmentioned male reader:

Ya ilustrísimo Fabio, por cumplir lo que pediste de que no diese trágico fin a esta historia, la hermosísima Lisis queda en clausura, temerosa de que algún engaño la desengañe, no escarmentada de desdichas propias. No es trágico fin, sino más felice que se pudo dar, pues codiciosa y deseada de muchos, no se sujetó a ninguno. Si os duran deseos de verla, buscadla con intento casto, que con ello la hallaréis tan vuestra. (670)

The female narrator thus betrays her character's desire for female homosociality by fulfilling the male reader's request for a happy ending. Because she instructs Fabio to pierce the cloister to collect his beloved, Zayas's narrator in effect provokes the reader to question whether convent walls are truly secure and whether a woman can ever escape the pull of the patriarchy.²¹

Considering the idyllic bond of sisterhood in Guerra's painting and Zayas's ambivalence toward it, this chapter will trace the narrative of friendship and community for female monastics, determine whether it offered nuns the same protection from gender hierarchy as it did for their non-cloistered contemporaries, and if so, explore how these women may have helped one another negotiate their spiritual equality despite their female bodies.

In order to understand friendship in the convent within a gendered context, it is useful to consider the personal dynamics among male monastics. Relatively little research has been done on this topic in the early modern Spanish context, but Jodi Bilinkoff represents an exception. Bilinkoff has written on the relationship between Juan de la Cruz and his disciple and biographer Alonso de la Madre de Dios, arguing that Alonso's experiences with Juan urge us to consider the affective bonds among male religious in early modern Europe (2). In 1587, when Alonso was a novice, Juan took him aside, offered the young friar advice, and embraced him. This instance of physical touch led Alonso to dedicate his entire religious career to the beatification proceedings of Juan de la Cruz, hoping that at the moment of the former's death, his spiritual father would again embrace him (12). After Juan died in Úbeda, Alonso spent a year and half in the town to reside near his friend's interred body and became interested in its thaumaturgic properties (3). At least for Alonso de la Madre de Dios, the affection of his superior—in life and in death—greatly

²¹ The end of the *Desengaños* features a surprising appearance by an extra-textual narrator, who speaks outside the frame tale. Because she speaks to Fabio—presumably a fictional character—this narrator is also presumably fictional character. Considering the entire corpus of her works, there is overlap between the opinions of this fictional narrator and the historical Zayas.

shaped his experience of life as a Discalced Carmelite friar. Did emotional relationships consequently play a significant role in other male religious communities? Moreover, did the monastic ascetic ideals of silence, solitude, and detachment allow for friendships to develop? Were they Ciceronian friendships based on equality or did the vow of obedience to one's superiors preclude egalitarian male bonds?

From late Antiquity to the Middle Ages, varying attitudes circulated in religious literature regarding personal relationships among monks and friars. Brian Patrick McGuire traces a history of monastic friendship and communities, observing that, despite the ambivalence toward friendships in the tenth century, Jotsald of Cluny and Hildegard of Chartres began to replace monastic *familiaritas*—an alliance similar to kinship—with *amicitia* in the classical sense. Personal friendships thus became just as valued as the collective friendship of the cloister (178). In the eleventh century, the evolution of the terminology of friendship suggests that the spiritual dimension of individual relationships flourished. McGuire explains this evolution through the example of monastic reformer Dunstan of Canturbury (909-988).

[Dunstan] shed light on the way the ideal of friendship was described both before and during our period. In one of the earliest accounts, from about the year 1000, a monk of Glastonbury, Wulfred, is said to have appeared after his own death to Dunstan. In describing this vision, the author mentions in passing that Wulfred had once been close to Dunstan, having been in life his loving companion: *familiaris amator*. The language has both classical and monastic overtones. *Amator*, borrowed from a ciceronian vocabulary indicates a friend (*Atticus* 1:20), while *familiaris* implies the group friendship of monastic life.

A contemporary biographer, Eadmer of Canterbury, described the relationship between Dunstan and Wulfred as a *sanctus amor*, while the twelfth-century William of Malmesbury categorized the same relationship as *sancta amicitia* (182). For McGuire, the golden age of monastic friendship arrived in the twelfth century partly as a result of the reforms that took place during the eleventh century, such as the Carolingian emphasis on the quality of spiritual life for the individual and a more dynamic and mobile society (227-28).

The spiritualization of friendship allowed these emotional bonds to undermine the monastic ideas of asceticism, but as McGuire points out, “In its monastic context friendship is also linked to the existence of collective forms of life. One or two monks can be singled out for special love, but only when the integrity of the community has been acknowledged and the personal bond poses no threat to stability and order” (279-92). Furthermore, friendship presented dangers because individual bonds often created expectations that monastic life could not fulfill (289). Aelred of Rievaulx (1110-1167) believed that he could channel his attraction to other people to become spiritually closer to human beings, as well as God (304). At the same time, “Aelred was a master of love, but the intensity of his loving created resentment, even hatred, from those who felt excluded or incapable of response” (337). Even when friendship in religious communities reached its maximum expression in the twelfth century, monks still faced the tensions between individual and collective bonds. At the end of the twelfth century, increasing formality in institutions posed greater challenges for spiritual friendship (383). McGuire argues, “From the early thirteenth century onwards, friendships in the religious life were being looked upon as problematic or even as undesirable. The crisis in friendship is connected with the urbanization of learned culture and the failure of small communities, the monasteries especially, to provide centres of religious and intellectual renewal” (413). Richard Rolle (d. 1349), for

instance, believed in the concept of spiritual friendship but not that he could achieve it with another man. From Rolle's perspective, a man should concentrate his entire being on God and pursue friendships only with God and the saints, a belief that invokes the Christian Stoicism of Late Antiquity (414). The doubts about monastic friendship in the Middle Ages were especially based on the danger that individual friendships posed for collective life. McGuire's study, however, does not resolve the conflict between individual and group relationships in monastic communities, but it illuminates the fluctuating attitudes toward spiritual friendship until the thirteenth century and offers the possibility of a discussion for early modern male spirituality and communities.

In the case of Alonso de la Madre de Dios, the young friar found his friendship with John of the Cross crucial to his spiritual development. Significantly, however, it remains to be explored whether Alonso represented—or deviated from—other sixteenth-century attitudes toward personal relationships among monastics. The Jesuit priest Baltasar Álvarez (1533-1580), in his *Escritos espirituales*—primarily a compilation of his teachings from the writing of his disciple and prolific biographer, Luis de la Puente (1554-1624)—endorses the relationship between the individual and God over communal bonds. During his tenure at the Jesuit probation house in Simancas, Álvarez's reputation as a harsh master who routinely humiliated his disciples did nothing to diminish their religious fervor. Luis de la Puente acknowledges the affection Álvarez's subordinates felt for the priest: "Nunca he visto en la Compañía más mortificar a Superior a sus súbditos, y en tiempos y lugares y ocasiones extraordinarias, que serían largas de contar; y nunca oí queja ni murmuración desto: aunque mortificados, le amaban más" (290, *Vida* apéndice XXI). Despite his severity, Álvarez was loved by his disciples, but he faced political complications with his superiors in 1576 over his methods of teaching prayer. In 1577, the

Provincial of Castile, Juan Suarez wrote, “Agora un año, Vuestra Paternidad le escribió con el Procurador, que no lo enseñase [su modo de oración], a los de la casa ni fuera; y que tuviese recato en el modo de hablar, que los tiempos son peligrosos” (Álvarez 142). In his *Spiritual Exercises*, Saint Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) taught that the three methods of prayer include meditating on the ten commandments, capital sins, powers of the soul, and senses of the body; contemplating the meaning of each word in a prayer; and praying to rhythmic measures (96-100). In the so-called dangerous times surrounding the Counter Reformation, Álvarez’s deviation from traditional spiritual practice alarmed his superiors.

In a departure from Ignatius’s method, Álvarez promoted a less structured, largely passive, personal interaction with God. In a text written at the behest of the Visitor, Diego de Avallaneda, to the Superior General of the Society of Jesus, Álvarez explains, “La oración es ponerme en su presencia [la de Dios], dada interior y corporalmente” (Flors 210). Occasionally, his prayer methods include resting quietly in the presence of God because “debemos gozar de Dios... aun en esta vida” (210-11). Rather than practice rigid spiritual exercises under the supervision of a guide, Álvarez often prefers simply to enjoy divine presence. However, he also writes, “Vencí esta tentación resolviéndome en no querer más oración de la que mandaba la obediencia,” having returned to the approved prayer methods because he valued obedience (207). His own mode of prayer, in which he commends his entire body and soul to God without the guidance of an experienced supervisor for the *Exercises*, echoes the Christian Stoic mentality of monks such as Richard Rolle in the fourteenth century. Though Álvarez may not have eschewed human relationships as did Rolle, his conflicts with Jesuit authorities reveal a desire primarily for

a personal bond with God. Significantly, in his obedience to his superiors, he renounced teaching his method of prayer to others because of his ultimate respect for ecclesiastical hierarchy.²²

Baltasar Álvarez's *Escritos espirituales* do not address monastic friendships explicitly, but his views on human relationships in part resonate with the Stoics of Antiquity. As Plutarch declared, "In our friendship's consonance (*συμφωνίας*) and harmony (*ἁρμονίας*) there must be no element unlike, uneven, or unequal, but all must be alike to engender agreement in words, counsels, opinions and feelings, and it must be as if (*ὡσπερ*) one soul were apportioned among two or more bodies" (qtd. in Lee 42). Although Justus Lipsius did not publish his *De Constantia*, a foundational text for the unity of Stoicism and Christianity (Neostoicism) until 1584, Álvarez proposes a vision of universal harmony under God by speaking about love for one's fellow man. He asserts, "Les es dulce servir y sufrir a los prójimos, y hacerse con ellos como una cera blanda y suave, y darles su amistad. Y si son ofendidos dellos, darles buena gana su perdón y gracia, buen rostro y dulces palabras, teniendo por cierto que cuales se mostraren con los prójimos, hallarán a Dios: si dulces, dulce; si misericordiosos, misericordioso" (284). The use of *amistad* in this case denotes collective love for other human beings, particularly for those who are suffering. Most strikingly, Álvarez argues that serving others offers direct access to God, which not only privileges the individual's relationship with the divine but also suggests that human bonds must serve a greater purpose.

Luis de la Puente's account in the *Escritos* reveals that Álvarez initially resisted dealing with other people because it would distract him from God:

Como a los principios tuviese alguna repugnancia al trato con los prójimos, por retirarse y dar más tiempo a la lección y oración y trato con nuestro Señor, luego

²² Álvarez was Teresa of Ávila's third Jesuit confessor. Although he initially disapproved of the Carmelite's mystical tendencies, in time he developed a method of mystical prayer remarkably similar to her. See Weber, "Teresa di Jesu e i rapport."

se desengañó, porque echó de ver, por experiencia, que le daban más devoción y espíritu por el camino de las ocupaciones con las almas, siendo por obediencia, que no en sólo el retiramiento que él procuraba. Y así dice en su librito, que los que salen al trato con los prójimos por obediencia del Señor, y no dejan la fe en la celda, prueban que en él reciben mejores bocados de luz y devoción, conforme a lo que dice el salmista: *Los que navegan por la mar rompiendo por las muchas aguas, éstos verán las obras del Señor, y las maravillas que hace en el profundo.* (286)

Though the priest feels that interacting with his fellow man would interrupt his solitude with God, he discovers a deeper spiritual purpose in serving others as an act of obedience. The psalm cited here suggests that one must occasionally leave the monastic cell for divine experience with fellow human beings. Álvarez even finds that God will shield him from the potential dangers of sexually charged relationships: “La seguridad que había en el trato con los prójimos, cuando se entraba en él por la obediencia, era muy grande. Y si por obediencia iba entre malas mujeres para ganarlas, tratando con ellas tendría pensamientos limpios, como si fuera un ángel; y si se quedaba en su celda, por su propia voluntad, allí se quemara con malos pensamientos” (273). Unlike the medieval monastics that McGuire describes, their early modern successors display a greater awareness of the dangers of potential erotic friendships. Despite the risks of interacting with sinful women, if the priest does so in obedience to God, he will leave with a clean conscience. In his teachings about *amistad* in a universal sense, Álvarez recognizes the tensions between forming relationships with other people and maintaining his bond with Christ. Yet he concludes that obedience enables him to perceive others as a vehicle to the divine, as long as

personal interaction is consonant and harmonious, or in the priest's words, *dulce, blanda, and suave*.

Álvarez represents the front between two different currents of Jesuit practice in the sixteenth century. Alison Weber points out that one tendency emphasized preaching and education and the other encouraged contemplative prayer and eremitical withdrawal (“Beatas” 4). Because of an increasing fear over the feminization of interior spirituality and over a rise in heterodox *alumbradismo*, the Society distanced itself from contemplative prayer (3-4). Álvarez and his biographer thus attempt to negotiate how to fulfill their apostolic mission without forming close emotional bonds with other people. As expressed in the *Escritos*, Baltasar Álvarez prefers to nurture his relationship with God more than his friendships with human beings. At one point during his discussion on God's love, he declares, “Y estando otro día [10 de marzo 1569, Medina], en la oración con la pretensión desde amor, dije a Nuestro Señor con gran sentimiento interior: ‘¡Oh, Señor, si ya no tratase con nadie, sino contigo, o de cosas de tu servicio que tocan al bien de las almas, que es lo que a Ti agrada!’” (286-87). Again stressing his exclusive devotion to God, Álvarez promises to reach out to other souls only as service to God. He even goes so far as to compare human contact for other motives and the desire for admiration to adultery:

Haciéndole todos los más servicios que pudieren con pura intención de agradar a El sólo. Porque, como una castísima mujer muestra el amor que tiene a su marido en hacerle todos los placeres que puede, y, si se adorna y atavía, es por contentarle a él solo y no al otro... y si desea el adorno de virtudes, ciencia y otras gracias, no es para agradar a los hombres y para que le estimen, porque esto tiénelo por linaje

de adulterio, sino sólo para agradar a Dios y para ayudar a que otros le agraden.

(291)

Just as the chaste wife adorns herself for the sole pleasure of her husband, any talents a man possesses should not be flaunted for the esteem of his peers but instead exercised to please God. By equating the need for human approval to the unfaithful wife, Álvarez employs gender hierarchies to express his monogamous relationship with Christ. He feminizes the man in relation to God partly because good Christian wives traditionally obey their husbands but also because the wife's existence centers on her husband both mentally and corporeally. Similarly, the priest disseminates the idea that a person, particularly a man of the cloth, should completely surrender his body and soul to divine providence and subordinate personal friendships to the goals of his order.

Luis de la Puente, in his biography of Baltasar Álvarez, highlights some of the same themes that the latter addresses in his teachings. The biographer's perspective suggests that Álvarez embraced Christian Stoicism not only in his theoretical views on friendships but also with respect to the discipline of his own body. La Puente especially exalts Álvarez for his complete surrender of body and soul to God's will. One of the ways in which he accomplished this was through dedication to ascetic practices:

De aquí es que, como nuestro Señor deseaba hacer perfecto a este su siervo, juntamente con las ganas de la oración le comunicó también, desde sus principios una generosa y fuerte resolución de mortificarse a sí mismo en todas las cosas, deseando morir, si pudiese, de una vez a sí y a todo lo criado, para vivir a sólo Dios y hallar en él quietud y descanso. Porque, como la carne tiene grandes repugnancias, miedos y temblores de la mortificación, teniéndola por cruz muy

pesada, y cuanto más huye de ella tanto se hace más terrible; así es gran prudencia ofrecerse varonilmente a llevarla desde luego con gran rigor; porque, como dijo el Salvador, el Reino de los cielos ha de ser conquistado por fuerza y violencia, y los esforzados y valientes le arrebatan, no venciendo a otros, sino venciendo a sí mismos, y degollando a su propio amor. (37)

La Puente celebrates his superior's desire to carry out frequent mortifications *varonilmente*. Notably, he does not enter into great detail about the specifics of Álvarez's ascetic practices, but he classifies them as virile and implicitly compares the priest to Christ, carrying the weighty cross of human flesh. He then enlists the language of war to praise Álvarez's holy masculinity because, as Jesus declared, the kingdom of heaven can only be conquered by force. At the same time, however, salvation does not consist of vanquishing others but instead of defeating the self. Through asceticism, Álvarez figuratively slits the throat of his own self-love. La Puente stresses that the ultimate mortification is the suppression of one's own will, reinforcing the commitment of Álvarez's entire being to God. The corporality of the priest's ascetic practices, though crucial to union with God, becomes subordinate to the surrender of his individual will.

Luis de la Puente, like his superior, demonstrates concern for Álvarez's personal interactions, especially with women, by admiring his restraint. On one particular occasion:

Estando en Valladolid en un auto de la santa Inquisición, le cupo un lugar desde el cual no podía mirar al tablado de los inquisidores y de los penitentes sin mirar primero las mujeres que estaban en otro tablado delante del suyo. Y pareciéndole esto de mucho inconveniente, sacó una imagen de nuestra Señora que solía traer consigo, y clavó en ella los ojos y corazón de manera que siete horas que duró el auto, no levantó los ojos de la imagen. (38)

Just as in Garcilaso de la Vega's and Francisco de Aldana's sixteenth-century poetry, women and female sexuality interrupt male homosocial relationships. In this case, however, the women witnessing the *auto de fe* threaten to interfere with Álvarez's friendship with God because he cannot see the spectacle without first passing his eyes over the female spectators. Instead, the priest channels his sexual energy into religious fervor while staring at an image of another woman—the Virgin Mary—for the *auto*'s seven-hour duration. The Jesuit priest, however, did not avoid all contact with women, because several instances demanded aiding them as a service to God. As La Puente relates:

Una vez, peregrinando, una mujer moza y de buen parecer le acometió como a otro José, estando a solas; mas el acudió a su acostumbrado refugio de la oración, y no sólo se libró de aquel peligro, mas ganó aquella mujer para Dios, y la hizo que, arrepentida de su pecado, se confesase. Mas no se aseguró con esta victoria, antes, con un humilde temor de su flaqueza, guardaba el tesoro de la castidad, huyendo cualquier ocasioncita de deslizar contra ella. (42)

La Puente compares Álvarez to the biblical Joseph, who successfully resisted the seduction of his master's wife, Potiphar (Genesis 39: 7-16). Similarly, this young woman becomes attached to the priest, but Álvarez escapes the dangers of carnal sin because he reintroduces her to God's mercy. As the biographer points out, however, Álvarez never feels secure in his ability to protect the treasure of his chastity, even with holy women. La Puente writes, "Y como él trataba con muchas mujeres espirituales, decía que con éstas se ha de tener mayor recato; porque el amor espiritual suele pasar los límites y volverse carnal, y el buen vino en vinagre fuerte...También consigo mismo a solas tenía gran recato en desnudarse sin dejarse ver parte de su cuerpo" (42). This passage narrates Álvarez's struggle to negotiate spiritual love and sexual desire when interacting

with devout women. Curiously, the Stoics validated erotic love (*eros*) as the binding force of the cosmos, but *φιλία* or *amicitia* united the members of universal humanity (Lee 170-71). Aside from conflicting with the monastic vow of chastity, however, *eros* interferes with Álvarez's union with God because his body must be reserved for divine purposes. The priest even avoids glancing at his own figure to escape the potential unchaste thoughts and actions that occur in solitude. By rejecting erotic love and his own will for the greater purpose of serving God, Baltasar Álvarez exemplifies the Christian Stoic body. He thus surpasses his theoretical views on universal *amistad* by putting them into practice, using his own Stoic constitution as a model for relationships within the monastic and larger Christian communities.

Throughout the *Escritos espirituales*, the Stoicism in Álvarez's personal relationships is also writ large on the entire monastic community as the body of Christ. One of the underlying themes in Álvarez's teachings about collective friendship is that of obedience. For the Jesuit priest, a man should obey his superior, "fiándose de Dios que le gobernará por medio dél. Y aunque muchas veces acaece ser inferior en letras, virtud y experiencia, no por eso deja de ser seguro el obedecerle; porque el acierto de la obediencia no está en la sabiduría, bondad y tiento del ministro, sino en el orden y traza de Cristo nuestro Señor" (270). Whether or not one's superior is equipped with experience or other talents, obedience requires the trust that God will use him as an instrument of divine authority. Álvarez's focus on "el orden y traza de Cristo nuestro Señor" reveals his belief that the Church and Christian society function under a hierarchy designed by God, whom the priest calls "el buen pastor." He further outlines the importance of a good shepherd: "El pastor bueno hace buenas ovejas, y así es gran beneficio y merced que se hace a ellas dársele tal. Cuando el pueblo de Dios trajo buena cabeza, Rey o Profeta, siempre fue bueno" (256). Álvarez compares the merciful shepherd to a good head of state, who in turn

ensures a well-functioning Christian society. As I argue in the third chapter, the seventeenth-century playwright Calderón de la Barca sees male friendships as part of a political body with the king as the metaphorical head. The Jesuit, too, highlights the necessity of hierarchy and obedience for the health of the Christian body politic. Álvarez's conviction that the sole purpose of interaction with others should be to serve God implies that all members must coexist in organic unity to carry out the will of the divine head to which they are bound.

The metaphor of the body to describe the Christian community evolves as part of a long tradition before it appears in Álvarez's teachings. In a letter to the Corinthians, Saint Paul wrote:

For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ ... But now God hath set the members, every one of them, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now they are many members, yet but one body... But God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked: that there be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care for one other. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all members rejoice with it. (1 Corinthians 12: 12-26)

Echoing Paul's decree that the body should remain undivided and each part, though seemingly insignificant, plays a vital role, Álvarez states, "En casa de Dios, no hay oficio bajo ... Quien de alguno se quiere servir, obligarse quiere a él. Pues ¿qué grandeza puede llegar a nuestras almas que tanto nos harte, como oír que quiere Dios servirse de nosotros, por obligarse a nosotros?" (271). For both Saint Paul and Álvarez, a necessary hierarchy exists in the body or house of

Christ, but all parts are equally vital because God has entrusted them with a duty to fulfill.²³ Most significantly, all members of the body of Christ feel the same joy and suffering, which unites them in an everlasting bond. Scholars such as Michelle V. Lee have tied Paul's body metaphor to the Stoics of old, including Cicero and Seneca, who saw the universe as a living being (46). Similarly, Álvarez's *Escritos* espouse an attitude approaching the Stoic concept of community as the body of Christ. The Jesuit priest's use of *amistad* in the collective sense of love for one's fellow man, as well as his instructions for chaste human relationships, indicate that for Baltasar Álvarez, friendship can only exist within the healthy Stoic body of the monastic community.

In the Jesuit priest's view, the role of social bonds in the male religious community thus differed remarkably from the affection that Alonso de la Madre de Dios felt for Juan de la Cruz. Whereas the Carmelite friar dedicated nearly his entire monastic life to the beatification proceedings of one individual who played a vital role in his spiritual relationship with God, Álvarez valued gentle, yet distant love for kindred beings as part of the same Christian organism. Alonso's beliefs may have allowed for meaningful personal relationships, but Álvarez's teachings suggest that obedience to one's superiors and God limited the intensity of friendships among equals. If Alonso focused on the thaumaturgical body of one individual, Juan de la Cruz, after the latter's death, Álvarez believed in the living Stoic body of Christ in the collective sense. The male monastic communities of sixteenth-century Spain thus displayed ambivalent attitudes toward the role of friendship. In both cases, however, the ideal human relationship ultimately served as a pathway to a more intimate relationship with God.

²³ For the Stoics of Antiquity, there were three different types of "bodies": 1) those that consist of separate entities and exist by themselves such as a flock of sheep, 2) bodies composed of contiguous parts forming a main structure such as a house, and 3) unified bodies held together by a "cohesive pneuma" including human beings (Lee 49-50). Álvarez uses both *cabeza* and *pastor* to describe God, as well as *casa* to represent the Christian social body, suggesting that his view of the body of Christ encompasses all three notions.

If Baltasar Álvarez's vision of the holy male body and monastic community were Stoic, how do the early modern women religious conceive of the holy female body and the role of friendship within the convent community? Caroline Walker Bynum has studied the female body and its significance for women's religious practices in the late Middle Ages, arguing that "compared to other periods of Christian history and other world religions, medieval spirituality—especially female spirituality—was particularly bodily; this was so not only because medieval assumptions associated female with flesh but also because theology and natural philosophy saw persons as, in some real sense, body as well as soul" (183). During this time, people often venerated the physical processes of holy people, sometimes bathing in the used bathwater of future saints and using their saliva for medicinal remedies (184). The ascetic practices of devout women in the late Middle Ages included jumping into ovens or icy water, driving nails into the flesh, hanging oneself in imitation of the Crucified Christ, self-starvation, and sleep deprivation (185).

Women's spirituality was perceived as especially corporeal because female humanness was considered unformed. For Walker Bynum, "Such a notion identified women with breaches in boundaries, with lack of shape or definition, with openings and exudings and spillings forth" (220). The divine phenomena most frequently occurring in women included miraculous lactation and unexpected bodily closure, such as amenorrhea or inedia, but some female somatic experiences extended beyond the individual body and often involved the bodies of other women. For instance, Lukardis of Oberweimer and Margaret of Faenza "kissed their spiritual sisters with open mouths and grace flowed from one to the other with an ardor that left both women shaken" (190-91). Medieval women's spirituality therefore occasionally crossed the threshold of the erotic. Early modern female spirituality retained many of the somatic manifestations of the

earlier period. Stigmata, ecstasies, and extreme mortification were widely associated with female aspiring saints. However, early modern Catholicism also witnessed a growing concern with pretense of sanctity—the fear that such manifestations might be the result of fraud, melancholy, or demonic delusion. Women’s somatic spirituality also sometimes provoked suspicions of ecclesiastical authorities because of its resemblance to the antinomian heresy of *alumbradismo*.²⁴ Considering the corporality of women’s spirituality, how did friendships in the convent differ from Álvarez’s view of male monastic relationships? By exploring the texts of sixteenth-century Carmelite nuns, including Teresa of Ávila and María de San José, I will suggest how early modern female spirituality might allow for friendship and how cloistered women may have helped one another to claim spiritual equality in a tradition dominated by men, despite their allegedly unformed female bodies.

The founding mother of the Discalced Carmelites, Teresa de Ahumada y Cepeda (1515-1582), unlike her Jesuit confessor, Baltasar Álvarez, recognized the value of personal relationships in monastic life. In her autobiographical *Libro de la vida* (1565), Teresa writes, “Gran mal es un alma sola entre tantos peligros” (7.20).²⁵ In a world of many temptations and spiritual dangers, a virtuous friend may help lead one down the path to salvation. Even Teresa herself struggled with desire for affection and companionship, particularly during her early life, yet she eventually fulfilled these needs with friendships in the convent. During her childhood, Teresa developed an unseemly bond with an older female relative, which she outlines in her *Vida*:

Con ella era mi conversación y pláticas, porque me ayudaba a todas las cosas de pasatiempo que yo quería, y aun me ponía en ellas, y daba parte de sus

²⁴ The bibliography on this topic is extensive. See Schutte, Weber, “Gender and Mysticism,” and Sluhovsky.

²⁵ Quotations from Teresa are from the edition by Efrén de la Madre de Dios and Otger Steggink. I follow by traditional custom of citing chapter and paragraph.

conversaciones y vanidades. Hasta que traté con ella, que fue de edad de catorce años, y creo que más (para tener amistad conmigo, digo, y darme parte de sus cosas), no me parece había dejado a Dios por culpa mortal. (2.4)

Teresa's yearning for female companionship leads her to commit venial sins of vanity and frivolous conversation and she confesses, "Mi padre y mi hermana sentían mucho esta amistad. Reprendíanmela muchas veces" (2.4). Like Álvarez, Teresa's attitude toward worldly friendships suggests that they may be antithetical to one's bond with God. In another problematic relationship involving a flirtation with her male cousin, the young Teresa "estaba en la mano del peligro, y ponía en él a [su] padre y hermanos" (2.6). Although the future saint guards her virginity, the mere suspicion against her honor threatens to disrupt not only her virtue but also her familial bonds. Teresa's father, D. Alonso Sánchez de Cepeda, delivers her to the Augustinian convent Santa María de Gracia, a decision that she initially begrudges but later credits for her spiritual conversion. From lived experience, Teresa highlights the potential dangers of secular relationships but suggests that good company and adequate guidance can be beneficial.

The young woman's residence in the Augustinian convent offers her the wholesome female bonds and leadership that she lacked in the outside world. As Teresa explains, "Dormía una monja con las que estábamos seglares, que por medio suyo parece quiso el Señor comenzar a darme luz, como ahora diré" (2.10). Here, she expresses the intimacy of communal life by alluding to the fact that these young women remained under constant supervision of the nun who shared their sleeping quarters, but most significantly, the proximity of this particular sister allowed God to reach Teresa. She continues, "Comenzó esta buena compañía a desterrar las costumbres que había hecho la mala y a tornar a poner en mi pensamiento deseo de las cosas

eternas y a quitar algo de la gran enemistad que tenía con ser monja” (3.1). Teresa thus attributes the triumph of her desire for spiritual over worldly matters to the bonds she forms at Santa María de Gracia.

Although Teresa declares that holy friendships aid in spiritual development, she cautions against not just particular relationships between male and female monastics but also against those that form within the convent walls. In her *Vida*, Teresa admits to an emotionally intimate bond as an “amiga de letras” of a confessor:

Pues comenzándome a confesar con este que dijo, él se aficionó en extremo a mí... No fue la afición de éste mala, mas de demasiada afición venía a no ser buena... [él] estaba muy en muy peligroso estado, con afición y trato con una mujer del mismo lugar y con esto decía misa. Era cosa tan pública, que tenía perdida la honra y la fama, y nadie le osaba hablar contra esto... Pues como supe esto, comencé a mostrarle más amor: mi intención buena era, la obra mala; pues por hacer bien, por grande que sea, no había de hacer un pequeño mal... me vino a dar el idolillo, el cual le hice echar en un río. (5.1-6)

She qualifies this anecdote by explaining that the priest’s affection was not bad, but its excess certainly was not good. Teresa apposes her relationship with the priest to his illicit love for a dishonorable woman, using her feminine charm to draw him away from the other woman’s sexuality and its demonic hold over the priest as symbolized by an “idol” or talisman he wears around his neck. She displays increasing affection for her confessor, noting that her intentions were good, but the act untoward. Teresa justifies the relationship because her womanly allure saves his soul by encouraging him to throw the idol in the river. At the same time, however, she concedes that no evil, no matter how trivial, should be done in order to achieve an ultimately

virtuous outcome. Alison Weber argues that Teresa's "rhetoric of concession" allows her to reclaim her innocence while obeying the mandate to confess (*Teresa* 51-56). In this particular case, her concession also captures the problematics of spiritual friendships: they can lead to salvation or, if taken too far, damnation. Especially with regard to interaction between men and women, Teresa states, "Creo que todos los hombres deben ser más amigos de mujeres que ven inclinadas a virtud" (5.6). Men must choose their female friends wisely, hinting that Teresa's relationship with the priest was a prudent choice on his part because of her virtue. Other women, such as the object of her confessor's erotic interest, nevertheless lead to perdition.

As scholars like Sherry Velasco have meticulously observed, Teresa deplored special friendships or *amistades particulares* within the convent as much as outside of it. In *Camino de perfección* (c. 1565), the foundress explains the evils of these relationships:

Y en mujeres creo deve ser esto aún más que en hombres, y hace otros daños para la comunidad muy notorios; porque de aquí viene el no amar tanto a todas, el sentir agravio que se hace a la amiga, el desear tener para regalarla, el buscar tiempo para hablarla, y muchas veces para decirle lo que la quiere, y otras cosas impertinentes, que lo que ama a Dios. Porque estas amistades grandes pocas veces van ordenadas a ayudarse a amar más a Dios, antes creo las hace comenzar el demonio para comenzar sino bandos en las religiones; que cuando es para ayudarse a Su Majestad, luego se parece que no va la voluntad con pasión, sino procurando ayuda para vencer otras pasiones. (4.6)

Perhaps most strikingly, Teresa points out that excessive affection is more of a problem in female religious communities than in male monasteries. Special attention between two individuals disrupts the sense communal love and creates animosity when feelings are hurt. The

symptoms of a particular friendship include desiring to give gifts, looking for opportunities to speak alone with a sister, and expressing love for her more than love for God. The devil capitalizes on these inappropriate relationships by dividing the convent into factions and distracting the nuns from serving the Lord. Teresa further observes that special bonds can be even more divisive when the nuns are related by blood: “Guárdense de estas particularidades, por amor del Señor, por santas que sean, que aun entre hermanos suele ser ponzoña y ningún provecho en ello veo; y si son deudos, muy peor; es pestilencia” (4.7). By comparing special friendships to poison and the relationships between relatives to disease, Teresa implies that factions within the convent portend the death of the communal female body. In her *Constituciones* (c. 1567), one of Teresa’s principle concerns was to avoid the cliques and intense sociability that prevailed in the Convent of the Encarnation, so as to allow nuns the solitude necessary for contemplative prayer: “Todo el tiempo que no anduvieren con la comunidad, o en oficios de ella, se esté cada una por sí, en las celdas o ermitas que la priora las señalare... Ninguna hermana pueda entrar en celda de otra sin licencia de la priora, so pena de grave culpa” (1.14).²⁶ In a guide for confessors who were tasked with inspecting convents periodically, *Visita de descalzas*, Teresa advises visiting prelates to be especially vigilant of special friendships between the prioress and her subordinates: “Informarse si la priora tiene particular amistad con alguna, haciendo más por ella que por las otras” (19). Such favoritism would, in Teresa’s view, lend itself to demonic interference in community life because “ansí les parecerá que aquella u aquellas la gobiernan” (19). To ensure the proper governance of the convent, the prioress must not show excessive preference for any particular sister or the others will think the object of the

²⁶ Teresa composed the *Constituciones* as early as 1562 and the general of the Discalced order, Juan Bautista Rossi, approved a version in 1567. Teresa actively clarifies and corrects interpretations of her text until a uniform version was approved in 1581 shortly before her death the following year. None of the primitive versions have been recovered (Weber, “Spiritual Administration” 126). Unlike most convents, the Discalced Carmelites did not have a common workroom, a provision designed to encourage nuns to engage in mental prayer while spinning.

prioress's affection influences her decisions. Excessive emotional bonds between two nuns, especially if one enjoys a higher position of authority, interrupt the communal atmosphere of the convent.

If emotional tenderness between two nuns was discouraged, physical intimacy was decidedly forbidden. The *Constituciones* mandate:

Ninguna hermana abrace a otra, ni la toque en el rostro, ni en las manos, ni tengan amistades en particular, sino todas se amen en general, como lo manda Cristo a sus Apóstoles muchas veces. Pues [siendo] tan pocas, fácil será de hacer.

Procuren imitar a su Esposo, que dió la vida por nosotros. Este amarse unas a otras en general, y no en particular, importa mucho. (6.10)

Physical touch such as hugging and caressing the face or hands was not permitted because it could lead to special friendships and, in some instances, even unchaste behavior. Instead, the nuns should imitate Christ, their spiritual husband, by loving every all members of the community equally. By invoking nuptial spirituality, Teresa reminds her sisters that their affection—and perhaps desire for erotic release—should lie with God. Sherry Velasco's study especially shades these special friendships with homoerotic implications, citing the emphasis on surveillance in dormitories and Saint Augustine's preoccupation with same-sex desire among nuns to suggest that at least in the imagination of early modern religious culture, sexual relationships within the convent were possible (90-96). Velasco concludes, "The numerous writings related to the nature of same-sex friendships in the convent make evident that attempting to foster collegiality was a serious challenge for the cloister, since it risked encouraging favoritism, promoting sensual attraction, and inciting negative perceptions about closed communities" (132). How often special friendships between nuns entered the realm of

erotic desire remains undetermined, but whether the woman-to-woman passion was sexual or purely emotional, the primary concern was the integrity of the convent as a community. Like her confessor, Baltasar Álvarez, Teresa condemns human relationships that interfere with the love of God. Simultaneously, however, she acknowledges that affection develops naturally among women and they can even help one another to grow spiritually. Teresa even argues that she, as a woman, may be better suited to teach and inspire others because they face the same difficulties. Weber describes Teresa's *Camino de perfección* as "a book by a 'weak woman' for 'weak women,' which addresses the special temptations they face within the cloisters" (81). Teresa therefore cautions against the potential excesses of female tenderness but if kept in check, or directed properly, it ultimately promotes holiness among women.

At least rhetorically, Teresa attributes some of these special temptations that women endured to the inherent weakness of the female constitution. Barbara Mujica has shown that Teresa worried that women's physical weakness rendered them more vulnerable than men to demonic temptation and possession (27). Rather than immediately attributing nuns' maladies to demons as male doctors and priests often did, Teresa recognized physical and mental illness as humoral imbalance in the body (28). Early modern medical discourse tended to associate the female body with instability and excess of fluids. Juan Huarte de San Juan (c. 1529-1588) adapted Galen's theories of the body and posited that although men are physiologically warm and dry, women must be wet and cold because "si no lo fuese, era imposible venirle la regla ni tener leche para sustentar nueve meses la criatura en el vientre y dos años después de nacida" (XVIII de 1594). Women's bodies were cold and leaky to allow for menstruation and lactation, but the feminine properties of humidity and coldness "son calidades que echan a perder la parte racional" (XVIII de 1594). Galenic medical theory thus informed Teresa's understanding of the

female body and how the potential for somatically-induced irrationality may have influenced daily life in the convent.

While Teresa acknowledged the potential for imbalance and leakiness in the female form, she also sought to bring it under control. In *Camino de perfección*, she instructs her nuns, “Mas unas flaquezas y malecillos de mujeres olvidaos de quejarlas, que algunas veces pone el demonio imaginación de esos dolores; quítanse y pónense: si no se pierde la costumbre de decirlo y quejaros de todo—si no fuere a Dios, nunca acabaréis” (11.2).²⁷ Even when they are suffering weakness and the pain of excess female fluids, the sisters should resist the temptation to complain, especially because the devil often creates malaise for no apparent reason. By advising her nuns to keep silent about their female discomforts, she not only encourages them to accept suffering graciously but also shields them from possible suspicion of demonic possession on the part of ecclesiastical authorities. Unlike her medieval spiritual foremothers as Bynum-Walker describes them, Teresa takes a more moderate approach to mortifications. Weber points out that Teresa believed that melancholia in women religious was a possible effect of too much prayer and extreme mortification rather than as evidence of demonic possession (“Saint Teresa, Demonologist” 181). The Discalced Carmelite foundress mandated that penitential practices during fasts would include sleeping on hay and wearing plain, light clothing but “si alguna hubiere enferma, pueda traer del mismo sayal algún ropón” (*Constituciones* 3.6). Teresa understood that legitimate illness required extra caution with ascetic practices. She additionally requires that “si el Señor diere espíritu a alguna hermana para hacer alguna mortificación, pida licencia” (6.4). By calling for permission of the prioress to allow extra penitential practices, Teresa ensures that the sisters avoid undue humoral imbalance. Her *Libro de las fundaciones* (c.

²⁷ 16.2 in the Escorial codex. I cite the Valladolid codex as it appears in *Obras completas*, ed. Efrén de la Madre de Dios and Otger Steggink.

1576) dedicates numerous pages to the dangers of—and remedies for—melancholia. Teresa is especially concerned with how one woman's malady may affect the community:

Porque es cosa peligrosa, que como es a tiempos el apretar este humor tanto que sujete la razón (y entonces no será culpa, como no lo es a los locos, por desatinos que hagan....) Y así, si lo miramos, en lo que más dan es en salir con lo que quieren, y decir todo lo que se les viene a la boca...Pues las pasiones no mortificadas, y que cada una de ellas querría salir con lo que quiere, ¿qué será, si no hay quien las resista? (7.3)

Although melancholic nuns are not to be blamed for their irrationality, unchecked passions in one sister will stir those of the others, making the convent difficult to govern. In addition to extra tasks and avoiding the excessive consumption of fish, Teresa prescribes a healthy dose of affection as a remedy for melancholia: “Llevarlas por la maña y amor todo lo que fuere menester, para que, si fuese posible, por amor se sujetasen, que sería muy mejor y suele acaecer, mostrando que las ama mucho y dárselo a entender por obras y palabras” (7.9). The love of a troubled nun's fellow sisters may offer her relief and in this case, Teresa authorizes as much affection as needed to alleviate suffering. Though overt displays of tenderness were usually prohibited, melancholia represented a greater threat to the community than preferential attention. The foundress's guidelines for dealing with problems unique to women's communities reveal that she not only grasped the vulnerabilities of the female body but also sought to control and even deemphasize them. Teresa's commentary on melancholia also suggests that she associated the health of one woman's body with the wellbeing of the community and observed the need for equilibrium both in the individual female body and in the body politic of the convent.

If Baltasar Álvarez's view of male religious communities aligns with the stoic body of Christ, Saint Teresa's convents—and the female friendships within them—represented Galenic bodies. Just as Teresa sought to regulate leakiness and imbalance in the individual constitution, she also intended to repair the metaphorical permeability of the female Discalced community. In her autobiography, Teresa enumerates the spiritual perils of open convents such as el Convento de la Encarnación, where she first took the habit. Among a variety of other reasons for reform, she again cites the interference of secular friendships in one's relationship with God: “más cautela y disimulación ha de tener para hablar en la amistad que desea tener con Dios, que en otras amistades y voluntades que el demonio ordena en los monasterios” (7.5). Frequent visits from family members and friends not only disrupt solitude with God but also the community atmosphere of the convent. J. J. Murillo observes, “El ambiente conventual es frecuentemente turbado por frecuentes visitas al locutorio. Las criadas y parientes de monjas que entran a las mismas celdas, dan lugar a un trasiego de personas que entran y salen con sus noticias, encargos, recados, chismes y comentarios que viene a crear un clima de disipación” (30). Visits from outside company introduce distractions not just from the continual flurry of people entering and leaving but because they also brought secular matters into the convent. Although the primitive versions of the *Constituciones* are much simpler and less detailed about punishments, a later version declares, “Grave culpa es... Si alguna se hallare al torno, al locutorio, o adonde las personas de fuera son, sin especial licencia de la Madre Priora” (13.1). Unauthorized interaction with the outside world was thus strictly forbidden in the Discalced community, but even graver were unchaste encounters. As the foundress dictates, “Gravísima culpa es... Si hubiere caído en el pecado de la sensualidad, aunque doliéndose de sí misma, tornare de su grado pidiendo misericordia y perdón, en ninguna manera sea recibida, salvo intreviniendo causa razonable”

(15.3). More serious than knowingly creating disharmony among the sisters, sexual sins involving visitors result in expulsion from the community, even if the offender begs forgiveness. Teresa again associates the female body with the integrity of the convent because both can be penetrated by visitors. In their seventeenth-century plays, María de Zayas and Ana Caro allow their female characters to unite in support of a dishonored woman because they recognize the vulnerability of women's bodies and the female body politic. Teresa, on the other hand, insists on keeping the individual body impenetrable to men as much as she tries to ensure the convent's resistance to secular interference.

Though she sought to protect her nuns from dangerous friendships, specifically, distracting or erotic relationships, Teresa gave passage to spiritual bonds between men and women. The friendship between a nun and her confessor was essential to her spiritual wellbeing, but the boundaries between spiritual and sensual love were often blurred. In the *Camino de perfección*, Teresa explores these two forms of love:

De dos maneras de amor quiero yo ahora tratar: uno es puro espiritual, porque ninguna cosa parece le toca la sensualidad ni la ternura de nuestra naturaleza; otro es espiritual y junta con él nuestra sensualidad y flaqueza. Que esto es lo que hace al caso, estas dos maneras de amarnos sin que intrevenga pasión ninguna, porque en haviéndola va toda desconcertado este concierto; y si con templanza y discreción tratamos el amor que tengo dicho, va todo meritorio, porque lo que nos parece sensualidad se torna en virtud, sino que va tan entremetido, que a veces no hay quien lo entienda, en especial si es con algún confesor; que personas que tratan oración, si le ven santo y las entiende la manera del proceder, tómasse mucho amor. (7.1)

Teresa's convoluted language on the topic of affection for one's confessor teases out the difficulties of directing emotional intimacy through an appropriate spiritual channel. Although passion should never develop in any relationship between confessors and female penitents, the line between sensuality—in the sense of tenderness or emotional closeness—and virtue was not always clear, especially when dealing with holy matters. From Teresa's perspective, love naturally develops between saintly individuals and this kind of affective intimacy could in fact positively influence nuns as long as it remained chaste. The *Constituciones* also require that “a nadie se vea sin velo... salvo en caso que pareciere tan justo, como en los dichos, para algún fin; y esto con personas que edifiquen y ayuden a nuestros ejercicios de oración y consolación espiritual, que no para recreación, siempre con una tercera” (4.1). Only when a sister visits with family members or converses about matters of conscience with a priest may her face be seen. This conditional mandate provides an opportunity for nuns to enjoy intimate conversations with men of the cloth and enhance their spiritual lives. An older, more cautious Teresa, however, writes in a letter to Jerónimo Gracián, “A los confesores no hay para qué los ver sin velos jamás ni a los frailes de ninguna Orden, y muy menos a nuestros descalzos... Para cosa de alma pareceme que se puede tratar sin abrir velo;²⁸ vuestra reverencia lo verá” (19 February 1581). To avoid accusations of laxness in convent administration, the foundress thus concludes that there is no reason to remove the veil of the locutory during spiritual discussions between nuns and their confessors. As Weber argues, “For Teresa, the ideal convent was physically enclosed, but spiritually permeable, a site from which spiritual renewal, if not explicit instruction, might emanate” (“Spiritual Administration” 132). Teresa therefore recognized the beneficial

²⁸ Kieran Cavanaugh translates the phrase “A nadie se vea sin velo” as “No nun should be seen with her face unveiled” (323). However, in an email interview, the Carmelite nun and scholar María José Pérez González points out that the verb *abrir* here suggests that Teresa refers to the veil or curtain placed over the bars of the locutory rather than the veil over the face. If the meaning were “lift her veil,” it would have been more typical to use the verb *alzar*.

relationships between male and female monastics, especially for nuns who could learn from their male counterparts, but she exercised great caution in regulating physical contact among individuals. The foundress sought to protect a role for certain kinds of affection in spiritual reformation while avoiding the problems that excessive emotions could provoke.

Through strict enclosure with a few limited exceptions, Teresa restricted the metaphorical leakiness of the female religious body, but she especially advocated for intramural balance in terms of the social structure of the Discalced community and the practices of daily life. At La Encarnación, Teresa lamented the size of convents that admitted up to almost two hundred nuns. The large group of women naturally fractured into cliques instead of representing the communal love to which Teresa aspired. Murillo notes that one sister's cell would often become the site of intimate friendship for a small group of women while excluding the rest (35). After founding the convent of San José in 1560, Teresa writes in *Camino de perfección*, “Y de estas amistades querría yo muchas adonde hay gran convento. En San Joseph, que no son más de trece ni lo han de ser, ningunas” (6.4). To minimize the risk of particular friendships, which were more common in large convents, Teresa decides that the ideal number of nuns per house is thirteen, a community small enough that everyone could be loved equally.

Another dividing issue at La Encarnación was the social hierarchy among the nuns, some of whom were aristocratic ladies who had servants, who were generally classified as “white-veiled nuns.” In some cases, the underprivileged women could not afford their dowries and were forced to spend periods of time at home, which greatly disturbed the communal atmosphere (Murillo 29-30). To promote balance within the group at San José at least initially, before economic reasons necessitated a certain amount of hierarchy, Teresa eliminated class distinctions among the nuns by imposing a vow of poverty. Even the prioress should strive to create an

equalitarian relationship with her nuns, a sentiment stressed in the *Constituciones*: “La tabla del barrer se comience desde la madre priora para que en todo dé buen ejemplo” (6.1). As a good role model, the prioress of the Discalced inspires equality among all by engaging in tasks traditionally reserved for servants. Although ideally all members of the convent would be considered equals in Teresa’s view, in a practical sense the prioress must take charge to ensure the wellbeing of the community. The *Constituciones* mandate, “El oficio de la Madre Priora es tener cuenta grande con que en todo se guarde la Regla y Constituciones, y celar mucho la honestidad y encerramiento de las casas, y mirar cómo se hacen todos los oficios, y también que se provean las necesidades, así en lo espiritual, como en lo temporal, con el amor de madre. Procure ser amada, para que sea obedecida” (6.1). Though the prioress’s central concern is to follow the Constitutions and guard the integrity of the cloister, she must also fulfill the material and spiritual needs of her subordinates. These tasks should be accomplished with motherly love and the prioress should seek to inspire adoration in her nuns so that they will obey her. Teresa thus did not employ the same severity that her confessor Álvarez used to train his disciples. Instead, she appreciated the value of well-managed affection in female religious communities. The governance and social structure of Teresa’s convents thus relied on the Galenic concept of balance to promote equality among the sisters in terms of social status and the bonds of friendship.

The Teresian Constitutions also sought to prevent an imbalance of humors not just in the individual but in the entire group of the Carmelite convent. Twice daily, the vow of silence was lifted for two periods of recreation after mealtimes for the nuns to release tension and build solidarity:

Salidas de comer, podrá la Madre Priora dispensar que todas juntas puedan hablar en lo que más gusto les diere, como no sean cosas fuera del trato que ha de tener la buena religiosa, y tengan todas allí sus ruelas... Juego en ninguna manera se permita, que el Señor dará gracia a unas para que den recreación a otras: fundadas en esto, todo es tiempo bien gastado. Procuren no ser enojosas unas a otras, sino que las burlas y palabras sean con discreción. (6.5)

The conversation may flow freely beyond religious matters as long as it remains within the realm of appropriate topics for holy women and everyone has her spinning wheel. Although this time was designated as recreation, games were not allowed because the sisters would receive divine inspiration to entertain one another. The moderation between solitude and social activity in Discalced convents thus promoted the wellbeing of the community and its members. The foundress also instructs her nuns to maintain harmony by keeping their anger in check. Later versions of the *Constituciones* include a chapter on the consequences for grave offenses that expresses concern over the possibility of physical violence in the convent:

Grave culpa es... si la hermana amenazare a la hermana en la persona con ánimo airado. Si alzare la mano, o otra cosa para herir, la pena grave le sea doblada...
 Más grave culpa es... si alguna maliciosamente hiriere a la hermana: la tal, por el mismo hecho, incurra en sentencia de descomunió, y de todas debe ser evitada.
 Si alguna fuere hallada sembrar discordia entre las hermanas, o ser acostumbrada a decir o maldecir en oculo. (13.1-14.1)

Even among women religious, violence could threaten to tear a small community apart. If one attempted to injure another, the typical punishment for a “grave culpa” would be doubled. If she succeeded in carrying out her intent, the offender would suffer *descomunió*, which Covarrubias

defines: “Apartar de la comunión de los fieles al contumaz y rebelde a los mandatos apostólicos” (s.v. *descomulgar* 411). Though she would not necessarily incur Excommunication from the Church, the rebellious woman would certainly be expelled from the convent and the other nuns would be advised to avoid her. Teresa’s vision of a well-functioning women’s religious community, like a healthy female body, therefore leaves no room for disharmony or imbalance.

The foundress’s moderate approach to suffering and solitude, as well as her emphasis on communal affection thus defy the extreme corporeal asceticism of her foremothers in the Middle Ages in order to generate a strong Galenic body politic of Discalced Carmelite women. In keeping the balance, she ensured that daily life among thirteen nuns was tolerable while also channeling the need for love and personal relationships into a communal setting. Though Teresa sought mental stability among the sisters, however, Discalced convents were hardly places of emotional warmth and passionate friendship. As Alison Weber demonstrates, becoming a Discalced sister meant learning to accept a certain degree of emotional detachment due to strict enclosure and the mandatory vow of silence (“Little Angels” 212). Later in her life, Teresa wrote to her superior to request that each convent admit one female child around seven years of age, a “little angel” as a boarder who would provide the sisters with, as Weber describes, “spiritually uplifting distraction” (214). Perhaps as another strategy to avoid intramural imbalance, Teresa’s plan for one little girl in each house allowed the nuns to redirect their maternal instincts and yearning for human affection to a child, whom they would prepare to take the habit once she reached the legal age of sixteen. As the founding mother of her order, Teresa took into account the specific difficulties that female monastics face, including humoral imbalance, increased vulnerability to demonic temptation, and craving for affection from both men and women. Her mandate for strict enclosure and balance in both the Galenic female body and the body writ large

of the Discalced community offered them some protection from the outside patriarchal pressures of family obligations and from suspicions of diabolical temptation—or even possession—in melancholic women.

Despite Teresa's efforts to prevent 'leakiness' in the homosocial female community by limiting special friendships inside and outside of the convent, her relationship with the apostolic visitor in Andalusia, Jerónimo Gracián, attracted the attention of Church authorities who did not support her reforms. The Calced friars spread rumors that Gracián was participating in illicit sexual relationships with Teresa and her follower, María de San José Salazar (1548-1603) (Weber, "Introduction" 4). Despite the suspect nature of these allegations, Teresa's and María's mutual affection for Gracián united them in a triangular bond of friendship. Daniel de Pablo Maroto argues that "Teresa está al corriente de que el amor que siente hacia el P. Gracián, superior, confesor, amigo y confidente, es compartido por su 'hija', y en lugar de sentir celos por el amor común, aumenta el amor por ella" (221). This triangulation of desire—spiritual or otherwise—allows Teresa to bond with María over their shared admiration of a male superior. María's first encounter with Teresa, however, occurred much earlier when the latter visited the palace of the aristocratic widow, Doña Luisa de la Cerda, where the young María was raised. During Teresa's stay to console the bereft Doña Luisa, María would spy on the holy visitor in hopes of catching her in one of her ecstasies (Weber, "Introduction" 2). After María took the habit in 1570, Teresa's letters to her reveal affection and admiration, sometimes prescribing remedies for María's ailments, yet their friendship was often troubled by the latter's independence and "aristocratic self-assurance," especially when María attempted to move the Seville convent without Teresa's approval (6). Although Teresa's teachings call for balanced, emotional distance among monastics in the Discalced order, the practical realities of

ecclesiastical administration, and the relationships formed within, complicated the foundress's ideals for spiritual friendship.

As a daughter of Teresa, María de San José inherited the view of women's religious communities as female bodies and even understood the dynamics of the convent in stronger Galenic terms than did her founding mother. Written at the request of Jerónima de la Madre de Dios, who had just been elected prioress of the Seville convent in 1590, María's *Avisos para el gobierno de las religiosas* advise the reader on how to maintain balance in the community. Explicitly invoking the body metaphor, she writes, "Visto he súbditas no del todo perfectas ni prudentes (calidad propia de mujeres), y por tener prelada que sabe ser cabeza, ser un cuerpo hermoso y lleno de gracias" (24). If the prioress acts as a good head of the convent, she controls the female imperfections of her nuns and transforms them into a beautiful body. María's metaphor emphasizes the corporality of women religious as a collective to suggest that a good leader will consider the feminine maladies that ail the body politic of the convent to ensure its wellbeing. Like Teresa, María approved a variety of methods to maintain the humoral equilibrium of the individual and of the group, but she goes even further by encouraging the prioress to employ approaches unique to each woman:

Algunos habrá de humores terribles y condiciones protervas que serán necesarios remedios recios y aun con presteza para atajar, que corre a la muerte. Otras flaquezas hay que muchas veces con blandura y amor se remedian.... Aquí sirve la discreción y ánimo de la perlada, que con la disciplina las vuelva el buen sentido; y como el cirujano que con la lanceta y cauterio de fuego saca la podre de la postema, y en tal caso no ha de haber piedad. Pero adviértase que de este rigor no

se usa sino donde hay alguna parte apostemada, porque se hiciese en la sana, ya no sería curar sino llagar. (42-44)

María echoes Teresa's view that one nun's terrible humors require harshness, while others call for a loving touch. The surgical simile cautions the prioress to select the appropriate remedy for her subordinates' spiritual illnesses because although drastic measures must be taken for a serious problem, lancing and cauterizing a healthy soul will cause further injury. Alison Weber observes that both Teresa and María consider the possibility that melancholia in the convent could represent a behavioral issue rather than a demonic or physiological one ("Saint Teresa, Demonologist" 185). The *Fundaciones* state, "Y la priora que por piedad dejare comenzar a tener libertad a las tales, en fin no se podrá sufrir, y cuando se venga a remediar, será habiendo hecho mucho daño a las otras" (7.7). The prioress must prevent nuns from taking these so-called liberties—disobeying her orders by persisting in excessive penance that can ruin her spiritual and physical health—because it can harm the entire community. María intensifies Teresa's Galenic prescriptions for a healthy female body and recognizes the individual wellbeing of her nuns but also their place within a balanced community.

Among the issues facing female religious leaders like Teresa and María was their authority over subordinates, particularly in relation to that of confessors and other male leaders. Again with regard to dealing with volatile humors and behavioral problems in the convent, María argues:

Así, es necesario abrir los ojos para conocer cómo se ha de guiar a cada uno, que aunque el gobierno universal sea uno (que en esto no es bien haya diferencia) hayla en las cosas interiores tan grande y diversa cuanto lo son los humores y sujetos de cada uno y según las gracias que el Espíritu Santo reparte, las cuales él

mismo quiere muchas veces obrar por manos de sus ministros y tomar medios humanos: ayudando a la austera y a la que se entrega a la vigilia y quiere domar su cuerpo con aspereza, a la que está purgada, a la que va alumbrada...Está claro decir que éste es oficio de sacerdote y confesor más que de mujer. Mas ¡oh, cuánto va de la perlada que sabe de estas ciencias a la que no las entiende!, aunque no todas en rigor las haya de ejecutar. Mas ¿quién la libra y hace exenta de estos cuidados a la que de sus manos medirá Dios las almas que se le han encomendado? (28-30)

She emphasizes again that although all members represent part of the same body, the fluctuating humors of each individual require different attention from authorities. Whether a nun is excessively ascetic or on the threshold of heterodox *alumbrada* spirituality, the prioress must help her subordinate achieve the appropriate balance. Yet María admits that spiritual advising is the job of a confessor rather than women, but she is ultimately responsible for the souls in her charge. Later in her *Avisos*, she further cautions the reader about the tension between confessors and prioresses in the spiritual health of the female community:

Y como en nuestros conventos todo es común y el humor melancólico de las tales siempre tira a particularidades y hallan un confesor que... no deja cosa en su lugar que no trabuca. De aquí nace el descontentarse de todo lo que antes hacía y de cuanto la perlada ordena, que, fuera de ser cosa propia de melancólicas, el demonio atiza cuando ve que hay quien sople. Luego han de ir a su Padre con las quejas... Y como le toca a la perlada entrar de por medio para que se modere, aquí es la guerra y el decir que se mete en las confesiones, y que tiene los espíritus apretados y sin libertad, y luego anda el leer a las penitentes la licencia que en tal

caso tienen, sin que se la pueda quitar la perlada, y cómo se ha de entender tal y tal constitución, y en qué están obligadas a obedecer y en qué no, haciéndolas señoras del tiempo y de sí mismas en aquel lugar (88-90).

With melancholia widespread in female monastic communities, there was inevitable ecclesiastical concern over the possibility of heterodox spirituality and demonic possession in convents. When a visiting confessor attempted to remedy these issues, conflicts arose between the priest and the prioress as mediator because she would be accused of interfering in confessions.²⁹ Here in particular, María essentially describes her unfortunate fate in Seville when she was removed from office and imprisoned for six months after a disagreement with a confessor over two nun's spiritual ailments.³⁰ María's advice thus highlights the problems that prioress faced as woman entrusted with the governance of a convent, especially when issues particular to female spirituality arose.

In 1585, María composed her didactic dialogue, *Libro de recreaciones* (1585), when Nicolás Doria, Jerónimo Gracián's successor, fought to suspend the hours of recreation in Discalced convents. In María's text, written as a response to Doria's initiative, the fictional character Justa boldly suggests that a woman may even be better suited to curing female spiritual problems than men: "En cosas menudas y accidentales, a que por ventura por la flaca e imperfecta naturaleza de las mujeres somos sujetas, no atinan los hombres, porque, como no tienen de ellas experiencia, no todas las deben de alcanzar por ciencia, y así vemos que grandes

²⁹ María also treats the dangers of melancholic confessors, who "cógenlas [las monjas], diciéndoles que las han entendido sus almas y condiciones, y que saben que por tal camino irán mejor, y que desde aquel punto las toma y que haga tales ejercicios; y comienza a exagerar algunos escrúpulos y dicen que por ellos entienden que conviene hacer una confesión general so pena de que van perdidas... Por este camino pretenden saber las inclinaciones y humores de cada una y hacerse señores de todas... Y como le toca a la perlada entrar de por medio para que se modere, aquí es la guerra y el decir que se mete en las confesiones... que tal poder tienen los confesores que meten la mano en las conciencias de mujeres sin experiencia" (*Consejos que da una priora in Avisos para el gobierno de las religiosas* (87-92)

³⁰ See Weber, "Teresa's 'Difficult' Daughter."

médicos suelen en indisposiciones de mujeres errar la cura que acierta otra mujer” (127).

Through medical discourse, María asserts that at least for minor spiritual ailments, one sister may be able to assist another better than a priest because of their shared imperfect nature as women, just as a male doctor may be unable to cure a female medical problem because he lacks experiential knowledge. In her 1599 text, “Tratado en que se ponen los medios y camino por donde el demonio va introduciendo la relajación en las religiosas derribando la perfección de los tres votos,” María further stresses the perils of an ill-equipped confessor in maintaining the wellbeing of the female religious body. She develops an extended metaphor in which confessors serve as doctors and prioresses as nurses. Concerning the spiritual doctors engaged in malpractice, María cries, “¡Oh, si supiera mi pluma decir lo que mi alma siente de los que son matasanos! ¡Oh qué estragos hacen en las consciencias de las pobres religiosas los que no tienen consciencia!” (130-31). María also notes that nurses are prioresses without whom “no se puede del todo efectuar este negocio, y sin amor menos” (133). Although prioresses may only occupy the role of nurse, they are essential to the treatment of women’s spiritual ills and provide the loving care that their subordinates require. In all of these cases, María pushes for maintaining what she understood as the Teresian model of convent governance, whereby prioresses were the primary physicians of physio-spiritual maladies, at a time when the current general of the order, Nicolas Doria, was attempting to place the convents more firmly under male clerical control.

Teresa dedicated a great deal of energy to reforming open monasteries and ensuring the stringent claustration of her nuns except in cases of spiritual friendship. María too acknowledged the benefit of limited outside friendships, as long as everyone within the community participated. In the *Avisos*, she writes:

Pues, ¿qué si ven que [la perlada] tiene un gran devoto? Y no se entienda aquí este nombre como suelen ‘devotos de monjas’, que por la misericordia de Dios no los hay en nuestros conventos si no es algunos aficionados a la virtud y agradecidos a los beneficios que sienten recibir sus almas con el trato y buen ejemplo de las religiosas; y aun éstos, aunque sean tales que les hagan la casa de oro y estén satisfechas que es todo santo y bueno, les ha de ser ponzoña si se les figura que toda esa amistad y bien se atribuye a sí sola y no las hace participantes de todo. Digo que sepan—y en hecho de verdad ello sea—que ni los buenos ni amigos los granjean ni sustentan sino en nombre de todas. (65-66)

María completely deplores “devotos de monjas,”³¹ who have unchaste motives, but if the prioress acquires a virtuous spiritual friend, then she is obliged to share his company with her subordinates who could learn from his holy example. From the author’s perspective, nurturing friendships should be a communal activity, one that may enable the sisters to release the unavoidable tensions of living in the cloister.

María de San José, like her spiritual mother, emphasized collective friendship inside the convent as much as with virtuous *devotos*. She issued an even harsher warning against special friendships than did Teresa and was more explicit about their potential for unholy behavior. In her 1599 treatise on the vows of obedience, poverty, and chastity, María dedicates the most attention to breaking the vow of chastity, speaking primarily about affection between women. She writes, “No os descuidéis, carísimas, por tener las puertas cerradas para amistades de fuera,

³¹ With regard to *devotos de monjas*, Francisco Javier Lorenzo Pinar notes that “Los contactos entre monjas y seglares estuvieron generalmente limitados a meros galanteos y no a relaciones sexuales, como en el caso de estas beatas eran idilios platónicos. Aquellos galanteos de monjas solían contar, como en el caso de Santa Ana, con la connivencia de la superiora y buscaban las caridades de los caballeros que frecuentaban los monasterios. Estas visitas resultaron más comunes en los conventos pobres que en los que disfrutaron de medios económicos suficientes” (131).

que pues el enemigo está dentro, tanto más peligro grande le tenemos si damos lugar a estas amistades particulares de unas con otras” (118). María cautions that the enemy arises from inside—the body and by extension, the convent—and manifests itself in the form of intimate friendships between nuns. She diagnoses a special friendship as “buscando ocasiones para hablarlas tomándola de la oración, andando por los rincones quebrando silencio, haciéndoseles largo y pesado el tiempo que gastan en el coro” (119). María echoes Teresa’s belief that inappropriate relationships between nuns—talking during prayer, lurking in corners together, breaking the vow of silence—ultimately distract them from unity with God, their divine husband who “os ama como esposas, claro está ha de querer que guardéis la fidelidad debida a tal Esposo” (120). Though María is speaking about female same-sex friendships, intimacy of any kind with another sister would constitute infidelity to God. Her injunction against unwarranted affection recalls Baltasar Álvarez’s belief that seeking the esteem of one’s peers amounts to adultery. More than Álvarez, however, María acknowledges that the potential for so-called infidelity—whether sexual or purely emotional—exists in a more literal sense in female religious communities.

Aside from the issue of chastity, María, like Teresa, expresses concern over how particular friendships disturbed the communal atmosphere of the convent:

Y como es cosa ordinaria que donde hay amigas ha de haber enemigas (o porque el amor que no está fundado en caridad no sufre compañía y entra luego la envidia, o porque las celosas del bien común no lo aprueban) está cierta la división y guerra.... Ya entra con esto la discordia y se desune el cuerpo hermoso de la Religión. Divisos los corazones, ya toca esto en lo vivo y alma de la caridad. (119-20)

Apart from alienating the other members of the community, the intensity of passionate friendship easily transmutes love into turbulent emotions like envy. The “cuerpo hermoso” of the spiritual sisterhood is dismembered under the stress of disharmony and divided hearts. María even compares special friendships to sickness when she beseeches God: “Dios por su misericordia nos libre de tan infeliz estado, donde llega a lo sumo la enfermedad. Y no hay más que tratar ya sino de dar algún remedio por que no llegue este mal a la muerte, donde no hay redención” (126). The unseemly passion of friendships in the convent creates an atmosphere ripe for spiritual illness. The author severely warns that these ailments cannot be treated but only palliative care can be administered in hopes that the sufferers will not perish. After death, there is no possibility for redemption. Although Teresa certainly forbids particular relationships among women religious, María enlists images of sickness unto death to describe the spiritual peril that emotional intimacy between two members of the community represents. Through her heightened focus on Galenic medical theory, María continually expresses her concern about the physical and spiritual health of the female Discalced community, as well as its individual members, offering remedies to ensure its balance and wellbeing.

In a departure from the typical prescription against physical affection, the end of the *Libro de recreaciones* narrates the dramatic death of a fellow sister, Bernarda de San José, and the significance of her body’s effect on the other nuns. Although Bernarda suffered a painful death wrought with fevers and delirium, María writes, “Quedó su cuerpo y rostro con grandísima hermosura que no nos hartábamos de besarle sus manos y pies” (349). In death, Bernarda’s holy constitution becomes the object of communal female love. The beauty of her body suggests the potential for sainthood and the act of venerating Bernarda’s physical form unites the sisters in shared adoration. The tenderness of this scene recalls that of Teresa’s death in the arms of Ana

de San Bartolomé as depicted in Sor Isabel Guerra's painting. While Ana lovingly gazes up at the ascension of Teresa's soul, Bernarda's sisters look downward at the splendor of her corporeal remains, unable to stop kissing her hands and feet. In both instances, spiritual female friendship survives and even grows stronger in death. No longer a source of Galenic anxiety and imbalance within the community of women, the holy female body becomes both a religious relic and one of sisterly love after the soul's departure.

For both male and female monastics, the individual body, its relation to others, and its role as member of the ecclesiastical body politic received significant attention during the early modern period. The affective bond between Alonso de la Madre de Dios and Saint John of the Cross reveals that friendship did indeed have a place in the spiritual wellbeing of a friar. Similar to María de San José's account of Bernarda's demise, Alonso's proximity to the saint's remains suggests that the bonds of holy friendship are not severed by death. Baltasar Álvarez focuses less on the deceased and more on the living body of Christ as the community of believers. His Stoic understanding of the singular and collective body requires that all members submit to God corporeally and emotionally, avoiding unnecessary human contact. Teresa de Jesús and María de San José, however, ground their concept of the female religious community on Galenic medical understandings of the female body. By recognizing the potential for cold, unstable humors and excess fluidity throughout the group as much as in one woman, they determine how best to maintain balance in the convent. Both Teresa and María seek to limit the penetrability of the cloister, but their Galenic perspective acknowledges that some outside contact, as long as it is virtuous, can relieve tension among members of the group. Though far from idyllic places of female friendship, Discalced Carmelite convents provided spaces in which women's particular

needs—both temporal and eternal—were considered, where sisters could relate to one another and begin to see themselves as men’s spiritual equals.

Conclusion

The Iberian daughters of Sappho explored in this project recognize that the classical and Renaissance theories of friendship are inadequate for expressing the nuances of women's same-sex bonds and they thus craft their own narrative of friendship grounded in early modern discourses of the female body. Male poets like Garcilaso de la Vega and Francisco de Aldana perpetuate the notion that women were incapable of meaningful social ties. They even go so far as to denounce the female body as a source of temptation that interrupts friendships between men. In response, women such as Sor Violante del Cielo and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz write about female relationships that do not correspond to the idyllic and harmonious models of their male counterparts. Instead, they resort to the discourse of erotic love and demonstrate their mastery of male courtship language. They also reveal, however, that traditional love rhetoric, which figures women either as objects of conquest or unattainable literary figures, is insufficient for articulating affection between living, powerful women.

María de Zayas and Ana Caro imagine a greater community of women's friendships by developing a female body politic that contests the traditional model of the social body as expressed in Calderón de la Barca's plays. Whereas Calderón suggests that dishonor foretells the death of the male social network, Zayas and Caro use it as a motive for female bonding, allowing women to form their own communities for mutual protection, even if they remain vulnerable to men. The metaphor of the community as a body extends beyond the theatrics of the stage and enters the realm of monasticism through the teachings of Teresa of Ávila and her spiritual heir, María de San José Salazar. Though Teresa's Jesuit confessor, Baltasar Álvarez, saw male religious communities as a stoic body in which men should only interact with others as service to

God, Teresa and María conceived of the convent as a Galenic female body that required balance and the limited permeability of spiritual friendships.

As I have argued throughout these pages, however, female friendship in early modern Spain was not an idealized image of women's solidarity. María de Zayas especially brings this issue to light at the end of *La traición en amistad*, a play in which women are not only capable of friendship but also of unsettling betrayal. In her novellas entitled *Desengaños amorosos*, Zayas also depicts a world in which women sometimes join men in inflicting horrifying acts of violence on the body of an innocent woman. In one of the novellas, "La inocencia castigada," a woman named Inés, entranced by a necromancer at the behest of Don Diego, walks to the latter's house every night so that he may indulge his illicit lust for the married woman. Although the civil authorities deem that Inés is not at fault, her husband and, most surprisingly, her sister-in-law torture her by imprisoning her in a chimney, keeping her on the threshold of life and death for six years to ensure her suffering. To be sure, Zayas provides an exaggerated, graphic description of the corporeal violence wrought on her by men—and by another woman:

En verdad, aunque tenía los ojos claros, estaba ciega, o de la oscuridad... o fuese de esto, o de llorar, ella no tenía vista... El color, de la color de la muerte; tan flaca y consumida, que se le señalaban los huesos, como si el pellejo que estaba encima fuera un delgado cendal; desde los ojos hasta la barba, dos surcos cavados de las lágrimas, que se les escondía en ellos un bramante grueso; los vestidos hechos ceniza, que se le veían las más partes de su cuerpo; descalza de pie y pierna, que de los excrementos de su cuerpo, como no tenía dónde echarlos, no sólo se habían consumido, mas la propia carne comida hasta los muslos de llagas y gusanos, de que estaba lleno el hediondo lugar. (428)

The image of the rotting female body desecrated with excrement and ravaged by worms not only depicts a horror story about violence on the individual woman but also symbolizes the potential for decay in the female community when women inflict—or perhaps even worse, are simply complicit in—violence against other women. The ending of “La inocencia castigada” threatens to unravel the idea that women express tenderness through the body, but Zayas instead reveals that just as the vulnerability of the female constitution can allow passage for affection, it can just as easily become a site of destruction.

Over the past few years, the social network of Twitter has circulated the hashtag #SolidarityIsForWhiteWomen, which reveals one of the central problems of feminism: whether the struggles of women who are not white or middle class have been, or can be, appropriately represented. In the early modern world, was solidarity just for “white”—that is, educated, aristocratic, Christian—women? Despite the fact that women were a marginalized category in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain, the female authors discussed here represent a fairly monolithic group. Sor Juana had *criolla* status in the New World and Teresa was thought to have *converso* lineage, but as literate women with powerful female allies, they enjoyed considerable privilege. Zayas touches on how friendship might develop between women of differing social status through the frame tale of the *Desengaños* when she describes the affection between the protagonist, Lisis, and the Moorish slave, Zelima: “Con esta hermosa mora se alegró tanto Lisis, que gozándose de sus habilidades y agrados, casi se olvidaba de la enfermedad, cobrándose de tanto amor, que no era como de señora y esclava, sino de dos queridas hermanas” (332). Though she seemingly promotes the idealized bond between Moorish and Christian women, in the first novella, “La esclava de su amante,” Zayas reveals that Zelima is in fact a Christian woman disguised as Moorish slave in order to pursue her male attacker. Aside from this brief flirtation

with female relationships that crosses class and religious boundaries, we never truly hear the voices of marginalized women.

These representations of female friendship produce their own problematic narratives for women who were not represented in literary and religious texts. Detailed archival research will thus be required to form a more nuanced vision of women's networks outside of the early modern female literati. The discourses of social alliances that are available to us, however, suggest that educated women, similar to Sappho's reputed circle of female poets, may have enjoyed a community of intellectual and spiritual support within male dominated traditions. Whether in poetry, on stage, or through religious reform, these authors envisioned women who were capable of loving one another in spite of—and even more significantly, because of—their vulnerabilities.

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