Communities and Connectivities: Iberian Considerations
Attending to Early Modern Women Workshop 2012
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I. WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION AND COMPARATIVE NATURE

This workshop aims to examine ways in which early modern women engaged in cross-cultural exchanges of ideas and influence in Iberia, Europe, and the Americas. The focus on Iberian women from both within and outside the convent aims to bring to light three different types of influence (cultural, political, and social) while also probing the extent to which women's geographic, class, and religious positions impacted their abilities to form influential alliances and communities. The workshop also calls into question current methodologies for examining women's communities in Europe and asks participants to consider whether and when we need to modify our theoretical or methodological frameworks when considering women from different geographical, religious, and class backgrounds.

II. WORKSHOP THEMES AS RELATED TO CONFERENCE THEMES

The workshop fits within the conferences themes of (1) communities; and (2) exchanges.

III. WORKSHOP FACILITATORS

Lisa Vollendorf, California State University, Long Beach
Nieves Romero-Díaz, Mt. Holyoke College
Vanda Anastácio, Universidade de Lisboa

IV. WORKSHOP DESCRIPTION ADDRESSING WORKSHOP CRITERIA

Studies about women’s communities (and the exchanges among them) have increased in the last years, particularly with regard to England and the Anglophone world. Susan Frye and Karen Robertson (1999), James Daybell (2004), and Stephanie Tarbin and Susan Broomhall (2008) have analyzed ways in which early modern European women formed communities to support one another. Whether civil or religious, such communities necessarily co-existed with others and, as Daybell has suggested, benefited families in important ways (9). Similarly, as Harris has argued, women exploited communal alliances in numerous ways, building connections that “encouraged them to assist one another emotionally and materially” (9). Finally, Heidi Brayman Hackel and Catherine E. Kelly's work on literacy and culture (2008) provides a fine example of recent research that demonstrates that we need to think about allegiances and alliances in terms that attend to a broader landscape than just the local when thinking about communities.

This research forms the background for our session proposal, as it reminds us that we need to move beyond describing and qualifying such alliances and exchanges to inscribing them into our understanding of the social fabric. The privileging of community as a site of inquiry, then, will allow us to better understand women’s social, cultural, and political agency. The body of scholarship that has emerged from specialists of the Ibero-American world provides a somewhat different viewpoint on similar issues. One important component of that research centers on religious communities and women’s roles as exerted through formal and informal structures provided by Catholicism. Many scholars—including Arenal, Cruz, Lavrin, Lehfeldt, Merrim, Schlau, and Weber—have pushed our understanding of women’s communities and communal roles in Iberia and the Americas, for example. The scholarship on Iberia and the Americas often has emphasized local communities over transnational
connections. Furthermore, whereas much work has been done on the most influential figures—such as Teresa of Jesus, Queen Isabel, and Sor Juana—Hispanists and Luso-Brazilianists have yet to fully map the scholarship of community onto a broader spectrum of women in Iberia and Ibero-America.

In this workshop, we propose to draw on the rich body of scholarship on the Ibero-American Atlantic and on the rest of Europe to examine the interstices between family and community, self and nation, and the local and the transnational. The workshop will bring current critical concepts about women’s communities and influence from across Europe and the Americas into focus through a discussion of three women from Iberia. The session intends to highlight the ways in which community dynamics played out differently for Iberian women in different geographic, social, and cultural contexts. Our readings reflect a range of women’s subject positions and alliances. We focus on three different women to be able to consider allegiances across geographic, class, and monastic boundaries in the areas of cultural, social, and political influence. While all three hailed from Iberia and not the periphery, their examples nevertheless encapsulate some of the research challenges we face when trying to delineate and interpret women’s lives through a community framework. Vanda Anastácio will discuss the cultural influence of Leonor Almeida, the Marquesa de Alorna and her role as a mediator of texts and ideas originating from other European areas (Great Britain, Germany, and France). As the main player in a circle of women, Almeida worked establish epistolary contacts between other aristocratic women inside and outside Portugal, including the Portuguese Countess of Vimieiro and the Austrian Madame de Thun. Lisa Vollendorf will use Ana Abarca de Bolea’s example to examine the challenges of tracing communities of influence when dealing with women who lived cloistered lives. Finally, Nieves Romero-Díaz will focus on María de Ágreda, a nun whose epistolary exchanges with noble and royal women reveal extensive political and personal influence beyond the walls of her convent.

V. WORKSHOP GOALS

The brief examples of the three women in question are meant to set the stage for a workshop discussion focused both on methodology and conceptualization. In probing women’s alliances and allegiances, the session aims to articulate numerous axes of influence and encourage scholars of women’s history to think about how to effectively map women’s communities across categories of subject position (e.g., geography, class, national identity, gender, and religion) as well as of type (e.g., social, cultural, political, and familial). The pairing of primary texts by Iberian women with the introduction to Stephanie Tarbin and Susan Broomhall’s *Women, Identities, and Communities in Early Modern Europe* should help those unfamiliar with Iberia and Ibero-American research think about the major questions of community and allegiance that scholars have been thinking about in recent years and that we ourselves have been struggling with in our own research. Our discussion period will probe the extent to which the scholarship of exchange and community for women’s history is bound by national, religious, class, or geographic boundaries. Are we asking different questions when we approach Iberian women’s allegiances vs. Anglo women, for example? What changes in the equation when we bring not only Europe but the Americas into the equation when considering influence, alliances, and exchanges? With these key questions in mind, we hope that scholars of different fields will attend the workshop to help all of us in our different sub-fields continue to push the boundaries of our current understandings of how to best approach questions of community, allegiance, and influence.

VI. WORKS CITED ABOVE


**VII. READINGS IN THIS PACKET (in order of appearance)**


Abarca de Bolea, Ana. Two poems translated into English.

Ágreda, María de (Madre). Selected letters translated into English.

Almeida, Leonor (Marquesa de Alorna). Short text translated into English.

**VIII. SUGGESTED READINGS**


Women and Gender in the Early Modern World
Series Editors: Allyson Poska and Abby Zanger

In the past decade, the study of women and gender has offered some of the most vital and innovative challenges to scholarship on the early modern period. Ashgate's new series of interdisciplinary and comparative studies, 'Women and Gender in the Early Modern World', takes up this challenge, reaching beyond geographical limitations to explore the experiences of early modern women and the nature of gender in Europe, the Americas, Asia, and Africa. Submissions of single-author studies and edited collections will be considered.

Titles in this series include:

Genre and Women's Life Writing in Early Modern England
Edited by Michelle M. Dowd and Julie A. Eckerle

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The Architectural Patronage of Hadice Turhan Sultan
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STEPHANIE TARBIN
The University of Western Australia

SUSAN BROOMHALL
The University of Western Australia

ASHGATE
Introduction
Stephanie Tarbin and Susan Broomhall

This collection examines questions of identity and community, starting from the premise that gender mattered to early modern women and men. As concepts, both ‘identity’ and ‘community’ denote similarity or affinity, but they also connote difference as well. That is, the process of defining key characteristics or shared values implies exclusion or separation from other similar entities. Given that recognizing diversity among women has been a major concern of feminist scholarship in recent decades, how to take account of differences between individual women while looking at the groups in which they participated raises serious questions. What patterns of gender emerge from the differences among women? How did gender interact with other parameters in women’s lives, as well as with their own perceptions and experiences of embodiment, to structure female agency? In paying attention to the contexts in which women identified with other women, or were so perceived by others, this collection offers analyses of women’s sense(s) of gender identity, and how the labels ascribed to them enabled different senses of affiliation and exclusion.

The essays here build upon work showing the importance of a wide range of factors affecting women’s identities: social, marital and sexual status; religious and political affiliations; age and occupation, and so on. More importantly, this collection is profoundly indebted to Patricia Crawford’s inspiring scholarship, on both intellectual and personal levels. Flowing through much of her contribution to early modern English history are themes concerning women as individuals and communities, their senses of identity and their collective activities, and the overriding conviction that gender mattered to early modern women. Her research has


shown how female identities and experiences were shaped by many variables and how the mesh of ideas about gender structured their conditions of existence. Moreover, a major focus of her work has also been women themselves: their perceptions of themselves, their experiences and responses to the world they shared. She asks, how can we read the traces of the past so that women emerge as agents, making their own histories? Crawford’s work provides overwhelming evidence that the experiences of women can be retrieved from sources with predominantly male perspectives, and that their voices are capable of offering alternative views.

While sensitive to differences between women, Crawford has been concerned to identify where patterns or similarities occur; in essence, what women shared. Her work considers the extent to which early modern women felt a common sense of identity, seeking to identify circumstances creating commonalities, as well as divisions, between them. In a series of pioneering articles, for example, Crawford examined understandings and experiences of embodiment, arguing that women’s shared knowledge of sexuality and reproduction contributed to a ‘female culture’; an argument developed in her work with Sara Mendelson on women’s friendships and female forms of cultural production. The nature of female identities and communities, their impact on women’s experiences and agency, have thus been vital questions in her work and are crucial issues for the essays in this collection. For the experiences of women, as in Crawford’s work, lie at the heart of this volume. The collection presents the insights of historians who are concerned to document the lived realities of women, as well as exploring literary or cultural meanings of gender identities.

The essays’ approaches to the themes of identity, community and power rise. Two essays examine the close inter-relationships between identity and community for early modern women. Anne Laurence considers how to integrate gender into Irish historiography, examining women’s participation in the religious, national and linguistic communities of Ireland and asking, what different understandings of identity arise as a result? Laurence also makes the important distinction between individual and collective identity, noting the paucity of sources by Irish women. In contrast, she observes, historians have analyzed Irish men as though they were autonomous individuals. She argues that attention to households and families reveals the religious, political and linguistic cultures in which both women and men participated, highlighting the competing communities and identities within domestic environments. Laura Gowing also balances interactions of community and identity in a study that examines how single mothers managed to construct an urban identity and integrate into London’s civic community. Her work finds instances of collective action and assistance among poor women showing that lone women could negotiate a position of belonging within contemporary understandings of poverty and the poor law. In so doing they also constructed specifically female senses of the civic community that accommodated the ambivalent place of single women.

The shifting concept of identity is the central concern of several of the essays. Two authors examine how women’s personal identities informed their connections with others. For Jacqueline Van Gent, particular elements of female identity, such as marital status, conditioned how women acted in their local communities and their access to power and agency. She explores the role of magic in women’s social interactions in eighteenth-century Sweden, examining how it created a ‘space’ accommodating both a sense of shared values and the expression of conflicts between women. In Frances Harris’s study of Elizabeth Packer, reading informed her political interests and opinions, helping to forge connections to other women with similar values. Harris shows that Packer’s letters offer evidence of her sense of place as a single woman within her family networks and social circles, revealing a woman who was not only politically informed and independent in her views, but whose self-perception was shaped by her political engagement.


Women, Identities and Communities in Early Modern Europe

Introduction

Two further studies assess the construction of identities for women at court. In case studies of royal women, Judith Richards’s essay investigates reputation as public identity, demonstrating its critical significance for contemporaries and modern historians. Margaret Beaufort was reinterpreted by near contemporaries as a conventional figure of virtue, overlooking her abilities and significant political role, while Katherine of Aragon’s sexual identity formed the focus of her sixteenth-century reputation. Identifying a long-standing tradition of sympathy toward Katherine of Aragon, Richards suggests that Katherine’s maritally troubles provided the focus for many women, and some men, to unite in feelings of support. Sybil Jack also examines public figures in her analysis of the images of queen consorts created in Latin ceremonial poetry. She observes that such women did not belong to a community comprising all women since they were set apart by status, even among aristocrats of the court, but they nonetheless shared common experiences with other women. Her essay suggests that changing notions of a queen’s identity shared parallels with changes in women’s social position in the late seventeenth century. In these essays, Richards and Jack show the implications of queenly identities, constructed by others, for contemporary women and modern historiography.

A final essay on the theme of identity reflects upon present preoccupations, particularly debates over ‘identity politics’ and the value of psychoanalytical notions of identity for histories. Sarah Ferber asks whether it is appropriate for modern scholars to identify with historical people for political or other purposes, exploring the utility of clinical understandings of dissociative identity disorder in reading early modern narratives of demonic possession. Can some accounts of childhood seduction by devils be interpreted as instances of sexual abuse, she asks? Ferber is cautious about imposing modern categories on the past, noting that demonic possession might equally have offered young women a way to deal with difficulties adjusting to religious life where the community aimed to subsume individual identity within the body of Christ.

Another set of essays here take community as their starting point. The notion of ‘community’ in historical scholarship may be problematic, evoking a golden age of caring, consensual and participatory relationships, and masking conflict or processes of exclusion. Yet division and conflict can be central to the creation of a sense of community, uniting people in debate about its defining values rather than agreement about core ideals. Evidence of hostility, abuse and exploitation in women’s interactions encourages us to consider how contemporary power relationships fostered or constrained the possibilities for collective action and feelings of solidarity among women. The essays in this collection examine how early modern women could act together, share a sense of purpose, or subscribe to a set of common values, attending to processes of exclusion in the formation of female networks and recognizing the role of conflict between women.

Several essays examine how women’s participation in communities contributed to their values, ideals and senses of selfhood. Sara Mendelson draws our attention to the local community in her study of one woman’s sense of belonging to ‘the neighbourhood’. For Anne Dormer, this provided support in the face of marital conflicts underlying her physical and social isolation. Bonds of friendship fostered through identification with the neighbourhood, revealed in her correspondence, proved stronger than divided religious and political loyalties or sexual rivalries for Dormer and her female friends. In Claire Walker’s contribution, the focus is on the meaning of religious communities to their female members. Her study of English Catholic nuns shows the fragility of community, where nuns retained loyalties to family and friends outside the walls and held onto secular values, introducing hierarchy into the cloister and subverting ideals of commonality. Political affiliations also caused conflicts. All serve to highlight ‘community’ as a process of debating values, rather than possession of particular collective attributes. For Dolly MacKinnon, secular communities provide a window onto overlapping groups of women identifying on the basis of piety and godliness, although often divided by social standing and wealth. Charity clothing announced the wearer’s worth as a recipient of pious benefaction and was a cue for the parish community to remember the benefactor. Parish charity enabled godly women to define themselves according to a collective identity of pious women. In the convent and parish, Walker and MacKinnon show how women shared physical and ritual spaces that helped to develop their ideas about spirituality, so that a sense of community could be empowering for individual women.

Other authors explore communities in which women participated as disadvantaged, peripheral or symbolic members. Susan Broomhall argues, in a study of women’s contribution to honour culture at the Burgundian ducal court, that noblewomen could derive a strong sense of identity as founts of knowledge for the elaborate rituals of the court community. Yet in practice women could rarely exercise the same forms of power through honour conduct as their elite male counterparts. Philippa Maddern, on the other hand, demonstrates how servant marriages challenged medieval political ideas about proper gender relations and associated authority structures in the household. Her essay sheds light on the potential for independent identities of female servants and subordinates in the domestic community. Being identified by others as at the margins of communities raised beneficial and challenging possibilities for women. Women could be symbolically central to communities even when they were marginalized. Lyndal Roper explores how feminine figures like that of the witch could symbolize communal identity for Augsburg’s male citizens, and represent the city while excluding women from participation in the political arena. Her essay highlights the rich lode of associations connected with female figures in Augsburg’s history, raising questions about the relationships between civic discourses, the experiences of the city’s women and their sense of participation in the civic community.

It is clear, then, that analysis of women’s negotiation of identities and contributions to communities cannot be disconnected from key questions of power and social

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13 Ibid., pp. 5–6.

politics. To what extent do women have the power to contest the workings of gender in their lives, creating new understandings of personal and collective identity? How could collective experiences create space for women to exercise power? Early feminist historiography that concentrated on relations between women and men often formulated questions and answers about power in terms of oppression and victimization. More recent work has concentrated on relations among women, having less to say about their power relations with men. Patricia Crawford’s work shows us the value of analyzing women’s agency in conjunction with considering broader mechanisms of power. For example, she demonstrated that despite formal exclusion from political participation, early modern women engaged in collective political action, laid claim to political rights and responsibilities and defined an expanded notion of citizenship.

This collection shows both how women engaged with formal political processes and also the value of an expanded notion of ‘politics’ for investigating the dynamics of women’s social interactions. Thus, Richards makes a compelling case for the political acumen and significance of Margaret Beaufort, while Harris, Mendelson and Walker reveal women’s concerns and involvement with national political upheavals. Female figures could be right at the heart of political communities, as Roper and Gowing demonstrate. While Roper explores the contradictions and ambiguities inherent in the symbolic female figures central to Augsburg’s civic history and identity. Gowing suggests that mutual assistance among women helped them to cope with the disorderly, vagrant identities imputed by civic authorities. Other essays suggest how women’s social interactions can be read as forms of political engagement, broadly defined, as recent work by social historians has shown. Van Gent, MacKinnon and Broomhall all consider how some women were able to construct forms of public authority for themselves and their actions by exploiting aspects of female identity, often with the result of reinforcing existing social and gender hierarchies and producing divisions between women. Perhaps more surprising, as Richards remarks in relation to the strong, continuing current of sympathy for Katherine of Aragon, are the possibilities for female aid, friendship and even solidarity emerging in a number of the essays here. As Van Gent argues, conflict and hierarchy are readily apparent in witch trials, but magic also provided ways for women to support and help each other in times of trouble or difficulty. Mendelson’s analysis of Anne Dormer’s letters shows the strength of respect and affection within her network of friends, despite serious differences of political and religious outlook and tensions caused by her husband’s pursuit of younger women in her social circle. Gowing traces how female networks provided knowledge and assistance for single mothers in the unwelcoming physical and social spaces of London. In a number of examples, as with the religious women analyzed by Walker, women found common cause in the face of conflicts with or hostility from men. Such insights elucidate the webs of relationships among women and those between women and men, sharpening our view of women as a group with shared interests but changing, and often divided, agendas.

Attending to women’s experiences and views of identities and communities has consequences for writing history and our understanding of present as well as past. Following the example of Patricia Crawford’s scholarship, several essays raise methodological issues for communities of historians. Anne Laurence and Judith Richards caution us not to rely on categories or assumptions that obscure women, such as politics as a masculine sphere of activity. As both Laurence and Marden show, attending to female identities also has the potential to disrupt received ideas about political order and agency. Laurence further suggests that concepts such as community or identity may not always be the most useful categories for comprehending women in the past, arguing instead for a focus on Irish families and households. Scrutinizing both modern and early modern subjectivities, Ferber reflects sensitively on when it may be appropriate for feminist historians to identify with women in the past, in the interest of understanding their experiences. She observes that historians can occupy subject positions characterized by both empathy and distance, enabling new approaches to evidence of women’s experiences without abandoning critical traditions of history.

Other essays seek to identify new ways to read known sources in ways that accommodate the experiences and actions of women. Women rarely controlled the production of sources, but their voices and actions come to us through the mediation of legal records such as wills and court proceedings. Ferber and MacKinnon, in particular, offer imaginative, innovative readings of this kind of evidence to reflect on ways of retrieving women’s experiences and perceptions. Others take a fresh look at women’s writings as evidence. Walker and Broomhall enhance our perception of women’s political action by re-examining texts such as convent histories and courtly conduct manuals, while Harris and Mendelson highlight the significance of correspondence as a key source for elite women’s political engagement. Where Crawford argued that early modern women were able to shape the political spectrum


throughout this book, the authors here show how women’s political interests surface in writings more commonly associated with personal, domestic and religious concerns.

We have arranged the essays according to the contexts they accentuate as most significant for their individual analyses of communities and identities. We begin our investigation with essays by Laurence and Ferber that problematize how scholarly communities read the early modern. Both authors encourage feminist historians to reflect on their scholarly practice in seeking women’s experiences in the past. Two further essays, by Maddern and Walker, focus on the politics of households and their implications for historians: how two distinct types of domestic communities, secular households and religious enclaves, sheltered members with disparate views and agendas disruptive to ideals of order and harmony. These essays insist that visions of unified household communities need revision in the light of evidence of female agency within them.

The following sections consider geographically defined communities. Within the setting of local parish and village, MacKinnon and Van Gent explore the workings of female social networks through magical rituals and material culture, respectively. For MacKinnon and Van Gent, processes of exclusion and social demarcation within women’s communities, coexist with common values and shared experiences. In the next section, the contributions of Roper and Gowing turn attention to women in urban environments, showing the symbolic importance of feminine stereotypes in the construction of male civic communities. Where Roper shows the complexity of the relationship between cultural beliefs about women and their lived historical experiences, Gowing’s essay suggests how women’s collective actions could help to resist identities not of their own making.

The final group of essays examine women of the social elite. In the section on gentry communities, Mendelson and Harris each offer perceptive case studies of female identities and friendships, as seen through women’s letters. Both authors suggest the significant role assumed by epistolary connections and emotional alliances when other circumstances restricted direct social contacts between women. Finally, turning to the world of the court and the monarch, where aristocratic women might fashion and wield political power, three essays explore the limiting effects of gender norms upon queens and female courtiers. Richards and Jack concentrate on the reputations of royal women, examining how representations of powerful women served political and ideological purposes. Broomhall’s examination of the courtly household of Burgundy, argues that noble women worked to establish a recognized female community of honour of their own, but their interpretations of ceremonial conduct could not subvert conventions of gender.


Ana Abarca de Bolea (1602-85)

Poems from Vigilia y Octavario de San Juan Bautista (1679)

Translated by Ana Kothe, University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez and generously made available for session at Attending to Early Modern Women 2012.

OCTETTS TO THE PURIFICATION OF THE VIRGEN

The slow flight of my angry pen
Pretends to ford holy oceans,
With great feeling, the spirit is kindled
Reducing greatness to a brief summary.
[62] Fear freezes, the hand is suspended,
Fearing that ambition not show off
What my bold voice tries
To speak about the purity of Mary.

Divine assistance the song implores
(Oh Sovereign Princess of Heaven!),
Since by serving you such glory is gained.
If affection can reach so high,
Aided now by Christian piety
In the divine and sacrosanct temple,
Your light exiles my ignorance and
Fear and communicates ardor [warmth, eagerness].

From eternity, in rapture,
The Supreme Author held your purity,
As most perfect and of his liking,
Surpassed only by its greatness.
Your clean, lovely clay molded
Into human form[1] lowly beings covet,
Rejecting its glory in heaven above
In order to enjoy it with You here on earth.

God displays the very actions of a lover,
Rehearsing through You many a memory
[account?].

You are the pure Sun, Lady, that imparts
Grace among men and, even to the Trinity, glory;
A white fleece of Gredón[2] that grants
[63] Great victories to the faithful Catholic;
A burning bush[3] that makes great fires faint;
The Rod of Aaron[4] of blossoming rays;
The Arc of the Covenant[5] you are, Lady,
Tried and true inside and out.

Keeping the law, because he who dwells with You
Honors resigned obedience,
To the mount of myrrh[6] You now go
Destined to judge a thousand defamations,
That despite the assaults on your honor and
Effrontery,
By keeping the law you live content.
Pure you stayed in your birth.

* * * *

A NEWLY ORDAINED PRIEST’S MASS

Listen to me carefully for a while,
Reverend Father Arned,[7]
Because I want to speak to you of a ball game[8]
Although it seems upside down.
They say that your first mass
Today we will see you give;
The saying “To sing in ignorance”[9]
Is not true when it comes to you.

You can’t imagine that to this table
You come only to eat;
Before, the more you would eat,
The hungrier you would become.
Come with three powers [strengths],
Although blindly you come,
Since to see God
You only need the eyes of faith.

2 Campo Guiral notes this is a reference to a judge of Israel who asked for a fleece as a sign of God’s protection (Jueces 6, 36-40); here used as a metaphor for the Virgin (62, footnote 161).
3 Reference to the burning bush through which God spoke to Moses (Exodus 3, 1-6); i.e., the Virgin.
4 Numbers 17; i.e., the Virgin.
5 Exodus 25, 10-22; i.e. the Virgin.
6 From Song of Songs, the site of the Temple of Jerusalem.
7 Campo Guiral notes that the archives at the convent of Casbas show a monk by the name of Salvador Arnet (footnote 199, 73).
8 Again, the use of “bolea” as a pun with the author’s name.
9 Idiom: cantar mucho sin saber.
It is good that one vow be honored,
And, since you give it to God,
You will be, lifelong,
His handiwork and faithful minister.

On the Epiphany
The Greatest King admits you
To the celestial banquet;
Come humbly to his feet,
Offering your heart,
And with the three Kings you will say
That it is lucky to have come
Today with them to the crèche [Bethlehem].
Do not forget to give thanks
To Maria and Joseph,
Because it is for you that they keep
This manna from Israel.10

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[165] DÉCIMA TO PORTIA

It’s very fine to eat,
For a dead love, live embers,
But it’s not too much, if it is based on
The love of a woman.
Portia, you could well have had
Your pain made into glory,
Since the memory lives on
Of such a generous deed,
From the Indies to Spain
Your story is celebrated.

* * *

Poem to Saint Teresa11

They say you are covered in darkness,
But, with a thousand beams of light,
I know that you enjoy the favors
Of He who calls you His loving wife.
[I know] you are tired of the world
And that you wish to take flight
And leave the Earth.
I base this on sound reason:
Because you know the world brings darkness
Just as much as the Heavens enlighten.

Décima A Santa Teresa
Dicen que estás ahumada,
Mas yo, con mil resplandores,
Sé que gozas los favores
De quien sois esposa amada.
Que estás del mundo enfadada
Y deseáis en un vuelo
El apartaros del suelo,
En buena razón lo fundo:
Porque sabéis tizna el mundo
Cuanto lucir sabe el Cielo.

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10 I.e., the Eucharist, or Host.

11 Teresa de Cepeda y Ahumada was Saint Teresa’s full name. The poem riffs on her second last name, playing with the two meanings of “ahumada”: ‘ahumar’ means ‘to smoke’ and therefore the implication is that one is the darkness of death (ahumada). The poems hinges on the contrast between “dark/blacken” and “light/enlightenment.” Translation of this poem is rendered only for EMW conference by L. Vollendorf and is admittedly rough. Spanish provided for word play context.
LETTERS: SOR MARÍA JESÚS DE ÁGREDA

1. Letter from Queen María Teresa de Austria to Sor María Jesús of Agreda
Great pleasure have I taken in your letter; every one I receive from you brings me much comfort and delight. I greatly appreciate your condolences for my brother’s death, for I am feeling his loss deeply and if I did not think that it came from the hand of Our Lord my soul would find no comfort. I am hereby letting it be known to you that the peace treaty and marriage settlement have been signed. What I request of you is that you ask God to grant me great blessings and that He watch over my father and meet all his needs. May God be with you. Madrid Nov. 18, 1659.

Answer from Sor María Jesús of Agreda to the Queen
The pure and sincere affection that I profess to Your Majesty, and the obligations that I owe to you lead me to offer myself once again as a servant to your Majesty, while my affection grows by your Majesty’s absence; I implore you, my dear Lady, to find cheer and to take your time during this journey and farewell to the King, our Lord [Philip IV]; and consider the sacrifice you are making for the Almighty in service to him and in benefit of these kingdoms; your Majesty should imitate, those women saints of the Holy Scripture; Esther was a most pious queen, she courted King Ahasuerus and she obliged him in such a way, and her mediation was so powerful that God’s people were freed of the oppression and punishments with which their oppressors threatened them. My Lady, Christian prudence is, within the state of matrimony into which your Majesty is entering, to oblige and win the Christian King, because peace in marriage is a relief for all hardship, and is of great comfort. And having his Majesty on your side, you could serve God in many ways: by begging him to favor the Catholics, that he maintain the Peace between these two crowns, and that he be favorable to Spain’s; in this way, your Majesty could compel the Almighty, and the King our Lord. And you could help your Majesty in these so serious matters, with prayers and petitions to our Lord, thereby imitating Judith who, despite her great
beauty and expensive attire, prayed and mortified her body; by her cries, God freed Betulia from Holofernes’s persecution, and she herself cut off his head. Believe me Your Majesty and Lady of Mine, that the nobility and authority of a queen is very powerful with the help of divine grace. I will keep your Majesty present in my humble prayers as long as I live, and I will work continuously beseeching the Almighty to make you most blessed, in heaven and earth, and that you might have prosperity for years to come. From the Discalced Conception in Agreda, April 2, 1660.

2. Letter from Queen María Teresa de Austria to Sor María Jesús of Agreda
The other day I received a letter from you of June 28 which brought me much pleasure and comfort. I love you greatly and hold you in infinitely high regard. I am very healthy, as is my son, and my pregnancy is going well; what I ask of you is that you beseech our Lord to grant me a happy outcome, and that He watch over this child. Also, I ask you to entrust the King to God and implore Him to make the King good, and to keep him away from bad company and bad advice; through the mediation of your prayers, I hope to reach everything I wish and whatever is the best for the other life and for this. From Saint Germain July 29, 1662.

Answer from sor María Jesús of Agreda to the Queen
Our Lady,
The proper result of sincere and fine affection is to hope for and beseech the highest good for the loved one. I love and esteem your Majesty so deeply in my heart that I feel this truth, and how obliging is the affection that I profess for your Majesty that I live in a continuous longing for your Majesty’s comfort, health and life; for God, the Almighty gives your Majesty His love, grace and salvation. I am not content with less than hoping and imploring for somebody to whom I hold in such high regard. Believe me, Lady of my soul, that I have devoted myself to working tirelessly for your Majesty and the Christian King, and in earnest, I will implore the Almighty what you ask me for, that He keeps him away from bad company and dishonest advisors. Your Majesty, you can do a lot by persuading him against bad advice. I take consolation in knowing that your pregnancy goes well; and for the fortunate outcome of this pregnancy, I will do a
novenas and other devotions so that He also protect of the prince. And to you, keep well for many years. From the Discalced Conception in Agreda, September 16, 1662.

3. Letter from sor María Jesús of Agreda to Lady Josefa Carrillo of Soria

Doña Ma. Josefa Carrillo,

Jesus Ma. My precious friend, my lady, may God be with you and may He generously provide you with heavenly gifts; true it is that I have been quite ill and though I am feeling somewhat better, I am forever feverish. I have read your worship’s letter; your hardships and sufferings have filled me with pity and have touched my heart. Cheer up and take your time, be patient, for there is no greater suffering than the one that is badly borne; by means of difficulties, you will reach eternal salvation; I do not agree, since you have children and little interest in being a nun, that your highness and don Rodrigo [her husband] take vows; rather you should stop that thought and try to fulfill your marital duties, and your highness should attempt to find peace for your part, and love your husband, and if your love is not returned as you wish, be patient and turn to God in your afflictions; in His Majesty you will find comfort, and I will have you present in my humble prayers, and I will implore our Lord to love you, and give you grace and salvation, and the same to don Rodrigo. [. . . ] From the Discalced Conception in Agreda, July 1, 1661.

NOTE: All translations are mine.

The original letters in Spanish to and from María Teresa de Austria are from the Archivo de las Concepcionistas Descalzas, Agreda.

The original letter in Spanish to María Josefa Carrillo can be found at: Campos, J. “Cartas inéditas.” *Salmanticensis* 16 (1969): 646.
To a Lady who was beginning to write in verse and has asked me for my weak advice on the first verse she did, which was erotic

Scribenti rectè sapere est et principium et fons.
--Horatio, Poetics

Gentle Nymph do not think that in Cythera
Is just any one who tasted the pure flood of Aganippe
Amor picks some blossoming myrtle
But Amor does not weave the ivy crown

The naughty child would have wanted
To disturb the source’s transparent vein
And proclaims among false and foolish people
That he has fallen asleep in the arms of Erato

But he who seeks the harmonious sound
From the magic Poetry that enamors the soul
Must submit fantasy to wise laws

He must not believe Amor, who is lying constantly,
And he must read the sublime bards of the past:
These are the temples where Apollo lives.

[PORTUGUESE ORIGINAL]
A uma Senhora que principiava a fazer versos e me pediu os meus fracos conselhos sobre os primeiros que fez os quais foram eróticos

Scribenti rectè sapere est et principium et fons.
---Horácio, Arte Poética

Ninfa gentil, não penses que em Citera
De Aganipe há quem prove a pura enchente
Colhe Amor algum mirto florecente
Porém não tece Amor a c’roa d’ Hera.

O menino travesso bem quisera
Turbar da fonte a veia transparente,
E publica entre falsa e néscia gente
Que nos braços d’Erato adormecera.

Mas quem buscar da mágica Poesia
O harmonioso som que a alma namora,
A leis sábias submeta a fantesia.

Não creia Amor, que mente a cada hora;
Leia os vates sublimes dalgum dia,
Estes os templos onde Apolo mora.
TEXT 2: LETTER FROM D. LEONOR DE ALMEIDA, MARQUISE OF ALORNA TO HER FATHER (c. 1772) (EXCERPT)

[Undated letter sent from the Monastery of Chelas, close to Lisbon during the period of D. Leonor's incarceration and her Father's imprisonment]

My dear Father and Lord of my heart

I am most pleased to know that Your Excellency's health is as good as you tell me. May God permit that you continue in good health, and that our worries are always ill founded; I very much appreciate that my letters console You Excellency. They are always written with such feelings of missing you, and in such a sad spirit that this would certainly seem impossible to me unless Your Excellency would tell me so; yours certainly give me the biggest relief, and I very much wish to persuade Your Excellency of this. I have nothing else in my mind, and every amusement seems insipid to me if I can not in some way share it with Your Excellency. My very Poems would have been extinguished if it was not possible for me to send you what I write, and if I did not know that Your Excellency likes me to cultivate the small talent God gave for this art, and so I go on with my correspondence, in spite of various misfortunes which could change them. [...]

I am learning English with great eagerness, in order to take advantage of the Teacher and also learn perfectly Latin, because I understand that some knowledge of the Latin Poets is very essential and I will not be able to develop certain Ideas if I do not know the language perfectly. Let us speak about these Ideas.

Take the Countess of Vimieiro, cousin Margarida Teles, Maria Mascarenhas, Joana Isabel, one of her sisters, my sister and I if I can count myself in this number and some more which exist in this world. I thought that we could find the utmost amusement and give our country some glory. I thought of forming an Academy, in which Poetry could blossom as well as all the Sciences we could be capable of. That the Queen would be the Protector of our academy, that the Court Ladies could honor it by joining because they are extremely well educated. On the birthday of each one of them a piece of Oratory would be composed, or some Poetic work, according to the talent of that academic chosen to celebrate the occasion, the academic works would then be reunited and published at the end of each year and, before they would appear, each one of them would be subject to the judgment of the Academy, in order for the works to be published in the most perfect form possible. Bylaws would be made in such a way that they would be capable of being enforced without difficulty. I have very confused ideas about this particular point, but I have lots of ideas, and my point is to capacitate myself to be able to implement something. I know that my circumstances as well as those of many others make this difficult, however I think that even if it can not be done in public as I would like it to be done in the benefit of this country, it can be done in particular, I just do not know how and I will only continue to study until Your Excellency sends me some direction. The first Lady which will conform to my ideas is the Countess, but I do not know how I should communicate them to her. Your Excellency, in whose hands I put everything, should tell me what you think of this, I know my goals and limitations. May God bless them. I will be most happy if my writings will make public the names of my countries Princesses in a dignified way, and if the reward my zeal by rehabilitating my Parents. Y do not wish for anything else and these two goals give me such strength that everything seems possible to me.

I feel great enjoyment in this, and the utility of banishing idleness from the Portuguese Ladies will in this way, will also reestablish our reputation which the dissipation and continuous distractions in the Ladies (I am saying this with such pity!) has in some way weakened; weather competing among ourselves or the ladies competing there would be academy awards like there exist in France, but this would always be moderate, just enough to distinguish the honor of the prized academic Lady. I wish that Your Excellency would point out to me some books which could give me some knowledge on the existing academies around the world and maybe Your Excellency could renounce writing some lines to my Mother in order to write more to me.

Your Excellency must know that my Poetic correspondence has caused an outcry, and that the Princesses want to honor me by seeing my verses. I am somewhat puzzled by this, however I think that God will help me in this, and I hope still to do something less unworthy of their eyes. [...]

I beg Your Excellency to give me your blessing and Good bye Father of my heart

Your Excellency’s Most obedient Daughter, L.
TEXT 3: LETTER FROM D. LEONOR DE ALMEIDA, MARQUISE OF ALORNA TO HER SISTER (1780) (EXCERPT)

Letter sent from Vienna where D. Leonor de Almeida's husband was Minister Plenipotentiary between 1780-1785

Vienna, 27th of October 1780

My lovely Sister, on what grounds could you form any suspicion of forgetfulness against me? My letters may fail to arrive, but you must complain only of the distance and do me the justice of judging me always as faithful as can be. I now hope that we can have news from each other by every courier, and I will never fail, not even in thoughts, for this is my only consolation, and I spent the whole week thinking about the day of the arrival of the post.

Every thing that concerns you interests me and nothing seems to me to be a small object, you can entertain me with all possible trifles for in this distance, it is better to know about to much than to little. I hope that you manage to experience some benefits from the waters of Caldas, and that if you have any illness, that it will be the same that I now suffer from\(^1\) and I wish it to you infinitely in spite of A.’s calculations. I hope in God this will be the case, since we have been companions in everything until now, although I do not dare to reveal my secret to Mother until three months have passed, which will be over by the end of this month. I am still quite sick, vomiting all the time, but since this is no other illness I decided to declare it to you so that you are free from the worries Lebzelter’s letter about me has caused you. [...]

My good fortune her continues and Prince Kaunitz shows us the highest consideration and esteem. Prince Schwartzenberg, who is the son in law of my Aunt and the Chamberlain of the Empress, in part also because of this kinship there is not any kind of gallantry that he wouldn’t do for me and since I now start to know more people I already chose the persons with which I will live in greater intimacy, and I believe I will reach the point of friendship 1\(^1\) the Countess of Waldstein, 2\(^1\) the Countess of Thun, who is her sister, 3\(^1\) the Countes of Chichi-Pally: these are three lovable creatures with judgment, good conversation and excellent mores and even quite good looking and beautiful; they are about our age and Soure’s and so there is a remarkable analogy between us. Of a different age I am also quite connected to Madame de Bourghausen and Madame Pafowitz, two persons who have judgment and quite an education, and if you want you can ask the Duke\(^2\) in order to be able to have an idea of my capacities of selection. However all these new friendships are of little aid against the continuous anguish I suffer with the separation of you, my unique friend, which Nature and reason as well as a thousing loving circumstances have make necessary to my heart. But you are already known here, and here, unlike in France, indifference and madness do not reign and the good and sensitive hearts are interested in that which interest others, and almost every post they ask me for your news from you and from Mother. [...]

I do not know if my Father and my Mother have already received my little presents sent from France. Please give notice of this for they amuse me, and tell me if Brother has already worn the waistcoat and tell him that I would like to send him another present, but since he is so rude he did not thank me for my first I suspend my generosity until I receive a letter from him. That \textit{Paris in France} is not worth seen from close as seen from afar, but that Vienna is twenty times better than I had imagined. I can not write anymore today because I have not told anything to my Mother yet and will write to her. I embrace you most tenderly, regards to your husband and if the separation of the Aunts occurs tell me. Two united families are rarely in peace with each other and I guess that would be a means for them to find it.

\textit{L. C. O. [Leonor Countess of Oyenhausen]}

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\(^{1}\) D. Leonor is refereing to her pregnancy.

\(^{2}\) D. Leonor is referring to the Duke of Lafões who had lived for two decades in the Viennese court and was in Lisbon at the time this letter was written.
TEXT 4: LETTER FROM D. TERESA DE MELLO BREYNER, COUNTESS OF VIMIERO TO D. LEONOR IN VIENNA

Lisbon, 29th of October 1780

Friend of my heart I contemplate the trouble these couriers are giving you and this makes that I try to spare some of the trouble of reading my letters. The news about you which I hear from others are all my friendship could wish for. The brilliant perspective in which I imagine you highly flatters me as well as that you are the publicly praised in Vienna and that the Ladies do not dare to contradict the opinion that we have sent there a really charming Lady! The point is that the state of your health will give you freedom and strength to enjoy the enjoyments that this situation offers you. I am most obliged by what you tell me about my Aunt Staremberg; I immediately asked my Mother about her and she told me that she is her first Cousin, the daughter of my Uncle Ernesto whom I do not know and used to be the Head of Justices, something like our Mayor. I have asked the Duke about her and he has painted her to me in such a way that I am dying to know her and for her to know me, and when I will send you my portrait please show me to that remaining good people I still have there. Your husband says that I have the look of the Breyner family; and the Duke says the same, and adds that we are similar in character and in the way we behave, without pretentiousness and always ready to serve for the good of the State. He said that this Aunt of mine used to be very good looking and that when he arrived in Germany she was still beautiful. He told me that the Colloredo ladies are also Breyners and that they are all adorable; in all he said a thousand agreeable things that made me wish to live with them. He advised me to write to them, and although I could feel secure from his advice I do not wish to do this before you tell them a thousand polite things on my behalf, and of the esteem we have for the feelings of their friendship, on the death of my Uncle and the sorrow I particularly have for not being able to communicate with such an amiable person, since the information I have from him make me wish to imitate him.

Your people are returning from Caldas and my Mother will also be returning tomorrow with the Queen, but since I started this letter yesterday and have been forced to interrupt it today I have a strong headache and so I can not continue. Give my regards to your husband and accept regards from mine and consider me always your True and faithful friend, T.

TEXT 5: LETTERS FROM D. TERESA DE MELLO BREYNER, COUNTESS OF VIMIERO TO D. LEONOR (EXCERPTS)

a) Lisbon 4th of April 1780

[...] you will receive at least three letters written successively and inside one of them are included the answers for Madame de Thun and for your husband. [...] Good bye my dear; give my regards to the Count as well as to Madame de Thun, in case this unknown Portuguese has the power to pull her out for a moment from her thick eye-browed friend from Moscow [...]  

b) Lisbon, July 1781

[...] You want to receive post from me by every courier but, my dear friend, why don’t you believe that I am equally famished of yours? I have not received a line from Vienna in three weeks and this disturbs the correspondence very much and distresses even more the heart of a friend such as me. Your present condition is for me a source of concern and until your time will be over I will be most restless about you. Don’t write to me with your own hand because it can cause you fatigue. Let whoever it might be to send me two words about your condition. It will be enough for me while I can not have more from you. I, my dear soul, am feeling as cruelly as can be, although I am not forced to live as a sick person; but the strength of the hypochondria has reduced me to a sad state. However I force myself to react as much as I can, and I owe some benefit to horseback riding and although I can not do it every day, it procures me some relief, and now that I am writing to you and that I have finished to write to Madame de Thun, I have a strong headache. [...]  

Good Bye my friend, please recommend me to M. and keep the pious affection you have conquered there among those people. [...]  

c) Lisbon, 2nd of October 1781

[...] Recommend me to my Cousins to whom I wrote, and to the Count and tell me if you have received a letter with another inside for Madame de Thun [...]  

d) Lisbon, 29th of October 1781

[...] P.S. I include a letter for Madame de Thun. Tomorrow we will celebrate your birthday at Atalaia’s home, where we get together every Wednesday and there will be music and dance.