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Variations on the Virgin: Anne de Marquets's Depiction of Mary in the *Sonets Spirituels*

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This paper explores the manner in which Anne de Marquets's (1533–1588) *Sonets Spirituels* (published posthumously in 1605) reshapes conventional portraits of the Virgin Mary. A Dominican nun at the Royal Priory in Poissy, Marquets, like many Baroque Catholic poets, follows Church tradition in glorifying Mary as a maternal symbol of chastity and faith. Yet, unlike Gabrielle de Coignard (*Œuvres chrestiennes*, 1594), Jean de La Ceppède (*Théorèmes*, 1613, 1622), or other of her lyric peers, Marquets depicts the Virgin as a subjective, intellectual near-deity whose role occasionally borders on the messianic. The basic approach of this study is comparative, as I will discuss how Marquets's characterization of Mary as a foil for Satan and as the typological avatar for several women in the Bible contrasts with Coignard's and La Ceppède's adherence to the *Stabat Mater* tradition which depicts Mary as an afflicted figure who witnesses Christ's Passion in silent agony.¹ As Terence Cave has shown, Marquets herself does imitate the various motifs of this Medieval Latin hymn (197).² But the image of the *Mater dolorosa* does not dominate Marquets's lyric. And while her representation of Mary does bear some resemblance to Coignard's in that the two authors at times draw parallels between themselves and the Virgin, Marquets's depiction of Mary is, as a whole, less personal and autobiographical than that of Coignard. Similarly,

¹ While the authorship of the hymn is still a matter of scholarly debate, the *Stabat Mater* was in common use by the end of the fourteenth century. Its full name is that of the *Stabat Mater Dolorosa*, and was sung as a companion hymn to the *Stabat Mater Speciosa*, which tells of Mary at the Manger. The pathos of the Virgin's misfortune is readily apparent in both Coignard's and La Ceppède's imitations of the hymn. See pp. 311–16 of Coignard's *Œuvres Chrétiennes*. Ed. Colette Winn. Geneva: Droz, 1995, as well as pp. 51–53 of La Ceppède's *Imitation de la pénitence de David*, the *Imitation* is included in the facsimile of La Ceppède's *Théorèmes*, presented by Jean Rousset. Geneva: Droz, 1966. For additional information on the hymns, see the *Handbook of Christian Apologetics*. Ed. Peter Kreeft. Downers Grove IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994. Online. Internet. 26 Aug. 2000.

² Consult *Devotional Poetry in France c. 1570–1613*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1969.

Marquets, like La Ceppède, relies on typological example to underscore how the narrative of Christ's life is structured according to the progressive revelation that links the Old and New Testaments. Nonetheless, Marquets goes beyond La Ceppède by emphasizing how the example of Mary fulfills and redeems the roles of Biblical figures, both male and female, to illustrate the indispensable nature of her role in God's redemptive plan for humanity.

The uniqueness of Marquets's depiction of Mary, found in 82 of the 480 poems that comprise the *Sonets spirituels*, is enhanced by the Virgin's relationship with Christ. Marquets differs from many of her predecessors, contemporaries, and successors by portraying the Mother as significantly responsible for the grace and purity of the Son. By virtue of her own sanctity, the Virgin serves as a model for Christ much like God the Father. Mary thus conceives and develops Christ's spiritual and moral being as well as his physical being. In Marquets's theology, Mary becomes a God-like figure not merely because of the adulation Christians, and particularly Catholics, have historically shown her, but because God himself takes human form in Mary's body. As a result, Mary becomes a God-incarnate in the manner of Christ. Such a representation in Marquets contributes to a kind of "masculinization" of the Virgin, as she is described as producing a "semence," i.e., Christ, whose purpose is, in warrior fashion, to slay Satan. One section of the *Sonets* with which this paper deals, the *Feste de la veneration Notre Dame*, contains poems originally written in honor of the *Feast of Our Lady of the Victories*, begun by Pius V in 1571 after the Catholic victory at Lepanto. It is therefore no coincidence that Mary's traditional *douceur* is complemented here by images of battle, decoration, and fervor. For Marquets, the power of Mary's will in the theomachy between God and Satan is matched by her ability to intercede on humanity's behalf in this struggle. In the *Sonets*, Mary's intercession takes the form of discourse as she pleads the cause of human redemption to God. Intellectually, Mary becomes a *porte-parole* advocating divine mercy for humankind. From a socio-critical perspective, we must examine the contribution Marquets makes to what Pierre Chaunu and Cave have separately called the "feminization" of devotional practice during the Counter-Reformation (Ferguson 57).³ What emerges during an analysis of Marquets's representation of Mary is an understanding of the way in which a female author constructs a female religious archetype whose example and intervention differ from the norm. Because other critics have dealt with the social ramifications of Marquets's poetry, issues of

³ See the introduction to Ferguson's critical edition of the *Sonets spirituels*. Geneva: Droz, 1997. He quotes p. 401 of Chaunu's *Eglise, culture et société. Essais sur réforme et contre-réforme 1517-1620*. Paris: Société d'édition d'enseignement supérieur, 1981. All citations of Marquets are from Ferguson's edition.

political contextualization will not be addressed at length in this paper. Nonetheless, when viewing how Marquets's portrait of the Virgin fits within existing critical opinion, certain political questions emerge. Namely, should we perceive the *Sonets* as part of an aggressive feminism that Hannah Fournier attributes to Marquets, or does it coincide with Mary Seller's contention that the work reflects Catholic orthodoxy?⁴ Further still, we may ask if the depiction of a strong Virgin somehow mirrors Gary Ferguson's idea of Marquets as a progressive theologian who advocated reconciliation with the Protestants.⁵

The Virgin's redemptive quality comes not simply through her holiness or her role as a vessel for Christ. Marquets deepens the traditional portrait of Mary by imbuing her with speech, as in first tercet of Sonnet 352:

Par elle mesme aussi sont les bons attirez:
Venez, dit-elle, à moy, vous qui me desirez,
De ce qui j'ay produit, venez tous vous repaistre.

By exhorting others to come to her, Mary adopts Christ-like language in affirming the uniqueness of her divine essence and message. In a manner similar to Christ, she embodies the Word of God. Traditionally, Mary has virtually no voice, either in the Bible or literature. Marquets provides the Virgin with her own discourse to establish her independence as a deity, or at the very least a "God-Bearer."⁶ the declaration in verse 9, "Par elle mesme aussi sont les bons attirez" affirms that Mary can and should become a vehicle for redemption in her own right. She stands with Christ, but the faithful come to "desire" (v. 10) her because of the beauty and strength she represents. Indeed, her claim that she has "produced" Christ (v. 11) indicates the kind of subjectivity that distinguishes Marquets's Virgin from that of other poets. the "attraction" Mary speaks of in verse 9 results not simply from the Virgin's purity, but from the authority Mary typifies as an embodiment of God's Word and will. The Virgin's persona is so compelling that in the poem's concluding

⁴ See Fournier's article, "La voix textuelle des *Sonets spirituels* d'Anne de Marquets," *Études Littéraires* 20:2 (1987), pp. 77–92. See especially Fournier's discussion of the Virgin on pp. 83–84. Seiler, in her book, *Anne de Marquets*, New York: AMS Press, 1969 (reprint of original 1931 edition, Catholic University of America Press), suggests that the *Sonets spirituels* sought to "soutenir les articles de la foi attaqués par les Huguenots" (p. 85).

⁵ Consult Ferguson's article, "Biblical Exegesis and Social and Theological Commentary in the *Sonets spirituels* of Anne de Marquets," *Œuvres et Critiques* 20:2 (1995), pp.111–21.

⁶ For a good summary of Mary's status as a "God-Bearer" or "goddess" in Catholic doctrine, see pp. 185–88 of Sally Cunneen's *In Search of Mary: the Woman and Symbol*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1996.

verse, Marquets states that Christ himself chooses to be born of Mary, "... Jesus Christ, qui d'elle a voulu naistre" (v. 14). Mary personifies God's will. But to a significant extent, Christ's will, at least in terms of his birth, is determined by his mother's exceptional character. From a theological standpoint, Marquets contributes to Mary's deity by suggesting that if the Son desires Mary as his mother, and entrusts her with his human and divine lives, then mere mortals will consign themselves to the Virgin as well. By reason of her own virtue and generosity, Mary becomes a model for Christ and thus a salutary figure for all. Accordingly, Christ's messianic ability finds at least one of its sources in Mary's holiness. She represents Christ's mother not only in flesh but in spirit, as one savior engenders another.

Within Marquets's portrait, the Virgin's grace and subjectivity are also shaped by an intellectual dimension. Her use of speech to call others to Christ constitutes an important aspect of the Virgin's intellect. Marquets subsequently enhances her representation of a cerebral Virgin by depicting her as a learned woman of the Church. In Sonnet 354, the poet contributes to this aspect of Mary's biography, if not hagiography, by stating, "Avecques l'âge croist en [la Vierge] sagesse et doctrine" (v. 2). That the Virgin's "wisdom" and knowledge of "doctrine" increase with age shows that Mary's significance far surpasses that of bringing Christ to term during the Nativity and lamenting his death at the time of the Passion. In Marquets' theology, Mary becomes a life-long *dévot*e who illustrates the tendencies of a *docte*, a distinction normally ascribed to males. In addition to "fasting," "watching" over the faithful, and "praying" (v. 5), Mary more importantly "contemplates" (v. 5) the meaning of God's plan for humanity. the poet remarks, "La parole de Dieu sans cesse elle rumine," transforming Mary into a thinker who serves as a "mirror" and "example" (v. 8) for humankind. What the reader infers is that Mary's mind becomes just as vital as her heart, and that faith, especially for the *dévot*e, involves meditation and interpretation as much as it does unyielding ardor and chastity. With respect to gender issues, one can suggest that the poet's wish is that the reader, in particular the female meditant, will imitate Mary in viewing devotion as a cognitive exercise as well as an affective one.

Marquets amplifies Mary's intellectual nature in Sonnet 355, where she affirms that the Virgin's "study" consists of "fearing" and "serving" (v. 11) God. In effect, Mary's efforts are tied to the illustrious Biblical examples she imitates. Among them, Marquets cites David's mercy or "mansuetude" (v. 9), Solomon's wisdom, Ezekiel's obedience and foresight (v. 10), as well as the "piety" of Josiah (v. 12). the poet concludes that Mary "herita des vertus plus parfaites / De tous les peres saints, des roys et des Prophetes" (vv. 13-14). Significant about these typologies is not only the way in which the Virgin, as

a female, becomes part of this male line of descent, but the manner in which she is aware of the lineage she must uphold. Opening her sonnet, Marquets' poet states, "La Vierge ensuyvoit bien, ainsi que faire il fault, / De ses predecesseurs l'excellence et noblesse" (vv. 1-2). In other words, the Virgin follows her celebrated forebears, as one must do. The verb "ensuyvre" implies logical action and consequence, while the phrase "ainsi que faire il fault" suggests a conscious decision to emulate past models. And indeed, the poet's declaration at the sonnet's turn, "Elle imita David" (v. 9), as well as the other Old Testament names mentioned, makes clear the idea that Mary's will is her own. As a result, Mary does not, as is often the case, exclusively represent an intrinsically sympathetic, but vague and sometimes pitiful figure conscripted into the service of the divine. Rather, Marquets establishes Mary as an independent agent who attracts the Godhead and Christ by virtue of her inherent sanctity. Similarly, it is Mary's strength rather than her pathos that appeals to the reader.

That Mary's intellectual and metaphysical ancestry is composed of both male and female figures becomes meaningful in terms of the gender dynamics of Marquets' project. By succeeding David and Solomon, as well as several Old Testament women that I will discuss shortly, the Virgin proves herself a model for the masculine reader *dévot*, as well as for the feminine reader *dévot*e. The Virgin transcends gender by surpassing all avatars of God's law except Christ himself. Marquets goes beyond other poets of her era by asserting that Mary is not merely a female symbol of the divine, but that she begets the divine not simply through her body, but more significantly through her knowledge and soul.

Form follows function with respect to Marquets' portrait of Mary's intellect and independence. From the standpoint of narrative technique, one notes that while Marquet's lyric contains a significant amount of biblical exegesis, it is much less self-exegetic in nature than that of many of her Baroque contemporaries. Similarly, Ferguson remarks in his edition, "... la présence du 'je' textuel est très faible dans les *Sonets spirituels*" (62). Marquets's narrative technique in the sonnets depicting Mary relies little upon the voice of the "je" typically found in devotional lyric poetry. Readers perceive that while Marquets' poet and reader are to internalize, at least implicitly, the example and virtue of Mary, they do not relive the experience of the Virgin in the manner of La Ceppède's or Coignard's *Stabat Mater*. the reason for this relative lack of personalization stems from the notion that Marquets' poetry depends more on intellect than affect to convey the message of the Virgin's strength and independence. For Marquets, Mary is indeed a sensitive, loving figure. But because the pathos of her life has been well documented and represented, the reader *dévot(e)* is better served by the poet who evokes admiration

for her heroine rather than pity. Marquets avoids extensive use of the “je” because it is precisely through the first person singular pronoun that other poets have sought to encourage identification between the meditant and the Virgin. Eliminating the “je” becomes a first step in doing away with the afflicted mother figure. Marquets’s Mary certainly possesses human traits, but she stands above humanity by reason of the moral and intellectual model she represents. Like those of her contemporaries, Marquets’s narrator speaks to the Virgin directly. But her narrative technique is more distant in its design, as the poet relies on the third person, primarily calling Mary “la Vierge” as if to elevate her above the more intimate first and second persons. The reader can, of course, emulate Mary’s virtue, but s/he must do so through cognitive interiorization of the Virgin’s life and example, rather than through emotive assimilation of Mary’s pain. A different Virgin thus calls for a different narrative format that recounts Mary’s role in contributing to the *telos* of celestial design, rather than embodying a mostly silent, suffering matriarch.

Questions of narrative technique also raise broader issues of narrative structure in the *Sonets Spirituels*. The general framework of Marquets’s text coincides with her technique of marking relative distances between the Virgin and the meditant because as a whole, these sonnets can be viewed as largely distinct units of discourse. One does acknowledge Cave’s assertion that Marquets’s “sequence of sonnets follows the pattern of a nun’s private daily meditation on the festivals of the Christian year,” and her “Easter week group forms a coherent narrative cycle” (196). But the reader does not, in a general sense, discern the interlocking episodic narrative structure found throughout La Ceppède’s *Théorèmes*, for example. Without question, the meditant perceives clear thematic and formal continuity in Marquets’s œuvre, but more often than not, the sonnets in any given cluster are not co-dependent on one another to convey meaning as is the case with La Ceppède.⁷ The cross-referencing of sonnets, so essential to La Ceppède’s reading experience, is not as often required in Marquets’s more self-contained verse.

With La Ceppède, the result is that the reader/meditant follows Christ step-by-step through the Passion, acting as a kind of eye witness who not only observes, but experiences Christ’s anguish. Often, the narrator’s voice, articulated by an omnipresent “je,” conflates with Christ’s as well that of the reader/dévot(e) who presumably internalizes Christ’s horror and expresses his/her own suffering through apostrophes, internal dialogue, and supplication of the divine. Coignard, though she does not always reflect the structural

coherence of a La Ceppède, frequently seeks the same balance between intellect and affect, as well as the same kind of transcendental frisson. Conversely, Marquets does not establish the same degree of intimacy between the reader, the narrator, and Mary. The reason for her attempt to gain a greater sense of separation lies in the wish that the *dévot/e* derive a better cognitive analysis of what the Virgin represents in terms of Christ’s redemptive mission. For Marquets, it is more important for her reader to understand Mary’s example and apply it to his/her daily life, than it is to quasi-mystically re-create and relive the experience.

As mentioned, part of this redefinition of Mary as a stronger, more thoughtful figure takes place through what can be termed Marquets’ “masculinization” of the Virgin. A noteworthy instance is found in Sonnet 370, where Christ is called the Virgin’s “semence divine” (v. 8). The poem, a variation of the “Hail Mary,” does insist upon the Virgin’s superiority among women in an apostrophe where the poet states to Mary, “Tu es certainement sur toutes femmes digne” (v. 5). However, by associating Mary with the male fluid (this time in a positive sense), Marquets goes beyond standard depictions of the Virgin in order to give her a more divinely androgynous, and therefore a more uncommon representation. Creating a sense of unfamiliarity becomes part of Marquets’s strategy of prompting the meditant to develop a new vision of Mary. It is this “semence,” of which the fruit is Jesus, that later in the sonnet is responsible for “destroying the enemy” (v. 13) that is evil. Accordingly, Mary begins to emerge as a kind of warrior mother, or, a “femme virile” (394, v. 3) that Marquets mentions in a later depiction. In Marquets’s theology, the Virgin’s purpose is not only to remain chaste at Christ’s conception and to weep at his death; it is also to figure prominently in God’s attack on sin.

Mary’s function as warrior coincides with her role as a Messiah figure. The poet claims that Mary is in some measure responsible for the possibility of human salvation because she has conceived Christ, who eventually defeats Satan. In Sonnet 372, she states:

Car nous estions perdus, si la Vierge excellente
N’eut conçu ce guerrier plein de force et bonté, (vv. 5–6)

Marquets’s use of the active voice suggests that Mary’s will figures into Christ’s conception. The Godhead is conspicuously absent in Marquets’s depiction of Christ’s conception. And while Mary is obviously not equal to God, Marquets’s representation of her both rhetorically and aesthetically establishes the Virgin as a subject. Accordingly, her choice to bear Jesus elevates her to the status of a companion, if not a comrade in God’s salutary campaign against hell. Earlier in the poem, Mary’s intellectual and military prowess is

⁷ I discuss this issue at length in my book. *Renaissance Resonance: Lyric Modality in La Ceppède’s Théorèmes*. Amsterdam and Atlanta: Editions Rodopi, 1998.

compared to that of the woman in Samuel (II, 20: 14–22), who effectively ends the rebellion of the Bichrites by convincing Joab that the revolt can best be stopped by simply cutting off the head of the leader Sheba, rather than by laying waste to the entire city of Abel of Bethmaacah. Later in the sonnet, she draws an additional comparison between Mary and the female figure of Jael in Judges (4:17–22), who drove a stake through the head of Sisera, the commander of the Canaanite army.⁸ Marquets focuses on the image of the head as a symbol of Mary's rational but forceful nature. By giving birth to Christ, the warrior who overcomes Satan, the Virgin is symbolically depicted as driving a nail into the head of human sin, which she calls "Orgueil." In the final tercet of the poem, Marquets asks the following question:

Et sçavez-vous le clou que Marie a fiché
 Pour transpercer Orgueil, le chef de tout péché?
 C'est quand, humble, ell' a dit: Voicy de Dieu l'ancelle.

Indeed, by becoming God's "ancelle" or servant, Mary engages in battle with Satan. By figuratively striking the death blow to the Devil's head, Mary, along with Christ, comes to embody a warrior figure herself.⁹ As a soldier enlisted in God's cause, Mary is again rendered more masculine. Consequently, Marquets alters the reader's familiar understanding of Mary by bestowing her with traits reserved more for certain Greco-Roman heroines than for the prototypical Christian mother. By having Mary pound the stake into Satan, Marquets reverses many of the chief images of the Crucifixion. With respect to her own role, Mary becomes the inverse of the figure in the *Stabat Mater* in that she does not stand and sob as her son is killed. Rather, she is the one killing her son's enemy. Contrary to Christ, whose resurrection accounts for humanity's salvation, Satan will have no such revival. For those who accept Christ, Satan will be truly dead, largely by Mary's hand. Consequently, her role in eliminating sin and restoring humanity to its former grace is second only to Christ's. She becomes a redeemer by virtue of her role as warrior.

⁸ See verses 9–11:

Je la compare aussi à l'accorte Jahel,
 Qui tua Sisara, l'ennemy d'Israël,
 Quand elle luy ficha un clou dans la cervelle:

⁹ The image of Mary threatening Satan can be traced to the legend of Theophilus in the Eastern Church during the sixth century. Warner explains that the "miracle" of Theophilus, where Mary intervenes to save Theophilus from Satan, was translated into Latin, found its way to Europe, and became one of the most popular Marian tales of the Middle Ages. The image of Mary about to smash Satan's head is also found on the north portal of Notre-Dame de Paris. See pp. 324–25 and plate 51 of *Alone of All Her Sex*.

The Virgin's image as a soldier in God's war on sin is similarly developed in the sonnets dedicated to the *Feste de la veneration Nostre Dame*, originally written in honor of the *Feast of Our Lady of the Victories*, begun by the Pope in 1571 after the Catholic victory at Lepanto. In Sonnet 416, Mary is again depicted as the slayer of Satan:

On doit bien t'honorer, ô Vierge glorieuse,
 Qui pour nous enfantas le beau fruit virginal,
 Et qui brisas le chef du serpent infernal
 Par la force et vertu de ta semence heureuse.

Tu as, comme Judith, pudique et vertueuse,
 Occis du peuple saint l'ennemy capital,
 Et nous as delivrez du sort triste et fatal
 Dont Sathan menaçoit nostre ame langoureuse.

Si que nous confessons, pour ta sainte victoire,
 Que de Hierusalem tu es l'insigne gloire,
 La joye d'Israël, de ton peuple l'honneur;

Mais l'effect principal de ta victoire adextre
 Procède de ton Fils, qui est ta force et dextre,
 Et aussi de luy vient nostre étemel bon-heur.

This poem is significant because it conflates traditional images of Mary and Marquets' transformation of the Virgin into a much more active and influential figure in human redemption.

Marquets's mention of "honor" and "glory" in the first verse are somewhat deceptive. Initially, one believes they will be associated with her role as mother, as indicated in the references to Christ as "le beau fruit virginal" in verse 2. Yet in the subsequent verse, Mary once more is depicted as smashing Satan's head, and therefore hell's power. Honor and glory are now associated with might. Marquets extols Mary's "force et vertu" in verse 4, suggesting both notions deal more with military heroism than, in the case of "vertu," with more conventional notions of chastity. As if to sexualize Mary in an oblique manner, the remainder of the verse speaks of the Virgin's "semence heureuse," with the image of "semence" again suggesting Mary's progeny in the person of Christ. A term such as "semence" is employed because it implies a kind of masculine sexuality associated with the Virgin's power. Her "seed" is what destroys Satan. While one could interpret the first quatrain as suggesting that Mary's presumed strength comes mainly from Christ, it should be remembered that the focus is on Mary's contribution to the battle between heaven and hell. Given the number of male poets who have deployed the war-

rior motif to represent Christ, it is indeed unique to see a female poet depict the Virgin in this manner. Marquets's mention of Christ's power is obligatory, but from a poetic and theological standpoint, it is Mary's prowess in defeating sin that interests her.

The image of the eroticized female soldier is reinforced in the second quatrain with the comparison to Judith. With respect to language, the poet uses a conventional term to describe the Virgin by employing the word "pudique" in verse 5. By stating that Mary slays, "occis," the "enemy capital" of God's holy people (v. 5), Marquets solidifies the notion that Mary's benevolence can emerge as both gentle and forceful. In this sonnet at least, it is more Mary's commanding nature that carries a salutary effect, as she "delivers" humanity from its "sort triste et fatal" (v. 7). The messianic character of the Virgin's purpose leads Marquets to dub her "La joye d'Israël," and "l'honneur" of her people (v. 11). Marquets elevates the Virgin to the status of an epic hero, presenting her as a kind of demiurge responsible for liberating her followers. Indeed, while Christ may appear as the "effect principal" of Mary's "victoire adextre" (v. 12), the victory is to a certain extent hers because the Virgin is portrayed as the *cause* of the victory over hell. Christ is described as Mary's "force et dextre" (v. 13), meaning that Jesus becomes the instrument of the Virgin's potency as a maternal and mighty being. Of course, Mary does not replace her son as humanity's ultimate redeemer, but the implication is that Christ's goodness and strength are in part extensions of his mother's divinely-inspired grace. As a result, Mary evolves into a redemptive figure in her own right.

In conclusion, one may ask the extent to which Marquets's vision of Mary informs the political dimension of the *Sonets spirituels*. Certainly, the idea of applying military imagery to the Virgin could be seen as consonant with the kind of determined feminism that Fournier ascribes to Marquets. Along with Marquets's feminism, however, one must consider other social and historical circumstances in which the *Sonets* were written. As a result of Lepanto, any agenda attributed to the text must also take into account Catholic fervor in the wake of the Counter-Reformation and the Council of Trent (1545–63). Alluding to France's religious conflicts of the sixteenth century, Ferguson conversely describes what he calls "a Gallican attitude of moderation" (118). And indeed, he is correct to assert that several of Marquets's poems demonstrate tendencies toward reconciliation that no doubt resulted from her participation in the Colloquy of Poissy in 1561, and from her association with the liberal Catholic theologian Claude d'Espence (117). Yet Marquets's sonnets on Mary run counter to the Lutheran and Calvinist inclination to eliminate Mary's role as intercessor and representative of God's mercy. If anything, a powerful, and

at times war-like Virgin mirrors Catholic defiance as a response to Lepanto and the Protestant challenge to Catholic dogma. One could even argue that her work prefigures the attitude taken by the militant Catholic order of "La Companie des filles de Nostre-Dame" at the beginning of the seventeenth century.¹⁰ As a result, Marquets's feminism shrewdly corresponds to the reaffirmation of the cult of the Virgin as one of Catholicism's central tenants. Marquets is thus a radical and a conservative at the same time. By strengthening her gender through Mary, Marquets, at least in these poems, also strengthens her Church, while lending originality to her poetry and theology.

¹⁰ This group, a kind of female counterpart to the Jesuits, promoted what Elizabeth Rapley calls a "militant Catholicism" of the Counter-Reformation in which the Virgin was "the powerful patroness" (43). Although Marquets's poetry was written before the founding of this Company in 1605, the *Sonets*, in motif and spirit, come to reflect many of the same principles as the *Filles de Nostre-Dame*. For more on this Society, see pp. 42–45 of Rapley's book, the *Dévotes*. Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990.