



“C’est un amour ou Cupidon nouveau”: Spiritual Passion and the Profane Persona in Anne de Marquets’s Les Divines Poesies de Marc Antoine Flaminus (1568–1569)

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Résumé de l'article

Connue aujourd'hui essentiellement pour ses 480 Sonets spirituels, recueil publié dix-sept ans après sa mort en 1605, la dominicaine Anne de Marquets a pourtant écrit d'autres poésies chrétiennes qui se trouvent à la suite de sa traduction du *Carminum sacrorum libellus* du poète néo-latin Marcantonio Flaminio (Les Divines Poesies de Marc Antoine Flaminus, [Paris : N. Chesneau, 1568, rééd. en 1569]). Dans ses cantiques ou chansons spirituelles et ses sonets de l'amour divin, Marquets exprime son amour pour le divin à travers divers modèles de la poésie renaissante. Elle pratique en particulier le pétrarquisme tel qu'il fut transmis par les poètes de la Renaissance française. S'inspirant des images et des thèmes trouvés chez Pétrarque et ses imitateurs, cette poésie s'inscrit dans le courant poétique mis en avant par la Pléiade, notamment dans la Deffence et Illustration de la Langue Francoyse de Du Bellay et dans l'ode ronsardienne Hercule chrestien.

“C’est un amour ou Cupidon nouveau”:
Spiritual Passion and the Profane Persona in Anne de
Marquets’s *Les Divines Poesies de Marc Antoine Flaminius*
(1568–1569)

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While best known for her 480 Sonets spirituels, published seventeen years after her death in 1605, the Dominican nun Anne de Marquets also contributed a remarkable collection of personal spiritual poetry during her lifetime in Les Divines Poesies de Marc Antoine Flaminius (Paris, chez N. Chesneau, 1568; reedited in 1569). In the pages following her translation of Marcantonio Flaminiòs Carminum sacrorum libellus, her original cantiques ou chansons spirituelles and sonets de l’amour divin reveal a convergence of Renaissance poetics and traditional Christian themes. In particular, Anne de Marquets looks to the Petrarchan tradition as a model for the expression of her love for the divine. Drawing on images and themes from Petrarch and his earliest French imitators, the Dominican adopts the poetic process promoted by the Pléiade, notably in Du Bellay’s Deffence et Illustration de la langue françoise and in Ronsard’s ode Hercule chrestien.

Connue aujourd’hui essentiellement pour ses 480 Sonets spirituels, recueil publié dix-sept ans après sa mort en 1605, la dominicaine Anne de Marquets a pourtant écrit d’autres poésies chrétiennes qui se trouvent à la suite de sa traduction du Carminum sacrorum libellus du poète néo-latin Marcantonio Flaminiò (Les Divines Poesies de Marc Antoine Flaminius, [Paris : N. Chesneau, 1568, rééd. en 1569]). Dans ses cantiques ou chansons spirituelles et ses sonets de l’amour divin, Marquets exprime son amour pour le divin à travers divers modèles de la poésie renaissance. Elle pratique en particulier le pétrarquisme tel qu’il fut transmis par les poètes de la Renaissance française. S’inspirant des images et des thèmes trouvés chez Pétrarque et ses imitateurs, cette poésie s’inscrit dans le courant poétique mis en avant par la Pléiade, notamment dans la Deffence et Illustration de la Langue Francoise de Du Bellay et dans l’ode ronsardienne Hercule chrestien.

Before the success of her posthumous *Sonets spirituels*,¹ Anne de Marquets (1533?–1588), a Dominican nun living just outside of Paris at the Monastère royal Saint-Louis de Poissy,² was celebrated in France as a translator

1. Anne de Marquets, *Sonets spirituels* (Paris: C. Morel, 1605); see also the modern edition by the same title, introduced and edited by Gary Ferguson (Geneva: Droz, 1997).

2. For a presentation of the life and work of Anne de Marquets, see Mary Hilarine Seiler, *Anne de Marquets, poétesse religieuse du XVI^e siècle* (New York: AMS Press, 1931), as well as Gary Ferguson,

and author of original spiritual verse.³ From 1560 to 1568, most of her work was written in collaboration with Claude d'Espence,⁴ an irenic Catholic priest interested in reforming the Church from within and in reviving the classical tradition as a tool for the enrichment of spiritual literature.⁵ In 1568, Anne de Marquets published what was perhaps the greatest achievement of her lifetime, *Les Divines Poesies [sic] de Marc Antoine Flaminius*,⁶ through Nicolas Chesneau, a Parisian Catholic printer. *Les Divines Poesies* comprises the Dominican's translation of Flaminius's last book, the *Carminum Sacrorum Libellus*,⁷ as well as her own original songs and sonnets on devotional themes. Her choice of publisher is not without significance, as Chesneau was known for printing political, openly anti-Huguenot in-octavos relating to the religious conflict in France.⁸ Chesneau's polemic inclinations notwithstanding, Anne de Marquets,

Introduction, *Sonets spirituels*, 9–73.

3. See, for example, the epidictic poems composed by Jean Dorat and Pierre de Ronsard, first published in response to her 1562 *Sonets et Pasquins* and reprinted in the 1605 *Sonets spirituels* (see Ferguson's 1997 edition, 78–80).

4. Anne de Marquets contributed the French versions of "Aenigme" and "Elegie sur le Vendredy Saint," two bilingual poems published in d'Espence's *Urbanarum meditationum in hoc sacro et civili bello elegiae duae. Eucharista. Parasceve. Aenigma* (Paris: Claude Morel, 1563). The bilingual poem on Good Friday had already been published in 1560, which raises the question of the true origins of this literary friendship. On this topic, see Guy Bedouelle and Simone de Reyff, "Anne de Marquets et Claude d'Espence: Énigmes," in *Religion et littérature à la Renaissance. Mélanges en l'honneur de Franco Giaccone*, ed. François Roudaut (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2012), 749–81. She also composed the French paraphrases of Claude d'Espence's poetry for the liturgical year, as well as a French translation of a neo-Latin poem, "Violae martiae descriptio," in d'Espence's *Collectarum ecclesiasticarum liber unus* (Paris: Veuve G. Morel, 1566).

5. One of the most notable examples of this practice in d'Espence's oeuvre is his *Sacrarum Heroïdum Liber* (Paris: Nicolas Chesneau, 1564), a book of fictional speeches by famous women of the Christian tradition, modelled on Ovid's *Heroides*.

6. The full title is *Les Divines Poesies de Marc Antoine Flaminius : Contenant diverses Prieres, Meditations, Hymnes, & actions de graces à Dieu : Mises en François, avec le Latin respondant l'un à l'autre. Avec plusieurs Sonnets & Cantiques, ou Chansons Spirituelles pour louer Dieu* (Paris: Nicolas Chesneau, 1568). I will be referring throughout to its second edition (1569), which included more bilingual poetry composed with Claude d'Espence (79–87).

7. "The Little Book of Sacred/Holy Songs." All translations are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

8. On this topic, see Luc Racault, "Nicolas Chesneau, Catholic Printer during the French Wars of Religion," *The Historical Journal* 52.1 (2009): 23–41.

like her model the much celebrated neo-Latin poet Flaminio,⁹ is inspired by the personal, internal journey of the penitent Christian, seeking God's love in a situation of perpetual sin and shortcoming. She thus dedicates two series of original poems to this topic: eleven *Cantiques ou Chansons Spirituelles*¹⁰ and forty *Sonets de l'amour divin*.¹¹ The volume seems to have been a success, re-edited almost immediately in 1569 with very few changes.

While a message of spiritual quietude (*quies* or *pax* in Flaminio's Latin; *repos* or *paix* in Anne de Marquets's French) lies at the heart of Flaminio and Anne's poetry, a poetics of spiritual passions persists throughout, characterized by an affective vocabulary that points to an intimate knowledge of classical and Renaissance love poetry. Anne de Marquets, like Flaminio, shows herself to be steeped in profane, “pâien,” or “gentil” traditions, and adapts these to fit the model of penitence. Notably, in her *cantiques* and *sonets*, she draws upon many tropes made famous by Francesco Petrarch and his imitators. Images and topoi from the Italian's *Canzoniere* lend themselves to the Dominican's Christian verse, and the relationship between the lover-poet and his beloved is mirrored in the ecstatic experience of the penitent before God.

Preliminary poetics: the verse preface for Marguerite de France

A brief examination of some of the book's prefatory matter illuminates the aim and aesthetics of Anne de Marquets's devotional poetry. Since Mary Seiler's seminal study of the Dominican's life and work,¹² several critics have identified the verse preface¹³—the second of three dedicatory pieces for the Princess Marguerite of France—as a kind of “art poétique” for Christian writing.¹⁴ After

9. For the life and works of Flaminio, see Carol Maddison's comprehensive study, *Marcantonio Flaminio: Poet, Humanist and Reformer* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960).

10. *Cantiques ou Chansons Spirituelles pour louer Dieu qui a creé [sic] toutes choses*, in de Marquets, *Les Divines Poesies*, 33–52.

11. De Marquets, *Les Divines Poesies*, 53–79.

12. Seiler, 62–63.

13. “Epistre Encore à la dicte DAME,” in de Marquets, *Les Divines Poesies*, n.p.

14. Seiler, 62–63. See also Ferguson, Introduction, *Sonets spirituels*, 26; and Évelyne Berriot-Salvadore's article, “Une nonain latinisante: Anne de Marquets,” in *Poésie et bible de la Renaissance à l'âge classique*, ed. Pascale Blum and Anne Montero (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1999), 192–93.

a very conventional beginning, where she implores Princess Marguerite to forgive her shortcomings,¹⁵ she states that the fruit of her work, its centre, is

Une divine ardeur, une perfection
De ferme & vive foy, une conjunction
De l'ame avec son Dieu, par devote priere [...] (lines 11–13)¹⁶

Évelyne Berriot-Salvadore has argued that Anne de Marquets's *Divines Poesies* may have a didactic end, introduced in these lines of the verse preface:

Sa traduction des *Divines poesies de Marc Antoine Flaminus* [...] ne cache pas ses intentions didactiques. Elle invite aussi sa royale lectrice à excuser la 'rudesse' de ses vers, pour prendre garde seulement au sujet principal, 'qui concerne et regarde / Une divine ardeur, une perfection / De ferme et vive foy' [...] Le 'fruit suave et doux' qui se cache derrière la dure écorce de son 'indocte écriture' est une leçon biblique. Précédant Pierre Poupou ou Philippe Desportes, Anne de Marquets appelle à une conversion à la fois littéraire et morale.¹⁷

According to Berriot-Salvadore, the poetic practice Anne promotes for herself and for her contemporaries is one where Christian sources are central not only for their content but also for their style.

Yet at this point in Anne de Marquets's career, biblical images and tropes far from overshadow the nun's pagan sources. Her praise of Flaminio in this verse preface consists of an elliptic juxtaposition between Flaminio as a devotee of his Christian muse and an unnamed pagan poet from Rome (likely Ovid), justifiably banished from his city, stating that her book:

15. "Epistre Encore à la dicte DAME," de Marquets, *Les Divines Poesies*, verses 1–6.

16. "A holy ardour, a perfection / Of strong and lively faith, a union / Of the soul with its God, through devout prayer [...]"

17. Berriot-Salvadore, 191–92 ("Her translation of the *Divines Poesies de Marc Antoine Flaminus* [...] does nothing to hide her didactic aim. She also invites her royal reader to excuse the 'unsophistication' of her poetry, to concentrate only on the principal subject, 'which concerns and regards / A holy ardour, a perfection / Of strong and lively faith' [...] The 'sugary and sweet fruit' that hides itself behind the rough bark of her 'unlearned writing' is a biblical lesson. Before Pierre Poupou or Philippe Desportes, Anne de Marquets calls for a conversion both literary and moral").

a pris son origine
De l'auteur inspiré d'une muse divine :
Qui luy faisoit chanter, non les folles amours,
[...]
Mais ce qui estoit propre à la gloire de Dieu,
[...]
Sans s'occuper ainsi à chose infructueuse
Contraire aux bonnes mœurs, & si pernicieuse
Que jadis les Romains bannirent justement
Un qui avoit escrit trop impudiquement,
Le contraignant en fin (pour quelque amende faire)
De prendre autre subject au premier tout contraire. (lines 41–43, 47, 49–54)¹⁸

Despite this implicit damnation of one of the most famous of the classical love poets, she then goes on to acknowledge in pagan poetry not only a richness of expression, but the expression of love:

A plus forte raison ceux donc qui sont instruits
En l'escolle de Christ, devroient bien estre induits
A convertir en mieux & en quelque œuvre utile,
La grace & l'ornement de leur plume gentille.
[...]
Mais il faut (disent ils, se voulants excuser)
Pour resveiller l'esprit & le subtiliser,
Ecrire de l'amour [...] (lines 55–58, 63–65)¹⁹

18. “[My book] was born / Of that author inspired by a saintly Muse: / Who led him to sing, not of foolish love, / [...] / But of that which is found only in God's glory, / [...] / Without bothering thus with insignificant things / That go against good morals, and which are so dangerous / That long ago the Romans justifiably banished / He who had written so lasciviously, / Finally forcing him (as a kind of fine) / To take on a new subject, the opposite of the first.”

19. “Even more so, then, those who have studied / In Christ's school, should be well disposed / To turn the grace and ornament of their gentile [pagan] pen / Towards good and a more useful work. / [...] / But one must (they say, wishing to redeem themselves) / Write about love, / In order to revive and refine the spirit[.]”

She qualifies this statement by adding that the only love worth representing in poetry is Christian love. Reading these lines, it is hard not to think of the opening of the *Hercule chrestien*,²⁰ a hymn by Pierre de Ronsard published in the 1550s, in which the French Pindar urges a turn to Christian subject matter, and models in his own poem how comparisons with classical myth can serve to embellish poetry for the divine:

Est-il pas temps desormais de chanter
 Un vers chrestien qui puisse contenter,
 Mieux que devant, les chrestiennes oreilles?
 Est-il pas temps de chanter les merveilles
 De nostre DIEU? & toute la rondeur
 De l'Univers emplir de sa grandeur ?
 Le payen sonne une chanson payenne,
 Et le chrestien une chanson chrestienne [...]

(lines 1–8)²¹

In the same way, and though she condemns earthly love, Anne de Marquets in no way suggests that pagan aesthetics are incompatible with the expression of one's passion for the divine. Nowhere is this more evident than in the underlying model of the Petrarchan *canzoniere*, which she echoes throughout the personal compositions that follow her translations of Flaminio. The very Christian subject that she presents in her book—the perfect holy passion, *l'ardeur*, of the soul for God, a relationship already much developed in Flaminio's last book²² but also in the *évangélique* poetry of French writers like Marguerite de Navarre²³—will thus find its parallel in the Petrarchan

20. Pierre de Ronsard, *Hercule chrestien*, in *Les Œuvres complètes*, ed. Paul Laumonier (Paris: Librairie Marcel Didier, 1966), 8:207–23.

21. “Is it not time to henceforth sing / A Christian line that could appease, / Even better than [it did] before, Christian ears? / Is it not time to sing the wonders / Of our GOD? and all the roundness / Of the Universe filled with his greatness? / The pagan rings out a pagan song, / And the Christian a Christian song.”

22. See in particular his hymn “De ardenti amore suo erga Christum” (“On the Poet's Ardent Love for Christ”), translated by Anne de Marquets in the *Divines Poesies* as “De l'ardent amour envers Dieu” (24). In this piece, Flaminio meditates on Christ's love, and calls him the “spouse of my soul” (“Tu sponsus es animæ meæ”).

23. See, for example, *Le Miroir de l'ame pécheresse*, ed. Joseph L. Allaire (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1972); and also her later poetry, like the *Chansons spirituelles*, ed. Georges Dottin (Geneva: Droz, 1971).

model of the earthly lover before his divine Laura, who already in the original text is not without similarities to the Virgin Mary.²⁴ While there are certainly Christian models for such a passionate devotion, notably the model of David in the Psalms, Anne de Marquets chooses one of the major models for French vernacular poetry promoted in the *Deffence* of Joachim Du Bellay—that of the Italian vernacular Renaissance, as incarnated in particular by Petrarch and the Petrarchan sonnet.²⁵

Formal considerations

On a purely formal level, the original poems included in the *Divines Poesies* already point to the influence of the famous Tuscan lover. After her translations of Flaminio, Anne de Marquets adds to the book eleven “chansons ou cantiques” and forty sonnets, putting into practice the two poetic forms of the *Canzoniere*, the song (*canzone*) and the sonnet (*sonetto*). In France, the sonnet, while not invented by Petrarch, had come to be closely associated with the Tuscan writer, and his imitators were many.²⁶ In the Dominican’s 1568 book, the sonnet is the most common poetic structure, appearing not only in the organized sequence that comes at the end but also in the third of her prefaces for Marguerite of France²⁷ as well as her translation of Flaminio’s famous elegy for Christ,²⁸ both of which she renders according to the constraints of different French sonnet patterns.²⁹ In the 1569 edition of this book, some of the additional neo-Latin

24. On this point, see, for example, Virginia Cox, “Sixteenth-Century Women Petrarchists and the Legacy of Laura,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 35.3 (Fall 2005): 587–88. The parallel between the beloved and the Virgin is not new in Petrarch, with the most obvious precedent being Beatrice in Dante’s *Commedia* (Jaroslav Pelikan, *Eternal Feminines: Three Theological Allegories in Dante’s Paradiso* [New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1990], especially chapter 3, “Beatrice as *Donna Mia*,” pp. 57–77).

25. Joachim Du Bellay, *La Deffence et Illustration de la Langue Françoyse*, ed. Jean-Charles Monferran (Geneva: Droz, 2001), 136.

26. On the topic of French Petrarchanism, see in particular the articles gathered in the book *Les poètes français de la Renaissance et Pétrarque*, ed. Jean Balsamo (Geneva: Droz, 2004).

27. De Marquets, *Les Divines Poesies*, n.p.

28. “A Jesus Christ / Sonet,” in De Marquets, *Les Divines Poesies*, 26.

29. The poem for Margaret of France follows the ababbacccddc rhyme scheme, while the translation of Flaminio’s elegy “Ad Christum” follows the ababbabccdede scheme.

elegiac hymns she translates at the end³⁰ are also, interestingly, paraphrased according to the organization of the French sonnet.³¹

Just as Flaminio chooses to praise Christ in a classical metre traditionally reserved for the expression of romantic love (elegiac couplets), Anne de Marquets turns to the Petrarchan sonnet for her own devotional poetry, and specifically to the Petrarchan sonnet as filtered through established French versification. The wide variety of rhyme schemes she practises within her sonnets reveals a familiarity with the French Petrarchan poets, from Pontus de Tyard and Jacques Peletier du Mans (as in the sonnet for Marguerite, which ends in two tercets CCD EDE), to Clément Marot (as in the translation of Flaminio's elegy, which is a sonnet "marotique"), to Pierre de Ronsard (as in the surprising number of sonnets which illustrate the "variation distique" at their end).³² That being said, she does not yet systematically practise the alternation of masculine and feminine rhymes, as she will in her posthumous *Sonets spirituels*.³³

Beyond formal considerations: Petrarchan passions, Petrarchan topoi

Anne's use of Petrarchanism (or French Petrarchanism) extends beyond the formal features of her work, for in places she paraphrases entire lines from the *Canzoniere*, or at least looks to various Petrarchan commonplaces as inspiration for the expression of her piety. Petrarch's book of love poetry famously follows his earthly passion for Laura, which is eventually sublimated into devotion for the Virgin Mary, a perfect image of feminine virtue.³⁴ It is possible that Anne de Marquets was aware of this reading of the Tuscan's book, as the first explicit echo of Petrarch occurs in a *cantique* in praise of the holy mother of God:

Qui veut veoir une creature
Excellente en toute beauté,

30. De Marquets, *Les Divines Poesies*, 84–87.

31. The two French sonnets, ostensibly translations of two Latin poems by Claude d'Espence (or vice versa), "Voici le jour orné de gloire speciale" and "Aujourd'huy Jesus Christ en terre prent naissance," are composed in alexandrines, and would be included in the posthumous *Sonets spirituels* as poems 27 and 28, respectively.

32. Sonnets 10, 13, 14, 15, 18, 19, 20, 28, 29, 33, 37, 39, and 40 all end in a rhyming couplet.

33. For a consideration of versification in the *Sonets spirituels*, see Ferguson, Introduction, 67–70.

34. Petrarch, *Canzoniere*, ed. Marco Santagata (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1996), canzone 366.

Comme un chef d'œuvre de nature
 Resplendissant de tout costé,
 Regarde la vierge tresdigne
 Qui nous a par grace divine
 Le sauveur du monde enfanté. (lines 1–7)³⁵

Here Anne de Marquets transposes Petrarch's famous rhetorical question “Chi vuol veder”³⁶ to draw her reader's attention to the Virgin, who supplants Laura as the apogee of virtue and beauty, surpassing all else in nature.

The poet continues her rewriting of the Petrarchan song in the following seven-line stanza:

Il verra que du corps & d'ame
 Ell' est ornee excellement,
 Car oncq' en ceste noble dame
 N'y eut un peché seulement :
 Ell' est du seigneur l'arche sainte,
 Qui d'or estoit richement peinte
 De toutes pars entierement. (lines 8–14)³⁷

The voice of the poet addresses the reader directly and calls her to look upon and contemplate the Virgin, just as Petrarch sees in Laura the perfect example of beauty and virtue—“quantunque pò natura / e 'l ciel tra noi.”³⁸ Anne de Marquets imitates his syntax as well, moving from the present, *vuol*, to the imperative—expressed as a jussive subjunctive in Petrarch's sonnet, *venga*,³⁹ which connotes the same force—to the future, *vedrà*⁴⁰ in Italian and *Il verra* in French.

35. “He who wishes to see a creature / Who excels in all beauty, / Like a masterpiece of nature / Radiant from every angle, / May he look upon the most worthy Virgin, / Who through divine grace, / Gave birth to the world's saviour for us.”

36. Petrarch, canzone 248.

37. “He will see that throughout body and soul / She is splendidly embellished, / For never in this noble lady / Was there a single sin: / She is the Lord's holy arc, / Which was richly painted in gold / Over all of its parts.”

38. Petrarch, canzone 248, verses 1–2.

39. Petrarch, canzone 248, verse 5.

40. Petrarch, canzone 248, verse 9.

The *Sonets de l'amour divin*: a Petrarchan *chansonnier*?

While Anne de Marquets's prefatory sonnet for Marguerite de France, her translation of the *Alme puer*, and her *cantiques* already display the influence of Petrarchan poetry, it is in the *Sonets de l'amour divin* that we see manifold Petrarchan tropes rewritten and manipulated to amplify the central theme of the *dévoté*'s love for her saviour. The sequence's title suggests that the poet looks to adapt a conventional convergence of form and content (the sonnet and love) to a slightly different context, where the love depicted is *divin* rather than profane. The first sonnet evokes the traditional portrayal of worldly love that the poet will denounce and replace in what follows:

Mais cest' amour qui tellement m'enflamme,
 N'est cestuy-la qui se bande les yeux :
 Car il est doux, l'autre est malgracieux :
 Il est honneste, & l'autre est trop infame. (lines 5–8)⁴¹

The mythological figure representing physical love, Cupid, is evoked by a conventional characteristic—his blindness—and then undermined as a purely negative force: this love is “malgracieux” and “infame,” and further along, “inconstant, léger & variable.”⁴² This programmatic sonnet references many love poems, including the first sonnet of Ronsard's 1552 *Amours*, an early French *chansonnier* where Amour is also represented as blind and the enemy of reason.⁴³

Anne de Marquets distinguishes herself from her French intermediary by suggesting an alternative to this fickle love, the holy flame which is chaste

41. “But this love which so enflames me, / Is not that which covers his eyes: / For this love is sweet, the other is graceless: / This one is honest, and the other too wicked.”

42. De Marquets, *Les Sonets de l'amour divin*, Sonnet 1, verse 10.

43. “Qui voudra voir [...] / [...] / Me vienne voir [...] / [...] / Il cognoistra combien la raison peult / Contre son arc, quand une fois il veult / Que nostre cuceur son esclave demeure” (“He who wishes to see [...] / [...] / May he come see me [...] / [...] / He will learn how weak reason is / Against his arc, when he [love] wishes / To make a slave of our [my] heart”): Ronsard, *Les Amours de Pierre de Ronsard*, in *Les œuvres complètes*, vol. 4, Sonnet 1, verses 1, 7, 9–11; in alternate versions of this sonnet, love is designated as “un aveugle” (blind) (*Les amours*, vol. 4, Sonnet 1n).

and closer to the heavens,⁴⁴ also designated a “Cupidon nouveau” in the second sonnet of this cycle. Again, the poet emphasizes the difference between love for God and earthly desire:

O doux amour ! qui n'as point d'amertume,
 Puis que tu as ceste sainte costume
 De transmuer toutes choses en mieux. (lines 9–11)⁴⁵

Unlike Petrarch and his earliest French imitators, Anne de Marquets does not see the torment of the earthly lover as paradoxically joyous. She insists on a rupture between the sweet and the bitter, while the traditional Petrarchan topos plays endlessly on the contradiction of the poet-lover's feelings. Still, according to the first poem, her love for God is strong enough to “enflame” her, suggesting that the great passion does not necessarily lead to the bitterness of heartache—if, of course, this passion is directed heavenward, rather than to an earthly paramour.

In these opening poems of the *Sonets de l'amour divin*, the citation of a Petrarchan commonplace gives way to a refusal of the profane model. Further along, however, and as in the song for the Virgin already cited above, the Petrarchan commonplace is instead manipulated to suit the Christian subject. The fifth sonnet, entitled “Que l'ame vit par charité” (“That the soul lives through charity”), borrows the Petrarchan metaphor of the flame of passion and its emblem, the salamander, which takes pleasure in fire. In one of the *Canzoniere's* songs, Petrarch compares himself to the salamander because, like this “surprising” amphibian, he feeds and he lives in flames: “Di mia morte mi pasco, et vivo in fiamme: / stranio cibo, et mirabil salamandra” (“From my death I feed myself, and live in fire: / strange food, and surprising salamander”).⁴⁶ This reading most likely refers to a notion inherited from Pliny the Elder's *Natural History*, where the Roman scientist suggests that salamanders live in fire because of their cold-blooded composition: “pleraque enim occulta et caeca origine proveniunt, etiam in quadripedum genere, sicut salamandrae, animal lacerate figura,

44. De Marquets, *Les Sonets de l'amour divin*, Sonnet 2.

45. “O sweet love! which holds no bitterness, / Since you honour the holy custom / To transform all things into better things.”

46. Petrarch, canzone 207, verses 40–41.

stellatum, numquam nisi magnis imbribus proveniens et serenitate deficiens. huic tantus rigor ut ignem tactu restinguat non alio modo quam glacies.”⁴⁷

Picking up on this idea from Petrarch, Ronsard suggests in the *Amours de Marie* that in place of a human heart he bears a salamander, who delights in the heat of the poet’s cruel mistress:

De la nature un cœur je n’ai reçu,
Ainçois plutôt pour se nourrir en feu,
En lieu de lui j’ai une Salamandre. (lines 9–11)⁴⁸

In her fifth sonnet, Anne de Marquets adapts this metaphor to her situation as a Christian believer, whereby the soul finds its comfort in the “feu de charité” brought by Christ:

Quand Jesuschrist voulut du ciel descendre
Pour se vestir de nostre humanité,
Il apporta le feu de charité
Voulant par tout l’embraser & espendre.

Dedans lequel (ainsi qu’une Salmandre)
Mon ame vit en grand’ suavité
Y recevant plus de fœlicité
Que n’en sçauroit l’esprit humain comprendre. (lines 1–8)⁴⁹

47. “For a number of animals spring from some hidden and secret source, even in the quadruped class, for instance salamanders, a creature shaped like a lizard, covered with spots, never appearing except in great rains and disappearing in fine weather. It is so chilly that it puts out fire by its contact, in the same way as ice does” (Pliny, *Natural History*, ed. and trans. H. Rackham [Cambridge, MA: Loeb, 1967], book 10, chapter 86).

48. *Les meslanges*, in *Les œuvres complètes* (1965), 6:224; “From Nature I received no heart, / But rather to nourish itself in fire, / In lieu of that [a heart] I have a salamander.”

49. “When Jesus Christ wished to descend from Heaven / To clothe himself in our humanity, / He carried the fire of charity / To set it alight and spread it everywhere. // In that fire (and just like a salamander) / My soul lives in great pleasure, / There the subject of more happiness / Than the human spirit could ever fathom.”

Like Petrarch and Ronsard, Anne relies on the emblem of the salamander for its relation to fire, a metaphor for the ardour of the poet's passion—an erotic or romantic passion in Petrarch and Ronsard, and a Christian passion in the *Sonets de l'amour divin*. Because Petrarch's salamander passage opens with a portrayal of the poet's soul, Anne and Ronsard may have independently composed a similar figure (albeit directed toward different ends)—but it is reasonable to suggest that Ronsard serves as an intermediary source for Anne de Marquets: both adapt lines from one of Petrarch's songs in a sonnet, specifying that it is the soul in particular that corresponds to the biology of a salamander, not the lover in general.

Many other Petrarchan commonplaces figure in the *Sonets de l'amour divin*, including the negative anaphoric sonnet in “Ni”⁵⁰; the representation of the *innamoramento* in a paraphrase of the Italian sonnet “Era il giorno [...]”⁵¹; and the recurring contemplation of the poet's beloved.⁵² Many of these topoi are adapted seamlessly to the situation of the *dévote*, as love remains the central theme, even if that love is now explicitly and exclusively Christian, in lieu of the earthly (sometimes even erotic) love that had, by the time of Anne de Marquets's *Divines Poesies*, come to characterize French neo-Petrarchanism. Sometimes the Dominican goes beyond imitation to directly reference the tradition that is her model, in a kind of juxtaposition where she can at once draw upon and criticize pagan poets. In Sonnet 20, for example, subtitled “Complaincte de ne pouvoir si bien dire en louant Dieu, que les Poëtes font sur quelque vain subject” (“Complaint on Not Being Able to Write as Well in Praising God, as Poets do on their Vain Subjects”), she writes:

Mais c'est grand cas, que tout gentil poete,
 Sur un subject de plaisir seulement,
 Ha tant de grace & dict si proprement
 Que son œuvre est excellemment bien faicte :

50. De Marquets, *Sonets de l'amour divin*, 56, Sonnet 6. Compare this piece with, for example, Petrarch, canzone 312 (“Né per sereno ciel ir vaghe stelle” [“Neither a voyager of stars through a calm sky”]); and Ronsard, *Les Amours*, Sonnets 50, 95, and 143. Sonnet 51, in particular, anticipates de Marquets's composition, in the negative enumeration of all the things that do not compare to the beloved (“Ny voyr flamber au point du jour les roses...” [“Neither seeing flowers burn at the peak of day...”]) (1).

51. Petrarch, canzone 3; De Marquets, *Sonets de l'amour divin*, Sonnet 11.

52. De Marquets, *Sonets de l'amour divin*, Sonnet 38.

Et la mienne est si manque & imperfaicte,
 Bien que j'ay' pris pour mon seul argument
 Cil qui contient en soy divinement
 Toute beauté excellente & parfaicte.
 Ha ! (mon Dieu) c'est que je suis trop indigne
 Pour un subject si rare & precieux [...] (lines 1–10)⁵³

The task of representing God's perfection is an evidently far greater challenge than that of portraying a beautiful woman. In Petrarch and his imitators, the lover-poet persona often laments the difficulty of his subject, all the more splendid than anything in nature.⁵⁴ Here, Anne de Marquets deploys this trope both to praise her own beloved, God, and to distinguish him from the Petrarchan beloved as well as all other things. Petrarchanism proves simultaneously a model to follow, in the trope of the ineffable, and a model to reject, though the poet's declared renunciation ironically harkens back to the same tradition of vernacular love poetry she condemns.

In some of the Dominican's other 1568 sonnets, however, the central image or trope is not so easily identified with this literary tradition. In one sonnet in particular, the argument cannot be appreciated without knowledge of both biblical and Petrarchan sources. While biblical paraphrase is relatively rare in this sequence, in Sonnet 34 the poet re-writes Psalm 41, in which the believer compares his tormented soul to the thirsty deer, the poet adding a Petrarchan detail specifying that the deer is also the prey in a hunt:

Comme le cerf courant à grosse haleine,
 Lors qu'il se sent des veneurs pourchassé,
 Pressé de soif, & durement lassé
 Cherche et desire une fraische fontaine :
 Ainsi, mon Dieu, quand par angoisse & peine

53. "But it is very true, that all pagan poets, / Who write on a subject of pleasure only, / Have so much grace and say so beautifully / That their work is very well accomplished: / And mine falls short and is so imperfect, / Even though I took as my subject / He who holds within himself so divinely / All beauty, perfect and excellent. / O! (my God) it is because I am so unworthy / Of a subject so rare and precious [...]"

54. Petrarch, canzone 248; see, also, for example, Joachim Du Bellay, *L'Olive*, ed. Ernesta Caldarini (Geneva: Droz, 2007), Sonnet 8.

Je sens mon cœur vivement oppressé,
Ou que Satan le combat m'a dressé
Le [sic - Je] cherche alors ta douceur souveraine.
 Helas Seigneur ! ce n'est pas sans propos
Car en travail tu me donnes repos,
Et contre ardeur tu m'es doux refrigerer.
 Tu me rends forte en imbecillité,
Et me remplis d'heur & félicité,
M'affranchissant de tout mal & misere.⁵⁵

The first line immediately alludes to the famous biblical song, one of the penitential psalms put into music by the great composer Palestrina (“Sicut cervus” [Like the Deer]) around the time Marquets was writing, and also paraphrased in the thirtieth *chanson spirituelle* of perhaps the most famous French woman writer of the century, Marguerite de Navarre:

Comme le cerf qui va courant,
Mordz de la couleuvre vilaine,
Au chauld du jour est désirant
De trouver une eae vive et saine,
Ainsy à toy, vraye Fontaine,
Qui tous bons cœurs va attirant,
Mon âme court en espérant.

(lines 8–14)⁵⁶

The biblical theme is thus, by 1568, already conventional in French spiritual literature. But Anne de Marquets's sonnet also echoes many Italian and French love poems where the lover is represented as the feeble prey of either Cupid or

55. “Just as the deer running breathless, / When he feels himself pursued by hunters, / Rushed by breath and greatly tired, / Seeks out and desires a cool fountain: / So, my God, when by anguish and pain / I feel my heart totally oppressed, / Or when Satan challenges me in combat, / So I look for your most powerful sweetness. / Alas, Lord! it is not without reason / For through this labour you give me rest, / And you are my sweet refreshment against ardour. You make me strong in my ignorance, / And fill me with joy and felicity, / Saving me from all evil and misery.”

56. “Like the deer who goes running, / Bitten by the horrid snake, / Desiring in the day's heat / To find lively and healthy water, / So to you, o real Fountain [God], / Who attracts all pure hearts, / Does my hopeful soul run” (*Chansons spirituelles*, 76; see note 23 in this paper).

his beloved. Petrarch compares himself to a deer in the twenty-third poem of his *Canzoniere*:

I' segui' tanto avanti il mio desire
 ch'un dí cacciando sí com'io solea
 mi mossi ;
 [...]
 Vero dirò (forse e' parrà menzogna)
 ch'i' senti' trarmi de la propria imago,
 et in un cervo solitario et vago
 di selva in selva ratto mi trasformo :
 et anchor de' miei can' fuggo lo stromo. (147–49, 156–60)⁵⁷

In the French tradition, Ronsard famously compares himself to a deer in the forty-ninth sonnet for Cassandra of his first book of *Amours*:

Comme un chevreuil, quand le printemps détruit
 Du froid hiver la poignante gelée,
 Pour mieux brouter la feuille emmiellée,
 Hors de son bois avec l'Aube s'enfuit,
 [...]
 Ainsi j'allais sans espoir de dommage,
 Le jour qu'un œil sur l'avril de mon âge
 Tira d'un coup mille traits en mon flanc. (lines 1–4, 12–14)⁵⁸

These multiple allusions and re-workings form a kind of poetic syncretism, responding to the Ronsardian project of a grand Christian literature. But Anne de Marquets looks to Petrarch and her contemporaries in lieu of lauding the divine with poetic ornamentation inherited from the classical tradition.

57. "I followed so closely my desire, / that one day, hunting, as I often did, / I went forth [...] / I will tell the truth (though it might seem a lie) / that I felt myself withdrawn from myself / and as a lonely and wandering deer / from forest to forest soon I was transformed: / and still I flee the pack of my own dogs."

58. "Like a deer, when spring destroys / cold winter's great freeze, / flees his forest with Aurora / in order to better taste the honeyed leaf, / [...] / So I went, without a thought of danger, / the day when, in the spring of my youth, / an eye shot a thousand arrows into my side."

While in other poems Anne de Marquets praises the fire of passion or of charity, here, conversely, her Lord is an antidote to ardour, her *doux refrigere*. It is clear that the *Sonets de l'amour divin* do not offer a paradoxical portrait of love as do Petrarch and his imitators; rather, they starkly juxtapose the fleeting, deceptive, worthless love known on earth with the abiding, fulfilling love that a good Christian should aspire to feel for her saviour. Still, the poet can benefit from the contradictions depicted in the Petrarchan paradigm, and in the struggle that is inherent to the persona of the Petrarchan lover, if she exploits it in the service of her Christian message. The poet's pain and struggles must only avoid signaling the cruelty of the object of her affection, instead marking her own shortcomings as a fallen soul.

Passions in the *dévot*e's spiritual journey

In addition to the reoccurring Petrarchan model, much of Anne de Marquets's poetry suggests romantic passion in general as a parallel for the *dévot*e's spiritual journey. In the second *cantique*, for example, the soul that wishes to celebrate God is represented as an extension of the idealized *dévot*e to which the poet aspires, that affective part which is in love with God:

O combien est infiniment heureuse
 L'ame qui est de toy seul amoureuse!
 Qui ne pretend, ne cherche et ne desire
 Sinon toy seul, ou sans cesse ell' aspire.
 Toute autre amour elle chasse et surmonte
 Et tous desirs elle maistrise et domte.
 Car tant ell' est de toy, Seigneur, esprise,
 Que pour t'aymer soy-mesme elle mesprise. (lines 7–14)⁵⁹

While this seems like a fairly generalized representation of piety, inspired perhaps by any number of medieval mystics, or by certain exegetical readings of the *Song of Songs*, it is of interest that this idea is clearly expressed in

59. “O how infinitely joyous / Is that soul who loves you alone! / Who does not aspire, nor seek out nor desire / Any but you alone, to whom she constantly aspires. / All other love she chases and overcomes, / And all other desires she masters and overthrows. / For so much is she taken with you, Lord, / That to love you she pays herself no heed.”

Flaminio's *Carmina Sacra*, where he addresses Christ as the husband (*sponsus*) of his soul. In a poem written on his "ardent love for God" ("De ardenti amore suo erga Christum"), Flaminio depicts the anguish of the unquiet soul, anxious to see God's face and feel his kiss. The soul, feminine in Latin as in French, is the female subject that serves as an intermediary for the poet's depiction of his love for God:

Amore totus languero,
 Nec ulla iam datur quies,
 Jesu benigne iam meam
 Solare mentem, candidos
 Ostende vultus, lumine
 Tuo beat alumina
 Fac mea, nec osculum precor
 Amans amanti denega.
 Tu sponsus es animæ meæ. (lines 1–8)⁶⁰

Given the very real barriers to women's education in early modern France, it is easy to understand why many critics have interpreted Anne de Marquets's poetry as a radical response to the dominant male paradigm, where her poetic voice is distinctively (and intentionally) female.⁶¹ In the same way, the modern

60. "I languish totally in [my] love, / and no solace is yet given to me. / Beneficent Jesus, / console my spirit now, / show the light of your face, / make my eyes fortunate in your light. / Loving you, I pray that you do not deny me a kiss. / You are the spouse of my soul."

61. For this approach, see in particular Hannah S. Fournier, "La voix textuelle des *Sonets spirituels* d'Anne de Marquets," *Études littéraires* 20 (1987): 77–92; Kirk D. Read's analysis in his unpublished "French Renaissance Women Writers in Search of Community: Literary Constructions of Female Companionship in City, Family, and Convent" (PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 1991); and Gary Ferguson's article "The Feminisation of Devotion: Gabrielle de Coignard, Anne de Marquets, and François de Sales," in *Women's Writing in the French Renaissance: Proceedings of the Fifth Cambridge French Renaissance Colloquium, 7–9 July 1997*, ed. Philip Ford and Gillian Jondorf (Cambridge: Cambridge French Colloquia, 1999), 187–206. It is important to emphasize that many of the traits these critics designate as "feminine"—images and themes of motherhood and domesticity; the valorization of female biblical exemplars and saints; the notion of a holy "community" of women—appear not only in de Marquets and other women writers, but also in many male devotional authors. See, for example, the Marian poems practised by the (male) poets of the Normand Puys, a tradition dating back to the fifteenth century well documented in recent years by Denis Hüe (*La poésie palinodique à Rouen*

critic generally tends to see women Petrarchan poets of the Renaissance as dueling with the very model they adopt.⁶² Yet, as Anne de Marquets's original verse contained within the *Divines Poesies* demonstrates, the Dominican manages to draw inspiration from the underlying Christian message already present in the *Canzoniere* (a message not often transmitted in early French *chansonniers*⁶³), and expand upon it both thematically, in the explicit depiction of a spiritual journey, and aesthetically, in borrowing from contemporary French poetry. Certainly the fact that de Marquets concentrates her neo-Petrarchan verse exclusively on devotional love would have protected against possible detractors, whereas other French women poets would be condemned for their more erotic writings.⁶⁴

While Anne de Marquets's oeuvre has been characterized by some critics as specifically feminine, I would argue that the many male models who inform her poetry—Petrarch, Flaminio, and Ronsard—align her most closely with renaissance aesthetics in general. Rather than thinking of her literary production as a “rupture” with a masculine tradition, it is more fruitful to see her as drawing upon established models and manipulating them in her own way, and indeed as one of the first French poets to do so in an explicitly Christian context.

[1486–1550] [Paris: Honoré Champion, 2002] and *Petite anthologie palinodique* [1486–1550] [Paris: Honoré Champion, 2002]), in which many of these themes and images are present.

62. As Virginia Cox surmises, “A widespread assumption among feminist critics in their readings of early modern poetry by women has been that Petrarchanism, as a poetic idiom, was inherently ‘male.’ Female poets might appropriate this idiom—and indeed they did, in quite surprisingly large numbers, especially in Italy—but in doing so they are assumed to have been working against the grain of the tradition, and thus to have been disadvantaged with respect to their male peers” (“Sixteenth-Century Women Petrarchists and the Legacy of Laura,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 35.3 [Fall 2005]: 583). Her article, which explores the works of Vittoria Colonna and Veronica Gambara in particular, demonstrates that the Petrarchan model and the figure of Laura in particular could provide a fruitful starting point for women's love poetry.

63. The notable exception to this is Du Bellay's *Olive*, where some of the sonnets reveal a Neoplatonic conception of Love, and the last nine (107–115) see the poet turn his attention from his beloved to the divine. Still, Du Bellay does not yet dedicate the whole of his book of sonnets to a Christian theme.

64. The most famous example of such an attack might be Jean Calvin's judgment of the well-known Louise Labé, calling her a “plebeia meretrix” (a common prostitute), as cited in Louise Labé, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. François Rigolot (Paris: Flammarion, 1986), 242.

**From the *Sonets de l'amour divin* to the *Sonets spirituels*:
Anne de Marquets and sixteenth-century Christian poetics**

To conclude, I briefly consider the 1568–1569 songs and sonnets in relation to the rest of Anne de Marquets's œuvre. One striking aspect of her writings, specifically in the *Collectarum liber unus* and in the posthumous *Sonets spirituels*, is the role played by Christian paraphrase. Whether of liturgy or the Bible, paraphrase of Christian sources *systematically*⁶⁵ informs the Dominican's poetry. Almost every piece in these two books—serving almost as a frame for her literary career, published in 1566 and 1605 respectively—takes its inspiration from a biblical episode or verse, or a line of the liturgy. The *cantiques* and *sonets* of 1568 follow an entirely different poetic practice, where paraphrase of Christian texts is much less dominant, despite the obviously Christian theme. In these pieces, the biblical and liturgical traditions are far from absent, but the feast days or biblical episodes that provide material for her poems are fewer, as Anne restricts herself to central episodes, figures, and celebrations. Jesus and Mary remain very present, but no other biblical character is alluded to, and the Annunciation and the Nativity are virtually the only holy days represented, primarily in the *cantiques*, while the *sonets* invoke even fewer biblical episodes.

In lieu of using liturgical paraphrase as a central tool, as she does in her other works, here Anne turns to a popular pagan or “gentil” tradition, the unit of the Petrarchan *canzoniere* as transmitted by its earliest French imitators, namely Ronsard. Around this model she constructs an illustration, possibly didactic, of her relation as a *dévoté* or penitent before God. While the 1605 *Sonets spirituels* have been qualified by Russell Ganim as “less personal and autobiographical” than other devotional poetry, specifically that of de Marquets's contemporary, Gabrielle de Coignard,⁶⁶ the 1568 *Sonets de l'amour divin* rely

65. I borrow this term from Terence Cave, who writes of the *Sonets spirituels*, “These sonnets form a complete devotional sequence of 480 sonnets ‘sur les Dimanches et principaux solennitez de l'année,’ including long sections on the Nativity, the Passion, the Virgin, and the Saints; they are therefore far more advanced, in terms of the application of systematic devotional practice to poetry, than anything written in the 1570s and 1580s.” *Devotional Poetry in France c. 1570–1613* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 86.

66. “Variations on the Virgin: Anne de Marquets' Depiction of Mary in the *Sonets spirituels*” in *La femme au XVII^e siècle : Actes du colloque de Vancouver, University of British Columbia, 5–7 novembre 2000*, ed. Richard G. Hodgson (Tübingen: Gunter Naar Verlag, 2002), 407–17.

heavily on first-person expression and focus on the search for spiritual quietude. While the sonnets of her contemporary Jacques de Billy⁶⁷ also put into practice various Petrarchan tropes, de Billy's book remains centred on paraphrase of biblical and patristic literature, not a personal spiritual journey. Anne de Marquets's poetry points to themes already developed in Flaminio and other Christian poets with similar spiritual leanings, like the French *évangéliques*, and specifically Marguerite de Navarre.⁶⁸ Still, the nun manages to show a creative evolution in this literary practice by turning to the Petrarchan mode that had been so popularized in France during the previous decades, putting her at the forefront of a renascent Christian aesthetics that would become famous with the French sonnet sequences of writers such as Philippe Desportes, Isaac Habert, Gabrielle de Coignard, and Jean de La Ceppède.

67. *Sonnets spirituels : recueillis pour la plus part des anciens théologiens, tant grecs que latins, avec quelques autres petits traictez poëtiques de semblable matière* (Paris: Nicolas Chesneau, 1570). Although Billy's date of publication for his sonnets is 1570, his *privilege* dates from 1567, the same year as that of Anne de Marquets (*Les Divines Poesies*, n.p.). Since both authors published with Chesneau, it is possible that de Marquets would have read or at least heard of Billy's sonnets before their publication.

68. For the recurring theme of spiritual quietude, for example, see Aldo Gennai's *L'idéal du repos dans la littérature française du seizième siècle* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2011); Gennai considers Marguerite de Navarre's *Les Prisons* in section 3, "Les repos de l'âme" (380–496).