In a letter dated September 11, 1709, Joseph Raimundo Arxo complains to the Duchess of Aveiro about the terrible state of the world. Writing from Genoa, he sends her news of his suspicions that the Pope no longer supports the Jesuit missionary project in China. In an attempt to alleviate her fears about the termination of a project that was of utmost importance to the Duchess, he explains that many cardinals disagree with the Pope and he promises that a certain gentleman who is knowledgeable about China will discuss the matter with the Pontiff. He also reports the reaction to a recent book about China by Lecomte, which in the opinion of one Monsignor is simply a series of falsehoods and lies. Finally, in writing of the scandalous disfiguration of various religious images in Rome, he declares: “calamitoso siglo es este” (3). Arxo’s pessimistic narrative foreshadows the unfortunate news contained in his subsequent letter. In a missive dated September 22, 1709, he informs the Duchess that despite his best efforts the Jesuits will almost certainly leave China.

The extraordinary letters penned by Arxo, which represent only a small fraction of the voluminous correspondence sent to the Duchess of Aveiro, highlight her central role in financing and promoting missionary efforts around the globe. This fascinating collection of epistles helps bring to the fore a neglected topic within the field of mission history: the role of women patrons in the establishment and spread of Catholic missions. In particular, eighteenth-century mission history has sometimes failed to note how powerful women could exert influence over male religious orders by means of their financial backing of a variety of missionary enterprises. While the Duchess of Aveiro has received some recognition as an important figure in the early modern history of Catholic missions, she is probably best known to Hispanists in relation to Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. Not only does she appear in Sor Juana’s catalogue of learned women in the Respuesta, the Duchess also received an encomiastic poem written by Sor Juana (1: 102-

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1 This is likely a reference to the book Nouveaux mémoires sur l’État present de la Chine (Paris, 1702) by the Jesuit Louis Daniel Lecomte (1655-1728).
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(5), a romance that has received substantial scholarly attention. As shall become apparent in the remainder of this article, the two distinguished learned women would often be described in similar ways. Nevertheless, despite her connections to Sor Juana, few Hispanists are familiar with the extraordinary details of the Duchess’s life and a more comprehensive examination of her legacy remains to be written. María de Guadalupe de Lencastre y Cárdenas, also the Duchess of Maqueda and of Arcos, was born in 1630 in Azeitão, Portugal, and died in 1715 in Madrid. Much of the information about this early modern Iberian writer is contained in Ernest Burrus’s edition of the letters written to the Duchess by the Jesuit Eusebio Francisco Kino regarding his missionary efforts in California. In *Kino Writes to the Duchess*, which also appears in a Spanish edition that includes the text of Sor Juana’s romance, Burrus’s principal focus is the Jesuit missionary. However, he does provide a great deal of information about the Duchess and includes a substantive annotated bibliography to aid researchers in reconstructing her biography, a project that he suggests for future scholars.

More recently, in the 2013 issue of *Early Modern Women: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, Jeanne Gillespie seems to answer Burrus’s call for further study of the Duchess and contributes a feminist interpretation of her life and work. In this special issue of the journal, which revisits Joan Kelly-Gadol’s essay “Did Women Have a Renaissance?,” Gillespie rightly asserts that “[t]he agency exercised by the Iberian noblewoman, María de Guadalupe de Lencastre, the Duchess of Aveiro and Arcos, serves as an example that specifically contradicts Kelly-Gadol’s assertion that European noblewomen did not experience a ‘Renaissance’ because they were dependent on both their husbands and their rulers” (305). As Gillespie details, the Duchess separated from her husband in order to maintain her title and, through a vast network of correspondence that stretched from the Americas to Asia, provided executive direction and economic support for the Catholic missionary enterprise. For this reason, she came to be known

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2 For a discussion of this poem, Sor Juana’s romance 37, see Luiselli, Martínez-San Miguel (146-49), Morales, and G. Thomas (75-77).

3 Editions of the *Respuesta* rarely include any biographical information about the Duchess in the notes to the text, although Arenal and Powell’s The *Answer/La Respuesta* includes a short paragraph about her (129-30). Scott’s book chapter on the learned women in Sor Juana’s catalogue contains a brief biography (221). Burrus and Boxer’s early works provide a basic introduction to the life and work of the Duchess of Aveiro. In recent years, a number of scholars have added more details by examining her library (Maillard Álvarez), artwork (Moura Sobral), and orientalism (Díaz Esteban). Calvo and Colombi’s recent edition of the letters of Sor Juana’s principal patron, the marquesa de la Laguna, features a letter written to the Duchess of Aveiro and also includes a great deal of biographical information (28-37).
as “the Mother of the Missions.” Since most of the correspondence sent to the Duchess was preserved, albeit dispersed among a variety of libraries and private collections, this immense archive of letters offers sufficient testimony of her power and influence. Nevertheless, this record is somewhat one-sided since the majority of extant letters are ones that were written to the Duchess by male religious and are not examples of the myriad of letters that she herself penned that were often sent to remote corners of the globe. While some of her autograph letters have been discovered—one example being a letter mentioned in Gillespie’s article—often these are drafts that were preserved and kept in her personal archive.4

In addition to expanding upon previous scholarship on the Duchess, a secondary objective of the present article is a methodological proposal regarding a potential avenue for the study of the history of early modern women. Ironically, another somewhat overlooked source for reconstructing the life of the Duchess is to consider the many texts that relate to her death. These occasional works—elegies, epitaphs, narrative accounts of her death, funereal sermons and prayers—provide clues as to her network of correspondents and supplement the existing biographical information contained in letters. Although funereal genres were frequently published in the eighteenth century, they have sometimes been overlooked by historians and literary critics. Nevertheless, given the relative lack of published texts, correspondence, or diaries written by early modern women in the Hispanic world, they are a particularly useful source for reconstructing women’s history and, in some cases, for recuperating texts written by women. The Spanish edition of Burrus’s study reproduces two such funerary works in their entirety, both of which were probably published in Madrid. The first is a rather extensive narrative on the Duchess’s sickness and eventual death that was written by an anonymous Franciscan and the second is an elegiac romance by Joseph Butrón y Muxica (Burrus, Kino escribe 411-93). In addition to these texts, there are at least eight other works that were published to commemorate her passing.5 This impressive number of printed texts commemorating the Duchess’s death is in itself a testimony to her stature. The subsequent analysis of three of

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4 Calvo and Colombí cite four autograph documents and sixteen letters written by the Duchess (33; note 30). They do not include two additional texts in the Lilly Library: a draft letter (discussed below) and a letter to the Jesuit María Francisco de Salerno that is cited by Gillespie (314).

5 Moura Sobral identifies six of these additional texts in his “Anexo 1” (69). Maillard Álvarez claims to have discovered four additional texts but two appear to be the previously documented texts by Butrón y Muxica and Rada Ragozi. See Dañón, Gallo de Castillo, Martí, Monterde, Rada Ragozi, San Félix, Ubrique, and Zamora.
these eighteenth-century texts, in addition to providing biographical details on the life of María de Guadalupe, will also reveal how they can supplement and enrich our readings of extant letters written by and to the Duchess. Furthermore, one of these panegyric works also incorporates text that was purportedly written by the Duchess herself.

The first text to be analyzed, *Oración fúnebre* (1716), consists of the funerary prayers delivered at an exequy organized by the Duchess’s son, Joaquín Ponce de León (Duke of Arcos) in the Capuchin Convent of the Immaculate Conception in the town of Marchena in Andalucia. Unlike a funeral, in which the remains of the deceased are usually present, the exequy was a formal ceremony performed in honor of a notable death that did not consist of a burial. The author of the text written for the exequy, Félix Joseph de Ubrique, compares the Duchess to the mythical Phoenix, an epithet that was also frequently applied to describe Sor Juana.6 In commemorating the Duchess, he praises the faith and charity of María de Guadalupe while describing her as a singular Phoenix: “Muger portentosa que explica sus ansias de morir por la Fe, morir con Esperança, y morir de Charidad, no fue muger, es una mystica Fenix. De esta Ave dize Beda, que es unica y singular, por genesis de si misma: *In mundo Phoenix semper est unica*” (Ubrique 8).7 Ubrique then proceeds to illustrate how various facets of the Duchess’s life prove that she was a Phoenix. While many of his observations consist of the elaborate Baroque metaphors that were frequently employed in this genre, these comparisons with the Phoenix are interspersed with more concrete details about the Duchess’s life. The frequent praise of her charity and intelligence is exemplified by an anecdote about a stolen custodia, the monstrance or ostensorium used to display the Eucharistic host in a church. The Duchess frequently donated such objects to churches and, in this case, she was obliged to resubmit her donation and was therefore doubly praised for her charity:

Robaron de un lugar de su Excelencia la Custodia, ostensorio de el Sacramento Eucharistico; sintió esta ofensa su amor con tierno y lloroso sentimiento; mandó hacer a sus expensas nueva Custodia, adornando sus Viriles y rayos con unas perlas de inestimable valor; y como su discrecion sabía que las perlas son lagrimas de la Aurora, en una targeta de oro que coronaba la hasta de la Custodia, mandó gravar este mote: *Lachrymae mea in conspectu tuo semper*. Mis lagrimas estarán siempre en tu presencia.” (22)

Ubrique employs the story to illustrate both the wisdom and generosity of the Duchess. The text also highlights her patronage of religious art for

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6 See Howe for a discussion of this epithet (157-58).

7 This citation refers to Saint Bede’s commentary on the Book of Job.
sacred spaces, a topic that demands further exploration. References to María de Guadalupe’s donations of metalwork, paintings, and other objects of art to churches and monasteries are present in a variety of sources. For example, the narrative by an anonymous Franciscan describing her death relates her final donations to the Monasterio Real de Guadalupe (Burrus, *Kino escribe* 489). In addition to being a painter herself, the Duchess of Aveiro financed a great deal of religious art. This appears to be a corollary to her zeal for sponsoring the construction of numerous churches as she was reported to have vowed that she would see as many Catholic churches built as Elizabeth I had destroyed in England (Clossey 214).

Another literary work that was published in Mexico shortly after the Duchess’s death, Fray Pedro Dañón’s prayers in her honor, provides evidence of her transatlantic reputation. Although both the author and the text, which is entitled *Sombra funebre* (1715), appear to originate in colonial Mexico City, the frontispiece indicates that the prayer was provided for a ceremony honoring the Duchess that was organized by Fray Rodrigo de la Cruz, “Prefecto General de la Religion Bethlemetica, en su Convento de Bethlen” (fig. 1).

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8 Burrus provides documentation from the Real Monasterio de Guadalupe confirming her donation of, among other objects, a jeweled scepter, nine paintings by Luca Giordano, and a set of silver to be used for the washing of the feet on Holy Thursday (*Kino escribe* 494-97).

9 See Moura Sobral for a discussion of paintings by and of the Duchess, in addition to documentation on artwork in her personal collection (64-67).
The Sagrada Religión Bethlemitica Hospitalaria was a hospital founded in colonial Guatemala in 1653 (León 872). In 1673, four friars established on the same site the Convento de Nuestra Señora de Belén [Bethlen] (León 872). The Bethlemite Order, which was founded by Fray Pedro de San José Betancur, was the first religious order to originate in the Americas. The Historia Bethlehemitica (1723), a history of the order, confirms that the Duchess had provided support for their missionary enterprise in the Americas. While the first book of this history focuses on their founder, the second book contains three references to the patronage of the Duchess (392, 398, 424). One passage narrates how Fray Rodrigo and his companions found lodging and financial support to further their New World missions at the home of the Duchess:

A la real Curia de Madrid llegó brevemente Fr. Rodrigo: y habiéndose albergado con sus compañeros en la casa de la excelentísima Duquesa de Abeyro, cuya inclinación halló igualmente benévola en esta ocasión, que en la pasada; comenzó su empresa, patrocinado de su gran autoridad. Mucho era el respetoso merecimiento de esta gran señora en la Corte. (424)

Dañón’s Sombra fúnebre, which was presumably delivered at the Convento de Nuestra Señora de Belén in Guatemala, provides evidence of the Duchess’s foundational role in supporting the Bethlemites since not long after her death the religious order organized a solemn celebration to commemorate her life and legacy.

Dañón’s text also provides a large number of biographical details about the Duchess, although some of these would have to be further confirmed in other sources. Fray Pedro exalts her contributions to the creation of missions in China, India, the coast of Adra, the Cape of Good Hope, the Marianas Islands, Africa, and Tunisia (16v). He writes that her palace was like a hospital for the poor (19v) and that orphans from Argel and Tetuan found refuge by her side (16). Clearly, some of his praise conforms to the hagiographic conventions of this genre, as he repeatedly provides affirmation of her saintly ways and virtuous life. For instance, he claims that her daily regimen consisted of sleeping on a cross-shaped bed, praying for three hours, attending mass, and then studying in her library (15v). He also states that she was fluent in eleven languages. This is probably something of an exaggeration, although through extant letters written to her Burrus manages to document that she was, at the very least, proficient in reading six languages (Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, French, Latin, and

10 The citation from León reproduces an article from the Gazeta de México, issue number 145 (December, 1739).
In addition to praising her piety, Dañón celebrates the erudition of Duchess of Aveiro by adding that her circle of acquaintances consisted of those that excelled in virtue and in letters (19r). Furthermore, her knowledge of a variety of subjects: Latin, philosophy, theology, civil law, canon law, medicine, and mathematics. This list of disciplines in which the Duchess excelled parallels the impressive range of books that were dedicated to her. Burrus’s study details a small portion of these works and in some cases he documents her financial support for these publications through existing letters. These products of her patronage include works on philosophy and theology (González), mathematics (A. Thomas), history (San Agustín), and—perhaps most importantly—the lives of the missionaries and martyrs of Asia (García, San Nicolas). The Duchess’s patronage of historical works not only served to document her support of the Church’s missionary efforts across the globe, they were also an important means of commemorating the efforts of particular missionaries that she had sponsored, some of whom were later canonized. This facet of the publication program sponsored by the Duchess, the hagiographic recounting of the model lives (and deaths) of the many missionaries that she had supported, would spur on missionary efforts that were still in progress by suggesting that the saintly lives of Catholic missionaries would serve as exemplary models for their successors. In a letter to the Duchess written by a Jesuit en route to the Marianas Islands, Lorenzo Bustillo (1642-1716), he refers to them as “her islands” and, with hyperbolic praise, calls her their Apostle and the Mother of all those that live on the Marianas Islands: “No se que mas gloriosos empleos en la Salvacion de las almas Marianas podemos desear los que venimos a estos payses que los que tiene V[uestra] E[xcelencia] en esas partes siendo N[uestra] Apostola, Protectora, y Procuradora Marian, y Madre de todos los Marianos” (1).

Bustillo goes on to cite the blood of previous Jesuit martyrs (Diego Luis de Sanvitores, Francisco Esguerra, and Luis de Medina) as part of his motivation for continuing the mission. He even mentions a text on the life of Luis de Medina, which relates the miraculous appearance of the Virgin of Guadalupe to the inhabitants of the Marianas Islands. Since the Duchess maintained a particularly fervent devotion to the Virgin of Guadalupe, it appears that her influence even shaped the

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11 There are a number of different estimates as to the number of languages in which the Duchess was proficient (Boxer 733, Moura Sobral 67). According to Maillard Álvarez, the Duchess’s library contained books in more than ten languages.

12 This is probably a reference to the work written by Francisco García (Relación).
Virgin of Guadalupe, it appears that her influence even shaped the religious accounts of apparitions in the Marianas Islands.\textsuperscript{13}

The previous funerary texts documenting commemorative prayers from different corners of the globe find a parallel in the sentiment expressed by the title of one final work, \textit{Llanto universal de España, del Orbe y de la Iglesia}. Clearly, the death of the Duchess was mourned across the globe and throughout the Catholic world. While this particular work, an elegiac \textit{romance}, contains many of the formulaic tropes of death poetry, it concludes with the inclusion of a sonnet epitaph that is presented as one written by the Duchess herself:

\begin{verbatim}
Epitafio: Dejo su Excelencia escrito el suyo
Esse de jaspe obscuro pavimento
guarda (o mortal) Muger que peregrina,
como punto final de su doctrina,
mas, que por ley, murio por documento,

Vivio exhala el hasta el postrer aliento,
de Evangelica Luz ciencia divina:
solo faltava con su propia ruina
enseñar a que hablasse el Monumento.

El Orbe dolorosamente mudo
ya quisiera no averla posiedo,
a precio de evitar el golpe agudo.

Qual seria el valor de lo perdido;
quando el dexar de ser moverle pudo
a pesar de que un tiempo huviera sido! (9)
\end{verbatim}

This final epitaph documents the Duchess’s own success in making the “Monument speak:” crafting the final words to be inscribed on her tomb. The sonnet demonstrates that, in addition to her epistolary texts, the Duchess produced literary writing as well. This poem, which might have been carved in stone beside the final resting place of the Duchess, was not the only epitaph that she composed. \textit{Llanto universal} mentions three additional epitaphs that were written in Latin by the Duchess: “Dexo escritos Epitáfios para su nicho, el de su madre, y hermano, y en el fin versos Latinos, los hazia admirables” (4). These inscriptions for her tomb along with two notes composed in Spanish and Latin, one written in her

\textsuperscript{13} Not only did the Duchess adopt the name Guadalupe but she also provided a large donation in order to be buried at the Real Monasterio de Guadalupe in Extremadura, Spain.
own blood, are included in the narrative penned by the anonymous Franciscan.  

The texts that commemorate the death of the Duchess demonstrate that although elegiac works are often ignored in literary history, they are important primary sources for the study of early modern women. The texts that relate to the Duchess’s death provide details not found in other texts, reveal many of her contributions to the missionary enterprise, and suggest her agency in directing particular aspects of the missionary enterprise. This relates to another important point brought up by Gillespie who, in detailing how the Duchess’s exercise of power contradicts some of Kelly-Gadol’s assertions about women’s loss of power during the Renaissance, also mentions the repressive role of the Church in opposition to the agency of women. As Gillespie recounts, the Duchess sometimes assumed a more executive or advisory role, as in her letter to the Jesuit Francisco María de Salerno explaining the challenges and necessity of establishing successful missions in China. Given the impossibility for women to take up positions of power within the established hierarchy of the Catholic Church, the Duchess’s letter writing campaigns and financial contributions were an appropriate means of assuming a position of power. While most of the literary texts commemorating the Duchess’s death do not provide clear examples of her agency, glimpses of her ability to shape the terms of the missionary enterprise are viewed in the few remaining letters written in her own hand. For example in one draft letter written by the Duchess, she appears to propose that a Capuchin Friar be stationed in Curação in order to minister to West African slaves. She writes: “Habiendo considerado … la fatalidad de los gentiles del Africa a quienes tantas naciones buscan por el cautiverio y ninguno para llevarles la libertad de hijos de Dios, deseé sumamente ayudar estos pobres …” (1). She then advises that missionaries be allowed in Africa and in Curação in order to minister to the slaves and to teach them Catholic doctrine before they are sold, commenting that “los holandeses son por un lado codiciosos que sólo atienden a las ganancias” (1). In closing her letter she justifies the proposal by reminding the unnamed recipient, undoubtedly a male member of the Catholic hierarchy, that the Church has an obligation to ensure their salvation: “…siendo obligación de los hijos de la iglesia romana cuidar de la doctrina de los esclavos…” (1). While it is unclear as to whom the Duchess  

14 These texts are reproduced in Burrus’s study along with photos of the Duchess of Aveiro’s tomb at the Real Monasterio de Guadalupe (Kino Escriba 488-92). More recently, they were included in the anthology of early modern Portuguese women writers edited by Vanda Anastácio.  

15 Since this letter was very difficult to read, I have modernized the spelling in my transcription.
is writing, it appears that this proposal was eventually submitted and accepted, thus inducing the Dutch West India Company to allow a Capuchin friar to be stationed in Curaçao.16

While only a small number of the Duchess’s autograph letters have been identified, it is possible that more similarly remarkable letters will be found in archival collections.17 Despite the rather one-sided perspective that is provided by the existing letters written to the Duchess, this vast body of correspondence creates the portrait of a woman that was at the very center of a global missionary enterprise. The connections that are brought to light by elegiac works help to further clarify her active role in aiding and advising members of a variety of religious orders. Additionally, since the literary works that relate to her death are a means of establishing the networks of missions and missionaries that she aided, they can potentially lead to the identification of archives where more of her writing can be found. The legacy of the Duchess of Aveiro is clearly apparent in the corpus of texts mourning her death, the remaining examples of her vast correspondence, and the published works that she patronized. These works repeatedly characterize María de Guadalupe de Lencastre y Cárdenas as a learned woman and a great patron of the Church. They also document her central role in a vast evangelical enterprise that has often been deemed solely the dominion of men, one in which her own letters served to direct, to finance, and to create the terms under which the missionaries would operate and be remembered.

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16 The letter is part of a collection that includes the notes of the historian Charles Boxer, who asserts that the proposal was accepted (739). This seems to be confirmed by another letter written by the Duchess accompanied by a Franciscan manuscript (Maggs Bros. Bibliotheca americana 3: 129) and a royal decree (Maggs Bros. Bibliotheca americana 3: 194).

17 For other letters to/from the Duchess, see Aveiro, Burrus, Calvo and Colombí, Golvers (136), and Hoff Wilson and Bonfield Donovan. Many of these references point to the same collections (the Bancroft, Gleeson, and Huntington Libraries). Golvers mentions a letter in the Archivum Romanum Societatis Jesu (Letter from Antoine Thomas, ARSI, JS 148, folio 96v). As Burrus details, the catalogues of rare books and letters by the Maggs Brothers document a substantial amount of her correspondence and each entry is accompanied by a short summary in English. A few autograph letters by the Duchess of Aveiro are included in these catalogues (Maggs Bros. Bibliotheca americana 2: 2; 3:129, 3: 132; Maggs Bros. Bibliotheca asiatica 2: 5).


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