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Teresa de Ávila: Lettered Woman (review)

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compliment—give no ground from which to infer even an awareness of it. More dubious is the acknowledgment of Vittoria's assumed function on the part of Pier Paolo Vergerio and Cardinal Reginald Pole. Pole's explanation in answer to Colonna's remonstrations for his neglect of her, rather than as an expression of a reformist concept of a nonreciprocal gift (p. 70), should be read as follows: "Divine Will shall amply reward you as He rewards all those who are beneficent" (with *benefico* translated as "beneficent," not as "worthy"). Pole's was indeed a doctrinally unimpeachable reply and a tactful one in addressing a woman whose attachment to him was judged by friends to have morbid connotations.

Overall, Brundin's analysis confirms and amply illustrates Colonna's insistent need for religious assertion and investigation. The marquise went on to express her evangelical beliefs in both poetry and prose, but only in her last years did she assume an open stance of opposition to the authorities and of agreement with the Viterbo group, certainly in reaction to the latter's failure in advancing their plan of compromise and reconciliation with the reformists. As to the acceptance of Colonna's writings after her death, her poetry was certainly understood by those who were already of an evangelical persuasion, but to what extent it may have influenced people without similar concerns is a matter of conjecture. It is a fact that Colonna's sonnets remained in the mainstream of Petrarchism for centuries to come and only in our times, when a better knowledge of the evangelical movement was established, have scholars become alert to their specific religious content.

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Teresa de Ávila: Lettered Woman. By Bárbara Mujica. (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press. 2009. Pp. xiv, 272. \$45.00. ISBN 978-0-826-51631-2.)

Bárbara Mujica has made a significant contribution to Teresian studies with her book on Santa Teresa de Jesús, better known in English as St. Teresa of Ávila. In the title Mujica plays with the sense of "lettered" as both a reference to the saint's learning as well as to her authorship of letters to a variety of people during her lifetime. Even as she examines Teresa's epistolary output within the context of the saint's life and times, she also reveals the pragmatism and the principles of the saint.

The book begins with a background history of the *devotio moderna*, the move to reform monastic practice in Europe as a whole and in Spain in particular, and, finally, of the Carmelite Reform specifically. Within this discussion, Mujica adds the function of letters as instruments of reform, especially in the case of St. Ignatius of Loyola and the Jesuits as well as with Teresa and her nuns. As she explains, "by examining Teresa's letters, we can watch the Carmelite reform unfold as it was experienced by Teresa herself" (p. 11).

Chapters 1 and 2 provide more background on both the saint and on letter writing in general. Mujica makes a compelling case for the influence of *converso* experience in the composition of petitions, legal documents, and letters on the young Teresa. She explains the place of writing in the Cepeda household and its possible effect on the later actions of the foundress in her own letter writing. The history of letter writing, the postal delivery system, and the production of paper fill the second chapter. Mujica ties these details to the burden of letter writing as it affected Teresa with special attention to the protocols, rules, style, and etiquette involved in the process.

The second half of the book focuses on the letters themselves as a reflection of the author and her endeavors. In chapter 3, Mujica asserts that Teresa “saw herself as God’s warrior, and letters were weapons in her arsenal” (p. 68). The connection to her other writing is evident in her use of the vocabulary and tactics of war. The primary battlefield for these letters was Andalucía where Jerónimo Gracián struggled to extend the discalced reform in the face of resistance from the calced: “For Teresa and her contemporaries, the personal, the political, and the tactical were all intertwined” (p. 84).

Chapter 4 concentrates on letters sent to her four principal correspondents: Gracián; the prioresses María de San José and María Bautista; and the saint’s brother, Lorenzo de Cepeda. Not only the subject of the reform but also the relationships among this group are evident in the content and tone of Teresa’s letters. While she “considered Gracián and María de San José her ‘spiritual children,’ her epistolary writing reveals different relations with each” (p. 116). As Mujica observes: “although Teresa loved María, she adored Gracián. He was the favorite” (p. 118). With her relatives, María Bautista and Lorenzo, both intimacy as well as exasperation were present. Still, the letters to both “show that she was concerned with family as well as convent business” (p. 132).

Chapter 5 examines letters as revelatory of the different roles Teresa adopted in her lifetime, including those of administrator, Mother General, legislator, educator, disciplinarian, politician, and diplomat. The author asserts that “every letter [Teresa] wrote was an act of self-representation that served to affirm and solidify the authority she needed to achieve her end” (p. 140). The last chapter considers the history of Teresa’s letters after her death. It focuses especially on a collection of documents in the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid (Ms 12.764) that is indicative of attempts to “reconstruct [Teresa], to transform her into a model of feminine virtue” (p. 183). Mujica shows how hagiographers and others attempted to move her canonization forward even as they altered Teresa to fit a procrustean view of female spirituality. Along with written encomia, Mujica also considers the use of iconography both in Spain and in the New World as a means of defining Teresa for future generations.