

# *Letras Hispanas*

## Volume 12

**TITLE:** The Woman or the Text: Reading Teresa of Avila's Rhetoric of Obedience

**AUTHOR:** Raquel Trillia

**EMAIL:** raquel.trillia@uleth.ca

**AFFILIATION:** University of Lethbridge; Modern Languages Department; University Hall, B594; 4401 University Dr. W.; Lethbridge, AB T1K 6T5, Canada

**ABSTRACT:** For centuries Teresa of Avila (1515-1582) has captivated readers as a visionary and, particularly, as a writer, burdened by the "double hindrance of being both female and sinful" (Hollis 26). Being a woman necessitated that she cast herself as a virtuous and thus obedient woman. Ironically, to achieve this, she portrayed herself as an ordinary, sinful woman and constructed a discourse around obedience that enabled her to write and act to reform her order and found multiple convents. In her writing, she represented herself as obedient to her confessors, superiors, Orthodox Church doctrine, the female condition and God. This tactic did not go unnoticed in her day, nor in ours. From her confessors, through early editors of her works in the sixteenth century, to Teresian scholars such as Víctor García de la Concha and Alison Weber in the twentieth, both Teresa's advocates and detractors have noted this obedience as virtue and method. This paper will discuss her rhetoric of obedience and how it has been received over time while demonstrating that Teresa's readers depend on their own respective objectives and circumstances, conscious or unconscious, to assign meaning to Teresa's discourse.

**KEYWORDS:** Teresa of Avila, Trent, Women, Virtue, Obedience, Rhetoric, Orthodoxy

**RESUMEN:** Durante siglos Teresa de Ávila (1515-1582) ha cautivado a sus lectores como visionaria y, en particular, como escritora, agobiada por el "double hindrance of being both female and sinful" (Hollis 26). El ser mujer exigió que se presentase como una mujer virtuosa y consecuentemente obediente. Irónicamente, para lograr esto, se retrató como una mujer común, pecadora, y construyó un discurso en torno a la obediencia que le permitiese escribir y actuar para reformar su orden y fundar múltiples conventos. En su escritura se presentó como obediente a sus confesores, a la jerarquía y doctrina ortodoxa de la Iglesia, a su condición de mujer y a Dios. Esta estrategia no ha pasado desapercibida, ni en su época ni en la nuestra. Desde sus confesores y los primeros editores de su obra en el siglo XVI, a los estudiosos como Víctor García de la Concha y Alison Weber en el siglo XX, tanto los partidarios como los detractores de Teresa han notado esta obediencia como virtud y como método. Este trabajo estudiará la retórica de obediencia de Teresa y como se ha respondido a ésta a través del tiempo, demostrando que sus lectores dependen de sus propios objetivos y circunstancias, conscientes o no, para darle significado al discurso teresiano.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Teresa de Ávila, Trento, mujeres, virtud, obediencia, retórica, ortodoxia

**DATE RECEIVED:** 11/23/2015

**DATE PUBLISHED:** 6/8/2016

**BIOGRAPHY:** Raquel Trillia is Associate Professor of Spanish in the Department of Modern Languages at the University of Lethbridge (Canada). Her research concerns the lives and work of early modern Castilian women, especially the writing of and about religious women of the period. She has published articles on Teresa of Avila, Teresa de Cartagena and María de Ajofrín.

ISSN: 1548-5633

## The Woman or the Text: Reading Teresa of Ávila's Rhetoric of Obedience

Raquel Trillia, University of Lethbridge

According to E. A. Peers, Teresa of Ávila (1515-1582) is “the greatest woman in Spanish history” primarily due to her “many-sidedness” (15). This sixteenth-century nun, visionary, mystic, reformer, foundress and writer has captivated readers for centuries. Particularly the writer, burdened as she was by the “double hindrance of being both female and sinful” (Hollis 26) as Teresa herself ‘acknowledged’ she was. She described herself as “una mujercilla ruin y flaca como yo” (*Libro de la vida* XXVIII.18) for whom obedience was a virtue “de quien soy muy devota” (*Libro de las fundaciones* I.3, cf. V.17, XVIII.13). The fact that she was a woman, ‘naturally’ feeble of body and mind, necessitated that she cast herself as a virtuous and thus obedient woman, because a weak woman, if obedient, was less likely to stray or be deceived. Teresa was careful to portray herself as a woman was thought to be, weak, but also as she ought to be, obedient. To achieve this, she rendered herself as an ordinary, sinful woman but constructed a discourse around obedience that enabled her to write, reform the Carmelite Order and found multiple convents. In her writings she presented herself as obedient to her confessors and superiors, to orthodox Church doctrine and practice, to her sex, and, above all, to God. The various aspects of Teresa’s posturing regarding obedience are evident in her insistent praise of this virtue, her desire to be obedient and be seen as obedient, and her recording of her acts of obedience. By exploiting the cardinal female virtue, Teresa created a rhetoric of obedience

that allowed her texts to survive, particularly the rigours of the second half of the sixteenth century, making her “la única [escritora] destinada a sobrevivir fecundamente de entre el fango y las llamas de la crisis religiosa de su época” (Márquez Villanueva 379).

Teresa’s concerns regarding obedience stemmed both from her anxieties as a woman writer, and from a long tradition that prescribed this virtue as the guiding principle by which a woman, cloistered or not, must guide her life and actions. Additionally, Teresa was aware of the vicissitudes that confronted the Church in the sixteenth century (e.g. *Vida* XVI.7, XXXII.6; *Camino de perfección* IV.3, LVIII.2; *Moradas del Castillo interior* V.ii.10). Given these circumstances, Teresa wove the period’s mores and beliefs into her discourse to persuade (most of) her readers that she conformed to the conventional values of her time. Indeed, as Dámaso Chicharro states, she had to write “sin romper con la ortodoxia social—y mucho menos con la religiosa—” (23). Teresa thus engaged her sixteenth-century reader in a discourse that upheld the status quo while—by writing—she violated it. This tactic has not gone unnoticed, not in her day, and not in ours. From her confessors, through Luis de León—the first editor of her works—in the sixteenth century, to scholars Víctor García de la Concha and Alison Weber in the twentieth, both Teresa’s advocates and detractors have noticed this obedience, both as virtue and method. Like Teresa, her readers faced, and still face today, the paradoxical situation of reconciling writing with silence, and leadership with

obedience. I shall begin by examining why and how Teresa crafted obedience into her writing, then discuss how her rhetoric of obedience has been received over time to show that her readers depend on their own respective objectives and circumstances, conscious or unconscious, to interpret the value of obedience within Teresa's discourse.

Teresa wrote after 1560, that is, after the Valdés Index of Prohibited Books of 1559, after the high profile Valladolid *autos de fe* of 1559 which "da testimonio [...] de la nueva severidad con que procede la Inquisición" (Bataillon 709), and after the Council of Trent (1545-1563), when "religious authorities actively discouraged the individual and institutional experimentation that had characterized the first half of the century, and instead placed a high premium on conformity, quiescence, and obedience in the religious life" (Bilinkoff, *Avila* xiii). The restructuring of the Church and the centralization of power by the state caused both Church and state to seek ideological uniformity. This led to the perception of difference as dissidence; so much so, that the Catholic Church's resolve to control and perpetuate orthodoxy meant that after 1559 only orthodox Scholasticism escaped suspicion. This climate of control and suspicion, in which women were excluded from active roles within the Church and which fostered the idea that women were intellectually inferior and spiritually weak, was responsible in part for Teresa's portrait of herself in her work. Indeed, Kieran Kavanaugh, of the events of this century, says these "left [their] traces on Teresa's works" (II: 19; cf. T. de la Cruz 306, 316). Teresa's self-representation certainly speaks to the times she lived and to her own expectations of her readers in light of the narrow margin for action in the second half of the sixteenth century. This margin was more acutely narrow for women, given the "increasing strictures placed upon women in Counter-Reformation Spain," which Anne J. Cruz sees manifest in the literature of that time by "the increasing silence, not only of female writers, but of their poetic voice" (146, 150).

Teresa was not only a woman, who, according to the Scriptures, the Church Fathers, and medieval and early modern (male) writers, due to her weakness must obey her masters, but a nun.<sup>1</sup> Nuns are doubly bound by obedience for when a nun takes the veil she makes a vow of obedience. Thus Teresa could logically write, "[e]n esto de la obediencia es en lo que más había de poner, y por parecerme que, si no la hay, es no ser monja" (*Camino* VII.7).<sup>2</sup> Teresa lived and breathed obedience because it was an essential feature of convent life in addition to part of being woman. Hence, Teresa's rhetoric of obedience is a fitting extension of her religious vows taken upon accepting a consecrated life. Teresa's readers, primarily Church prelates, were familiar with the vow of obedience—most of them had professed vows themselves: obedience, poverty and chastity—an observance required by Christian monasticism.<sup>3</sup>

To counteract these overbearing restrictive religious and social constraints, Teresa honed the vow of obedience into an effective rhetorical tool that presented her as submissive to Church doctrine and hierarchy, and which allowed her to express her adherence to contemporary views on women. Teresa's rhetoric of obedience was her response to the impossible situation in which she found herself as a writer. As a woman she ought not express herself, much less in writing.<sup>4</sup> Yet Teresa did write much, at the behest of her superiors, and of her own volition.<sup>5</sup> By responding to the requests and commands to write, Teresa was simultaneously obedient and not. Recognizing that writing itself was a violation of the female condition, Teresa's discourse crafted obedience as the ultimate virtue as well as the motor and objective of her writing. Thus, she made sweeping statements about obedience—"la obediencia todo lo puede" (*Vejamen* 1; *Vida* XVIII.7)—narrated her own acts of obedience—"Yo como traía tanto miedo, obedeciale en todo [al confesor]" (*Vida* XXVIII.15)—and promoted obedience to one's superiors—"no teniendo otra voluntad sino la de nuestros mayores" (*Fundaciones* V.13).

## Teresa's Obedience to the Female Condition

Teresa of Ávila's obedience to the female condition is characterized by her self-representation as a feeble, ignorant, wretched woman, intellectually inferior and lacking in letters (e.g. *Vida* XXVI.3). Her 'condition,' to justify the act of writing, required obedience, particularly, to confessors and to the 'nature' of her sex. These two cases of obedience are inextricably linked: the physical and intellectual frailty of women necessitates obedience to the stronger sex. To strengthen this impression in the *Vida*, she returns to the idea of writing as a response to a command as set out in its prologue:

Si fuera persona que tuviera autoridad de escribir, de buena gana me alargara en decir muy por menudo las mercedes que ha hecho este glorioso santo a mí y a otras personas; mas por no hacer más de lo que me mandaron, en muchas cosas seré corta, más de lo que quisiera; en otras más larga que era menester; en fin, como quien en todo lo bueno tiene poca descripción. (VI.8)

Teresa refers to the limitations placed on her as a writer: she straightforwardly says that the directive to write determines what and how much she would write about any given topic. She did not wish to overstep the mandate she had been given because not only did she lack authority, she also lacked *discreción*, the ability to discern one thing from another or to judge things ("Discernir," *Tesoro*). This passage is an example of how she ascribed to herself 'female' qualities.<sup>6</sup> To further the idea that she conformed to preconceived notions of women, Teresa presented herself as intellectually inferior. She repeatedly refers to her "pobre entendimiento" (*Fundaciones* V.2), her "tan rudo entendimiento" (*Vida* XXVIII.6), her "entendimiento tan grosero" (*Vida* IX.5, cf. IV.11), and her "torpeza" (*Vida* XII.6). She

showcases the 'fact' of the inadequacy of her intellect to claim she did not rely on it when writing, because "[t]enía muy poca habilidad para con el entendimiento representar cosas" (*Vida* IX.6, cf. XIV.9, XVII.2).

Faithful to her female condition she persevered in portraying herself as ignorant: "Soy tan ignorante y de tan rudo entendimiento que [...] algunas veces se espantaba el que me confesaba de mis ignorancias" (*Vida* XXVIII.6, cf. XIII.19, XXX.10). In this Teresa did not present herself as alone, for she extends ignorance to all women, contrasting them to men of letters: "estas [...] ignorancias no las tendrán los letrados [...] mas para nosotras las mujeres, de todas estas ignorancias nos conviene ser avisadas" (*Fundaciones* V.2).<sup>7</sup> To guard themselves against the dangers posed by ignorance, women must seek the counsel of superiors and confessors. That is, they must not think or act of their own volition: "es la obediencia el verdadero camino para sujetar [la razón]" (*Fundaciones* V.11).

Teresa also reported her ignorance as particularly relevant when it came to writing: "Quien tan poco sabe como yo, forzozo habrá de decir muchas cosas superfluas" (*Moradas* I.ii.7);<sup>8</sup> or, "Yo no sé otros términos cómo lo decir [hablar de la tercera agua] ni cómo lo declarar" (*Vida* XVI.1, cf. XXXVIII.18). Her ability to express herself was hampered by her lack of knowledge and her lack of learning stated here as a point of information. Furthermore, she had never desired any learning: "y jamás, gloria a Dios, fui curiosa en desear saber cosas, ni se me da nada de saber más" (*Cuentas de conciencia* LIV.23). In this way she was faithful to Paul's admonition to women by neither actively seeking learning, nor trusting what she wrote: "No sé si entiendo lo que digo, porque—como he dicho—juzgo por mí" (*Vida* XV.3).<sup>9</sup>

Always with a view to capture her own female inferiority and consequent submissiveness, Teresa notes she was "temerosa en extremo" (*Vida* XXV.14), makes reference to "mi bajeza" (*Vida* XXX.15), calls herself "una miserable como yo, cargada de abominaciones"

(*Vida* XXXVIII.21), “cosa tan sucia y miserable” (*Vida* XXXVIII.19), “agua de tan mal pozo” (*Vida* XIX.6) and repeatedly refers to her own weakness—*flaqueza*— (e.g., *Vida* III.7, XIX.6, XXVIII.1; *Cuentas* I.7; *Camino* XI.2; *Moradas* III.ii.8). Teresa thus framed her experiences within parameters that coincided with male expectations for women’s understanding and conduct. If Teresa were weak, fearful, lowly, ignorant and especially submissive, she would not be seen to evince unorthodox qualities or behaviour and would thus not appear to threaten a Church seeking to reaffirm orthodoxy. Teresa summarizes her endeavour to conform to (male) expectations of her as a feeble woman (yet accomplish her goals) in the last chapter of the *Vida*. Mindful that a woman should not be writing, much less about lofty matters, Teresa reiterated both the virtue and the wretchedness of the female condition and presented her life as *disbaratada*, that is, as something that “no se hizo o dijo con el modo debido y con cierto fin” (“Disparar,” *Tesoro*), referring to both her life and her text. She also referred to her writing as lacking in proper (literary) form, prayed she has not erred by writing, and pointedly stated her desire to do the right thing and to obey (*Vida* XL.24). Although she acknowledged that she had been daring and forward—*atrevida*, [*he*] *osado*—she expressed concern about such behaviour. However, she hoped that through her (text) God might be worshiped, and that the *Vida* might also count as *obras*—good works—because God “will render to every man according to his works” (*Council*, “Sixth Session” 44).

If Teresa cast herself as a member of this group of feeble humans, “cosa tan flaca como somos las mujeres” (*Camino*, Prol. 3), and made specific mention of her own (spiritual) weakness—“Yo, como ruin, mal he sabido defenderme [del diablo]” (3)—it served to explain her obedience. Teresa’s direct reference to her *ruindad* pervades all her written works.<sup>10</sup> She presented herself as a weak and sinful woman, yet obedient and thus trustworthy, because if Teresa were to be trusted her readers might be persuaded that she told the truth.<sup>11</sup> She thus assumed a

stance of obedience toward the female condition construct and presented examples of the prevalent views on women with which she apparently agreed. Dámaso Chicharro’s 1993 edition of Teresa’s *Vida* has a footnote in which he remarks on Teresa’s contempt for women in general: “Nótese el poco aprecio que tiene la santa de la mujer en general cuando habla despectivamente de *disbarate de mujeres*” (391n2).<sup>12</sup> This suggests her remarks regarding the female condition were equally successful in the sixteenth century.

## Teresa’s Obedience to Church Doctrine and Hierarchy

Obedience is concomitant with the religious life. If Teresa could not contravene the circumstances of her sex, neither could she break her vow of obedience. Additionally, Teresa had inherited a tradition that valued obedience as a means to spiritual perfection, a goal she had for herself and others. All her actions, including the act of writing, are framed in terms of submission to her superiors and obedience to orthodox Roman Catholicism (inextricably bound together). Because she lived in the religiously tumultuous sixteenth century, as much as because she was a woman, she explicitly submitted everything she penned to “el parecer de quien me lo manda escribir, que son personas de grandes letras” (*Moradas*, Prol. 3, cf. II.ii.11). She had written much the same in the Prologue to the *Fundaciones*:

En todo me sujeto a lo que tiene la madre santa Iglesia Romana, y con determinación que antes que venga a vuestras manos, hermanas y hijas mías, lo verán letrados y personas espirituales. (5)

Throughout her writings she also established obedience to her superiors by affirming orthodox tenets of the Catholic Church, and stating her adherence to Scriptures (e.g. *Vida* XXV.13, XXXII.17, XXXIII.5, XXXIV.11; *Moradas* VI.iii.4).<sup>13</sup>



Teresa must show herself to be obedient to her superiors, because in the monastic tradition the command from one's superior is to be understood as a command from God:

Because of the holy service which they have professed [...] as soon as anything has been ordered by the Superior, they receive it as a divine command and cannot suffer any delay in executing it. (*Rule* 33, cf. 159)

Accordingly, Teresa's obedience to the articles of faith and the doctrine of the Catholic Church also implied strict obedience to her superiors. But given Teresa's spiritual life and her reform activities, this was not always easy. Yet she submitted. In the account of the real barriers and the spiritual anguish she faced regarding her first foundation, the Convent of San José, obedience emerges as one of the key issues Teresa had to negotiate. Just when things appeared to be in order for the foundation to go ahead, "mi confesor me mandó no entendiese más en ello" (*Vida* XXXIII.1, cf. 3). How could she move forward with reform if she had no permission to do so? God came to the rescue:

Me dijo entonces que no me fatigase, que yo había mucho servido a Dios y no ofendídale en aquel negocio; que hiciese lo que me mandaba el confesor [Pedro Ibáñez] en callar por entonces, hasta que fuese tiempo de tornar a ello. (XXXIII.3)

The divine command to obey her superiors reassured Teresa, as it did her superiors. One of them—Domingo Báñez—testified during the *Proceso informativo* in 1591 that Teresa "le daba cuenta de su vida y preguntaba lo que debía hacer para más servir a Dios en todos los negocios que trataba" (*Procesos* I: 6), and that "siempre se informó de los hombres más letrados que ella hallaba, especialmente de la Orden de Santo Domingo" (*Procesos* I: 7, cf. I: 16, 17).<sup>14</sup>

Teresa accentuated her obedience to

orthodoxy by endorsing points of doctrine upheld by the Council of Trent (cf. *Vida* XXXIII.5). By explicitly supporting the tenets unequivocally confirmed by the Council—such as the value of good works, the existence of purgatory, the veneration of the Saints, and the enclosure of nuns—she could dispel suspicions surrounding heresy and reaffirm orthodox Catholic doctrine.<sup>15</sup>

The Council of Trent confirmed good works as necessary to a truly orthodox Christian life. Teresa's wish to do good works was not, therefore, a minor point. Good works separated Teresa from Protestant teachings, and particularly set her *contra* Luther's doctrine of justification by faith alone.<sup>16</sup> As stated in Canon XXXII of the Sixth session of the Council (1547), "[i]f any one saith, that the good works of one that is justified are in such manner the gifts of God, as that they are not also the good merits of him that is justified [...] let him be anathema" (48-49, cf. Chapter XVI of the same session). Thus, Teresa was much concerned with her *obras*. In the *Vida* she refers to her "malas obras" (IV.4), her *obras* "ruines e imperfectas" (IV.10) and her lack of good works (XL.24), because "conforme las obras se habrá de dar el premio" (XXI.5, cf. Council, "Sixth Session" 44). Her concern—"[b]ien me parece a mí que amo [a Dios], mas las obras me desconsuelan" (*Vida* XXX.17)—spurs her into action: "Procuraba hacer buenas obras exteriores para ocuparme" (XXX.15), because "[o]bras quiere el Señor" (*Moradas* XXX.i.6, V.iii.11).<sup>17</sup> Teresa establishes the importance of works even as the soul seeks God's mercies in prayer: "Mientras más merced el Señor os hiciere en la oración, es menester más ir bien fundadas las obras" (*Camino* [Valladolid Codex] V.2; cf. *Moradas* VII.iv.6). Furthermore, *obras* are not only good for one's soul but for others: "Que enseñe a aquella [hermana] por obra, lo que por palabra por ventura no lo entenderá" (*Camino* [Valladolid Codex] VII.7; cf. *Camino* XI.4, XXIII.1). Good works also reflect one's inner spiritual health: "Si estáis aprovechadas [...] se entienda en sus obras" (*Camino* XXIX.5).

The Council of Trent also established the truth of the existence of purgatory, belief to which Teresa adhered (*Vida* III.6, III.7, XXXIX.5; *Camino* XL.9-10; *Moradas* VI.xi.6, etc.). She also interceded for dead souls, and recounted visions in which she saw friars and nuns leave purgatory, or go straight to heaven. Upon hearing of the death of a provincial (Gregorio Fernández), for example, Teresa reveals this news

dióme mucha turbación, porque temí su salvación, que había sido veinte años perlado, cosa que yo temo mucho, cierto, por parecerme cosa de mucho peligro tener a cargo las almas, y con mucha fatiga me fui a un oratorio. Dile todo el bien que había hecho en mi vida, que sería bien poco; y así lo dije a el Señor que supliesen los méritos suyos lo que había menester aquel alma para salir del purgatorio. Estando pidiendo esto a el Señor lo mejor que yo podía, parecióme salía del profundo de la tierra a mi lado derecho, y vile subir al cielo con grandísima alegría. (*Vida* XXXVIII.26)

Teresa offers her own good deeds in exchange for the salvation of this man, then witnesses him rise to heaven. The rest of this chapter—XXXVIII—is devoted to other visions in which she saw others go from purgatory to heaven (e.g. *Vida* XXXVIII.29, 30). Teresa's belief in, and visions of, purgatory, and her successful intercession for others' souls affirmed the Council's decree that established that "there is a Purgatory, and that the souls there detained are helped by the suffrages of the faithful" ("Twenty-fifth Session" 232-233, cf. 47). By recounting these visions Teresa participated in the work called for by the Council, that instructed that the doctrine concerning Purgatory be "believed, maintained, taught, and everywhere proclaimed by the faithful of Christ" ("Twenty-fifth Session" 232-233, cf. "Sixth Session" 47).

Trent also ruled on the veneration of saints and sacred images. The faithful are to be taught to "invoke them, and to have recourse to their prayers," because such practice is not idolatry;

[m]oreover, that the images of Christ, of the Virgin Mother of God, and of the other saints, are to be had and retained particularly in temples, and that due honour and veneration are to be given them. ("Twenty-fifth Session" 234)

In keeping with these tenets, there are throughout her works many instances of such belief and conformity, such as her own mother's teachings—"Mi madre tenía [... cuidado de] ponernos en ser devotos de Nuestra Señora y algunos Santos" (*Vida* I.1)—and the consolation she drew from an image of the Virgin upon her mother's death:

Como yo comencé a entender lo que había perdido, afligida fuime a una imagen de nuestra Señora, y supliquéa fuese mi madre con muchas lágrimas. Paréceme que, aunque se hizo con simpleza, que me ha valido; porque conocidamente he hallado a esta Virgen soberana en cuanto me he encomendado a ella, y en fin me ha tornado a sí. (*Vida* I.7; cf. *Fundaciones* XIV.9)

Teresa records her prayers for Mary's help and her belief that these have been useful to her, thereby demonstrating the certainty and value of such intercession (cf. *Moradas* I.ii.2, I.ii.12; *Fundaciones* II.5, cf. XXV.3).

Her devotion to images also enriched Teresa's piety. Through the contemplation of physical objects she was able to participate in the humanity and suffering of Christ (*Vida* IX.1). Teresa appreciated the image because its realness led to the shedding of many tears and prayers to show that images helped her achieve her spiritual goals:

Yo sólo podía pensar en Cristo como hombre; mas es así que jamás le pude representar en mí—por más que leía su hermosura y vía imágenes—sino como quien está ciego u acurcas [...] a esta causa era tan amiga de imágenes. ¡Desventurados los que por su culpa pierden este bien! Bien parece que no aman al Señor, porque si le amaran, holgáranse de ver su retrato [...]. (*Vida IX.6*)

Images facilitated the enjoyment of a deeper spiritual life (cf. *Camino XLIII.2*). For her, the veneration of images was important enough that those who do not rejoice in images, surely, she suggested, do not love the Lord. The reference to those who would not seek images in their pursuit of greater spirituality undoubtedly refers to John Calvin's rejection of pictorial representations of God and the worship of images. For Calvin, the worshiping of images and pictures is contrary to Scripture, and the "brute stupidity" of superstitious men who "pant after visible figures of God, and thus to form gods of wood, stone, gold, silver, or other dead and corruptible matter" (*Institutes I.xi.1*, cf. *I.xi.2-4*). Against Calvin's position that "whenever any observances of piety are transferred to someone other than God, sacrilege occurs" (*Institutes I.xii.3*), Teresa corroborated the orthodox notion that the Virgin and the Saints intercede on behalf of the soul. She advocated the value of devotion to images, supporting an important place for iconography in the life of the faithful (e.g., *Vida XIX.6*, *XXVII.1*, *XXIX.5*).

In its Twenty-fifth Session the Council of Trent ordained that provision be made for "the enclosure of nuns [to] be carefully restored, wheresoever it has been violated, and that it be preserved, wheresoever it has not been violated" (240). Nuns could no longer leave the convent, and no one must enter the enclosure of a nunnery without the written consent of a superior, notwithstanding birth, age or sex "under the pain of excommunication to be *ipso facto* incurred" (240). These grave consequences stress the importance the Council ascribed to enclosure for women (cf. Teresa of

Ávila, *Epistolario* 421.14; Chapters 66 and 67 of Benedict's *Rule*). It also required that women's cloisters move within city walls if these were in unpopulated areas. Thus Ulrike Strasser is able to stress that

[m]onastic reform was a key component of the Counter-Reformation [...]. The council fathers took a number of measures to re-establish the cloister as sacred space and reinvigorate the moral and spiritual life of the religious. Interestingly, but nonetheless in line with a long tradition of clerical misgivings about women's moral capacities, the council decreed more regulations for nuns than for monks and it put a premium on reining in female religious conduct. A linchpin of convent reform was the novel insistence on strict claustration of all female religious houses. (262-63)

Strasser also notes that "[a]side from a brief prohibition of unapproved absences of male religious from their convents, all clauses on claustration pertained to female religious" (263n21).

As a nun who had lived before and after Trent, and who also sought to improve the religious life of women within the framework of orthodoxy, Teresa approved of strict claustration. She explains that "[m]e hizo harto daño no estar en monasterio encerrado" (*Vida VII.3*), so that "me quería ir de este lugar [Monasterio de la Encarnación] y dotar en otro monasterio muy más encerrado que en el que yo al presente estava" (*Vida XXXI.13*). Teresa supported *encerramiento* because for her it was concomitant with the monastic life and her desire to "apartarme más de todo y llevar mi profesión y llamamiento con más perfección" (*Vida XXXVI.5*). In the end Teresa never moved to another, more enclosed, convent; instead she reformed her order and founded Discalced Carmelite convents where strict claustration was the rule, and where, "[t]odo lo que en esta casa [the Convent of San José] se guarda de encerramiento [...] se me hace en extremo suave" (*Vida XXXVI.10*,



cf. XXXVI.9). Strict enclosure was also agreeable to her sisters: “No se creará el contento que se recibe en estas fundaciones, cuando nos vemos ya con clausura” (*Fundaciones* XXXI.46, cf. XXX.12; *Epistolario* 385.15; *Vida* XXXVI.7) because “[e]stando encerradas peleamos por El” (*Camino* III.5), y “parece ya lo tenemos todo hecho” (*Camino* X.1). To preserve and endorse claustration, and in keeping with the renewed value placed on enclosure by the Church, Teresa also detailed in her *Constituciones* how the nuns ought to carry out any interaction with persons from outside the convent walls (15–20; cf. *Cuentas* XIX; *Fundaciones* XXXI.46; *Epistolario* 94.4, 98.14).<sup>18</sup>

Teresa’s reform, and much of her brand of spirituality, coincided with and promoted the Council of Trent’s pronouncements. This explicit adherence to orthodox doctrines and practices created the space that allowed her to live a deeper spiritual life, write about it, and reform her order. Because

[w]hatever the extent obedience to confessors’ orders was involved in taking up the pen, all women who wrote had to find the means to authorize themselves to commit thoughts, experiences, and inventions, to paper. (Arenal and Schlau 239)

In addition to obeying confessors and superiors, Teresa legitimized her voice by means of adherence to official Tridentine Church doctrine.

## Reading Teresa’s Rhetoric of Obedience

Of the many extant contemporary responses—accounts, biographies, testimonies—to Teresa’s life and writing, consider that these were written about a nun described in her lifetime by the Pope’s ambassador Sega as “femina inquieta, andariega, desobediente y contumaz” (de la Madre de Dios 930n4; cf. Teresa, *Epistolario* 254.3). I shall limit the

discussion to Domingo Báñez’s 1575 *Censura* written for the Inquisition, Luis de León’s 1588 *Prologue* to the first edition of Teresa’s published works, and Alonso de la Fuente’s review of these for the Inquisition in 1589, for these readers were particularly concerned with whether Teresa’s texts conformed to Catholic orthodox beliefs and practices or not, and passed judgement on Teresa’s writing either during her lifetime, or soon after her death.<sup>19</sup>

The Dominican Domingo Báñez (1528–1604), having given the *Libro de la vida* careful consideration, found that Teresa “da relación llana de todo lo que por su alma passa, a fin de ser enseñada y guiada por sus confesores” (“Censura” 190, cf. 191). Writing in 1575 at the request of the Inquisitorial Tribunal of Toledo, Báñez was convinced of the divine origin of Teresa’s experiences and of the orthodoxy of her ways of prayer—and thus of the content of her *Vida*—by Teresa’s declared obedience to her superiors. Báñez reported that Teresa did not wish to teach but rather to be taught, that she wrote plainly and clearly in simple and honest language, and that she was readily guided by her spiritual advisors. He did not comment on the fact of Teresa’s writing. His concerns stemmed rather from the visions and revelations contained in her *Vida* that might lead readers—particularly women readers—astray of orthodox religious practices (“Censura” 190).<sup>20</sup> Like Juan de Ávila before him (1568),<sup>21</sup> Báñez thought the book should not be widely circulated (Álvarez 628),<sup>22</sup> although he also stated that “no he hallado cosa que a mi juicio sea mala doctrina, antes tiene muchas de gran edificación y aviso” (“Censura” 190). According to Báñez, Teresa succeeded when writing about her ways of prayer precisely because she had been submissive and obedient to lettered men and confessors (“Censura” 190). It was not so much the content of her work that won his endorsement; Teresa’s submissiveness to her confessors secured his support (“Censura” 190). And although he was careful to state that he could come to no definite conclusion

regarding the nature of her experiences, he further endorsed the *Vida* based on Teresa's character. Her virtues secured Báñez's guarded support: "tengo grande experiencia de su verdad, de su obediencia, penitencia, paciencia y charidad con los que la persiguen y otras virtudes que quienquiera que la tratare verá en ella" ("Censura" 191). Her visions and revelations are of divine origin because she is a woman of many virtues ("Censura" 191; cf. Carrera 2). Among these, obedience stood paramount. Hence, he derived his confidence in the orthodoxy of her ways from Teresa herself as much as from her book, but in particular because she submitted to her confessors and always accepted their judgement. In 1575 Báñez had been her confessor for a number of years. He could rely on his knowledge of her as a person, besides studying her text, to "judge the book's content on the basis of his conception of its author and her intent" (Ahlgren, *Politics* 50). Teresa's virtues, in particular her submissive attitude towards her confessors and the Church—to which Báñez also testified at the proceeding for her beatification (cf. *Procesos* I: 6, 7)—were for him the greatest endorsement of the possibility that her visions were God-given. This in turn led to his approval of Teresa's text. Báñez was persuaded of Teresa's sincerity and orthodoxy by virtue of her obedience.

This was not the first time that Báñez had raised his voice on behalf of Teresa. As Bilinkoff reminds us, city councillors and *letrados* met in Ávila in 1562 to decide the fate of the new and reformed Convent of San José. And only "[t]he timely intervention of the Dominican [...] tipped the balance in her favour" of a foundation without endowments ("Social Meaning" 355). Báñez reasoned that reform should be understood as *renovación* ("Discurso" 162). He also argued that the city need not concern itself with San José because it was "fuera de la jurisdicción seglar" since the newly founded convent had the support of the Bishop and the Holy See ("Discurso" 164).

Báñez can also be said to have supported Teresa's writing career. As her confessor, in

1562 he allowed her to write "otro libro." In the prologue to that book, the *Camino*, Teresa explains: "tenía licencia del padre presentado fray Domingo Vañez, de la Orden de Santo Domingo, que al presente es mi confesor, para escribir algunas cosas de oración" (1; cf. Bilinkoff, *Related Lives* 28). Nonetheless, Teresa did not take Báñez's support of her writing for granted. She added that he, as the first one to read her text, would burn it should her book not prove to be *acertado* (*Camino*, Prol. 1). Teresa's caution and submission was necessary in post-Tridentine Spain:

[B]y 1400 the issue of women's charismatic authority had become especially fraught. In an age of schism, political instability, and growing anxieties about heresy and witchcraft, women's behaviour and spiritual status came under special scrutiny. [...] And t]he outbreak of the Protestant Reformation in the early decades of the sixteenth century only intensified concerns about orthodoxy and authenticity. (Bilinkoff, *Related Lives* 4-5, cf. 18)

Moreover, the 1570s "wave of Inquisitorial activity against *alumbardismo*, [...] a wave of investigations for false mysticism [that] included Teresa of Ávila and Francisca [de los Apóstoles]" (Ahlgren, *Introduction* 7, cf. 34-35; Weber, "Demonizing" 143-146, 149), would have also cautioned any cleric wanting to endorse or support a female mystic. Confessors had to be careful too. For a nun's confessor's reputation was attached to her, because if she "turned out to be a fraud, then, presumably, he would have been implicated in that deception" (Surtz 75). Therefore, guiding Teresa spiritually entailed potential danger: "In a misogynistic age writers warned of women's intellectual and moral weakness" and how women also "represented sexual temptation" (Bilinkoff, *Related Lives* 18, cf. 21, 94; Giles 80-89). However, not all priests skirted the work of the discernment or examination of spirits in order to establish the penitent's orthodoxy or heterodoxy (Bilinkoff, *Related Lives* 19-20). Báñez was one of these

men. Because, as John Coakley states of Dominican friars who ministered to women religious, confessors “could also acquire a deeply admiring interest in their lives, and thereby a personal involvement with them that transcended duty entirely” (222). Indeed, Jodi Bilkoff’s study of such confessor-penitent relationships shows that the spiritual guidance of female penitents became in early-modern Europe “a crucial component of [clerics’] personal and professional identities” (*Related Lives* 20). Confessors could be much more than the examiners of souls or the scrutinizers of texts, and “clerics could certainly benefit from these confessional relationships as well” even if “spiritually inclined women [...] needed the authorization of priests [...] more than the priests needed the women” (Bilkoff, *Related Lives* 27; Donahue 113).

Thus, in spite of, or because of, their confessor-penitent relationship, Báñez had cause to be guarded. When he wrote his “Censura” in 1575 Báñez’s main concern was whether Teresa truly received visions from God, whether she was a fraud, or whether she might have been deceived by the devil. At that time Báñez decided that Teresa “no es engañadora” (“Censura” 190; *Vida* X.7), position he upheld in his 1591 testimony during the Salamanca proceedings calling for her beatification and canonization (*Procesos* I: 10). But even then, Báñez was guarded. He stated it would please him to see his opinions—the “Censura”—published alongside her works so that “se entendiera con cuánto recato se debe proceder en santificar a los vivos” (I: 10).

In the same 1591 deposition Báñez indicated that he had desired the original *Vida* manuscript to be burned (because copies were being circulated without permission) but that Teresa had suggested that “lo mirase bien y lo quemase si le pareciese; en lo cual conoció este testigo [Báñez] su [Teresa’s] gran rendimiento y humildad; y lo miró con atención y no se atrevió a quemarle” (I: 10). Submission to his authority won the day. However, the *Vida* remained in the hands of the Inquisition, where it had been since 1574, till Ana de Jesús secured its release

(*Procesos* I.485) so that Teresa’s complete works could be published in 1588, edited by Luis de León.

In 1587, five years after Teresa’s death, Luis de León prepared her texts for publication. Llamas Martínez explains that Luis de León’s undertaking was twofold: “[p]or una parte la revisión doctrinal, encomendada por el Consejo. Por otra parte, un cotejo crítico-editorial” (293). Furthermore, fray Luis wrote a prologue to this first edition of Teresa’s works to justify wide/r circulation for Teresa’s texts. In it he considers the timeliness of their publication and reflects on the virtues of the writer.

Like Báñez, Luis de León sought to address whether Teresa’s texts deserved wider circulation or whether these should be read only by spiritual and lettered people. As part of his strategy to support the publication of her works, he addressed the prologue to the prioresses and the sisters of the Discalced Carmelite Order so that it reads as a letter addressed to the nuns instead of summoning a wide impersonal audience. A letter intended for “las Madres Priora Ana de Jesús y religiosas Carmelitas Descalzas del Monasterio de Madrid (*sic*)” suggested a specific limited readership that minimized the potential threat to orthodoxy the publication of Teresa’s works might imply.

Fray Luis also relied on the fact that Teresa was no longer living and thus her virtue no longer threatened. Reminiscent of Báñez, he endorses the publication of Teresa’s works, at this time:

Mientras se dudó de la virtud de la madre Teresa, y mientras hubo gentes que pensaron al revés de lo que era, porque aun no se veía la manera en que Dios aprobaba sus obras, bien fué que estas historias no saliesen á luz, ni anduviesen en público, para escusar la temeridad de los juicios de algunos; mas ahora despues de su muerte [...] las mismas cosas y el suceso dellas hacen certidumbre que es Dios [...]. (20)

Dead and buried, Teresa’s virtue was no longer in question. Fray Luis could now state

the fact that it was God's hand at work in and through her. Now he could say Teresa was not deceived nor was she a deceiver, her writings the work of the Holy Spirit (19). Thus, his approval of the publication of her works is in tune with Báñez's previous, more cautious, statements made about the texts during Teresa's lifetime (cf. Bilinkoff, "Social Meaning" 355). Fray Luis respects previous judgments and decisions, while advocating a broader audience for her texts on account of the miracles that are her daughters and her books, both witnesses "de su gran virtud" now that Teresa "vive en el cielo" (17, cf. 20).

Teresa, the virtuous woman she had been, also determined fray Luis' judgement of her texts and their origins. He sought approval for the circulation of her texts based on Teresa's Christian virtues and the miracles associated with her:<sup>23</sup>

cuando el milagro de la incorrupcion de su cuerpo, y otros milagros, que cada día hace, nos ponen fuera de toda duda su santidad, encubrir las mercedes que Dios le hizo viviendo, y no querer publicar los medios con que la perfeccionó para bien de todas las gentes, sería en cierta manera hacer injuria al Espíritu Santo. (20)

Her books, he argues, are marvels that reflect her virtues and the work of the Holy Spirit. The divine spoke through her, guiding her pen and her hand. For Luis de León this was apparent due to the light Teresa shed on difficult matters (19) and because he believed, with Saint Paul, that it was not for women to teach but to be taught (18). Furthermore, she had always been guided by prelates and confessors and not by her own revelations, that is, Teresa governed her conduct by submitting to her superiors rather than to God. Fray Luis solved the problem Teresa faced of having to submit to divine instruction and her confessors' guidance by portraying her as medium, and ascribing to Teresa herself only the act of obedience. In short, her obedience to her superiors was proof of her virtue and

saintliness, and the latter justified and necessitated the publication of her works for the benefit of other souls (22; cf. fray Luis' "Censura" [Álvarez 633]). This in turn promoted Teresa's holiness and the (Catholic) Church. Teresa's saintliness was both the justification and the purpose of publishing her works. Writing after her death it was possible to make such suggestions. For Báñez, writing in 1575, to extoll the saintliness of a person of this world was likely a temptation from the devil ("Censura" 191; cf. *Procesos* I: 10).

Seven years after Teresa's death and a year after the publication of her works the Inquisition began a process against these, prompted by a letter written by Alonso de la Fuente (1533-1594), "a friar with an obsession about illuminists" (Kamen 145). His letter dated August 26, 1589, was addressed to the Inquisition's tribunal, which "happened to value his information" (Kamen 146). The proceedings officially began October 12 of the same year, the date on which the Inquisitorial commission received Alonso de la Fuente's document (Llamas Martínez 395-96). For him, Teresa's book "tiene la ponçoña de la heregía" and "exede la capacidad de muger" (396). Alonso de la Fuente aligned Teresa with Mahomet and Luther, who, he argued, had been deceived by the devil or by their own heretical ambitions (397). And the miracle of her incorrupt body, which for Luis de León confirmed the divine origin of Teresa's experiences and works, de la Fuente saw as a "negocio fabuloso o prestigio de sathanás, o imbención de hereges" (397, cf. 396, 402, 404). According to Alonso de la Fuente, Teresa's doctrine is the same as that of the *alumbradas*: "el libro es corrupto y contiene secta manifiesta de heregias," based on the fact that they, the *alumbrados*, also called their doctrine "de oración mental" (397, cf. 401).

Alonso de la Fuente followed up his letter with five *Memoriales*—briefs—four of which are extant. In these documents he presented himself as a trustworthy judge and witness who had the instruction and experience to pass judgement on Teresa's texts. De

la Fuente found the language of the *Vida* to be “sospechoso” and warned his readers that Teresa’s doctrine was cloaked in a rhetoric of humility:

[l]a authora deste libro hace larga historia de su vida y conversión y virtudes, tomando de ello *leve ocasión* que dice se lo mandaron sus confesores. Donde, entre muchas palabras que tienen sentido humilde, dice un millón de vanidades. (400, emphasis added)

I highlight the words *leve ocasión* because de la Fuente sought to show that Teresa took advantage of circumstances, and the support of confessors, to write. Furthermore, he pointed out that Teresa’s discourse was enveloped in layers of protective rhetorical strategies. These he summarized as “recatos y cautelas y fiadores” (404). He criticized Teresa’s rhetorical stratagems, which he interpreted as lies and poison veiled in a sweet and spiritual language (398), but in so doing he acknowledged Teresa’s rhetorical skills (cf. Weber 161). He saw Teresa’s rhetoric for what it was, a strategy designed to protect her that might also ensure the survival of her texts and her spiritual ways.

Unlike Báñez, Alonso de la Fuente did not believe Teresa’s discourse to be sincere, including her claim that she wrote out of obedience. He enumerates the elements in her text that he did not believe, such as her claim that lettered men had learned from her. In some cases de la Fuente uses Teresa’s own arguments to condemn her. For example, because she complained she could not find, over a twenty-year period, a confessor who could understand her, de la Fuente is confident her spiritual experiences were not from God. And he further supports this point with Teresa’s own admission that many informed men of God believed her experiences to be the work of the devil (400). And even when they did believe her, that educated men could learn from a woman, offered no support for Teresa’s position, nor did it confirm

her doctrine as good; for de la Fuente this was evidence that she worked secretly, deceiving these men because they were “hombres doctos” de “poco seso” (402). In trying to unmask Teresa as a heretic and a fraud de la Fuente acknowledged her rhetorical abilities, describing her style as one that persuades and teaches “con cauthela y artificio” (423, cf. 404). In the sixteenth century *cautela* implied ingenious trickery, accomplished by the use of ambiguous terminology and equivocal or indeterminate words (“Cautela,” *Tesoro*). So although Alonso de la Fuente disapproved of her teachings—none of which escaped being lies, fables, mistakes, heresy, sectarianism or diabolical dreams (399)—he recognized her writing skills. For him, because Teresa’s discourse is persuasive, disguised as it was in a rhetoric of obedience, her books had to be censored. However, although de la Fuente was instrumental in the persecution of many illuminists after 1573, “the Inquisition ignored him” when it came to Teresa (Kamen 145). The discourse that persuaded Báñez, Juan de Ávila and fray Luis de León of her obedience (which they saw as genuine) and consequent orthodoxy convinced Alonso de la Fuente of Teresa’s heterodox views.

Perhaps the Inquisition in the end relied on Luis de León’s answer to some of the accusations levelled at Teresa’s work after its publication in 1588.<sup>24</sup> In the marginal notes he made to the second edition of 1589 fray Luis addressed “aspectos delicados de la experiencia mística” (qtd. in Álvarez 634). These notes were indeed responses to accusations in which the friar sought to explain and elaborate on specific points Teresa made about issues that required careful handling in Counter-Reformation Spain, such as Christ’s Humanity and the difference between union and ecstasy. For example, of a vision of Christ and His wounds that Teresa included in *Cuentas de conciencia* 15, fray Luis wrote: “No dice en esto la santa madre, como algunos han entendido y engañádose, que entonces avía abaxado y engañádose, que entonces avía abaxado del cielo la humanidad de Christo para hablar con ella” (635). His attempt to deal



with specific charges is one instance of the support Teresa's work received. But fray Luis was not alone in his support of Teresa's life, writings and teachings. Consider that she had no less than eight biographers in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, leading up to her canonization in 1622.<sup>25</sup> These writers too, men of the cloth, portrayed Teresa as obedient. In 1590 Francisco de Ribera wrote that Teresa's judgement was "rendido a la obediencia" (576), which Diego de Yepes reiterated in 1599: "Obedecía la Santa fielmente, [...] y vencía á su mismo juicio y sentido, por seguir con humildad lo que el confessor le decía" (I: 87).

This brief survey of contemporary readers of Teresa leads us to two conclusions: first, that to a large degree, Teresa's rhetoric was indeed persuasive. And second, that the readers' judgements of her texts depended in part on their understanding of Teresa the person as they knew her or had good reason to believe she had been, and whether they were supportive of Teresa and her life's work or not. If this survey were not sufficient, consider the testimonies regarding Teresa's obedience to her confessors (and others) given at the processes for her beatification beginning in 1591 (e.g. *Procesos* I: 16, 17, 170, 282, II: 56, etc.). The goal or agenda of the readers informed their reading. For most of them the goal was the protection and/or advancement of Catholic orthodoxy, and the protection of clergy and prelates as the authorities within the Church. Teresa's life and writing supported this cause. Furthermore,

ecclesiastic leaders and censors recognized that in turbulent times, when so many Christians were tempted to join heretical cults or simply fall away from the church, it might be auspicious to publicize a naïvely charismatic eloquence. (Arenal and Schlau 193)

Although Arenal and Schlau are discussing the text of Isabel de Jesús (1586-1648), the same can be said for the publication of Teresa's works.

The passage of time did not really change the way Teresa's writing was perceived. In fact, her writing was not cause for much literary study before the 1880s. Always greatly admired, her life was written about, and a great number of biographies were written and published in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. A perusal of Sánchez's 2008 *Bibliografía sistemática* on Teresa confirms this. The writers were interested in her spiritual teachings, her reform activities, her life and times. Academics were not much interested in her till the nineteenth century when a careful edition of her works was prepared by Vicente de la Fuente and published in 1861. Additionally, the number of lives written in the nineteenth century, and in particular published in 1882—the tercentennial of her death which was "celebrated famously" (DuPont 10)—may well in part account for the flourish of studies that followed. Ángeles Ezama Gil notes "el impulso que para la reivindicación de Santa Teresa significó la celebración del tercer centenario de su muerte en 1882, el primero con carácter social y público desde la desaparición de la Santa" (780), though as DuPont has pointed out "this increase in attention [...] was not necessarily synonymous with greater sophistication in readings of her work" (12).

In the nineteenth century writers of fiction, as well as scholars, were drawn to Teresa and pondered her writing life. For female writers Teresa could be looked to as model. Emilia Pardo Bazán explored Teresa's life and writings as she worked through "her own self-definition as an intellectual and an author" (DuPont 92, cf. 23) and later politicized Teresa and defended her as an example for (intellectual) women (DuPont 92-93). George Eliot dwelt on the life of Saint Teresa as she struggled with "the social lot of women" in Victorian England (DuPont 7-8; cf. Ezama Gil 785). However, in some cases, the turn of the century praise (by men) of Teresa's writings in Spain were "in reality attacks on women writers," a strategy not unnoticed by them (DuPont 20).

In spite of the continuing attention garnered by Teresa and her *oeuvre* since the

1880s, some scholars, now also interested in Teresa the writer, have continued to read Teresa's obedience as factual and genuine, while others have assessed her stated obedience as strategy. A pivotal point came in 1908, with Alfred Morel-Fatio's seminal article "Les lectures de Sainte Thérèse" in which he dispelled the notion of Teresa as "una monja iletrada, sin otra fuente de doctrina que la inspiración divina" (Alborg 503). Yet even in 1930, Margarita Nelken reads Teresa as an icon, an "hidalgua castellana" (83, cf. 84), the Spanish figure that condenses orthodox Christian mysticism and "el alma de Castilla" (83). Nelken, unable to discard notions of histerismo (87; cf. 94), focused on her *genio* to which she attributes Teresa's writing ability to "expresar [los sentimientos más inefables] con la lógica más rigurosa y el más absoluto dominio del equilibrio del pensamiento" (87). Although for Nelken Teresa's writings "nunca dejaron de ser razonados" (97, emphasis in original), she paradoxically also writes that Teresa "escribe al dictado" (102). That is, Teresa was a scribe for the divine and a rigorous thinker.

Only in 1978 Victor García de la Concha considers Teresa's works as those of an earnest author. He titled his book *El arte literario de Santa Teresa* and acknowledged at once Teresa the saint and Teresa the writer. Perhaps the title reflects the contradiction he sees in the fact that a soul inclined to solitude and introspection should have written so much. As a consequence, García de la Concha accepts Teresa's assertion that she was a writer "por obediencia" and argues that from this very obedience "surge un esencial condicionamiento literario, dándose en la forma más directa, expeditiva y desnuda" (92). He accepts at face value Teresa's assertion that obedience is her guiding principle. He says as much: "Escribe por obediencia a las necesidades de la Reforma, a los mandatos expresos de sus directores o a las peticiones de sus hijas" (91). According to this view, Teresa's writing is done hastily, in order to get it out of the way, and is unpolished. He does not assign to her authorial intentions. However, he does believe that

her writing includes what he calls "tarea redaccional" (105), that is, that it involved some composition and editorial work, acknowledging that Teresa's writing was more deliberate than she would have us believe.<sup>26</sup> Though he identifies the contradiction implicit in writing to comply with commands (91), García de la Concha does not see it as an issue: Teresa is a writer by obedience, and her writings contain theological teachings and these have substance beyond the mere expression of her experiences. Moreover, he claims, Teresa only knew how to give herself totally to a task, which for him explains the abundance of her writing, and her writing style (91-92). This implicitly highlights writing as obedience. Though García de la Concha set out to "apprehender la literariedad [de la obra tere-siana] y categorizarla" (11), he attributes this very literariness in large part to her personality and her obedience. And though he provides us with an in-depth study of the grammar, vocabulary, and rhetoric of her works, he believes with fray Luis that these are also the result of the supernatural (10), much as Teresa had stated herself (cf. *Vida* 39.8).

Another critic, Enrique Llamas, explained in 1978 that the virtue of obedience "la movió a poner por escrito las maravillas que el Señor había realizado y estaba realizando en su alma. Fueron sus confesores y consejeros quienes la mandaron llevar a cabo este trabajo" (206). For Llamas, the *Libro de la vida* "es fruto de la fuerza sobrenatural y de la eficacia de las (*sic*) obediencia" as well as "efecto de un carisma especial con que el Señor [la] distinguió" (209). God is both the origin of her experiences, and also the source of her understanding of these experiences and the strength to write, all possible due to the efficacy of obedience. According to this reading, the only agency ascribed to Teresa is that of obedience. However, many have noted that a twenty-year writing career of the magnitude of Teresa's cannot be explained away solely as a response to commands and/or grace. Karen Hollis, exploring Teresa's life before writing, sees "her gradual emergence as a writer" as

the result of many forces such as the Index of 1559, her reform activities, and her choice of confessors (29).

Llamas agrees with García de la Concha that obedience is the key stimulus for Teresa's act of writing, and adds that there could be no other reason for writing, since Teresa "no hubiera robado tiempo a sus quehaceres conventuales: hilar, tejer, despachar los asuntos del convento, dedicándolos a escribir un libro de vida espiritual" (205). According to Llamas, "[l]a práctica de la obediencia, tenía para ella una eficacia sobrenatural insospechada: facilitaba su realización y posibilitaba la mayor parte de las veces la ejecución de las obras" (208; cf. *Vida* XVIII.8). Moreover, Teresa's claim that her writing was a response to her confessors' request for a written account of spiritual favours (with the sole aim of authenticating them), and her claim that she wrote in obedience to God (*Vida* XXXVII.1) led Llamas to write that in Teresa obedience "alcanzó el mérito de una misión espiritual incondicionada" (206). Llamas read Teresa quite literally: obedience was her guiding virtue, and humility would have inhibited her from writing (cf. 205). García de la Concha and Llamas never suggest that personal reasons might have determined Teresa's wish to write, though they credit her with literary acumen. Thus, Gillian T. Ahlgren rightly argues that Teresa has been misread, "misinterpreted by nearly all literary critics, who understand her motivation to write solely as obedience to her confessors" (*Politics* 72). Like Hollis, Ahlgren holds the Valdés Index was the principal instigator of Teresa's writing, and this was her personal reason for writing. Teresa wished to provide spiritual reading material, especially for her sisters, to replace the spiritual literature that had been banned by the Index (41). In this light the mandate to write was not the primary mover of her actions, it was necessity that decided Teresa to write.

To highlight the importance of the virtue of obedience, in Chapter six of the *Libro de las Fundaciones* Teresa tells how a nun's obedience enables the distinction between

*flaqueza* and *arrobamiento* (VI.12, cf. VI.14, 16, 19). Of this and other examples in the *Fundaciones*, in 1990, Alison Weber writes: "the anecdotes of exemplary obedience are so extreme as to seem ludicrous to a modern sensibility" (*Rhetoric* 134). Furthermore, Weber argues, with respect to Teresa's own obedience, Teresa's self-directed humour "serves to diminish the seriousness of her individual acts of disobedience," such as neglecting to inform specific authorities of her intentions regarding the foundation of an un-endowed convent (*Rhetoric* 133-34). For Weber, Teresa had to find "a narrative strategy that [would] legitimate the disobedience and deceptions she practiced [in order to further her reform and foundations] without undermining the value of absolute obedience to authority she wished to inculcate in the nuns" (*Rhetoric* 134), in other words, how to uphold the status quo for other women and violate it herself. Weber claims Teresa did this, and achieved (posthumous) success, but that this would not have been possible

had Teresa not made some accommodations to the gender ideology of her audience [...]. Teresa's defensive strategy was to embrace stereotypes of female ignorance, timidity, or physical weakness [...] Teresa concedes to women's weakness, timidity, powerlessness and intellectual inferiority but uses the concessions ironically to defend, respectively, the legitimacy of her own spiritual favours, her disobedience of *letrados*, her administrative initiative, her right to 'teach' in the Pauline sense, and her unmediated access to the Scriptures. [...] Because] for a *mujercilla* the alternative to concession was silence. (*Rhetoric* 36-41, emphasis in original)

To elude this silencing, Weber also argues that Teresa honed the traditional literary topoi of the *captatio benevolentiae*, so much so, that the "frequency and distribution [of self-deprecatory remarks] are something totally new [...]. In this sense all of Teresa's

works are *extended* prologues” (50, emphasis in original), and as such constitute a rhetorical strategy and strongly suggest deliberate obedience to her female condition. Although Weber’s analysis of Teresa is foundational of new approaches to reading Teresa’s works, we must wonder whether Weber is not too happy to project modern sensibilities on a sixteenth-century nun, however clever Teresa may have been. As we seek to vindicate women and their contributions to history, perhaps we are too eager to ascribe to Teresa’ more recent feminine (if not feminist) ideals.

Writing in 1996, Gillian Ahlgren makes a case for Teresa’s rhetoric of obedience as the tool that may have saved her from the Inquisition:

In many complex ways Teresa enshrouded her activities in obedience. The rhetoric of obedience went a long way toward establishing Teresa’s goodwill toward institutional figures. She portrayed herself as in all ways obedient—to her confessors, to theologians, and to representatives of the hierarchical church—and her writing and reform activities as undertaken in obedience to God. (*Politics* 72)

Furthermore, Ahlgren continues, obedience “established Teresa’s theological credentials, [and] her right to write, despite the lack of a university education” (*Politics* 73). For this scholar, Teresa’s rhetoric of obedience is quite nuanced, depending on the context of each of her works, and Teresa’s need to “justify her forays into the literary world” (*Politics* 73). Ahlgren also argues that Teresa’s statements regarding obedience became clearer and stronger in the prologues of her works written after the *Libro de la vida* was in the hands of the Inquisition. In each case Teresa established exactly who was being obeyed. In the opinion of Ahlgren, this rhetoric of obedience differentiated Teresa from the *alumbrados* and the *luteranos*, who were “punished not only for their beliefs or practices but for the tenacity with which they clung to them” (*Politics* 76), leading

her to assess Teresa’s emphasis on humility and obedience as “a rhetorical strategy designed to present herself as no threat to a patriarchal and institutional church” (*Politics* 152). Weber and Ahlgren are examples of readers conceivably influenced by their own life and times—post 1950. In our desire to understand women’s early modern awareness of themselves, and the evolution of their emergence as writers and fuller participants in society, are we not ascribing to Teresa’s works much more design than she intended? If Ahlgren warns “we must be sensitive to the climate that produced Saint Teresa’s persona while recognizing her keen insights into the politics of sanctity of her day” (*Politics* 171), must we not also be sensitive to the politics of our day?<sup>27</sup>

Reading Teresa’s readers demands that we consider their own writing circumstances and objectives. Consider a 2002 entry in the *Diccionario de Santa Teresa de Jesús* in which Evaristo Renedo writes:

[n]o es necesario conocer mucho a T[eresa] para poderla definir como cristiana obediente y como monja que vive el voto de obediencia hasta las últimas consecuencias [...]. Lo suyo no era disputar con sus superiores, sino obedecer. (477-78)

Renedo notes that Teresa obeyed confessors even if it meant burning her writings, as when commanded to destroy her “Conceptos del amor de Dios.” For him, this burned book “se convirtió en ceniza y humo como canto de alabanza a la obediencia” (479). He accepts her obedience at face value. Renedo, a member of the Discalced Carmelite Order, is an example of the readers who approach Teresa from a theocentric perspective. This position presupposes agreement with Teresa due to their faith in divine intervention, and an unquestioning belief in her honesty, accepting the persona that emanates from her texts as thoroughly genuine. Reading Teresa quite literally, Renedo is able to write that Teresa obeyed God’s will, and Christ’s, since He is “el obediente por excelencia” (481). In the

twenty-first century, Teresa's discourse is still persuasive.

To summarize, we note that however confessors, editors and critics read Teresa they acknowledged the peculiarities of her writing. The different readings depend on whether they wanted to defend or indict her person, texts and/or legacy, whether style or content was what mattered most, and how the fact of being woman was considered. Men of the cloth saw, and see, Teresa as a woman, as a nun, and/or a saint. In the sixteenth century these men saw her as either visionary or heretic, and in either case writing was somehow deviant, unexpected, supernatural. Christian male scholars in the twentieth century still see her as a woman, as a nun, as a Mother, as a saint, but also as a writer, more or less spontaneous or skilled as the case may be; and more or less inspired by God, perhaps depending on the depth of their own religious convictions. To this day lots of eminent Teresian scholars are priests, like Tomás Álvarez, a Discalced Carmelite himself, and William Rowan, recently the Archbishop of Canterbury. These men have faith, today, in the supernatural, so they are interested in promoting Teresa's spirituality, greatness and virtue. It is primarily secular scholars who, late in the twentieth century, brought to the forefront the adverse conditions under which Teresa wrote—including being woman—and how these circumstances may have determined and conditioned both the act of writing and Teresa's very distinct writing style. It took till 1984, nearly 400 years after the publication of Teresa's works, for Rosa Rossi to suggest that obedience might be constructed as permission to write, and that Teresa's claims to write in obedience did not necessarily mean that Teresa did so but that she said she did so ("Mujer" 40).<sup>28</sup> Thus, we might say with Dupont that as "authors portray Teresa, they also represent their own preoccupations [...] Teresa is employed as a lens with which to [...] examine the concerns of their historical moment" (3).<sup>29</sup>

Retrospectively, one can hardly doubt that Teresa's obedience, and her rhetoric of

obedience, served her well. Both she and her texts survived the religiously tumultuous climate of the second half of the sixteenth century. Though restrictive, Teresa likely derived both comfort and licence from this eminently feminine virtue. It provided her with coordinates to guide her that Church and society could understand and find appropriate. However, it was only after her death that she received the vigorous support of the Church, because, as Rosa Rossi reminds us, throughout Teresa's life this support was never established beyond doubt: "toda su vida fue una convivencia permanente con el riesgo [de ser condenada por la Inquisición]" (*Biografía* 11). Teresa's stated obedience to orthodox doctrine, practice and belief, and her obedience to the standard construction of woman allowed for her work of reform and foundation, in addition to authorizing her writing and her consequent (if limited) participation in the apostolic work of the Roman Church. If we acknowledge her awareness of the times she lived (*Vida* XXXIII.5; cf. *Camino* XXI. 3, III.4-5, IV.2-3, XXXVI.4), we find that Teresa's desire for reform went beyond her order, a desire Teresa clearly articulated in the first three chapters of *Camino de perfección*. For even as she bemoans the fact that as a woman she could not act in defence of the Church—"imposibilitada de aprovechar en nada en el servicio del Señor, que toda mi ansia era" in the business of fighting "estos luteranos" (*Camino* I.2, cf. IV.1, XXXV.3; *Vida* XXXII.6; *Moradas*, Concl. 4; *Fundaciones* XVIII.5)—Teresa asserted her contributions: prayer in her reformed convents, and obedience, following the rules set by the Order and their Constitutions so that God "admitirá nuestros ruegos" (*Camino* V.1-3, cf. VII.4, VIII.1). Her part in the *gran empresa* was prayer and discipline. These were Teresa's responses to "[t]he rise of Protestantism [...] which] posed unprecedented challenges" (Bilinkoff, *Related Lives* 111). Obedience, devotion and intercession became "the active apostolate for which Teresa yearned" (115; cf. Wilson viii). Teresa's goals, as stated in her works, were achieved by casting obedience as the virtue



that synthesized the religious and social mores of her time. Although a virtue imposed on women, Teresa's obedience to her sex, to her superiors and to the orthodoxy of the Roman Catholic Church allowed her to have a sphere of action and influence much greater than that of other women of her time. However limiting, obedience—as noted by many scholars—gave Teresa of Ávila a lot of latitude.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Aristotelian physiology, that understood the “female state” (*Gen.* 775a) as the “weaker creature” (*Gen.* 726b) and “as it were a deformity” (*Gen.* 775a), and Galen's ideas on the hierarchy of the sexes—“the female is less perfect than the male” (qtd. in Blamires 41; cf. Aristotle, *Gen.* 737a)—were still authorities in the Middle Ages.

<sup>2</sup>The quotations from *Camino* are from the Escorial Codex, unless otherwise stated.

<sup>3</sup>These vows can be traced back to the *Rule of Saint Benedict* (c. 480-550), which “sets out a coherent and detailed plan for the organization of a monastic community” (Lawrence 20). From the outset, the *Rule* presents obedience as the guiding principle and virtue of the monastic life (7, cf. 131). Obedience is the preeminent virtue that should guide the monk seeking spiritual perfection, for “[t]he first degree of humility is obedience without delay. This becometh those who hold nothing dearer to them than Christ” (*Rule* 33).

<sup>4</sup> Consider Juan Luis Vives, who, even as he advocated some learning for women in *The Instruction of a Christian Woman* (1523), reveals early modern sensibilities regarding women's minds: “Así que, puesto que la mujer es un ser flaco y no es seguro su juicio, y muy expuesto al engaño [...] no conviene que ella enseñe” (1001, cf. 991). Because women are physically and intellectually weak, and susceptible to deception, they should not only not teach, but not talk, for Vives later asks: “¿cuántas palabras lees de María en toda la historia de los Evangelios? [...]. Ella, como conviene a la doncella, se queda siempre tan callando” (1042; cf. Córdoba 97).

<sup>5</sup>Her extensive correspondence, the length of her works, and her desire to communicate effectively in writing are evidence of a desire to write.

<sup>6</sup>However, she says she will write “como quien,” that is, *as though* she were a person who lacks the ability to discern things, implying no lack of such

ability for herself.

<sup>7</sup>Interestingly Teresa, who is always able to make use of both sides of a coin, assigns value to ignorance, which serves a purpose beyond equating it with womanhood. Ignorance allows for God's work through her, as much as, on occasion, excusing Teresa's lack of awareness or poor decision making: “No quiero pensar que en esto tuve culpa [...] que cierto era ignorancia” (*Vida* XXIII.4). Paradoxically again, she also states that ignorance does not remove responsibility (*Vida* V.1; cf. *Fundaciones* XX.3).

<sup>8</sup>Another aspect of the *nature* of women that Teresa exploits is her talkativeness. “[M]uchas cosas superfluas” (*Moradas* I.ii.7) suggests she will write much that is unnecessary. Similarly, in the *Vida* she had written: “Quiérome declarar más, que creo me meto en muchas cosas. Siempre tuve esta falta de no me saber dar a entender—como he dicho—sino a costa de muchas palabras” (XIII.17).

<sup>9</sup>“Let a woman learn in silence with full submission. I permit no woman to teach nor have authority over man; she is to keep silent” (1 Tim 2:11-12).

<sup>10</sup>Reinforcing the contemptible nature of the female condition, from the beginning of her writing life, Teresa repeatedly presented herself as “tan ruin,” (*Vida*, Prol., cf. V.1, VII.1, 22, VIII.8, XIX.6, XXX.10, XXXIII.14, XXXVIII.3; *Fundaciones* IV.6, IV.7, XXVIII.19; *Moradas* VI.vii.4, etc.), as well as having “ruines costumbres” (*Vida* IX.1). All due to her “bajo natural” (*Fundaciones*, Prol. 2). *Ruin* signifies “de mal trato,” and a “mujer de mal trato, [es] la que no es casta y recogida” (“Ruin,” *Tesoro*), which could hardly be said about Teresa. For Randolph Pope the function of the adjective *ruin*, which saturates her text, is to provide contrast: “este epíteto [Teresa] se lo aplica como un *leitmotiv* que subraya la antítesis entre sus méritos y los dones de Dios a lo largo de toda la *Vida*” (52). For Alison Weber, it corroborates her position that many of Teresa's deprecatory remarks about herself are indeed part of a rhetorical strategy (*Rhetoric* 15). For Elena Carrera such frequent self-deprecatory remarks “show evidence of repentance,” which

recognize one's weakness [...] to acknowledge the transcendent nature of inner strength, while stressing, with St. Paul, her continued need for God's help [...] to capture their [her confessors'] benevolence (or appease them). (181)

<sup>11</sup>For Aristotle one of the proofs that orators offer in order to persuade is their moral character (*Rhet.* I.ii.3). He adds that to convince their audiences orators must show “good sense, virtue and good will” (*Rhet.* II.i.5-6). Though Teresa was not schooled in rhetoric, she was well read. She was especially familiar with the spiritual literature of the sixteenth century, texts written by theologians and moralists, such as Luis de Granada and Francisco de Osuna, who were themselves educated and who had inherited, through the Middle Ages, the writings of the Greco-Latin and Patristic traditions. She had also read Augustine.

<sup>12</sup>Chicharro has not carefully read the context for this phrase. Teresa is actually explaining what *others* thought about her reform and foundation project in Ávila and how it came to a halt due, in part, to this perception (*Vida* XXXIII.1).

<sup>13</sup>Jerónimo Gracián specifically addressed this issue to defend the orthodoxy of Teresa’s texts:

Quien leyere atentamente estos libros de la madre Teresa, verán que ningún nombre dize de otros afectos interiores, que no se pueda colegir de la Sagrada escritura, o se halle escrito en santos, y autores graues. (16v)

<sup>14</sup>Part of the beatification and canonization proceedings begun in Ávila in 1591-1592.

<sup>15</sup>Tomás de la Cruz shows Teresa was familiar with the outcomes of the Holy Synod due to her privileged “relaciones concretas con la jerarquía de la Iglesia española” (320), especially with P. Pedro Fernández who “durante cinco años vivió en íntima relación con la Santa, a quien asesoró, no tanto desde el punto de vista carmelitano, cuanto en el plano de la reforma tridentina” (321). But even before 1563 Teresa’s relationships with Dominican theologians would have ensured she was aware of the “pensamiento tridentino” (T. de la Cruz 321-22).

<sup>16</sup>According to Martin Luther (1483-1546)

[t]he first and highest, the most precious of all good works is faith in Christ, [...] because] faith alone makes all other works good, acceptable and worthy, in that it trusts God and does not doubt that for it all things that a man does are well done. (*Treatise on Good Works* II, IV)

<sup>17</sup>Teresa here makes reference to another sin, *acedia*, to which women are prone. Fray Martín de

Córdoba explains that because women are “intemperadas” (91), which will cause them to seek carnal pleasures, among them idleness (91), he recommended that women channel “las manos en perfectas obras” (99).

<sup>18</sup>However, for T. de la Cruz, Teresa’s desire for enclosure for her reformed convent of San José in 1562:

ni acusa dependencia o referencia alguna a los proyectos de clausura que por aquellas fechas se debatían en Trento [...] ni la neta orientación eclesial—antiluterana y contrareformista—de los primeros capítulos del *Camino de perfección* obedecen a consignas tridentinas; ni las expresiones doctrinales más intencionadamente antiprotestantes, pese a su coincidencia material con el espíritu y la letra de los cánones conciliares, contienen referencia alguna al Concilio. (322)

Because for T. de la Cruz, Teresa’s response to the plight of the European Church in the 1560s had only “resonancia interior [...] conciencia de culpabilidad [...] y agudo dolor” (362). Yet he also states: “El *Camino de perfección* era el código de vida que ella proponía a su naciente familia. Sobre sus páginas hizo el primer esfuerzo consciente de ingreso en los caminos abiertos por los Padres de Trento” (324), and concludes that the “explosión de conciencia eclesial [...] fue el último mensaje de la Santa mística del Carmelo” (367).

<sup>19</sup>These texts are the extant evidence of the first assessments of Teresa’s writings (cf. Carrera 3). And these readings differ from those of readers whom, for example, Teresa’s texts inspired. Jodi Bilinkoff studied two groups of such readers, in particular of Teresa’s *Vida*:

Teresa’s books were read by other devout women, many of whom later became writers and recorded their own narratives. They were also read by male clerics, the confessors and promoters of women they regarded as holy and held up as exemplars to a wider Christian community. Both spiritually-inclined women and their clerical supporters found inspiration in the life of Teresa of Ávila, and used her *Life* as a powerful authorizing precedent. (“Touched” 108)

<sup>20</sup>One of the objectives of Teresa's writing was to provide spiritual readings to her sisters after the Valdés Index of 1559 removed access to so many spiritual books in the vernacular.

<sup>21</sup>Teresa wanted Juan de Ávila to approve of her book. Unfortunately, Ávila did not receive it until 1568, three years after the completion of the manuscript. In his letter to Teresa after reading the book, he declared that her doctrine was for the most part good, that he found signs that her raptures were those visited by God upon the sincere, and that these are more likely from God if the recipient communicates them to those who can shed light on them, and s/he is willing to submit to someone else's judgement (Álvarez 629, cf. 630). It would appear that Teresa's submissiveness convinced him too.

<sup>22</sup>Bañez also pointed out in his "Censura" that others had approved the document too, like fray Hernando del Castillo. Unfortunately, these documents are not extant (Álvarez 623).

<sup>23</sup>Although Luis de León called her a saint and attributed miracles to her in 1587 (20) she would not be beatified or canonized till 1614 and 1622 respectively. The collection of information pertaining to her beatification began in 1591, shortly after Teresa's death in 1582. Interestingly enough, the justifications for this process were those that fray Luis had used to support the publication of Teresa's work: the incorruptibility of her body, the marvels or miracles that occurred as a result of her intercession, and her virtuous life (see *Procesos I*: 1-5; cf. Ahlgren, *Politics* 148).

<sup>24</sup>According to Weber's study of Alonso de la Fuente, by the 1570s the Inquisition:

was reluctant to endorse Alonso's convictions that popular interior piety was inherently heretical [...]. Alonso's view of *alumbradismo* failed because it was too inclusive; it condemned forms of piety endorsed by elite and popular classes alike, including practices advocated by the post-Tridentine Church and favoured by the king. ("Demonizing" 155-56)

<sup>25</sup>Aside from fray Luis de León, Ribera and Yepes, there was Julián de Ávila—all writing between 1586 and 1604 (Fita 34-35; cf. Gómez Centurión 600)—Jerónimo Gracián de la Madre de Dios, and six others (Díaz 476-77).

<sup>26</sup>García de la Concha disagrees with Marichal's 1957 labelling of Teresa's spirituality, and therefore her text, as "emotional" (110), as an expression not

of what she has read but of what she has felt and lived (111). For Marichal, her writing was a way "to access her own individual inner being" (105, cf. 113) because in Teresa the "spiritual principle" overrode any creative impulse (106). García de la Concha wished to show this was not the case, that theology, as opposed to emotion, was an integral part of Teresa's life that affected her writing style with an "overflowing" of energy that overwhelms the reader (109).

<sup>27</sup>Scholars agree that to study Teresa's work and not mention her gender is not possible: "es una premisa ineludible" (Egido 255). As often noted, Teresa addresses it herself. Scholars also agree that her writing (both the act and the text) needed protection, and that Teresa used language and rhetorical strategies to further her personal agenda. The trouble is discerning how much to emphasize Teresa's *intentions* when we speak of her "deliberate strategies," her "subversive discourse," her 'exploitation' of female stereotypes (Weber, *Rhetoric* 15, 97, 11), Teresa's "feminine and feminist" hermeneutic (Slade 40), or the "movimientos tácticos" and "estrategia intencionada" of her discourse (Marcos 15, 250). As Carrera put it, "the difficulty arises when critics establish direct causal links between words in the text and intentions attributed to the writer which cannot be ascertained" (5). That is to say, how much of her discourse was intentionally crafted to sway her readers, and how much the result of internalized views and deep desires. Reading Teresa's works from the twentieth- or twenty-first century, can we confidently discern where Teresa's support for *all* women begins and where here internalized bias against them ends? Was Teresa's obedience *only* a strategy or was it, partly at least, the product of socialization? We cannot ignore that she lived in a society in which the religious and the sacred were paramount, and at a time in which, in Caro Baroja's words, "se pensó en Dios con una intensidad y ardor que acaso no se han dado antes ni después. [...] En el siglo XVI la idea de Dios se presenta constante e imperiosa" (45). This was also a time in which a woman's sphere of action was extremely limited. Therefore, to her readers, Teresa is always an exceptional woman and *being woman* was/is central to understanding Teresa's exceptionality. For her contemporary male confessors and mentors, Teresa was so exceptional that she was described as manly, virile (e.g., *Procesos III*: xiii; cf. Weber, *Rhetoric* 17-18, 165; Ahlgren, *Politics* 155). Much more recent readers are satisfied that being woman is enough to explain Teresa's achievements,

but seek to understand the means to her survival and (posthumous) success given the context in which she lived and wrote. Thus Teresa's writing has led Weber, for example, to assign different rhetorical strategies—humility, irony, obfuscation and authority—to each of Teresa's major works. Also according to Weber, Teresa's voice was coated, willfully, in rhetorical language that sought to deceive (e.g., *Rhetoric* 80, 88, 93, 134). Ahlgren, along the same lines as Weber, claims that Teresa was able to nuance her rhetoric of obedience to suit the compositional circumstances of each book (*Politics* 72-76); that for Teresa obedience "proved to be quite pliable:" it could serve as the impetus or the excuse to write, as much as it "went a long way toward establishing Teresa's goodwill towards institutional figures" (Ahlgren, *Politics* 72). Although the works of Weber and Ahlgren are well argued and convincing, Carrera suggests that

[t]heir exaggerated belief in Teresa's ability to choose her style as she pleased appears to be a reaction to the previous view that, as a saint, she was incapable of deception. (15n6)

Perhaps Steggink is closer to an accurate portrayal of Teresa's achievements as woman. He states that Teresa's accomplishment was the advancement of religious freedom for contemplative women (112) at a moment in time characterized by "[l]a tensión entre jerarquía y charisma, entre lo institucional y la libertad de Espíritu y del Evangelio" (114; cf. *Procesos* I: 9; Carrera 193; Slade 43). Similarly, Egido believes that Teresa's contribution to the Reform was the vindication of woman's purpose within the Church. Women's prayers might work where politics, war and theological debates had failed (263). And he cautions that "[a] analizar —y valorar— lo que Teresa reivindica para las mujeres no se puede ser anacrónico," because Teresa's complaints cannot be identified with those of the feminist movements of our times due to their different historical circumstances (262). He may have a point. Weber, for example, concludes that Teresa's "rhetoric of femininity, which served her own needs of self-assertion so successfully, also paradoxically sanctioned the paternalistic authority of the Church over its daughters and reinforced the ideology of women's intellectual and spiritual subordination" (*Rhetoric* 165). One cannot but agree that Teresa did, indeed, assert herself (with many caveats) and adhere to and support the institutionalized

Church. But was Teresa really able to escape the influence of the beliefs held by her contemporaries regarding women and their place in the Catholic Church? This would be necessary for Weber to be able to claim that Teresa *paradoxically* served her own needs and supported patriarchy. What is 'odd' or 'paradoxical' for an equality-seeking woman of the 1960s onwards, is not so for Teresa. In fact, Teresa's success for herself was achieved *by* endorsing the status quo for women. Teresa achieved her personal goals *in ways that* "sanctioned the paternalistic authority of the Church over its daughters" and "reinforced the ideology of women's intellectual and spiritual subordination." There is nothing paradoxical, odd, or *inconsistent* about this for a woman of her time. There was no other way to achieve her own goals in Counter-Reformation Spain. It was very different for a woman in, say, 1962. This woman could have made personal progress *qua* woman in a man's world without sanctioning or reinforcing the male-dominant ideology. What would have been paradoxical or inconsistent in the 1960's is certainly not in the case of Teresa or any other woman of that time and place. Thus, Weber's attribution of paradoxicality to Teresa seems to be anachronistic. Although Weber's, Ahlgren's and Slade's views on Teresa's writings do not disagree with Egido and Steggink's estimation of Teresa's achievements, and although scholars don't dispute that Teresa used language and rhetorical strategies to further her personal agenda, perhaps some critics overstate Teresa's intentions. Just how cognizant of, and deliberate in, her employment of rhetorical strategies Teresa was, is a matter of degree. Whilst we can state that she most certainly participated of

women's major intellectual enterprise for more than a thousand years [which] was to re-conceptualize religion in such a way as to allow for women's equal and central role in the Christian drama of the Fall and Redemption (Lerner 11),

exactly how much intentionality may we accurately attribute to Teresa's rhetoric? Regardless, whether today's reader of Teresa's works leans more towards Egido and Steggink's understanding of her works, or towards Weber and Ahlgren's, the value of reading Teresa's works *en clave femenina* cannot be disputed. But these readings may teach us as much about present circumstances, issues and preoccupations—such as recovering and understanding women's contribution to history or finding new

acceptable ways of being woman (singlehood and childlessness come to mind)—as about Teresa's (cf. Slade 6; Barbeito Carneiro 59).

<sup>28</sup>Rosa Rossi explains:

Aparte de la evidencia por la que 'obediencia' funciona como sinónimo de 'licencia' o 'precepto' [...] un mínimo de instrumentación lingüística moderna impondría el preguntarse en qué contexto hace comprender que en cualquier caso aquella frase no significa que Teresa escribiera porque le habían mandado escribir, sino solamente que Teresa *dice* escribir por obediencia. Y lo dice en el contexto de sus relaciones como monja con sus superiores. ("Mujer" 40, emphasis in original)

<sup>29</sup>Recently, in a *New York Times* article, writer Jessa Crispin explored Teresa's life and works as she pondered present day female singlehood and loneliness. Crispin's interest in Teresa stems from an exploration of her own circumstances and experiences as an unattached woman, which led to her appreciation of Teresa's

creation of a woman's life, outside of a life with a man. [...] Because f]ive hundred years after St. Teresa [...] there are still few models for women of how to live outside of coupledness. (SR6)

## Works Cited

- Ahlgren, Gillian. *Teresa of Avila and the Politics of Sanctity*. 1996. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1998. Print.
- . "Volume Editor's Introduction." *The Inquisition of Francisca: A Sixteenth-Century Visionary on Trial*. Ed. and trans. Gillian T. W. Ahlgren. The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2005. 1-36. Print.
- Alborg, Juan Luis. *Historia de la literatura española I. Edad Media y Renacimiento*. Madrid: Gredos, 1966. Print.
- Álvarez, Tomás. "Nota histórica. Anexo al volumen II del *Libro de la Vida*." Burgos: Monte Carmelo, 1999. Print.
- Arenal, Electa and Stacey Schlaw. *Untold Sisters: Hispanic Nuns in Their Own Works*. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 1989. Print.
- Aristotle. *Art of Rhetoric*. Trans. J. H. Freese. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1926. Print.
- . *Generation of Animals*. Trans. A. L. Peck. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1963. Print.
- Báñez, Domingo. "Censura del P. Domingo Báñez en el autógrafo de la 'Vida.'" *Obras completas de Santa Teresa*. 2nd ed. Ed. Efrén de la Madre de Dios and Otger Steggink. Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1967. 190-91. Print.
- . "Discurso del Padre Báñez ante las autoridades religiosas y civiles de Ávila, en defensa de Santa Teresa y del Monasterio de San José." *Santa Teresa y el P. Báñez*. Ed. Paulino Álvarez. Madrid: Lezcano y Compañía, 1882. 162-64. Print.
- Barbeito Carneiro, María Isabel. "Gestos y actitudes 'feministas' en el Siglo de Oro español: de Teresa de Jesús a María de Guevara." *Literatura y feminismo en España (s. Xv-Xxi)*. Ed. Lisa Vollelendorf. Barcelona: Icaria, 2005. 59-75. Print.
- Bataillon, Marcel. *Erasmus y España. Estudios sobre la historia espiritual del siglo XVI*. Trans. Antonio Alatorre. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1950. Print.
- Bilinkoff, Jodi. *The Avila of Saint Teresa. Religious Reform in a Sixteenth-Century City*. 2nd ed. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2014. Print.
- . *Related Lives. Confessors and Their Female Penitents, 1450-1750*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2005. Print.
- . "The Social Meaning of Religious Reform: The Case of St. Teresa and Avila." *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte - Archive for Reformation History* 79 (1988): 340-57. Print.
- . "Touched by Teresa: Readers and Their Responses, 1588-1750." *The Heirs of St. Teresa of Avila*. Ed. Christopher Wilson. Washington: ICS Publications, 2006. 107-22. Print.
- Blamires, Alcuin, ed. *Woman Defamed and Woman Defended. An Anthology of Medieval Texts*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992. Print.
- Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. 1536. 2 vols. Ed. John T. McNeill. Trans. Ford Lewis Battles. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960. Print.
- Carrera, Elena. *Teresa of Avila's Autobiography: Authority, Power and the Self in Mid-Sixteenth-Century Spain*. London, UK: Legenda, 2005. Print.
- Caro Baroja, Julio. *Las formas complejas de la vida religiosa (Siglos XVI y XVII)*. Madrid: Sarpe, 1985. Print.
- Chicharro, Dámaso, ed. *Libro de la vida*. By Teresa de Ávila. Madrid: Cátedra, 1993. Print.
- Coakley, John. "Friars as Confidants of Holy Women in Medieval Dominican Hagiography." *Images of Sainthood in Medieval Europe*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1991. 222-46. Print.



- Córdoba, Martín de. "Jardín de las nobles doncellas." *Prosistas castellanos del siglo XV*. Vol. 2. Ed. Mario Penna and Fernando Rubio. Biblioteca de Autores Españoles. Madrid: Atlas, 1959-1964. 65-117. Print.
- Council of Trent. *The canons and decrees of the sacred and oecumenical Council of Trent*. Ed. and trans. J. Waterworth. London: Dolman, 1848. Hanover Historical Projects. Web. 20 July 2015.
- Crispin, Jessa. "St. Teresa and Single Ladies." *New York Times* 10 Jan 2016, New York ed.: SR6. Web. 10 Jan 2016.
- Cruz, Anne J. "'La bella marmaridada.' Lessons for the Good Wife." *Culture and Control in Counter-Reformation Spain*. Ed. Anne J. Cruz and Mary Elizabeth Perry. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1992. 145-70. Print.
- Cruz, Tomás de la. "Santa Teresa de Ávila hija de la Iglesia." *Ephemerides Carmeliticae* 17 (1966): 305-67. Print.
- De la Fuente, Alonso. "Memoriales de Alonso de la Fuente, 1589-1591." *Santa Teresa de Jesús y la Inquisición española*. By Enrique Llamas Martínez. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1972. 397-423. Print.
- De la Madre de Dios, Efrén and Steggink, Otger, eds. *Obras completas de Santa Teresa de Jesús*. Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1967. Print.
- Díaz, José Simón. "Hagiografías individuales publicadas en español de 1480 a 1700." *Hispania Sacra* 30: 421-80. Print.
- Donahue, Darcy. "Wondrous Words: Miraculous Literacy and Real Literacy in the Convents of Early Modern Spain." *Women's Literacy in Early Modern Spain and the New World*. Ed. Anne J. Cruz and Rosilie Hernández. Surrey, Gt. Brit.: Ashgate, 2011. 105-22. Print.
- DuPont, Denise. *Writing Teresa: The Saint from Ávila at the fin-de-siglo*. Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2012. Print.
- Egido, Teófanos. "Santa Teresa y su condición de mujer." *Surge: Revista Sacerdotal* 40 (1982): 255-75. Print.
- Ezama Gil, Ángeles. "Ana Ozores y el modelo tereciano: ejemplaridad y escritura literaria." *Leopoldo Alas: un clásico contemporáneo (1901-2001)*. Tomo II. *Actas del Congreso celebrado en Oviedo (12-16 de noviembre de 2001)*. Oviedo: Universidad de Oviedo 2002. 775-90. Print.
- Fita, Fidel. "Cuatro biógrafos de Santa Teresa en el Siglo XVI. El P. Francisco de Ribera, Fr. Diego de Yepes, Fr. Luis de León y Julián de Avila." *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia* LXVII (1915): 550-61. Print.
- García de la Concha, Víctor. *El arte literario de Santa Teresa*. Barcelona: Ariel, 1978. Print.
- Giles, Mary. "Francisca Hernández and the Sexuality of Religious Dissent." *Women in the Inquisition. Spain and the New World*. Ed. Mary Giles. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1999. 75-97. Print.
- Gómez Centurión, José. "Relaciones biográficas de Santa Teresa, por el P. Julián de Ávila, en 1587, 1596 y 1604." *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia* 67 (1915): 592-600. Print.
- Gracián de la Madre de Dios, Jerónimo. *Dilucidario del verdadero espíritu, en que se declara, que sea espíritu verdadero: de donde mana: y sus grados*. Madrid, 1604. Ed. Facsim. Whitefish, Montana: Kessinger Legacy Reprints, 2015. Print.
- Hollis, Karen. "Teresa de Jesús and the Relations of Writing." *Conflicts of Discourse: Spanish Literature in the Golden Age*. Ed. Peter W. Evans. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1990. 26-47. Print.
- Kamen, Henry. *The Spanish Inquisition: A Historical Revision*. 4th ed. New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2014. Print.
- Kavanaugh, Kieran. "The Way of Perfection. Introduction." *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila*. Vol. 2. By Teresa of Ávila. Trans. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodríguez. Washington: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1980. 15-36. Print.
- Lawrence, C. H. *Medieval Monasticism*. 4th ed. Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2015. Print.
- Lerner, Gerda. *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness: From the Middle Ages to Eighteen-Seventy*. New York: Oxford UP, 1993. Print.
- Llamas, Enrique. "Libro de la vida." *Introducción a la lectura de Santa Teresa*. Ed. Alberto Barrientos. Madrid: Editorial de Espiritualidad, 1987. 205-39. Print.
- Llamas Martínez, Enrique. *Santa Teresa de Jesús y la Inquisición española*. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1972. Print.
- Luis de León. "Introducción al Libro de la vida de Santa Teresa." *Escritos de Santa Teresa*. Vol. 1. Ed. Vicente de la Fuente. Madrid: M. Rivadeneira, 1861. 17-22. Print.
- Luther, Martin. *A Treatise on Good Works*. Champaign, IL: Project Gutenberg, n.d. eBook Collection (EBSCOhost). Web. 29 Sept. 2015.

- Marcos, Juan Antonio. *Mística y subversiva: Teresa de Jesús*. Madrid: Editorial de Espiritualidad, 2001. Print.
- Marichal, Juan. "Santa Teresa en el ensayismo hispánico." *La voluntad de estilo. (Teoría e historia del ensayismo hispánico)*. Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1957. 103-15. Print.
- Márquez Villanueva, Francisco. "La vocación literaria de Santa Teresa." *Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica* 32 (1983): 355-79. Print.
- Moral Fatio, Alfred. "Les lectures de Sainte Thérèse." *Bulletin Hispanique* 10 (1908): 17-67. Print.
- Nelken, Margarita. *Las escritoras españolas*. Barcelona: Editorial Labor, 1930. Print.
- The New Oxford Annotated Bible, with the Apocrypha*. New Revised Standard Version. Ed. Bruce Metzger and Roland Murphy. New York: Oxford UP, 1991. Print.
- Peers, Edgar Allison. *Saint Teresa of Jesus and other Essays and Addresses*. London: Faber and Faber, 1953. Print.
- Pope, Randolph D. "Santa Teresa de Jesús." *La autobiografía española hasta Torres Villarroel*. Frankfurt: Lang Bern, 1974. 47-55. Print.
- Procesos de beatificación y canonización de Sta. Teresa de Jesús*. 3 vols. Ed. Silverio de Santa Teresa. Burgos: Monte Carmelo, 1935. Print.
- Renedo, Evaristo. "Obediencia." *Diccionario de Santa Teresa de Jesús. Doctrina e historia*. Ed. Tomás Álvarez. Burgos: Monte Carmelo, 2002. 477-83. Print.
- Ribera, Francisco de. *La vida de la Madre Teresa de Jesús. Fundadora de las Descalzas y Descalzos Carmelitas*. 1590. Ed. Carmelitas Descalzas and José Martínez Puche. Madrid: Edibesa, 2004. Print.
- Rossi, Rosa. "La mujer y la palabra." *Mientras tanto* 15 (1983): 29-46. Print.
- . *Teresa de Ávila. Biografía de una escritora*. Trans. Marieta Gargatagli. Barcelona: Icaria, 1984. Print.
- The Rule of Saint Benedict*. Ed. and trans. Justin McCann. Westminster: Newman, 1952. Print.
- Sánchez, Manuel Diego, comp. *Santa Teresa de Jesús: Bibliografía sistemática*. Madrid: Editorial de Espiritualidad, 2008. Print.
- Slade, Carole. *St. Teresa of Avila: Author of a Heroic Life*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1995.
- Steggink, Otger. "Teresa de Jesús, mujer y mística ante la teología y teólogos." *Carmelus* 29 (1982): 111-29. Print.
- Strasser, Ulrike. "Bones of Contention: Cloistered Nuns, Decorated Relics, and the Contest over Women's Place in the Public Sphere of Counter-Reformation Munich." *Archiv Für Reformationsgeschichte – Archive for Reformation History* 90 (1999): 255-88. Print.
- Surtz, Ronald E. *Writing Women in Late Medieval and Early Modern Spain: The Mothers of Saint Teresa of Avila*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1995. Print.
- Teresa de Ávila. *Obras completas de Santa Teresa*. 2nd ed. Ed. Efrén de la Madre de Dios and Otger Steggink. Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1967. Print.
- Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española*. Sebastián de Covarrubias Horozco. Ed. Ignacio Arellano y Rafael Zafra. Madrid: Iberoamericana Vervuert, 2006. Print.
- Vives, Juan Luis. "Formación de la mujer cristiana." *Obras completas*. Vol. 1. Ed. Lorenzo Ribber. Madrid: Aguilar, 1947. 985-1175. Print.
- Weber, Alison. "Demonizing Ecstasy: Alonso de la Fuente and the *Alumbrados* of Extremadura." *The Mystical Gesture: Essays on Medieval and Early Modern Spiritual Culture in Honor of Mary E. Giles*. Ed. Robert Boenig. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2000. 141-58. Print.
- . *Teresa of Avila and the Rhetoric of Femininity*. New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1990. Print.
- Wilson, Christopher. "Introduction." *The Heirs of St. Teresa of Avila*. Ed. Christopher Wilson. Washington: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 2006. vii-xvii. Print.
- Yepes, Diego de. *Vida de Santa Teresa de Jesús*. 1606. 2 vols. Barcelona: Biblioteca Clásica Española, 1887. Print.