

CRAVING CREDIBILITY:
TERESA DE AVILA'S SHIFTING DISCOURSE IN *MEDITACIONES SOBRE LOS CANTARES*

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Whether or not they constitute an exercise in biblical exegesis, Teresa de Avila's *Meditaciones sobre los Cantares* concern themselves with themes similar to those found in her other works, among them: mental prayer, guidelines for the practice of religious life, divine grace, and union with God. According to Efrén de la Madre de Dios and Otger Steggink, editors of the 1986 edition of Teresa's complete works, it is not a question of exegesis. "No es un comentario ni un análisis del *Cantar de los Cantares*. Son consideraciones personales sugeridas por frases del mismo *Cantar*, no de seguido, sino en suelto" (421). In fact, her references to the *Song of Songs* are limited to five quotes which serve as a point of departure for her meditations. According to Carole Slade, in a 1986 article devoted exclusively to the *Meditaciones*, "Teresa de Avila (1515–1582) anticipates contemporary views of the significance of the *Song of Songs* for the equality of the sexes in her only exegetical work, *Meditaciones sobre los Cantares* [*Meditations on the Song of Songs*]" (27–28).

Aside from the question of the exegetical status of Teresa's text, there is considerable debate as to whether or not Teresa had access to a Spanish version of the *Song of Songs*. Even if she did refer to such a text, she wisely made no mention of it, since such works were prohibited by the 1559 Index. Teresa's own rough translations are thus purportedly based on the Latin Vulgate. Efrén and Steggink take the text at face value: "El texto que le sirve de inspiración es el de la *Vulgata*, tal como lo traía el Breviario romano. Ella misma hace referencia al latín [a veces]" (421). Slade speculates that perhaps the 1559 Index "would have prevented Teresa from admitting that she had read the *Song of Songs* in Spanish, and her hermeneutics of humility would have required her to conceal any knowledge of Latin" (33).

Saint Teresa did not entitle her work, nor did she divide it into sections. Jerónimo Gracián de la Madre de Dios, Teresa's confessor, upon publishing the text in Brussels in 1611, divided it into seven chapters and chose *Conceptos del Amor de Dios* as its title. It must be noted that Fray Luis de León did not include the text at all in his 1582 edition of Teresa's works. Perhaps his own imprisonment by the Inquisition from 1572–1575 for translating the *Song of Songs* directly from the Hebrew was all too fresh in his memory.¹ In their 1986 edition of the complete works of Saint Teresa, Efrén and Steggink base their choice of title, *Meditaciones sobre los Cantares*, on Teresa's own allusion to the text as "mis meditaciones" and on her contemporaries' reference to it as *Sobre los*

Cantares (421). I will follow their example not only in the matter of titles, but also in the matter of manuscripts, limiting myself to the consideration of the Alba de Tormes copy, which has been deemed the most authoritative and is the only one to include the prologue. The Baeza, Consuegra and Desierto de las Nieves copies of the manuscript, which are reproduced in the Burgos edition of Saint Teresa's complete works, contain only fragments of the text (211–351).

The meditations were written in San José de Avila between 1566 and 1567, and rewritten at least once in 1574. Only in June of 1575 did the manuscript receive Father Domingo Báñez's approbation, a month before Teresa's *Libro de la Vida*, begun in 1562, was also approved. I will argue that, indeed, the *Meditaciones* can be considered a companion piece to the *Libro de la Vida*, the former, a third-person project, the latter, a first-person endeavor, both with autobiographical resonances.

Magdalena Velasco Kindalán has attempted to divide Teresa's works into two fundamental groups: autobiographical works (*Vida*, *Fundaciones*, *Relaciones* and her letters) and ascetico-mystic works (*Camino de perfección*, *Las Moradas* and her poetry) (82–83). This binary conception of Teresa's writings belies the fundamental ambiguity inherent in all of Teresa's work: that even her ascetico-mystical beliefs and writings are based precisely on her "experiencia" and not on *letras*. Furthermore, Velasco Kindalán's neat division ignores the text of the *Meditaciones* entirely. Such a text does not fit neatly into either category. Although ostensibly based on reflexions stemming from the Bride's experience of Christ in the *Song of Songs*, this third-person project only thinly veils the first-person concerns of Teresa herself. The autobiographical referent implicit in the *Meditaciones* cannot be ignored.

Let us rather consider Teresa's works chronologically, attentive to the increasing rigidity of counterreformist Spain during the reign of Phillip II. *Meditaciones sobre los Cantares* would thus be grouped with Teresa's early writings in the epoch of *Libro de la Vida* and *Camino de perfección* in the early 1560's as against her later writings, *Las fundaciones* and *Las Moradas* in the late 1570's. Alison Weber, in an excellent rhetorical study of Teresa's works, alludes to the increasing reaction against *alumbrados* in Teresa's lifetime (22–24). The Illuminists, many of whom were *conversos* and whose leaders were often women, contended that "illuminated" by the Holy Spirit, believers were able to read and understand Scripture. From an orthodox perspective, of course, this attitude was dangerously close to the protestantism of Luther and Calvin. The Illuminist movement was akin to Erasmian ideas and was allowed to flourish in the Spain of

¹For a concise discussion of the polemic surrounding Fray Luis de León's translation of the *Song of Songs* and the problem of exegesis of the *Song of Songs* in general, see Weber 118–120.

Cardinal Cisneros, whose religious reform aimed to include women and the laity.

But a confluence of events—the death of Cisneros in 1517 and the beginnings of Luther's rebellion in the same year, the growing suspicion of Erasmian anticlericalism, and the intensification of anti-*converso* racism—moved the Inquisition to repress what it could only define as a native protestantism in the making.

In 1525 the Inquisition published an edict against the *alumbrados* . . . (Weber 23)

The Illuminist sects were considered heretical for their emphasis on faith over works and for their rejection of the intermediary of the Church hierarchy in the interpretation of Scripture. The Illuminist doctrine of *dejamiento* sounds dangerously similar to Teresa's description of the stages of mental prayer. "The term appears to refer to a direct experience of God, achieved through a form of mental prayer that emptied the mind of thoughts. In the state of *dejamiento* the advanced adepts could surrender themselves to God's will, with the assurance that they would not be led into sin" (Weber 24). Thus, Teresa feels the need to distance herself from such denounced practices. Weber notes where Illuminist doctrine diverges from Teresa's own beliefs:

Teresa de Jesús was not an *alumbrada*, if we define Illuminism in terms that the Toledo group themselves would have accepted: she did not share their disdain for sacraments and exterior works, the veneration of saints, and the mortification of the flesh. She could never be said to have espoused their belief in justification by faith alone. But as a *conversa*, a woman, a reader of Scripture, and as practitioner of mental prayer, she was suspect on multiple grounds and associated inevitably with the Inquisitions' ever-expanding definition of Illuminism. (Weber 33–34)

The preponderance of women in such sects only fueled the fire of counter-reformists who would silence women based on Saint Paul's injunction against women's participation in the teaching and the interpretation of the Scriptures. Nevertheless, Teresa somehow had to validate her mystical experiences and authorize her discourse. Resorting to Scripture, she finds in the Bride of the *Song of Songs* an alter ego in an analogous union with Christ, all the while protecting herself from the accusations of interpreting Scripture, which would be to invade the domain reserved for *letrados*, learned men. Her insistence on women's experience as opposed to men's learning is ever-present in the text:

. . . Teresa was careful not to claim the right to interpret Scripture; but she did slyly suggest that women, by virtue of their limited intellect, have the capacity to enjoy a fragmentary, passive, and ineffable experi-

ence of Scripture. . . . Furthermore, the verses upon which Teresa bases her meditations are the most erotic of the *Canticles* . . . Nor do Teresa's commentaries shy away from the eroticism inherent in the language of these verses. . . (Weber 115)

The changing counter-reformational context only heightens our interest in Teresa de Avila's meditations on the *Song of Songs*, as we explore how Teresa, the orthodox reformer, advocates the pruning away of the frivolity of conventual life and the cultivation of a deep spirituality in the form of mental prayer, while simultaneously justifying her own audacity in making reference not only to Scripture *per se*, but to *Song of Songs* of all texts, and fending off attacks that her mystical visions were demonically inspired.

This audacious text was copied and circulated among the Discalced nuns but did not receive Báñez's official approbation until 1575. Apparently when Teresa began the *Meditations* in the late 1560's, she felt secure enough under the protection of Carmelite General Rubeo to allow the diffusion of an "underground text." But by the time she began *The Interior Castle* in 1577, as we have seen, the situation had changed dramatically. In the earlier work it is clear that Teresa found in the most highly charged verses of the *Canticles* a stimulus for mystical contemplation; but in the later text she could only make veiled references to the language of erotic spirituality. Her caution was not unwarranted: in 1580 she received the order to burn the *Meditations*. As Gracián summarizes the anonymous censor's objections: "She was ordered to burn this book, since it seemed to a certain confessor of hers very unorthodox and dangerous for a woman to write about the *Song of Songs*. He was moved by his pious concern that, as St. Paul says, women should be silent in God's church, which is to say: they should not preach from the pulpit, or teach at universities, or print books. And since at the time Luther's heresy was doing much harm, for it had opened the doors for ignorant women and men to read and explicate divine works, . . . it seemed to him that the book should be burned. And so, as soon as this priest ordered it, she threw her book into the fire, practicing her two heroic virtues of humility and obedience. (Weber 117)

Understandably, Gracián, a sympathetic reader of Teresa's work, emphasizes her orthodox reaction to criticism of her unorthodox text. The occasions for controversy here are many: the issue of the translation into vulgar languages of Biblical passages; the issue of the interpretation of scripture; the issue of gender; and the ever-present issue of the divine or diabolical origin of Teresa's mystical experiences. The manuscript of *Libro de la Vida* was also received with mixed reviews. Teresa wisely avoided the *letrados* who considered her mysticism to be inspired by the devil and sought out confessors

and the protection of those who read her life's text as a divinely inspired one.

There is an undeserved paucity of critical studies focusing primarily on the *Meditaciones*. Weber refers to the text in its relation to the later *Las Moradas*, but does not accord it its own chapter. Esteban Inciarte's provocative title, "El vino y la embriaguez en los místicos españoles," promises a comparative study of Saint Teresa, Saint John of the Cross and Fray Luis de Leon's treatment of Song of Songs but does little more than juxtapose quotations from the three writers based on the same selected passages of the *Song of Songs* dealing with wine and drunkenness, with virtually no commentary, analytic or otherwise (51-56).

In one of the few pieces focusing exclusively on the study of the *Meditaciones*, Slade puts forth a compelling argument that Teresa establishes a feminine hermeneutics of humility and enjoyment, revindicating her right to interpret Scripture. For Slade, Teresa finds in the Virgin the paradigmatic model for women's direct experience of the divine as against the erudition of men of letters. The humble Virgin passively accepts and enjoys the divine revelations made to her, unlike learned men who indulge in reductive rational analysis of the divine. "... Teresa delineates a uniquely feminine principle of interpretation, privileging it over the masculine by demonstrating that it provides greater understanding of God's word" (30-31).

Convinced that *Meditaciones* deserves further consideration as an integral text in its own right, I shall explore the text from the point of view of its enunciation, proposing Benveniste's theory of personal pronouns as a means to analyse Teresa's use of pronouns as revealing shifters which indicate a fluctuating definition of "we" and a changing perspective of the "I" or "we" in relation to the other(s). This study will serve as a means to illuminate the multiple addressees inscribed in Teresa's text, as well as the use of "non-persons"—the third-person Bride of the *Song of Songs*, the Virgin Mary and the Samaritan woman—both to mask and to support the underlying first-person nature of the narrative.

For Benveniste, all pronouns are not created equal. The three "persons" in the singular and in the plural that are normally associated with the verbal paradigm have been established in a relation of implicit equivalence which Benveniste finds false.

The correlation of person sets the first two persons, "I" and "you" in opposition to the third person, which for Benveniste is a "non-person." "I" and "you" are specified, are given their referential value according to their context and in relation to each other. "He/she/it" lacks this shifting quality. "I" and "you" contain both an implicated person and a discourse about that person. "He/she/it" carry only the discourse; they are lacking the implicated person. Thus, the third person is a "non-person" (228).

Interior to the correlation of person is the correlation of subjectivity which sets "I" and "you" in opposition. "I" represents the subjective person, interior to the enuncia-

tion. "You" is defined as the non-subjective person in opposition to the subjective "I" (232).

Qualifying Teresa's *Vida* as an autobiography is problematic due to considerations of genre. She herself did not conceive of it in such terms. Yet, for our purposes, suffice it to say that *Libro de mi vida* is a first-person project. Teresa writes about her parents, her childhood, her entrance into a religious order, her mystical experiences, and the founding of the first discalced convent, with an excursus detailing the four stages of mental prayer. She, as a subjective person, is implicated in this text. I would argue that the *Meditaciones* is another first-person endeavor, in the guise of a third-person project. Teresa meditates on the Bride's union with the Bridegroom as a mystical union with Christ; she explores the Virgin Mary's experience of the divine; and she refers to the Samaritan woman's encounter with Jesus. Yet each of these third-person references is posited in the place of Teresa even as it is explicated by her. Teresa serves as the mediator between these "non-persons" and her addressee(s); however, it is her own *espiriencia* that she is recounting and justifying and her own discourse that she is authorizing. The *Meditaciones sobre los Cantares* are Teresa's meditations and it is Teresa's voice that we hear when she quotes the Bride. The Bride, the Virgin and the Samaritan woman are "non-persons" in the Benvenistian sense. It is Teresa's "yo" with its implication of a subjective person that is in evidence behind the third-person examples and references.

If the *Song of Songs* serves as the point of departure for Teresa's meditations, it is in order to cast herself in the role of the Bride and thereby attempt to explain, using the metaphor of the Bride's union with the Bridegroom, her mystical union with Christ. The scriptural precedent serves to protect her from accusations of having demonically-inspired visions. In other words, it is safer for Teresa to couch her first-person *espiriencia* in the third-person, non-person of the Bride.

... Teresa interprets the kiss of Song 1.1 as mystical union in which the soul receives God's peace and friendship... *Teresa speaks in the dramatic role of the Bride*, however, phrasing her request with a bold use of the direct command rather than with the more literal indirect command: "Bésame con el beso de su boca"... This presumptuous demand provokes enormous fear, which she can relieve only through spiritual warfare for humility sufficient to justify the request. *Using disguised autobiographical narrative, she tells of a person who learned to read the Song through the purgative process of humiliation...* (Slade 36; emphasis added)

As Slade points out, even Teresa's own story of how she came to understand the *Song of Songs* is retold in the third person, in the non-person encompassing no subjective implication on Teresa's part.

After establishing the Bride as the non-personal model of her mystical experience, Teresa turns to the Virgin to corroborate her interpretation. Teresa authorizes her way of knowing through the non-person of the Virgin. One simply has to read the Virgin's role as a non-person (italized below) in the first person to hear Teresa's voice. It is Teresa's own faith, wisdom and understanding that she is pitting against those of the *letrados*. The implicated first-person subjective discourse masked behind the use of the non-person would hypothetically be: *Como quien tenía tan gran fe y sabiduría, entendí luego que, entreviniendo estas dos cosas, no había más que saber ni dudar. . . . ¡Si deprendiesen [los letrados] algo de mi humildad!* Yet, such a discourse would have been untenable in Teresa's historico-religious context. She thus resorts to the non-personal mode of discourse:

7. ¡Oh secretos de Dios! Aquí no hay más de rendir nuestros entendimientos y pensar que para entender las grandezas de Dios, no valen nada. Aquí viene bien el acordarnos cómo lo hizo con la Virgen nuestra Señora con toda la sabiduría que tuvo; y como preguntó al ángel "cómo será esto," en diciéndole "el Espíritu Santo sobrevendrá en ti y la virtud del muy Alto te hará sombra," no curó de más disputas. *Como quien tenía tan gran fe y sabiduría, entendió luego que, entreviniendo estas dos cosas, no había más que saber ni dudar.* No como algunos letrados, que no les lleva el Señor por este modo de oración ni tienen principio de espíritu, que quieren llevar las cosas por tanta razón y tan medidas por sus entendimientos, que no parece sino que han ellos con sus letras de comprender todas las grandezas de Dios. *¡Si deprendiesen algo de la humildad de la Virgen sacratísima!*

8. ¡Oh, Señora mía, cuán al cabal se puede entender por Vos lo que pasa con la esposa, conforme a lo que dice en los Cánticos! Y ansí lo podéis ver, hijas, en el Oficio que rezamos de nuestra Señora cada semana, lo mucho que está de ellos en antifonas y lecciones. (*Meditaciones 460-461; emphasis added*)

Once the Virgin's example is established, Teresa takes on her own persona again to address and instruct her *hijas*. Far from the careless rhetoric ascribed to it, Teresa's prose, though not scholarly, shows evidence of premeditated rhetorical intention. "Aquí viene bien el acordarnos cómo lo hizo con la Virgen . . ." The third-person, non-person rhetorical strategy is just that, and not some coincidence of careless prose.

The non-person Bride, model of mystical union, and the non-person Virgin, model of understanding of the divine, are followed by the non-person Samaritan woman who serves as the model of credible discourse. In the seventh chapter of the *Meditaciones*, Teresa dismantles the Mary/Martha dichotomy of the contemplative versus the active life. Teresa admonishes those intent upon serving

God and helping others to resist the desire to please one's fellow man or to gain honor and to concentrate on pleasing God and only God. "Temen la persecución; quieren tener gratos los reyes y señores y el pueblo . . ." (*Meditaciones 465*). The Samaritan woman then serves as an example of one such soul who, after her dialogue with Jesus, returns to her village to share the good news with her community. Here, the emphasis of Teresa's discourse shifts. The primary advice about serving God without regard for human praise or disdain is overshadowed by the issue of credibility. The Samaritan woman was believed by her fellow townspeople and, on the strength of her word alone, they gathered to meet the Lord:

5. Acuérdomme ahora lo que muchas veces he pensado de aquella santa Samaritana, qué herida devía de estar de esta yerva y cuán bien había comprendido en su corazón las palabras del Señor, pues deja al mismo Señor por que ganen y se aprovechen los de su pueblo; que da bien a entender esto que voy diciendo; y en pago de esta tan gran caridad, *mereció ser creída* y ver el gran bien que hizo nuestro Señor en aquel pueblo. [. . .]

7. Iva esta santa mujer con aquella borrachez divina dando gritos por las calles. *Lo que me espanta a mí es ver cómo la creyeron, una mujer.* Y no devía ser de mucha suerte, pues iba por agua. De mucha humildad, sí; pues cuando el Señor le dice sus faltas, no se agravió (como lo hace ahora el mundo, que son malas de sufrir las verdades); sino díjole que devía ser profeta. *En fin, le dieron crédito, y por solo su dicho salió gran gente de la ciudad al Señor.* (*Meditaciones 466-467; emphasis added*)

What appears to be an aside—retelling the story of the Samaritan woman—is in fact the *mise en abîme* condensing the entire thrust of Teresa's discourse. The implicated subject of this non-personal account of the Samaritan woman is of course Teresa herself. It is she who fears persecution in her multiple roles. As a mystic she fears the persecution experienced by *alumbrados* as well as the charge that her visions were demonically inspired. As a woman she fears Pauline persecution for teaching or interpreting Scripture. As a nun she fears persecution for her activity founding convents when her stated mission is a life of contemplative mental prayer. She yearns to be believed. So much so, that her perception of the biblical story is colored, or perhaps it should be said that her rhetorical use of the story is influenced. In the gospel according to Saint John, many Samaritans believed the woman; many more, however, did not believe the woman until they heard Jesus himself. This is not the part of the story that Teresa chooses to retell:

39. Now of that city many of the Samaritans believed in him, for the word of the woman giving testimony: He told me all things whatsoever I have done.

40. So, when the Samaritans were come to him, they desired that he would tarry there. And he abode there two days.

41. And many more believed in him, because of his own word.

42. And they said to the woman: We now believe, for thy saying; for we ourselves have heard him and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world. (John 4:39-42)

Teresa's preoccupation with being believed, her concern for the reception of her discourse in general and for the *Meditaciones* in particular, is evident in a letter she wrote to María Bautista in Valladolid on August 28, 1575, while awaiting her confessor's approval of the manuscript.

17. ¿Por qué no me dice si ha dado por bueno el libro pequeño quien dijo lo estava el grande? Hágame señalar lo que se ha de quitar, que harto me he holgado no se hayan quemado, y me holgaría mucho si el grande se quedase para cuando . . . sabiendo lo que sé . . . la rompa para que por mí . . . aprovechar a muchas almas; que a mí ¿qué me va por otra cosa? La gloria de mi Señor quiero y que haya muchos que le alaben, y querría cierto conociesen mi miseria. (*Obras completas* 955)

"El libro pequeño" is, of course, the *Meditaciones* and "el grande" refers to her *Vida*. Teresa herself juxtaposes one text with the other, reinforcing the thesis that they are parallel first-person projects, the *Vida* written in the first person and the *Meditaciones* in the third person, or non-person, masking the implicated subject.

The daring nature of her undertaking is evident from Teresa's own expectation that the text would have to be expurgated and from her hope that it would not be burned outright. It is clear, then, why Teresa felt the need to mask her discourse with such third-person, non-person, rhetorical strategies.

The multiplicity of addressees inscribed in Teresa's meditations is noteworthy. Her primary audience seems to consist of nuns whom she addresses as "hijas mías," yet in her prologue Teresa addresses an anonymous reader and refers to both her confessor and her sisters in the third person. Here, the same nuns are now "hermanas." In the prologue, before the male religious authorities, she is thus one of the sisters, whereas in the thick of her text she assumes the role of authority over her "hijas." Almost invariably, Teresa moves from the didactic to the laudatory mode, leaving behind her spiritual daughters to address God directly in prayers of praise before continuing her discourse. After speaking *about* the Bride, Teresa speaks directly *to* her. Likewise, she speaks *about* the Virgin Mary and then directly *to* her in prayer.

Teresa's manipulation of the plural forms, *vosotros* and *nosotros*, reveals the extent to which she exploits their potential as shifters. Benveniste proposes the replacement of the ordinary distinction between singular and plural with the distinction between simple and amplified person. Only the third person, as a non-person, permits the true use of the term plural. For our purposes, we will focus on the amplified first person, that is, "we." Benveniste delves further into the nature of "we" to delineate its multiple functions.

Benveniste asserts that the passage from "I" to "we" does not entail a simple pluralization, but rather a more complex amplification which is either inclusive or exclusive in nature. The plural is a factor of illimitation rather than of multiplication. "We" is not a product of multiple "I"s. It is either inclusive (we = I + you [+ you + you . . .]) or exclusive (we = I + they [+ he + she . . .]). The inclusive "we," which is in opposition to "he/she/they," underlines the presence of "you," whereas the exclusive "we," which is in opposition to "you" (singular or plural), highlights the "I" (233-235).²

It is the shifting referent of Teresa's *nosotros*, her passage from *yo* to *nosotras* to *vosotras*, that interests us here; the shifting inclusion or exclusion of her fellow nuns as well as her shifting effacement or self-aggrandizement:

Cuando el Señor quiere darlo a entender, Su Majestad lo hace sin trabajo *nuestro*. A mujeres digo esto y a los hombres que no han de sustentar con sus letras la verdad, que a los que el Señor tiene para declarárnoslas a *nosotras* ya se entiende que lo han de trabajar, y lo que en ello ganan. Mas *nosotras* con llaneza tomar lo que el Señor *nos* diere; y lo que no, no *nos* cansar, sino alegrarnos de considerar qué tan gran Dios y Señor *tenemos*, que una palabra suya terná en sí mil misterios, y así su principio no endendemos *nosotras*. Así si estuviere en latín u en hebraico u en griego, no era maravilla; mas en nuestro romance, ¡qué de cosas hay en los salmos del glorioso rey David que, cuando *nos* declaran el romance sólo *tan oscuro nos queda* como el latín! Así que siempre *os* guardad de gastar el pensamiento con estas cosas ni cansaros, que mujeres no han menester más que para su entendimiento bastare; con esto las hará Dios merced. Cuando Su Majestad quisiere dárnoslo sin cuidado ni trabajo *nuestro*, lo *hallaremos* sabido. En lo demás, humillarnos y—como he dicho— alegrarnos de que *tengamos* tal Señor, que aun palabras suyas dichas en romance

²The denominations "inclusive" and "exclusive" are themselves arbitrary; they refer to the presence or absence of "you." One could as well conceive of the inclusion or exclusion based on "they." Benveniste himself recognizes the conventional nature of the denomination. We will follow his usage using the criteria of the presence or absence of "you" as the basis for the inclusion or exclusion respectively.

nuestro no se pueden entender. (*Meditaciones* 424; emphasis added)

Teresa's sermonizing to her fellow nuns in the *vosotros* mode appeases those who would have women refrain from theological contemplation, yet she clearly disassociates herself from the general injunction. She then shifts to the *nosotros* mode when referring to the reception of God-given understanding. The *nosotros* here is exclusive, highlighting Teresa's *yo*. Included are those who share—using Slade's terminology—Teresa's hermeneutics of humility and enjoyment; all others are excluded. The ambiguity of this *nosotros*, its inclusive or exclusive nature, allows Teresa to continue addressing multiple interlocutors reading with varying levels of sympathy. At this syntactical level, one sees played out in microcosm the larger issues addressed by Slade and Weber. A polyvalent *nosotros* allows Teresa simultaneously to reject an unsympathetic reading by an Inquisitorial clergyman excluded in this *nosotros* (Slade's masculine rational analysis), and to accept a sympathetic reading by fellow nuns or benevolent confessors of an alternative feminine experience of the divine enjoyed by the *mujercillas*.³

The pronominal intricacy of Teresa's discourse is only augmented if one compares the preceding passage, found in the first chapter of the meditations, with her concluding remarks at the end of the seventh chapter.

Y porque en el libro que os he dicho hallaréis cuándo ha un alma desear salir a aprovechar a otros y el peligro que es salir antes de tiempo, muy por menudo, no lo quiero decir aquí ni alargarme más en esto, pues mi intento fue, cuando lo comencé, daros a entender cómo podéis regalaros cuando oyerdes algunas palabras de los Cánticos y pensar—**aunque son a entender vuestro oscuras**—los grandes misterios que hay en ellas; y alargarme más sería atrevimiento. Plega a el Señor no lo haya sido lo que he dicho, aunque ha sido por obedecer a quien me lo ha mandado.

Sírvase Su Majestad de todo, que si algo bueno va aquí, bien creeréis que no es mío, pues ven las hermanas que están conmigo con la priesa que le he escrito, por las muchas ocupaciones. Suplicad a Su Majestad que yo lo entienda por experiencia. A la que le pareciere que tiene algo de esto, alabe a nuestro Señor y pídale esto postrero, por que no sea para sí la ganancia. Plega nuestro Señor nos tenga de su mano y enseñe siempre a cumplir su voluntad, amén. (*Meditaciones* 468; emphasis added)

³Weber analyses Teresa's double use of the diminutive *mujercilla*. "... 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 favors, her disobedience of *letrados*, her administrative initiative, her right to 'teach' in the Pauline sense, and her unmediated access to the Scriptures" (39–40).

Here at the end of her text, with the exception of the references to "our Lord," Teresa has abandoned the polyvalent *nosotros* and speaks with her own *yo* as against *vosotros*. The Biblical text that was so obscure to "us" women in the first chapter, is now obscure to "you" (others? nuns?). Through her divine experience, Teresa has received understanding from God, and thus the *Song of Songs* is no longer obscure to her. The authorial *yo* is far more in evidence here at the end of the text. Teresa states her authorial intention firmly in the first person, yet feels the need to repeat that she writes only in obedience to her confessor and that thus, to continue further would be inappropriate. Teresa reaffirms the experiential basis of her understanding, while crediting God with whatever good might be found in the text: a clear echo of her prologue. "Si algo acertase, no será de mí. Plega a la divina Majestad acierte..." (*Meditaciones* 424). Through a topos of humility, Teresa rejects credit for her own work. Simultaneously, however, she intimates that what she writes is divinely inspired, thus dismantling the humility topos. Furthermore, as Slade points out, this framing device of textual responsibility is double-edged. By reminding her readers that she is obliged to write by her confessors, she shrugs off responsibility for the orthodoxy of her text before the Inquisition onto her confessor (Slade 30).

The book Teresa so vaguely refers to in the quote above is of course her own first-person project, *Libro de la Vida*. She refers the nuns to this book for further reading. The text of the *Meditaciones* does not end in the first-person mode, however. This third-person project ends with yet another non-person, behind which we can clearly see Teresa's outline. "A la que le pareciere que tiene algo de esto, alabe a nuestro Señor y pídale esto postrero, por que no sea para sí la ganancia" (*Meditaciones* 468). The "algo de esto" is, understanding through direct experience of the divine, which Teresa has put to use, not for her own benefit, but rather as she has done in this very text, to enlighten her fellow nuns.

"Her extensive writings and her foundations of reformed Carmelite monasteries throughout Spain indicate that she did attain the authority to teach the word of God. Like all Teresa's works, the *Meditaciones* tell of victory" (Slade 40). Slade's is a thorough and thoughtful study of Teresa's text. In her affirmative and enthusiastic conclusion, however, she seems to forget that the text in question, Teresa's *Meditaciones*, was banned and ordered burned. Weber, though she does not study the *Meditaciones* in such textual detail, is perhaps more attuned to the delicate balancing act that Teresa had to perform in sixteenth-century Spain, deftly maneuvering around the issues of the translation and interpretation of the Bible, of gender and the limitations imposed on her as a woman, and of her double and paradoxical role leading both an active and a contemplative life.

Not only are the *Meditaciones* a "stimulus for mystical contemplation," as Weber asserts, but also a created opportunity to justify and validate the divine nature of

Teresa's mystical experiences, inscribing them within a Biblical tradition: conflating her experience with that of the Bride, aligning herself with the Virgin Mary in the question of the direct experience of understanding of the divine, and finding in the Samaritan woman a kindred spirit in the quest to be believed. The third-person project, superficially the study of the Bride's experience of Christ in the *Song of Songs*, is in reality a thinly disguised first-person endeavor in which Teresa appropriates the voice of the Bride in order for her own to be heard. The Bride, the Virgin and the Samaritan woman are indeed non-persons; the implicated subject is most definitely Teresa herself.

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