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Weber, Alison (ed.). Approaches to Teaching Teresa of Ávila and the Spanish Mystics

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that these spiritual experiences are prime examples of the seeming opposite of what she argues, which is disembodiment. She herself mentions that an interest in incarnation in the late Middle Ages is nothing surprising, so she could have spent less time on that topic. At the same time she rather surprisingly omits any mention of the cult of Corpus Christi, and sacramental theology gets a very late mention in the book as well.

I do not like to make such distinctions, coming from an interdisciplinary background myself, but I think the above issues will make the book more attractive to scholars of English than to historians of religion. Still, I do not think they ruin what is a very useful study.

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Weber, Alison (ed.).

Approaches to Teaching Teresa of Ávila and the Spanish Mystics.

Approaches to Teaching World Literature. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2009. Pp. vii, 297. ISBN 978-1-60329-023-4 (paperback) \$19.75.

The essays in this edition of the *Approaches to Teaching* tackle a challenging pedagogical question: How to engage twenty-first century North-American students—in either largely secular, Catholic, or other institutions of higher learning—in the esoteric topic of early modern Spanish mysticism? The contributors tell their stories of successfully motivating students to reflect on the religious, socio-political, and philosophical issues triggered by the lives and writings of Spanish mystics.

Part One of the collection (“Materials”) addresses the basic issues of accessing the writings of the Spanish mystics for instructors and students. Alison Weber describes Spanish and bilingual anthologies and editions of primary texts. She discusses reference works on the relevant historical events, works on individual mystics and spiritual orders, and historical and literary, religious and theological studies of mysticism. Amanda Powell explains how English translations of Teresa’s writings convey different nuances of meaning, suitable

for different curricular requirements, whereas Emily Scida details features of sixteenth-century Spanish that cause difficulties for contemporary readers.

The essays in the second part (“Approaches”) are organized under headings that discuss historical and theoretical perspectives, specific course contexts, and the teaching of specific texts. This review highlights some common themes identifiable in these critically and pedagogically well-informed contributions, without pretending to do justice to their complexity.

Through a historical approach, Elizabeth Rhodes grounds Spanish mysticism in a series of socio-political circumstances that led to, and shaped, the writings of Teresa of Ávila and John of the Cross. Whatever their specific themes, virtually all other essays address some aspect of the historical context of Spanish mysticism. Lisa Vollendorf discusses successful strategies for contextualizing the radical nature of mystical practices in Counter-Reformation Spain. William Childers studies the purported Sufi influence on the Spanish mystical tradition, and Michael McGaha considers Teresa’s Jewish heritage as a possible influence on her spirituality. Guiding students to understand a deeply religious mindset of Spanish colonial society, Kathleen Ann Myers considers the influence of Teresa’s spiritual authority in the legacies of Rose of Lima, María de San José, and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz.

Issues of feminism and gender figure by far most prominently in the collection. Bárbara Mujica examines the possibility of Teresa’s feminism against the sixteenth-century attitudes towards women, and Weber invites reflections on the place of Christian feminism in the history of feminist consciousness. Barbara Simerka analyzes Teresa’s writings as early examples of feminist epistemology and pedagogy that challenge masculinist standards of cognition. Linda Belau reads the paradoxes of Teresa’s language as an unconscious linguistic performance of the saint’s ineffable experience of God, and explains how Lacan derived from the saint’s writings the notion of feminine *jouissance*.

Feminist criticism, along with the theories of the body, further informs studies of Teresa’s autobiographical writings. Helen Reed highlights memorable passages in *The Book of the Foundations*, which give a rare portrayal of an early modern woman with agency. Carol Slade and Darcy Donahue compare Teresa’s *The Book of Her Life* with, respectively, St. Augustine’s and Ignatius Loyola’s autobiographies. They show how gender influenced Teresa’s construction of her devotion and her strategies of self-representation. Sherry Velasco draws, among others, on theories of autobiography, body and disability, psycholinguistics, and

pornography to teach early modern women's convent writing, whereas Martha Vicente explores the female mystics' attitudes towards the body as a site for negotiating authority for early modern women.

Some rewarding approaches to mysticism rely on early modern visual and music culture. Cordula van Wyhe uses Rubens's paintings and the writings of Teresa's follower Margaret von Nort to exemplify verbal and visual expressions of post-Teresian movement in the Spanish Netherlands, and Christopher Wilson interprets the engravings of Teresa's image to show how iconographic representations reconfigured the mystic's persona in conformity with dominant political and gender expectations. Reading Fray Luis de León's "Ode to Salinas" through Neoplatonic music theories, Mario Ortiz shifts students' attention from the religious content of the mystic's writing to the Renaissance aesthetic discourse of harmony.

Ralph Keen reflects on the controversy of teaching spiritual texts in a secular academic setting, inviting a question of what is the appropriate way to teach mysticism? Different institutional settings answer this question in ways that speak to their students' specific needs. For María del Pilar Ryan, the concept of "holy disobedience" in mystical practices engages students seeking a sense of identity in a highly structured environment of a US military college. In contrast, the religious context of a Jesuit university favours Gillian Ahlgren's reading of Teresa as a theologian with an extensive knowledge of the Scripture. Taking field trips, studying visual materials, and drawing on available community resources motivates Dona Kercher's students in an undergraduate Catholic institution.

Several contributors comment that mystics' use of sensual language to communicate the ineffable experience of God often clashes with students' religious sensibilities. Both Howard Mancing's method of teaching John of the Cross's "Noche oscura" and Joan Cammarata's contribution on Teresa's *The Interior Castle* offer strategies for overcoming students' reservations regarding the mystics' use of erotic language to communicate spiritual experience.

Dana Bultman and David Darst offer counterpoint readings of Fray Luis de León's poetry. Bultman draws a distinction between Fray Luis's "Noche serena" and John of the Cross's "La noche oscura" as examples of a humanist and a mystical text, whereas Darst teaches Fray Luis's poetry by focusing on the concepts of journey as metaphors of mystical progress.

Weber's *Approaches* brings together essays that offer a range of perspectives for the teaching of Spanish mysticism at different levels and in different academic contexts. The collection thus testifies to the intellectual currency of Spanish mysticism in art history, or women's and religious studies, well beyond its usual place in Spanish literature and culture classes. Various essays can be used as assigned readings; presenting summaries of significant trends in mysticism scholarship, they can provide valuable directions for future research.

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Wojciehowski, Hannah Chapelle.

Group Identity in the Renaissance World.

New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011. Pp. xiii, 390 + 40 ill. ISBN 978-1-107-00360-6 (hardcover) \$90.

This is an exceptionally well researched, handsomely produced, and often intriguing book. The bibliography runs to 25 dense pages, and 40 illustrations complement the text. Quantitative measures, however, fail to fully acknowledge the breadth of the author's research. *Group Identity in the Renaissance World* examines encounters between groups throughout the early modern period and on several continents. While the work clearly centres on the European Renaissance, it extends to Brazil, the Caribbean, the Portuguese colony of Goa in India, and the animal-hospitals of Gujarat.

Each chapter begins with an example, often taking the form of a brief narrative, then enters into an exploration of what the example might reveal about a group. The introduction begins with descriptions of Raphael's paintings *The School of Athens* and *Mount Parnassus*. The first chapter then begins with the recovery of the Laocoön in 1506. Other chapters concern the destruction of a Buddhist relic in Sri Lanka, Thomas More's visit to Antwerp where he drafted part of his *Utopia*, and the voyages of the fascinating Pietro della Valle, who travelled throughout the Middle East and India, accompanied part of the time by his beautiful Circassian bride and the rest of the time by her embalmed corpse and their adopted daughter, whom he later married. Again, the sheer breadth of Wojciehowski's study impresses and her anecdotes intrigue. Few