

Tudor England offered refuge to many Italian exiles, who often reciprocated keeping communication open with Counter-Reformation Italy, acting as intelligencers and cross-confessional brokers in the midst of the religious strife. More attention could have been dedicated also to the wide circulation of Ochino's writings, translated into many different languages, which were appropriated and misread by Catholic censors, European reformers, and later by libertines and *philosophes*. But these are only minor shortcomings of Camaioni's rich and stimulating book, which will be of interest for anyone working on the religious crisis of sixteenth-century Italy and on its relationship with the European Reformation.

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***The Life of Saint Teresa of Avila: A Biography.* By Carlos Eire.  
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\$26.95 cloth.**

This compact volume by Carlos Eire is part of the Princeton series Lives of Great Religious Books. Written for the general public, it reviews the creation and reception of Teresa of Avila's spiritual life story, a manuscript she called her "Book" but her first editor titled her "Life." The biography mentioned in the title, then, refers to Teresa's *Life*, not to Teresa herself.

Eire necessarily moves at a rapid clip through the *Life*'s creation, recounting the historical turmoil in which Teresa wrote it and the original challenges it faced before its catapult into history when Teresa was canonized in 1622. He summarizes the phases of the text's writing, which culminated in Teresa's superior asking her to add her memories of her convent foundations to the manuscript, presumably for posterity. Nonetheless, Eire stages the *Life* as a defensive text, a "forced confession" (34) composed to prove the orthodoxy of Teresa's mystical experiences.

Mystical writings in first person put any secularist academic in a quandary, a position Eire negotiates by detailing the intense religiosity of early modern Spain and listing the affinities that Teresa's text has with mystical texts of her day. He introduces his readers to her meditative method, her Jesus, and her devils. About her levitations, for which she was well known, he maintains that whether she defied the laws of gravity or not is irrelevant (92), leaving his readers at a loss as to how to interpret the many claims that she did. Chapters 1 through 3, which cover Teresa's lifetime, are grounded in the *Life*'s relationship to Catholic orthodoxy, particularly as a response to Protestantism.

Chapter 4 covers the editorial history of the *Life*, first published in 1588, and its influence through 1800. Eire follows the text into France, where he finds it had the greatest impact. He reviews what he calls her "wayward disciples" (122), the Jansenists and Quietists, and an "unlikely disciple" (127), Richard Crashaw. By the time of Crashaw (1613–1649), readers of Teresa's *Life* were using it as a springboard into their own agendas.

Artistic renderings of the *Life* are the subject of chapter 5, in which Eire briefly treats the graphic hagiography by Adriaen Collaert and Cornelis Galle, published in 1613, then dwells at length on representations of the transverberation. He maintains that

these images all reify the themes of love, ecstasy, and martyrdom (143), although how martyrdom squares with Teresa's experience is unclear. He presents seven artistic renderings in detail, with images reproduced in the book, and mentions several others. Curiously, Aire does not note the ever-intensifying youth and beauty of the saint in these representations, which signal the aestheticizing of Teresa's figure and distancing from her self and her text.

As the ideology of Europe moved into modernity, religious texts lost influence, as what Aire calls secular hegemony set in (170). This led to interpretation of Teresa's ecstasies as pathological, particularly once the male medical establishment adapted the ancient illness of hysteria to suit its own taxonomies. Aire does not mention that the hegemony to which he refers pertained to the white, Christian upper-classes and were formulated, although not always enacted, by men. Passing through influential writers about mysticism, such as William James and Evelyn Underhill, he concludes the chapter with an odd pause at hallucinogenic drugs, implicitly suggesting that Teresa's ecstasies were chemically induced, while recognizing that no one has suggested that (181). The chapter concludes with a riveting rendition of how the Spanish Fascists under Franco appropriated Teresa for their propaganda.

The book's final chapter reviews the *Life's* significance in what Aire terms our post-mystical age. After reviewing the feminist scholars whose work was key in learning to read Teresa's *Life*, he concludes with recent television and novelistic representations of the saint—works whose relationship to the original text of the *Life* is less apparent than their use of that text to promote a postmodern message. The epilogue, which details the 1970 declaration of Teresa of Avila as a Doctor of the Catholic Church, reiterates this idea.

Aire's style is chatty, his phrasing is lively, and his textual range is impressive. In 260 pages, he runs his readers from 1492 through 2018 with aplomb. This is a dense book, and the reader can feel Aire pounding his fist against the page limit in every paragraph. The general public will not notice the inaccuracies that scholars will see (Teresa's text says she was six or seven, not five or six, when called to virtue [7], to mention one). Although Aire's subject is religious, his approach is secular: no Carmelite writings about Teresa's *Life* are mentioned, nor is the influence of her *Life* on the order she founded considered. Although he summarizes feminist scholarship on the *Life* and mentions women influenced by Teresa, such as Thérèse de Lisieux and Edith Stein, Aire writes, perhaps unwittingly, within the cavalier masculinist tradition: Teresa's experiences with her God are "otherworldly trysts" (xii), the word patriarchy appears in quotation marks (207), and Columbus "stumbled upon" what Europeans called the New World (2). A feminist scholar likely would have found that the most important accomplishment of Teresa's *Life* was that it unlocked the door to women's experience of God and legitimized an alternative to married life in a way no other book had. It also engendered an entire genre of self-writing by women—women from whom history would otherwise have heard nothing.

Aire's volume is an introduction to Teresa's *Life* from which expert and general readers will cull something interesting. The extent to which it leads readers to Teresa's own writings will be the index of its success. One hopes it marks a new direction for this series: of the twenty-eight books in it, this is the only one about a text written by a woman, and only two of the series volumes were written by women.

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