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RHETORICAL WONDERS: THE EXCEPTIONAL TERESA DE CARTAGENA AND *ADMIRACIÓN OPERUM DEY*

RESUMEN

Exploramos la altamente construida presentación del excepcionalismo mujeril de Teresa de Cartagena en *Admiración operum Dey*, escrito en defensa de su tratado religioso anterior, *Arboleda de los enfermos*. La argumentación clásica muestra sus habilidades excepcionales y defiende su derecho de ser escritora, pero simultáneamente mantiene una postura estricta de humildad. Teresa llena las formas retóricas de Cicerón con los temas tomados de los sermones del Padre de la Iglesia San Agustín, para convertir sus “debilidades”—mujer, sorda, monja—en oportunidades por las cuales Dios obra maravillas. La autora invita al lector que alabe a Dios, pero a la vez revela sus maravillosas habilidades como escritora.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Teresa de Cartagena—*Admiración operum Dey*—Siglo XV—retórica—excepcionalismo

ABSTRACT

In this article we trace Teresa de Cartagena’s sophisticated, highly constructed presentation of her female exceptionalism in *Admiración operum Dey*, a text she wrote to defend her earlier religious treatise, *Arboleda de los enfermos*. Teresa’s classical argumentation shows her exceptionalism and simultaneously defends Teresa’s right to be an author, all while maintaining a strict posture of humility. Teresa fills in the rhetorical forms from

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Cicero with content from Church Father Augustine's sermons so as to turn her "weaknesses"—female, deaf, cloistered—into opportunities through which God works. While she invites her readers to praise God, one cannot deny her marvelous abilities as a writer.

KEYWORDS: Teresa de Cartagena—*Admiración operum Dey*—fifteenth-century—rhetoric—exceptional woman

1. AUTHORS' NOTE

This project began during a survey course on medieval literature when we (both authors) were graduate students, learning how to create a concordance by practicing with Teresa de Cartagena's *Admiración operum Dey*. Her text subsequently took on an enriched meaning in a different course with Dr. Alison Weber, where we studied gender in the medieval period. Inspired by what we learned there about the *querelle des femmes*, both of the authors of this paper chose to deepen their studies of this fifteenth-century wonder of pro-woman argumentation. As an undergraduate, Dr. Gutiérrez had first studied with Dr. Weber as part of her inaugural class at the University of Virginia. Years later, Dr. Weber supervised an independent course on rhetoric with Dr. Ewalt, which became a key moment in her formation and understanding of how classical rhetorical theory informed early women writers.³ It has been our pleasure to work together twenty years later, inspired by Dr. Weber's extraordinary legacy as professor and scholar. Our collaboration focuses once again on *Admiración operum Dey*, written by another exceptional female, Teresa de Cartagena.

2. INTRODUCTION

Teresa de Cartagena is the first known woman to write in Spanish about her intellectual abilities. This fifteenth-century nun composed a subtle and indirect pro-woman argument.⁴ In her first text, *Arboleda de los enfermos*,⁵ the "orchard" for the infirm is based on

³ During this independent course of study, Dr. Ewalt wrote her Master's thesis, which analyzed and compared the rhetoric of Teresa de Cartagena and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz.

⁴ This treatise is one of Hispanism's earliest examples of a pro-woman argument written by a woman, sometimes anachronistically defined as Hispanism's first feminist treatise. We consider *Admiración operum Dey* as a "proto feminist" text, but agree with scholars like Ronald Surtz in "The New Judith" and "Image Patterns", who argues that this text is not a general call for equality, but a specialized one for Teresa de Cartagena alone. Among others such as Cortés Timoner, Deanda Camacho, Deyermund, Kim, and Seidenspinner-Nuñez, Rocío Quispe unpacks this contradiction in "El espacio medieval femenino entre la escritura y el Silencio."

⁵ In "Autobiografías de mujeres en la Edad Media y el Siglo de Oro y el canon literario", Encarnación Juárez notes the scarcity of autobiographies written by women. Brenda Jo Brueggemann further notes that Teresa is

Teresa's struggles as a deaf nun;⁶ she makes the case that her deafness is a gift from God that keeps her from being distracted by the world. When she was criticized for being a woman and writing a religious treatise on the pious purpose of suffering,⁷ she responded with *Admiración operum Dey* to reaffirm God's singular grace and to authorize her first text as an unusual work of God. As is indicated by the title, in *Admiración operum Dey* Teresa builds her entire argument around the concept of God as the source of all good works. He provides for any perceived deficit in Teresa as a female writer. She reminds the reader that God inspires all knowledge, not just hers: "Toda la sabiduría [es] del Señor Dios;" that is, "todo desç[i]endió e desçiende de v[n]a fue[n]te ca el Señor de las çiençias, Dios solo es" (127).⁸ Her writings create a persona for herself as an exceptional woman, chosen to receive knowledge by God's wondrous grace.⁹

In this paper we will trace Teresa de Cartagena's sophisticated, highly constructed presentation of her exceptionalism. Her rhetorical skills allow her to turn every possible perceived trait of weakness—female, deaf, cloistered,¹⁰ from a *conversa* family—into an unimpeachable strength through which her readers may properly direct their admiration to God. Teresa creates a marvelous example of classical argumentation to show that she is exceptional while simultaneously maintaining a strict posture of humility. The careful reader can find influences of Ciceronian rhetoric and Augustinian tropes in Teresa de Cartagena's texts. *Admiración* imitates these two masters—one of classical rhetoric, the other a Church Father—in ways that suggest Teresa was in fact extremely learned and an

the only female writer of a *consolatio* in the canon (580). Other female writers like Teresa de Ávila faced similar but not identical challenges with "la desafiante empresa de convertirse en escritora" (Granados 623).

⁶ Elena Deanda describes Teresa's writing as a "prosthetic narrative" (464). Her text makes up for her body's inabilities, empowering her in spite of her perceived deficits. Seidenspinner-Núñez describes how Teresa's deafness isolated her within the convent and "thrust her into the dominant culture of male letters" (*Writings* 113).

⁷ Navas Ocaña and Torre Castro consider Teresa among other female authors, especially considering the accusations of plagiarism against her.

⁸ All page numbers for *Admiración operum Dey* refer to Hutton's 1967 edition. We have chosen to conserve much of Hutton's representation of Teresa's original language, where he inserts "corchetes oblicuos para indicar supresión de letras o palabras, [y] corchetes rectos para las correcciones y añadiduras editoriales." We chose to improve readability by omitting his "letra bastardilla para las resoluciones de las abreviaturas del copista" (7).

⁹ Teresa de Cartagena's grace argument is discussed by many, but we will focus on its singular nature as proof of her exceptionality. Dayle Seidenspinner-Núñez notes Teresa's evocation of grace as women in the plural: "Male letters is thus an example of the blessings of nature and of fortune [...] Women's writing, on the other hand, is a blessing of grace" (*Writings* 133). María del Mar Cortés Timoner also briefly describes Teresa de Cartagena's extraordinary woman argument that places natural gifts behind gifts of grace (*Las primeras escritoras* 53-57). Both of Teresa de Cartagena's texts "aúnan la experiencia personal de enfermedad y la gracia divina con la asimilación de la enseñanza de las autoridades cristianas y la educación prehumanista" (53). Marian Ochoa de Eribe adds that Teresa "pretende accionar sobre el discurso ajeno para crear un espacio para el discurso personal" (188).

¹⁰ These three "strikes" are part of Howe's "Sor Teresa de Cartagena and Entendimiento." Brueggemann focuses more exclusively on Teresa's deafness.

adept scholar.¹¹ Where did she get access to ancient Latin texts? The Cartagena family wealth may have given Teresa access to a library, an accident of birth that powerfully improved her ability to write by imitating Cicero and Saint Augustine.¹² While we cannot prove that she read these texts directly¹³, we argue that her access can be inferred from evidence in her writing. This article will first reveal the multiple ways in which Teresa structured *Admiración operum Dey* with Ciceronian rhetoric, and then will consider detailed examples of how Augustinian signs provided the content for her argument.

3. THE RHETORIC OF CICERO IN *ADMIRACIÓN*

We offer two kinds of evidence that Teresa knew Cicero. First, her vocabulary choices and six-part judicial rhetoric structure show deeply embedded Ciceronian precepts. Next, we consider three different ways in which Teresa sustains a focused use of Cicero's humble style, all techniques for how to win over the readers' judgement in a difficult case.

3.1. Cicero's vocabulary and judicial rhetoric

In the first category of evidence, we see the influence of Ciceronian texts in Teresa's linguistic choices: we suspect that she adopted "maravillarse" from her uncle Alfonso de Cartagena's Spanish translation of *De officiis* (*On Duties*), but gleaned "admiración" from a Latin version of the same work. Alonso de Cartagena translated the Latin concept of *admiratio* into the Spanish noun *maravilla* and verb *maravillarse* instead of the more latinized *admiración* and *admirar*. We see the same verb pattern in Teresa's work. Instead of *admirar*, she used *maravillarse* in various verb and adjective forms a total of 84 times. However, the noun 'maravilla' only appears eight times in Teresa's text, whereas her

¹¹ As Deyermond explains, Teresa de Cartagena "was an educated woman, a *conversa*, and a member of a literary family. Her training would have given her the technical ability to write words on paper, and to organize her thoughts. That puts her in a very small minority among fifteenth-century Spanish women [...]" (Deyermond "El convento de las dolencias" 28).

¹² Seidenspinner-Núñez and Kim's 2004 study, "Historicizing Teresa: Reflections on New Documents Regarding Sor Teresa de Cartagena", and Seidenspinner-Núñez's entry in *Castilian Writers* contain an updated history of the nun's life. María-Milagros Rivera Garretas gives basic biographical information and additional material about the "querella de mujeres" (283-84). Rivera Garretas cites Joan Kelly's book *Women, History and Theory*, Chicago and London, 1984, especially the section on *Early Feminist Theory and the "Querelle des femmes"*. Marian Ochoa de Eribe's "El yo polémico de Teresa de Cartagena" offers additional information on the *querella*, as do Beth Miller's introduction to *Women in Hispanic Literature: Icons and Fallen Idols*, and María del Mar Cortés Timoner's "Poner riquezas en mi entendimiento."

¹³ Deyermond explores this: "Among Teresa's sources, the Bible is explicitly cited, as are Boethius, St. Jerome, St. Augustine, Gregory the Great, and St. Bernard, though it is possible that her knowledge of some of these may have come from compendia rather than from direct reading of the texts" ("El convento de las dolencias" 23).

uncle's translation privileges the term. Instead of following her uncle's lead here, Teresa chooses the noun *admiración* 32 times. Her preference for the noun *admiración* indicates that in addition to Alonso de Cartagena's translation of Cicero, Teresa de Cartagena might have been influenced by her reading of the original Latin text. These two choices that Teresa made in vocabulary allow us to postulate that she read both Latin and Spanish translations of *De officiis*.

On a macro level, structural evidence of Teresa's knowledge of Ciceronian techniques can be seen in *Admiración operum Dey's* six-part judicial rhetoric formula, which she attenuates by dividing her text into nine paragraphs. The text's exordium covers paragraphs one and two, and the *narratio* spans the long paragraph three. Paragraph four reads like a lengthy thesis statement, which illustrates the proper Ciceronian *petitio* that "renders the whole speech clear and perspicuous" (Cicero 63). Teresa's *confirmatio* reaffirms her argument using the Biblical example of Judith. The *reprehensio* in paragraph six cautions those disagree with her logic not to be foolish, or *neçios*. Finally, the *peroratio* covers paragraphs seven through nine. Taken as a whole, *Admiración* is a textbook application of Cicero's judicial formula: she clearly had access to his text, a translation, or the teachings of Ciceronian rhetoric.

3.2. Cicero's humble style

The second category of evidence for Teresa de Cartagena's exposure to Ciceronian rhetoric is considerably more robust than the linguistic one. Cicero's impact is readily discernible in her nuanced "difficult case" argumentation and the stylistic choices she employs to make it. Teresa selects the strategies that universally create a pose of humility. The influence of the master rhetorician shows in the way that Teresa emphasizes her own frailty. The wonders of her use and adaptation of Cicero's models for a humble style may be grouped into three subcategories: her use of commonplaces to evoke pity, her adaptation of his *admiratione hominum*, and the crown jewel in her exceptional rhetoric: her truly remarkable application of insinuation and induction for this difficult case.

Teresa's rhetoric makes use of many of the commonplaces which Cicero recommends for the *conquestio* as she documents her poor health, a technique to evoke feelings of sympathy in her readers and a more favorable assessment from them. Of the sixteen Ciceronian topics to evoke pity, the most prominent in her work is the tenth one, "in which one's helplessness and weakness and loneliness are revealed" (Cicero 161). She asks her patron to consider her "enfermedades e corporales pasyones que de continuo he por familiares", and to forgive Teresa for these afflictions, which "mucho son estoruadores", leaving her with "no menos turbadoras del entendimiento [...] fatigado y turbado (111). She

high-lights “la soledad mía” (112) and later returns to “esta mi aflicción, confusión e tormento” (133). Teresa emphasizes her lived experience as an isolated, deaf, fragile woman; she reminds her readers of the reasons why she wrote *Arboleda*.¹⁴ Cicero’s commonplaces help Teresa rehabilitate her image in the eyes of the readers: anyone would want to be charitable to a woman who has suffered so much. As Cicero recommends, Teresa evokes sympathy to help win her difficult case.

3.3. Cicero’s *admiratione hominus* turned *admiratione Dei*

When writing *Admiración* as a reply to the astonishment at her previous work, *Arboleda*, we believe that Teresa based her argument on a Christianized concept of the classic *admiratione hominum*, the admiration of worthy men. Cicero explains his original concept in Book II, chapter X of *De officiis*:

While people admire in general everything that is great or better than they expect, they admire in particular the good qualities that they find unexpectedly in individuals [...] Those are regarded with admiration who are thought to excel others in ability and to be free from all dishonour and also from those vices which others do not easily resist. (204)¹⁵

Given the esteem and marvel towards good and virtuous men, “who then could fail to admire in them the splendour and beauty of virtue?” (207). Cicero argues that readers can admire and presumably imitate these good examples.

Teresa de Cartagena, however, goes further as she adapts and Christianizes Cicero’s admiration trope by substituting God in the place of the admirable men. The shift from admiring honorable men to admiring God implements another one of Cicero’s recommendations, a strategy for difficult cases: “If the scandalous nature of the case occasions offence, it is necessary to substitute for the person at whom offence is taken another who is favoured [...] in order that the attention of the auditor may be shifted from what he hates to what he favours” (Cicero 49). Teresa substitutes God, “another who is favored,” to turn the atten-

¹⁴ In *Arboleda*, Teresa comments, “[Q]uando miro esta mi pasyón en los temporales negocios, véola muy penosa y de grandísima angustia [...]” (40). Raquel Trilla’s “Teresa de Cartagena: Agent of Her Own Salvation” takes up the theme of how Teresa’s suffering improves her spiritual condition; furthermore, it describes her desire to be a mediator for others who suffer as a virtuous work.

¹⁵ The act of Christianizing *insinuatione* for a text in the *admirabile genus* had its roots in St. Augustine’s adaptation of Cicero in *De doctrina Christiana*. St. Augustine glosses Ciceronian “duties” in *De officiis* as well as parts of *De inventione*. Teresa seems to justify her own argumentation with the help of this Church Father’s defense of rhetoric for Christian purposes. Alfonso de Cartagena also translated Book I of the basic rhetorical treatise of medieval times, *De inventione*, as *La rhetorica* de M. Tullio Cicerone. All page numbers for Cicero’s *De inventione* refer to Hubell’s 1949 edition in Harvard’s Loeb Classical Library.

tion from herself to an unimpeachable source, converting Cicero's *admiratione hominum* into an *admiratione Dei*. She aims to shift the readers' attention from her amazing feats as a writer to focus instead on the mighty works of God as he makes her into a writer.

Teresa warns against admiring men with "admiración tan yndevota" in two senses: sinners are not admirable, and God alone is worthy of marvel (127). She speaks of her own honourable resistance to the temptation of "corporales afanes" and "espirituales peligros con muchedumbre de vanos e variables pensamientos" (112). Because men and women are insignificant sinners, each one a "pequeño pedaço de tierra," no human being can be worthy of unadulterated *admiratione* (114). This treatment of virtues and vices is part of her strategy to reveal the dangers of secular wonder, or admiration and how "devemos [nos] maravillar devotamente" (124). Neither good men nor Teresa herself are worthy of admiration, only God is.

Both of Teresa's treatises use the *admiratione Dei* trope to emphasize that God alone deserves all wonder and admiration. A key strategy in her defense of her writing was to chastise men who "se maravillan o han maravillado de vn tratado que, la graçia divina administrando mi flaco mugeril entendimiento, mi mano escriuió" (113). Anyone incapable of recognizing God's marvelous work through Teresa deserved her righteous vituperation. Her *admiratione Dei* deflects attention from her own abilities by marveling at the works of God, the only valid recipient of admiration: "Aquel que solo es el que hizo e haze las marauillas" (119), "Hazedor o Ynspirador de aquella obra de que nos marauillamos" (121). Her adaptation of this trope allows her to maintain an overtly humble pose and to join her readers in worshipping God's power in frail humanity.

By Christianizing Cicero's concept of admiration, Teresa de Cartagena attempts to refute her critics' astonishment at the unexpected: a religious treatise that prescribes a code of conduct, written by a woman. Teresa answers her critics with the assertion that "devemos [nos] maravillar devotamente, dirigiendo [e] endereçando nuestra admiración, non a respecto de la persona que los tiene, que sea varón o henbra, entendido o synple, mas solamente a respeto del misericordioso Padre que los da" (124). Teresa does not fully refute Cicero's idea of the *admiratione hominum*, that all men should admire good men. However, men must not lose sight of the fact that over and above any admiration of honorable humans they should admire their superior and divine God. In short, Teresa Christianizes Cicero's rhetoric to deflect criticism from her somewhat scandalous audacity in writing a religious treatise.

3.4. Cicero's *insinuatío* and *inductio*

In a third application of Cicero's humble style, Teresa seems to base her argument on his recommendations for handling a 'difficult case:' she combines *insinuatío* and *induc-*

tio throughout her text. Cicero's difficult case is an argument or example "which has alienated the sympathy of those who are about to listen" (41).¹⁶ Critics of *Arboleda de los enfermos*, Teresa writes, "lo tienen por dudoso e como ynposible, que muger haga tractados [...]. E sy los varones hazen libros e compendiosos tractados no se maravillan" (126). She understands the level of resistance that she must overcome to convince her implacable opponent of the virtue of her argument.

Teresa follows the precepts for forensic rhetoric, designing a particular type of exordium to effectively bring "the mind of the auditor into a proper condition to receive the rest of the speech. This will be accomplished if he becomes well-disposed, attentive, and receptive" (Cicero 41). *Admiración operum Dey* generates that receptive attitude because Teresa insinuates her ideas slowly, moving her reader stepwise through an argument—but also because she achieves her *confirmatio* (a positive proof) mostly through *inductio*, with a notable lack of Aristotelian syllogism or enthymeme. Instead, her case slowly develops via the two, indirect means of insinuation and induction.

Insinuation is the technique Cicero recommends especially for difficult judgements (*admirabile genus*). Teresa carefully employs insinuation not only in the exordium, as recommended by Cicero, but also beyond it and throughout the entire text. Her astute adaptation of his technique makes her argument even more subtle throughout *Admiración*, an effective approach for her particular jury, that is, the critics of *Arboleda de los enfermos*. These readers might otherwise reject out of hand any attempt on her part to argue her ideas. Insinuation allows her, as it were, to convince them slowly by starting where they can agree with her, and gradually working her way closer to her final proposition that she is exceptional because she has been endowed with grace from God.

In a further adaptation to reinforce the subtleness of her logic, Teresa marries insinuation to induction. Cicero defines *inductio* in Book I of *De inventione* as: "a form of argument which leads the person with whom one is arguing to give assent to certain undisputed facts; through this assent it wins his approval of a doubtful proposition because this resembles the facts to which he has assented" (93). If the implied addressees were to reflect on the development of their opinion while reading *Admiración operum Dey*, they would have noticed that Teresa de Cartagena followed the specific Ciceronian steps recommended for *inductio*: "Thus this style of argument is threefold: the first part consists of one or more similar cases, the second of the point which we wish to have conceded,

¹⁶ Hubbell renders the Latin *genera admirabile* as "difficult case." 'Admirable' in this context refers to an impressive challenge to the rhetor's skills of argumentation or persuasion. Teresa de Cartagena wrote well aware that choosing this genus would make her task seem even greater: the reader should not only admire her rhetoric but even more so wonder at the amazing works of God.

for the sake of which the similar cases have been cited; the third is the conclusion which reinforces the concession or shows what results follow from it” (95-97). Teresa’s indirect means of arguing her case amalgamates *insinuatio* and *inductio* to slowly convince her opponents to move from their opinion that a woman cannot and should not write, to her own opinion that she can write and even should have written what she did.

An extended example of the amalgamated insinuation/induction will illustrate Teresa’s logic. The example we have chosen begins in paragraph three, which marks the start of the *narratio*. Teresa begins her inductive chain of argument by redirecting her readers’ attention to God, substituting Him as the favored person to deserve their goodwill, instead of arguing from her own point of view: “todas las cosas que la onipotencia de Dios h[a] fecho [e] faze en el mundo son de grande admiración a nuestro humano seso, asy que la menos cosa que este soberano e potentísimo Hazedor ha fecho e faze, no es de menor admiración que la mayor” (114). In this first step, her Catholic critics should agree with the proposition that humanity must properly direct all admiration to God.¹⁷

Next, Teresa continues with step two of the *inductio*, introducing ‘similar cases’ from other respected authorities. She quotes Church Fathers St. Augustine, St. Jerome, and St. Gregory, as well as numerous books in the Bible, weaving a safety net of sympathetic support from their texts.¹⁸ Specifically, she quotes her authority, the “glorioso e doctor Sant Agustín” (114), from his sermon 130 where he mentions the miracle of the loaves and fishes that fed the five thousand. Everything about the miracle points to a wonder-working God, “E de aquesto ninguno se maravilla ca no menos miraglo es de pocos granos nascer muchos espigas que de pocos panes satura[r] o harta[r] muchos omnes” (115).¹⁹ Teresa guides her readers step by step, from one link into the next in her chain of logic by showing how bread from a poor boy’s lunch can be used by God as a conduit of grace to miraculously feed over five thousand people:

“E las que nunca o [r]aramente acaescen, causan e[n] nos admiración [...]. Pero sy queremos elevar el entendimiento a contemplan o bien considerar las obras de Dios, fallaremos que no son menos maravillosos ni de menor admiración dinas éstas que por natural [c]urso vemos que cotidianamente pasan, que las que [r]aramente e por grand distancia de tiempo acaescen” (115).

¹⁷ As both the title *Admiración operum Dey* and critics like Cortés Timoner remind us, pious wonder is the main point of this work, “admirar la causa y no el objeto de la gracia divina” (*Las primeras escritoras* 62).

¹⁸ Hutton’s critical edition of both of Teresa’s works identifies quotes and phrases from Old Testament and Apocryphal books, choices appropriate for a *conversa* that include Genesis, Ecclesiastes, Isaiah, Joel, Tobit and Judith, although Teresa’s favorite is obviously the Psalms. New Testament books include Matthew, Luke, John, Acts of the Apostles, Romans, and II Corinthians.

¹⁹ The miracle can be found in Matthew 14:13-21. Cortés Timoner mentions the use of *amplificatio* to create a sermonic tone.

In step two of her induction, Teresa's logic has led her readers to the proposition which she wishes conceded: that a weak person can be blessed by God to do extraordinary acts, and miracles can spring from ordinary or lowly things.

Cicero's third step completes Teresa's inductive chain: she now explains the results that follow from the readers' concession in step two, that God may work miracles in whatever or whomever he chooses. This is the point with which she could not have started for fear of alienating them, and to which they would not have agreed without the intervening insinuating and inductive postulations. She insists that God can graft understanding into women, just as he used the poor boy's lunch: "sy quiere enxerirlas en el entendimiento de las mugeres avnque sea ynperfecto o no tan ábile ni sufiçiente para las reçeibir ni retener como el entendimiento de los varones" (115).²⁰ God's "grand[eza] divina" can actually "dar pe[rf]içión e abilidad en el entendimiento fimineo asý como en el varonil" (115-16). God's gift of ability to exceptional women is not to be marveled at any more than the identical gift when it is given to men; therefore, no one should criticize *Arboleda de los enfermos*. In short, the audience cannot dispute God's omnipotence, and the parallel between the miraculous multiplication of the loaves and the fishes that St. Augustine preaches and God's ability to impart understanding upon singular women leads the readers to accept Teresa's 'doubtful proposition', that this particular author's act of writing, however rare in a woman, was rightfully inspired by God's grace and therefore is exonerated from criticism. Between the insinuation and the induction, Teresa indirectly but emphatically wins over her readers to her difficult case.

In summary, one can easily trace the embedded influences of Cicero's rhetoric from all of these elements: a vocabulary that may have been influenced by his text, the six-part judicial organization, adoption of *admiratione Dei*, and techniques for a 'difficult case' including induction and insinuation. While Teresa's manuscript may have appeared simple, the underlying structures and adapted techniques reveal her eloquence.

4. AUGUSTINIAN SIGNS IN *ADMIRACIÓN*

While *De officiis* left its mark on Teresa's argumentation, Cicero is not the only model she imitates. She applies and adopts Augustine's signs within her Ciceronian inductions masterfully to prove her points. We can also see the impact of St. Augustine's advice to

²⁰ We should note that one reason scholars can mistake Teresa's argument to be in support of all women may be that they take her intermediary steps in the inductive chain to be final or prescriptive. Here she uses the plural "women" not because this is her point, but because advocating for women in general keeps her real goal still hidden: she is arguing for herself, but wishes to keep her logic still more hypothetical than personal at this point, to further ease her audience into accepting that she herself has written a religious treatise.

preachers. His *ars predicandae* allows Teresa to counter potential accusations that she is overly duplicitous or worldly in using Cicero's persuasive techniques that were associated with non-Catholics or pagans. Teresa imitates the Church Father's techniques: St. Augustine advocated transforming Ciceronian rhetoric for Christian purposes. He warns that men cannot leave pagans with all of the rhetorical strategies, because the evil "usurp" them "for the winning of perverse and vain causes in defense of iniquity and error" (Augustine 119). To prevent this, Christians must obtain eloquence "for the uses of the good in the service of [God's] truth" (119).²¹ Teresa takes Augustine's recommendation seriously.

Teresa de Cartagena adapts Augustine's ideas from Book II of his *De doctrina Christiana*, which contains a comprehensive treatment of natural and conventional signs. The Augustinian signs can be thought of in the same way as Biblical signs in the book of John: they are miracles that point to a greater truth, or object lessons to teach spiritual truths. Augustine used signs in his sermons to help his listeners understand religious lessons. Teresa likewise uses familiar miracles and metaphors to help her readers apply the logic in her arguments. Three signs in particular illustrate the technique: Judith, the Jewish heroine; grafting branches on the tree of faith, and a tree's bark and pith.²²

4.1. The Judith sign

Teresa uses one of St. Augustine's signs in a second *inductio*, where she includes the difficult and similar case of another exceptional woman, Judith. The idea that grace can supersede natural ability forms an important and bold part of Teresa's argument, and she makes use of Judith's daring story twice in *Admiración operum Dey*.²³ The first time, Teresa argues that eloquence would be a far easier task than the one Judith performed, having decapitated Holofernes, the military leader of Israel's arch-enemy, Assyria:

²¹ We can be sure Teresa read or was acquainted with Augustine's works. Alfonso de Cartagena also translated Book I of the basic rhetorical treatise of medieval times, *De inventione*, as *La rhetorica de M. Tullio Cicerone*. As she directly quotes his version of Cicero's *admiracione hominum* to lend authority to an early step in her inductive argument against "ynde vota" admiration: "E añade mas este santo e doctor [en] la sentençia syguiente diziendo: 'Aquello es mirado non porque mayor sea, mas porque pocas vezes o [r]aramente acaesca'" (Cartagena 115). Hutton footnotes the original Latin text of St. Augustine's words in this edition of the *Admiración*; they more clearly express the idea of admiration: "Sed quia illud omni anno facit, nemo miratur. Admirationem tollit non facti vilitas sed assiduitas" (151).

²² Roland Surtz's "Image Patterns in Teresa de Cartagena's *Arboleda de los enfermos*" examines other metaphors used in Teresa's first work: space, architecture, permeable boundaries, food, and enclosure. Rivera-Cordero considers how Teresa "embodies" deafness within spatial metaphors.

²³ See the Book of Judith in the Biblical Apocrypha, chapters 10-13, for the story of how Judith uses her charm to lure in and kill the leader of the Assyrian armies of Nebuchadnezzar.

[...] más ligera cosa le será vsar de la péñola que del espada. Asý que deven notar los prudentes varones que Aquel que dió yndustria e graçia a Iudit para fazer vn tan marauilloso e famoso acto, bien puede dar yndustria o entendimiento e graçia a otra qualquier henbra para fazer lo que a otras mugeres, o por ventura algunos del estado varonil no s[ab]rían. (120)²⁴

Just as Judith wielded the sword with exceptional strength, Teresa de Cartagena now wields the pen. She places herself in a singular, exceptional category analogous to that of Judith, also an unusual recipient of singular grace: “este tan singular beneficio; que no se entiende por eso, que las otras henbras han de reçebir aquesta syngularidad de yndustria e graçia” (120). Teresa parallels her own difficult case with one where a woman literally was superior to men: the “espeçial graçia [e] yndustria que Dios quiso dar a la prudente Iudit. E asy lo digo, pero segund esto, bien paresçe que la yndustria e graçia soberana exçeden a las fuerças naturales e varoniles, pues aquello que grant exerçito de onbres armados no pudieron hazer, e fizolo la yndustria e graçia de vna sola muger” (119). By weaving in a provocative case—but one that is Biblical and thus acceptable to and irrefutable by her audience—Teresa leads her readers in logical steps from Judith’s “sign” to Teresa’s analogous but lesser case. If her jury agrees with the former, it must agree with the latter. Teresa has used Cicero’s techniques to win over her hostile readers so that they will overlook her exceptional status.

4.2. Biblical, botanical signs

In addition to Judith, Teresa relies on two additional Augustinian signs: the tree of faith, and the bark and pith metaphor. We shall see that Teresa’s use of Biblical, botanical signs in *Arboleda de los enfermos* and in *Admiración* authorizes her simultaneously as an exceptional woman and as an exceptional Catholic of *conversa* heritage.²⁵ In the following two subsections, we will consider each botanical sign in turn.

4.2.1. Engrafted branches in the tree of faith

The first metaphor she borrows from the Biblical tree of the Christian family in Romans 11—an image that grafts ‘foreign’ Gentiles into the Church as a whole (117-18).²⁶ The second meta-

²⁴ Rivera Garretas mentions the *mujer varonil* within the context of the *querrela de mugeres*: “cuando no se ajustan al modelo--masculino--de la “mulier virilis”, la mujer que--como dijeron San Jerónimo y otros muchos antes y después que él--para decir o hacer algo sifnificativo [*sic*] deja de ser mujer y se convierte en hombre. Es en este sentido que Teresa de Cartagena pertenece plenamente a la Querrela de las mujeres” (291).

²⁵ While most critics consider Teresa’s various identities separately, more recently James Hussar considers Teresa’s intersecting identities. “The Jewish roots of Teresa de Cartagena’s *Arboleda de los enfermos*” considers how the work’s audience extends to both the sick and *conversos*; the consolation there works on two levels. Our article illustrates how her identity as a *conversa* meshes with her identity as a woman.

²⁶ *Thayer’s Greek Lexicon* defines ἐνεκεντρίσθης (Romans 11.17) as “1. to cut into for the sake of inserting a scion; 2. to inoculate, ingraft, graft in.” In the Greek New Testament, ‘graft’ appears only in this passage in Romans, but the Latin Vulgate Bible translates ἐνεκεντρίσθης as ‘inserere,’ and uses the Latin term both in the Romans passage and in

phor she borrows from botany, describing men and women respectively as the two components of a tree branch—men are its bark and women the interior pith. Together, the two metaphors establish a legitimized space for Teresa as a female *conversa* within the masculine, Old Christian space of the written word. In fact, in this intermediary step, she hints that in matters of faith, *conversos* may be superior to Old Christians, and women might be superior to men.

Teresa's text shows evidence that she read the verses from Romans 11 about the engrafting of Gentiles into the Jewish olive tree either in the works of her uncle, Alonso de Cartagena (who used the same passage from Romans to defend *conversos*), or in the works of St. Augustine (who favored Romans as a source for examples and material). *Enxerir* in a botanical sense is found only in this one passage of the Bible, where Paul describes how both Jews and Gentiles together belong in a spiritual tree of the faithful:

[...] but if the root be holy, the branches are too. But if some of the branches were broken off [the Jews], and you [the Gentiles] were grafted in among them and became partakers with them in the rich root of the olive tree, do not be arrogant towards the branches [...]. For if you [the Gentiles] were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more shall these [the Jews] who are the natural branches be grafted onto their own olive tree? (Romans 11:16-18, 24)

This image is particularly interesting in light of the Cartagena family tree, rooted in illustrious Jewish stock. The family descended from its patriarch Selemó Ha-Levi, Rabbi of Burgos, a devout believer who converted to Catholicism before the 1392 pogroms. Taking the Christian name of Pablo de Santa María, he later became the Bishop of Burgos (Cantera Burgos 289). In Alonso de Cartagena's text, he uses these verses to emphasize that the Gentiles are "admitidos y amados" (156) to the cultivated tree of the faithful—whereas the Jews were the original trunk of the tree. He honors both sides of his heritage.²⁷ This evidence supports the idea that Teresa's references may very well have come from her uncle's writings as well as St. Augustine.

Like Alonso de Cartagena, his niece Teresa uses the passage to show that God can exalt some members of the body—whether of Gentile or Jewish descent, male or female—above the rest due to their usefulness to their Catholic brothers and sisters, regardless of

2 Corinthians 10:12 to translate a different Greek word for "to class within, place within the same rank." Covarrubias defines 'enjerir' as "meter una cosa en otra e incorporarlo con ella: tomase particularmente por la incorporaci[ó]n que ha[c]emos de la vara verde en el tronco o ramo de otro [á]rbol, que de tal manera se aduna que le comunica su humor y sustancia, dándole en si vida; de[] donde ha nacido multiplicar los g[é]neros de frutas [...]."

²⁷ There are also Jewish customs that might illuminate this context. According to Benjamin D. Gordon, the Jewish subtext of the "extended or transferable sanctity" of the branch would have been perfectly evident to Jews reading the Biblical text, but that the inferred meaning holds even if one has not lived with Jewish halakhic customs (368). The image belongs to different contexts in both religions.

their initial condition or ability. In *Admiración operum Dey* the sign from Romans 11 justifies Teresa's ability to write, even as a woman. She argues that God engrafts [from *enxerir*] knowledge into His creations as He chooses, into men or women.

Enxerir appears early on in *Admiración*, as a sign in one of Teresa's *inductio* arguments to guide the reader from the initial idea of God dispensing grace freely to all, to the idea of God dispensing special grace to Teresa. The cases are similar: "Pero no es mayor maravilla ni a la omnipotencia de Dios menos fãcile e ligero de hazer lo uno que lo otro, ca el que pudo e puede enxerir las çiençias en el entendimiento de los hombres [puede] sy quiere enxerirlas en el entendimiento de las mujeres aunque sea ynperfecto o no tan ábile [...]" (115). Thus, because God "inxirió [las naturales çiençias] en el entendimiento de los onbres" (128), men do not own any unique claim on the gift of understanding. Furthermore, grace is independent of personal ability or effort: "ni yo digo [que] alguno por amar e servir a Dios ha de ser hecho súpitamente Maestro en Teología ni Doctor en Leyes ni Bachiller en Cánones [...]" (128). Masculine studies do not enable God's engrafting of knowledge any more than Gentile blood limits inclusion in God's family tree if He has graciously chosen to engraft non-Jews into it because: "aquel poderoso Señor soberano que dio preheminiçias al varón para que las aya naturalmente e continua, bien las puede dar a la henbra graçiosamente e en tienpos devidos [...]" (119).²⁸ Her third step finally explains the consequences of God's work: "[...] esta ynperfiçión [de las mugeres] e pequeña [e] suficiençia pu[é]dela muy [bien] reparar la grand[eza] divina e avn quitarla del todo e dar pe[r]fiçión e abilidad en el entendimiento fimíneo así como en el varonil, ca la suficiençia que han los varones no lo an de suy[o], que Dios gela dió e da" (115-116). While Teresa concedes the weakness of the female intellect, "inperfecta y no tan ábile" (115) she simultaneously argues that God can, will, and does make up for any lack.²⁹ God shows His goodness by engrafting wisdom into whomever He sees fit. Her use of this Augustinian sign supports her main assertion that as a writer she is not responsible for having been a recipient of special grace from God: it is God who engrafted the knowledge and ability in her.

4.2.2. *The tree's bark and pith*

Teresa further nuances the botanical sign of 'engrafting' by including a second metaphor, that of the bark and pith of tree branches, one of the more well-known 'similar cases' in *Admiración*. In a frequently cited passage, she inverts the traditional interpretation

²⁸ As an intermediate step in her argument, Teresa's metaphor seems to nod to a parity between men and women because of God's gracious engrafting.

²⁹ As Deborah Ellis states in "Unifying Imagery", Teresa's "imagery often depends on the idea that apparent weaknesses are strengths and apparent strengths are weaknesses" (Ellis 45). As the Apostle Paul succinctly puts it, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness" (II Corinthians 12.9).

of this paradigm³⁰ and assigns the women as the pith, and men as the bark: “Están así enxeridas [...] las cortezas [que] guardan e conservan el meollo, sufriendo esterioramente las tenpestades ya dichas. El meollo así como es flaco y delicado, estando yncluso, obra ynteriormente, da virtud e vigor a las cortezas e así lo vno con lo ál se conserva e ayuda [...]” (117). The female side of this dichotomy in Teresa’s view is the pith within the branch, the *meollo*. This life- and strength-giving pith is covered by the masculine bark, whose sole task is to protect the *meollo*, which in turn gives the bark its necessary sustenance. While this might be taken to indicate that men are strong and women are weak, it is nuanced by the idea that men get vital strength from their proximity to the feminine *meollo*.³¹ While this is certainly one way to interpret the example, we cannot be sure that Teresa intended this, especially given her argument’s emphasis on her own special case.

The *meollo* image allows Teresa an acceptable ‘interior’ realm for personal thought and belief, and it simultaneously echoes the feminine traditional role of a life literally lived indoors, a subtle nod again to the difficult case she argues. This is a particularly clever rhetorical tack. She follows a special order from God to “know thyself,” but relies on God who “abre la puerta de la su muy sagrada arca,” providing His knowledge to her (140). However, this special attention is ameliorated by the interiority of her knowledge and experience as a cloistered nun, kept safely indoors. To emphasize her correct role as a cloistered woman, Teresa introduces the counter image of women who “salen de su casa amenudo e andan vagando por c[a]sas ajenas, las quales, por esta mala costunbre, se fazen así negligentes [...]” (138). In her final paragraphs she sets the intended male addressees at ease by reinforcing women’s traditional, non-intellectual duties with a familiar example of feminine vice. Teresa’s “house,” she reminds them, is actually “la cogitaçión secreta e soliloquio de su ynterior pensamiento” (139). The interior *meollo* becomes an interior house: both are safely contained.

By using these two botanical signs of engrafting and pith, Teresa suggests that rather than being defective and incapable, through God’s grace an exceptional woman can be even more gifted in matters of religion. Teresa’s interior life makes her part of the core and spiritual lifeblood of the entire Church—the entire olive tree of the family of God. The combination of metaphors depicts the exceptional woman as a living conduit by which all can gain access to God’s best gifts. Teresa de Cartagena repurposed the grafting sign in her uncle’s work along with the traditional *corteza* and *meollo* metaphor to exalt the value of her singular intellectual and spiritual life.

³⁰ See Seidenspinner-Núñez and Kim, “Historicizing Teresa: Reflections on New Documents Regarding Sor Teresa de Cartagena,” for Teresa’s reversal of the Church Fathers’ traditional view of this distinction (134).

³¹ Mary Baldrige’s “The Tree as Unifying Element in the Works of Teresa de Cartagena” includes additional information. Seidenspinner-Núñez, for her part, discusses how, when “homologizing male/*corteza* and female/*meollo*, Teresa subverts conventional patristic paradigms of allegorical reading and associates woman with spirit and the higher truth, man with carnality and the letter” (*Writings* 135).

5. TERESA'S CONCLUSION OF *ADMIRACIÓN OPERUM DEY*

As Teresa concludes her work, it seems that she is confident in having won over her jury for this 'difficult case'. She makes no clear *petitio* in this section of the treatise, but instead assumes a "not-guilty verdict" for *Arboleda de los enfermos*. Essentially, she does not need forgiveness for having been chosen by God for a special gift, and thus does not ask for it. She proceeds through her *peroratio* as if her wonderfully crafted rhetoric has already won the argument.

Teresa's final summary of that victory can be seen in paragraph nine of *Admiración operum Dey*, where she includes a standard *indignatio* against anyone who still would dare to criticize her. This string of final questions with only one possible response reconfirms God as the source of all works, male or female; therefore, He is the only being worthy of "Admiración". Criticism is no longer an option when the readers consider everything as "operum Dey". In the final lines of the paragraph, Teresa switches into the first-person plural 'nosotros', a stratagem that supports her *conquestio*. She includes the readers in this "we" as if they fully agree with her: together author and readers will not ignore God's role:

la misericordia en nos faziendo dinos de ser prevenidos e cor[r]ejidos en esta vida presente, e la graçia en alunbrando nuestros entendimientos, que la conoscamos e reconoscamos e nos conuertamos a Dios, ca b[en]ino e misericordioso [es], etc. E [Dios da] los trabajos, afliçiones, plagas [...] para reconosçer los sus grandes bienes [...] [en] la escuela de Dios. (141)

Teresa de Cartagena and her readers have learned everything they know in this "school of God," and none can challenge His generosity—or her writing.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, scholars have suggested that this text might be a proto-feminist call for an equality that applies to all women. However, what some may see as a general defense that extends to all women, we have read as a masterfully curated, individual 'exceptional woman' argument. Teresa de Cartagena is a rhetorical wonder whose argumentation underscores how God engrafts knowledge via grace, in her case, partially because of her deafness and other perceived deficits or 'disabilities'. Teresa de Cartagena's exceptional articulation of that grace falls short of a general pro-woman argument. Teresa creates her work with the substantive inclusion of rhetorical techniques advocated by Cicero and Augustine in order to convince others of her own space to be a writer and scholar. She cleverly constructs her justification within the marginalized spaces that she alone inhabited, without extending the equality in writing argument beyond her own exceptional reception of God's singular grace.

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