THE SUFI TROBAR CLUS AND SPANISH MYSTICISM: A SHARED SYMBOLISM

(Part III)

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First and second parts of this study appeared in *Iqbal Review*, Oct. 1997 and April 1998. Dr Baralt argued that the degree to which the mystical literature of Spain came under the influence of Islam is much greater than had been studied. Focusing on such great figures of Christian mysticism as St John of the Cross and St Teresa of Avila she presented her thesis with reference to the key concepts, symbols and recurrent motifs that are found in these works. Part I was devoted to preliminary observations and studied the imagery of "*Wine and Mystical Drunkenness*" and "Dark Night of the Soul" in the Works of St John of the Cross. Part II continued to trace the symbols in the same vein. In part III she continues to investigate further and draws our attention toward the close parallels between the two traditions.

The process of assimilating the aesthetics, the mysticism, and the narrative and metaphoric symbolic devices that were present in the literature of their Moorish neighbors went on among the Christians of Castille for hundreds of years; some day [the co-presence of that literature in Spanish letters] will be talked about with the same naturalness as we say today that Virgil and Ovid were present in the literature of the sixteenth century.

Américo Castro

St Teresa de Jesús

The spiritual symbolism of St Teresa de Jesús in many ways parallels the Symbolism of St John of the Cross, who worked closely with St Teresa, as we all know, in the reformation of the Carmelite order. The two poets share

several important symbols that would appear to have Islamic antecedents and both also employ a great deal of the same technical language. Let us look quickly at those images and phrases that we have explored in St John of the Cross:

a) "Contraction" and "expansion"; wine; the interior fount or spring; the soul as a garden

Over and over, St Teresa insists on the Qur'ānic technical vocabulary of "Contraction or straitness" (*qabî*) and "expansion or breadth"(*basÇ*). The torments of straitness are unmistakable: "because there are many things that embattle [the soul] with an inward straitness that is so sensible and unbearable, that I do not know what it may be compared with save those who suffer in hell"; "it is unspeakable because they are spiritual straitnesses and pains, to which one knows not how to put a name."[7] But curiously, St Teresa *does* know how to "put a name" to this intense spiritual suffering: she calls it "straitness"— *qabî* ?—throughout the *Interior Castle.* The parallel with the *qabî* and *basè* of the Sufis is quite precise: for St Teresa the state that is the alternative to this straitness is, quite explicitly, "expansion." She would appear to interpret Psalm 118: 32 from the perspective of Muslim mysticism:

> . . . "Dilataste cor meum," speaks of the heart's being enlarged. . . [and as] this heavenly water begins to flow from this source of which I am speaking—that is, from our very depths—it proceeds to spread within us and cause an interior dilation and produce ineffable blessings, so that the soul itself cannot understand all that it receives there (*Moradas* IV:2 [*Castle* p. 82]; *OC* 386).

In addition, the works of St Teresa are filled with passages celebrating the wine of ecstasy and the spiritual intoxication that washes over the soul. The verse "thy breasts more precious than wine" is "deciphered" according to this occult meaning that the Muslims established over the centuries:

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[7]*Moradas del castillo interior,* Madrid: BAC, 1976, pp. 406-407. Hereafter, pages in the Spanish edition of the text will be given as *OC* "page"; when quoting from the Standard English edition, the citation will also include the indication *Castle* "page."

> [When] one is in this delight, so drunken and absorbed that one appears not to be within oneself, but rather in some way in a divine drunkenness, that one knows not what one wants, nor what to say, nor what to ask for. . . .When one awakes from that dream and that celestial drunkenness, one is as though shaken and groggy, and feels a holy confusion (*Meditación sobre los Cantares* IV; *OC* 349).

One of the symbols in which St Teresa most closely parallels the Islamic tradition is that of water or the inward spring or fountain. Asín Palacios began to sketch out this parallel in *ŠāÉilâes y alumbrados*: for St Teresa, prayer and meditation are performed in two ways—one, laborious and difficult; the other, spontaneous and autonomous. She compares the two ways of praying with two basins that fill up with water in different ways. The first one is filled by means of "numerous conduits and through human skill; but the other has been constructed at the very source of the water and fills without making any noise. If the flow of water is abundant, as in the case we are speaking of, a great stream still runs from it after it has been filled; no skill is necessary here, and no conduits have to be made, for the water is flowing all the time" (*Moradas* IV: 3 [*Castle* 81]; *OC* 386). For St Teresa, the "conduits and human skill" are the arduous duties which we are bound to (the mortification and guided meditation) and by which we achieve nearness to God, while the free-flowing spring is God Himself, the knowledge of Whom "rushes forth" into our souls with no special effort on our part. This is exactly the same comparison that occurs over and over among the Muslim mystics and that we have also seen in St John of the Cross. Let us look at how closely St Teresa's image resembles the Shādhilite metaphor:

> Just as the mystics of this school compare the soul with a mirror, they also compare it with a spring of water, and link the knowledge and intuitions that exist within the soul with the water that flows from the spring, and say that sometimes the spring is hidden in the earth, and only by digging can one extract water from it. And this simile which they employ, comparing the soul with the spring, is exact, for when the soul is lighted with the mystical truths that make it forget its cares and the things of the world, from it there rushes forth the divine knowledge, just as the water rushes forth from the spring; on the other hand, sometimes one must dig down into the

> water with the hoe of ascetic combat and the shovel of mortification, until those waters gush forth again, as previously they gushed forth spontaneously, or better yet. (Asín Palacios, *ŠāÉilâes* 272)

This soul swollen by spiritual waters is for St Teresa, as for St John of the Cross and so many followers of the Prophet, also a garden cooled by divine breezes, refreshed by the rain of God's mercy, and adorned with the flowers of the virtues. But one must tend it diligently, be a good gardener:

> [With] the help of god we must attempt, like good gardeners, to make these plants grow [in the soul] and take care to water them so that they are not lost, but rather put forth flowers that give forth great fragrance, to give pleasure to our Lord, so that He will come many times to take delight in this garden and pass His time among these virtues (*Vida* 11; *OC* 59).

We have already seen that the Sufis were good "gardeners" of their souls throughout the Middle Ages. It is interesting to note that despite her bad memory, St Teresa recognizes that the image of the garden is not her own: "It now appears to me that I have read or heard this comparison, though as I have such a bad memory I do not know where, nor to what purpose, but it does now content me."

But there are yet more parallels between St Teresa, St John of the Cross, and the mystics of Islam: for St Teresa, as for those others, the soul is a *mirror* that one must polish (*Castle* VII: 2: 8, p. 217) and whose center or deepest depth receives the sudden illumination of a *lightning-bolt* of mystical enlightenment (*Castle* VI:9: 3, p. 185). We might go on piling up examples: the comparative study of the mystical symbolism of St Teresa, St John of the Cross, and the Muslims has yet to be done.

There are other symbols that St Teresa shares with the Muslims but that we have not seen in St John of the Cross. Let us turn now to these.

b) The mystical tree.

One of the most curious of the symbols shared by St Teresa and Muslim mysticism is the tree that grows in the "living" waters of the soul, which is the soul itself:

> I want you to consider what will be this tree of life, planted in the living waters of life—namely, in God—. . . this spring of life in which the soul is as a tree planted [there]. . . . [For] the spring sustains it and prevents it from drying up and causes it to produce good fruit (*Castle,* I:2: 1, pp. 33-4).

The symbol of the cosmic tree is shared by the most diverse cultures. The *Bhagavad-Gitā* and the Upanishads, for example, give us the image of the universe in the form of a tree whose branches extend throughout the world. Scandinavian and German mythology repeat the idea, although Mircea Eliade believes that the image has an Eastern origin: the cosmic tree "has a special significance in the beliefs of the Nordic and central Asiatic and, more particularly, the Altai and Germanic peoples, but its origin is probably eastern (Mesopotamian)" (Eliade, *Patterns* 299 [*Traité* 255]). Some of these traditions link the tree with water, as St Teresa does. Revelations 22: 2 speaks of the tree of life that is planted in the river that flows from the throne of God in the Heavenly Jerusalem and gives all manner of fruit,[8] and the idea is not very distant from numerous Indian, Persian, and Arab traditions.[9]

The alchemists, however, interpret the cosmic tree in terms of their own spiritual experiences, and it becomes "the outward and visible sign of the realization of the self," according to Carl Jung (196). The Arab alchemist Abë 'l-Qāsim al-'Iraqâ (thirteenth century) speaks of the symbolic tree of his soul which rises out of a spring in precisely that way. And with this we come nearer to St Teresa, who notes that the tree (which represents her soul and not the universe) will grow well or ill depending on the kind of spiritual

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[8]Ezekiel 47:7 also, though in a very vague way, links the tree with an allegorical river or "waters."

[9]In chapter 48 of Muhammad's *Mi'rāj,* Gabriel and Ridwān take Muhammad to a spacious place called *Sidra al-muntahā.* There they find a huge tree, made of pearl, at whose feet "there arose a spring of clear water beyond all praising," which was perfect grace (in Munoz Sedino 220).

waters that nourish it: the clean waters of grace or the filthy waters of sin. The parallels multiply when we look at the mystical literature of the Sufis, who over and over again repeat the image of the tree of the soul that rises out of a spiritual spring, and do so in the same terms St Teresa employs. In other words, the mystics and alchemists of Islam give the tree—the symbol of the universe for so many cultures—a new and inward, mystical dimension. Let us look a little closer at these Islamic theories.

The ancient *Book of Certainty* sees the tree and the spring or river of the Garden of Eden as having their counterpart in the soul:

> In the centre of the Garden of Eden there is said to be not only a fountain but also a tree, at whose foot the fountain flows. This is the Tree of Immortality, and it is an outward image of the inward Tree of Immortality, which grows in the Garden of the Heart (40).

The Persian Shabastarâ also praises this tree which, like St Teresa's, grows in the depth of his spirit and indeed is the spirit itself: "From water and earth springs up 'the soul's kernel' into a tree, Whose high branches are lifted up to heaven" (Lederer 32). Nërâ of Baghdad speaks to us repeatedly of the same tree, an image he explores in several chapters of his *Maqāmāt al-qulëb*. Here is a brief excerpt from Chapter I:

> God planted [in the soul of the believer] a tree of mystical knowledge. . . [whose] roots penetrate the heart, while its branches rise up to heaven, reaching even to the Throne of God. . . . Then [God] has made a water [spring, etc.] that flows from the sea of right conduct flow from the river of His grace, and with it He waters [this tree] (*op.cit.,* 131-2).

In close parallel to St Teresa, Nërâ notes that the soul's tree of spiritual knowledge grows in step with our positive or negative spiritual growth (*cf.* his chapters XVII, "A Portrait of the tree of knowledge in the mystic's heart," and XIV, "A Portrait of the tree of desire"). The Islamic tradition of the tree of the soul is very strong: Ibn 'Arabâ, among so many others, considers the cosmic tree in its double dimension: macrocosmic and microcosmic. Laleh Bakhtiar notes the following:

> The Cosmic Tree, Tuba, in its macrocosmic form grows at the uppermost limits of the universe. In its microcosmic form, its cultivation depends on the mystic. In its macrocosmic aspect, it is associated with the Cosmic Mountain on Top of which the Cosmic Tree grows. . . . [In] the microcosmic form. . . it is the symbol of wisdom which, through roots in meditation, bears fruit of the Spirit (57).

The symbol was so common among the Muslims that it found expression in the plastic arts of Persia, as in a piece of embroidery with flannel appliqué (Fig. 6). Somehow, the ancient Muslim image seems to have found its way to St Teresa in the Spanish sixteenth century.

c) The silkworm.

Another symbol that is immediately associated with St Teresa is the silkworm. The soul is like a silkworm that weaves its own dwelling-place for union with God, and in doing so withdraws from all things created:

> . . . The silkworms[, when] . . . they are full-grown[, . . .] start spinning silk, making themselves very tight little cocoons, in which they bury themselves. Then, finally, the worm, which was large and ugly, comes right out of the cocoon a beautiful white butterfly. . . .
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> Here, then, daughters, you see what we can do, with God's favour. May His Majesty Himself be our mansion as He is in this Prayer of Union which, as it were, we ourselves spin. . . .
>
> On, then, my daughters! Let us hasten to perform this task and spin this cocoon. Let us renounce our self-love and self-will, and our attachment to earthly things. (*Castle,* 5: 2, pp. 104, 105, 106).

Once again, this figure would appear to have Eastern origins. Several critics—Gaston Etchegoyen, González Palencia, etc.—concede that it was the Arabs who introduced the literary silkworm into Andalucia and adapted it to the Peninsular climate. And yet the silkworm was employed as a mystical symbol in Islam in exactly the same sense as St Teresa's. Could St Teresa have had indirect access to these literary sources in which the symbol is such a clear trope, since she confesses to never having been an eyewitness to the

lifecycle of the silkworm?[10] Be that as it may, in the thirteenth century the Persian poet and religious thinker Rëmâ was one of the most famous users of the trope. We might cite, from among the multitude of examples that the poet left us, these lines in which he celebrates the way the leaves that the silkworm eats are transformed into silk, and in comparing us with those silkworms situates us, exactly as St Teresa was to do so many centuries later, outside all things created:

> "When the worm eats leaves the leaf becomes silk
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> we are the worms of love, for we are without the
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> leaves (provision of sorrows, *barg*) of this world"

(*Divān-e-kabâr* 1484/15652, in Schimmel, *Triumphal Sun* 111).

It is not just the silkworm but also silk itself that obsesses Rëmâ, who explores it at great length as a mystical symbol. Perhaps, then, it is in the East that are to be found the germs of this spiritual image that St Teresa, in Europe, made so much her own.

d) The seven concentric castles of the soul.

We will end our study with one of the most famous symbols of Peninsular mysticism: St Teresa's seven concentric castle of the soul, an image celebrated for its beauty and immediacy, and above all for its startling "originality."

St Teresa, whose memory for sources so often failed her, declared at the beginning of her treatise, in all innocence, that the delicate mystical schema

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[10]"You will have heard of the wonderful way in which silk is made—a way which no one could invent but God—and how it comes from a kind of seed which looks like tiny peppercorns (I have never seen this, but only heard of it, so if it is incorrect in any way, the fault is not mine) (*Castle,* V:2, p. 104).

she had formulated was the product of her own imagination, divinely inspired:[11]

> While I was beseeching Our Lord to-day that he would speak through me, since I could find nothing to say and had no idea how to begin to carry out the obligation laid upon me by obedience, a thought occurred to me which I will now set down, in order to have some foundation on which to build. I began to think of the soul as it if were a castle made of a single diamond or of very clear crystal,

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[11]Fr Diego de Yepes insists that the symbol is the product of a direct inspiration from God, and cites the personal testimony of St Teresa with respect to the genesis of her famous treatise. Although Robert Ricart ("Le symbolisme du 'Château intérieur'") and Víctor G. De la Concha (*El arte literario de Santa Teresa*) question whether this statement is to be taken absolutely at face value, as absolutely "true," I think it useful to record it here because it would seem to confirm that full credence was given to the idea that the trope was original with St Teresa. Here are Fr Diego's words:

> This holy Mother had been desirous of obtaining some insight into the beauty of a soul in grace. . . . Just at that time she was commanded to write a treatise on prayer, about which she knew a great deal from experience. On the eve of the festival of the Most Holy Trinity she was thinking what subject she should choose for this treatise, when God, Who disposes all things in due form and order, granted this desire of hers, and gave her a subject. He showed her a most beautiful crystal globe, made in the shape of a castle, and containing seven mansions [Trans: *moradas,* see note below], in the seventh and innermost of which was the King of Glory, in the greatest splendour, illumining and beautifying them all. The nearer one got to the centre, the stronger was the light; outside the palace limits everything was foul, dark and infested with toads, vipers and other venomous creatures. . . . It was about this vision that she told me on that day. . . [To this point, the Peers translation, p. 8 in *Castle*]. She took from those seven dwellings of the castle seven degrees of prayer, through which we enter into ourselves and grow nearer and nearer God, so that when at last we come to the depths of our soul and perfect knowledge of ourselves, we have then arrived at the center of the castle and the Seventh Dwelling, where God is, and we are joined to Him in perfect union (qtd. in Asín Palacios, *"El símil"* 266-67; this study of the castles served as a basis for our paper "De Nërâ de Bagdad a Santa Teresa de Jesus, el símbolo de los siete castillos concéntricos del alma," read at the Seventh International Congress of Hispanicists, Venice, August 1980).

in which there are many rooms, just as in Heaven there are many mansions.[12]

It does not strain credulity overmuch to believe St Teresa's protestations of originality and divine inspiration, for the image has a strange loveliness and an undeniable imaginative complexity about it: the soul is conceived as a castle made of fine crystal or diamond and constituted by seven dwellings or apartments which seem themselves to be seven concentric palaces or castles (*cf. Interior Castle,* I: 2, 207; VII: 2, 9 and 10, 337-38, and *passim.*). In the last palace or dwelling resides God, Whom the soul joins and with Whom it dwells; the soul thus escapes the ravages of the devil who, in the form of various horrible and venomous animals, is constantly attempting to penetrate the castles that demarcate the progressive resting-houses or dwellings arrived at on the mystical path. When we consider one further important detail, the symbolic schema would indeed appear to be original: it has been found terribly difficult to document, in all its particulars and constitutive elements, anywhere in the European mystical literature that antedates St Teresa.

This symbol has, in fact, led to one of the most intriguing problems of filiation in all of Spanish literature. Many more than one scholar, respectfully ignoring St Teresa's protestations of originality, has joined the search for the literary source or sources of the seven concentric castles of the soul. And the findings of critics such as Morel Fatio, Gaston Etchegoyen, Menéndez Pidal, and R. Hoornaert do mitigate our wonder at the trope to a degree, for they have documented the equation of the soul with a castle in spiritual writers before St Teresa. (It seems only fair, too, to note that C. G. Jung[13] and

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[12]*Interior Castle,* I:1 (*OC* 365).This last word in the Peers translation, *mansions,* is translated from the Spanish *moradas,* which means most generally *dwellings.* Peers chooses "mansions" to echo with the Biblical phrase "In my father's house there are many mansions" (John 14:2). St Teresa, however, does not seem specifically to be echoing that verse here.

[13]In his *Alchemical Studies,* Jung reproduces a drawing of a castle fortified with sixteen towers and with an interior moat. This schema perfectly coincides with the Eastern *mandalas* described in the *Tao* and with the quest for deep consciousness, although it was drawn by one of Jung's patients (60).

Mircea Eliade[14] have written at some length on the universality of the image.) And yet the antecedents seem rather distant and disappointing: in none of them do we find the mystical way or path structured as seven dwellings or castles, each clearly *inside* the other, their progressive interiority marking the stages or steps of the soul's ascension. Gaston Etchegoyen, the commentator who has probably most deeply delved into the phylogenetic aspect of the problem of the castles, has proposed that Bernardino de Laredo and Francisco de Osuna were Teresa's principal sources. These writers, the works of both of whom were well-known by St Teresa, do indeed conceive the inner soul as a castle, but their sketchy figures hardly explain the fullness of detail achieved by St Teresa. In his *Tercer abecedario espiritual* ("Third Spiritual Primer"), Osuna keeps to a schema which owes much to medieval allegories; in this conception, the traditional enemies (the world, the flesh, and the devil) try to breach the castle of the soul.[15] The figure that Bernardino de Laredo

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[14]St Teresa's basic intuition is quite profound in the sense that it appears to correspond with a universal conception of the "sacred space" that we find present, spiritually, in the construction of temples and palaces throughout the world. Eliade describes the architectural configuration of these *mandalas*: "The same sense of a cosmogony is also apparent in the construction of the *mandala* as practised in the Tantric schools. The word means 'circle'; the Tibetan renderings of it are either 'centre' or 'what surrounds'. The thing itself is a series of circles which may or may not be concentric, inscribed in a square. . . . The initiation consists in the neophyte's penetration into the various zones or stages of the *mandala.* The rite may be looked on with equal justice as the equivalent of the *pradaksina,* the well-known ceremonial of going round a temple or sacred monument (*stëpa*), or as an initiation by way of ritual entry into a labyrinth. The assimilation of the temple with the *mandala* is obvious in the case of Borobudur" (Patterns 372-73 and *passim.* in Chap X, "Sacred Places: Temple, Palace, 'Centre of the World'"). It would appear that we are even closer to St Teresa with the Babylonian ziggurats which manifested or embodied a mystical meaning: "Les celebres *ziqqûrâts* de Babyloine typificent la montagne cosmique aux sept étages, aux couleurs respectives des sept Cieux; par elles était possible, rituellement, l'ascension jusqu'a sommet, c'est-à-dire jusqu'au point culminant qui est le nord cosmique" (Henri Corbin, *L'homme* 66). But in this case, Corbin notes that the subdivisions of the mystical path into seven degrees, corresponding to the seven heavens constitutes a typically Eastern symbol which was to find later elaboration in the spiritual literature of Islam. It will be interesting to recall this when we look at the mystical schemata of the seven concentric castles of the soul that we will see later in Nërâ of Baghdad (9th century) and the anonymous author of the *Nawādir* (11th century).

[15]Osuna says: "The heart [must be guarded] with all vigilance, as the castle which is beset is guarded, setting against the three harassers three lamps: against the flesh, . . . set chastity; against the world, . . . set liberality and alms-giving; against the devil, . . . set *caritas*." There

sketches in his *Subida del Monte Sión* ("Ascent of Mount Zion") is more complex and intriguing, but finally even further from St Teresa's: the understanding is a sort of "civitas sancta" built in a square field. Its foundations are of crystal and its walls of precious stones, with a Paschal candle inside symbolising Christ.[16]

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are three portals or gates of the castle through which the devil may enter, according to Osuna: through one enters deceit, through another fear, and through the third enters hunger. "And it is to be noted," Osuna continues, "that if the devil finds only one part or path of these three ill-guarded, by that way he enters into the castle of the heart" (IV, III, pp. 198 and 202).

[16]This is Laredo's enigmatic text, in which the image differs considerably from St Teresa's: "[The understanding is a field] perfectly foursquare; seek that it be fenced about with a fine crystal, which is a bright and precious stone. And on each one of the panels or sides of that square thou wilt erect three towers hewn in precious stonework, that is precious gems; thus of that towered wall make a walled city, and let it be *civitas sancta*, that heavenly Jerusalem of whose walls it is written that they are of precious stones (Revelation 21:18). . . . From the top of these towers must thou hang four shields of fine gold. . . . In the centre of this now-walled field. . . let there be lighted a rich Paschal candle, of cleanest wax and of purest wick, . . . crafted in such perfection. . ., that once the candle is lighted no space nor time will ever see it spent, or diminished, or its light fail. . . . And when this candle is lighted, the wax is the most sacred body of Christ; the wick, His most happy spirit; and from its perfectly illuminated splendour thou mayest. . . elevate thy understanding of the Holy Trinity in one most pure substance. . . . And in this holy city neither sun nor moon is ever needed. . . for the brightness of God illuminates it. . . . The crystalline wall is the bright virginity which illumines the city; the divers gems. . . are the great nations of the fortunate; twelve towers, twelve Apostles, the four shields are the four Evangelists. . . . Look again at the shimmering brightness and splendour of the gems. . . and the other materials, for it is thus that the blessings of our God are communicated to the fortunate. . . . And still we have another tower which is castle, is fortress, strong house, royal house, it is the apartment of the King, citadel of the city, it is nearer than the candle's, it is homage to God and it exceeds the other towers in such perfected eminence, that this meagre understanding can in no way reach it. . . . [Its] foundations rest on fine crystal as strong as diamond, which cannot be broken or breached, and of a thousand precious stones is its wall fortified, and of sapphire and emerald are its doors hewed. (Tobit [Apocrypha] 33:16). . . [This] our royal citadel is sanctified in the Church, . . . it is a temple of God, Jerusalem. . . City of God. . . [Our] splendor is God, is blessed Jesus Christ, is that Paschal candle. . . splendor and brightness from its glory, the immense Divine Being" (*Subida del Monte Sinaí* in *Místicos franciscanos españoles* II, pp. 270-274).

These are, then, the symbolic outlines which criticism has generally taken to be the best explanation for St Teresa's figure, but it is obvious that this simple scheme has really very little to do with the imaginative richness of her seven concentric castles.

Furthermore, we should note that conceptions of the spiritual castle, such as those found, as we have noted, in Osuna, Laredo, Denis the Carthusian (and even Ramon Lull), are yet more abundant in medieval and Renaissance literature than scholars have so far documented. St Bernard of Clairvaux [1090-1153] in the twelfth century, for example, over and over again compares the soul to a fortress besieged by spiritual enemies.[17] Jean

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[17]In his sermon *De la guarda constante del corazón* ("On the Constant Guard of the Heart"), we are told that we must defend this fortress against attacks "from above and from below, from before and from behind, from the right and from the left,"[7] while in his sermon *En la dedicación de la Iglesia* ("Upon the Dedication of the Church"), after describing such military defenses of his castle as continence and penitence, he identifies this castle, anticlimactically, with the castle of the Order of Clairvaux: "A most beautiful castle wilt thou have taken from Christ shouldst thou deliver to its enemies the castle of Clairvaux." Following is the text of Bernard's sermon "On the Constant Guard of the Heart" (*Sermones varios*, #82, *Obras Completas*, p. 1107):

> We should cultivate and keep custody over the castle of the soul above all things, for from it comes eternal life. But this castle, located in the land of our enemies, is attacked from every side; from above and from below, from before and from behind, from the right and from the left. From below it is assailed by the concupiscence of the flesh, which struggles with the soul. . . From above there is God's imminent judgment. . . . From behind is the morbose delectation which is born from the memory of past sins; from before, the insistence of temptations; from the left, the perturbation of arrogant, murmuring brothers; from the right, the devotion of obedient brothers.

In his *Sermones de santos* ("Sermons on the Saints"), Sermon 2: "On the Ascension of the Virgin Mary, titled On the Manner of Cleaning, Adorning, and Furnishing the House," St Bernard expands the Biblical verse: "Now it came to pass, as they went, that [Jesus] entered into a certain village [in Spanish: *castillo*]: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house" (Luke 10:38). Bernard continually shifts the meaning of the Spanish word *"castillo"* [lit. "castle" but in the King James version

Gerson likewise speaks of assaults on the soul by the world, the flesh, and the devil.[18] Other theorists such as Hugh of St-Victor (*De arca Noe morali*) and the anonymous author of the thirteenth-century *Ancren Riwle* ("The Nun's Rule") make more or less the same symbolic arguments. In a curious variant, Robert Grosseteste, in his thirteenth-century Anglo-French *Château d'amour*, equates the allegorical castle to the Virgin Mary's womb which receives Christ.[19] He, like many other spiritual writers, avails himself of a Biblical passage which did not occur to St Teresa (or at least which she did not use):

> "village" (and therefore, "walled city")]: it is the world, the incarnation of Christ, Mary's bosom, the house or castle of our soul. For purposes of his allegory he also quotes Proverbs 4:23: "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." The enemy [read: *the devil*] can conquer the "wall of continence. . . [and] the forebattlement of patience" of the allegorical castle of the soul (707). But Jesus "entered into the [castle] and attacked the fort and sacked its spoils, . . . he broke open the brass doors and rendered the iron bolts into pieces, taking out the prisoner from the prison and from the shadow of death. He went out through the door which is confession. . ." (708).

[18] *". . . l'ostel de mon âme est durement assegié: . . . par le monde, par la chair, par l'ennemie. . ."* (*Sermon pour la Pentecôte: Mansionem (De la première chamberière, Oraison)*, from *Six sermons français inédits de Jean Gerson*, Paris, 1946, p. 74. ["The dwelling of my soul is hard besieged: by the world, by the flesh, by the enemy. . ."]

[19]Here is an extract from that poem:

En beau lu fut il veraiment, / La ou Deu de le ciel descent. / En un Chastel bel et grant, / Bien fermé e anenant, / Kar c'est le chastel de ammur / De tuz solaz, de tuz sucur. / . . . . / Ou habiter ne poet nul mal. / Environ ad quatre tureles / En tut le mund ni ad si beles. / . . . . / Le castel est bel e bon, / Dehors depeint environ / De treis colurs diversement. / E si est vert le fundement, / Ki a la roche se joint. / . . . . / La colur ki est en mi liu / Si est inde e si est bliu, / la tierce colur par en som / Plus est vermeille ke n'est rose / . . . . / En mi la tur plus hautaine / Est surdant une fontaine / Dont issent quatre ruissel / Santé porreit recoverer / K'a cel ewe peüst puiser. / . . . . / En cele bele tur el bone / I ad de invoire une trone, / Ce est le chastel de delit / Cum la duce Virgine Marie / La roche k'est si bien polie, / C'est le cuer la duce Marie, / Ki onkes en mal ne mollist / . . . . / Et de si tres bele verdur / Ce est la fei de la virgine / . . . . / C'est cele ki tant est vermeille / . . . . / E c'est la seinte charité / . . . . / Les quatre tureles en haut / . . . . / Sunt quatre vertuz kardinals. / . . . . / La baille k'est en mi formé / Signifie sa chasteté. (*Le Château d'amour*, Paris, 1918, pp. 105-6, 111.)

"Intravit Jesus in quodam castellum. . . " (Luke 10:38). The German mystic Meister Eckhart, who produces some of the most delicate and beautiful spiritual literature in medieval Europe, buttresses his own metaphorical castle—which in this case is also a metaphor for the Virginal womb which received Christ—with the same passage from Luke, and translates the Biblical "castellum" by "*bürgelin*"—"little burg" or "village," rather than strictly "castle," as the King James Bible in fact also does (*cf. Selected Treatises and Sermons Translated from Latin and German*).

The Portuguese, for their part—St Anthony of Lisbon (or Padua), Frei Paio da Coimbra, the author of the *Boosco deleitoso*—would seem virtually obsessed with the symbol of the castle of the soul, though they develop it with the same limitations as do their European contemporaries. The most interesting treatise-writer of all the Portuguese may be Dom Duarte, who in his *Leal conselheiro* ("Faithful Councillor") speaks of the "five houses of our heart," one inside another. The last chamber or house is the "oratorio," or "room of prayer,"[20] and there is some justification for Mario Martins' belief that he sees some family resemblance between the Portuguese Dom and the Spanish St Teresa.[21] In Spain, we should add the names of Juan de los

[20]These are the details of Dom Duarte's image: "In the center of the heart of every person there are five houses, disposed as the nobles are wont. In the first, all those who reside in the realm may enter, as may those foreigners who desire to come there. In the second chamber or antechamber, they are wont to have their dwellings, and some notable [persons] of the kingdom. In the third, which is the bedroom, the eldest and those most closely related to the house. The fourth, which is the inner room, where they are wont to dress, is for special persons. The fifth, which is the room of prayer [*oratorio*], is the place into which the nobles retire each day in order to pray, read holy books, and think upon virtuous occupations. In each of these houses, we have those twelve passions of which I have written before: to wit, Love, Desire, Delectation, Hatred, Loathing, Sadness, Meekness, Hope and Boldness, Rage, Desperation, and Fear. . . . And it is at the end of these [passions] that we must have our beginning [that is, of a virtuous and holy life]: first we must order our heart, setting in the [first] room all things that [the other room] does not have. In the antechamber, improvement. And bodily health in the bedroom. In the inner room, deeds of honor. The study shall be especially kept for the service of our lord and the following of virtue" (Chapter LXXXI, "*Das casas de nosso coraçom, e como lhe devem ser apropiadas certas fiis*" ("On the Houses of Our Heart"), *Leal conselheiro* 303-4).

[21]"[He] belongs to the same tribe, though of a more humble family" (233). Martins' scholarly and erudite study a bounds in examples of Portuguese treatise-writers whose allegories employed the castle in similar terms: St Anthony of Lisbon (*Sermones et Evangelia Dominicarum*,

Angeles and Diego de Estella. In Italy, Dante would appear to be close to St Teresa when he speaks of his *"nobile castello / sette volte cerchiato d'altre mura"* [literally, of course, "noble castle"; the John Ciardi translation is "great Citadel / circled by seven towering battlements"] (*Inferno*, IV, ll. 106-7), but Dante's castle symbolises not the soul but rather the entrance to the Garden of Limbo.

Thus, castle-allegories among European spiritual writers are, as we see, quite widespread, but in fullness of imagistic detail they compare very unfavourably with the highly articulated Teresian schema.[22] Other sources sometimes mentioned in relation to St Teresa's famous symbol are even more remote and disappointing in this regard, such as the castles in chivalric books, the allegorical castles of courtly love of the *cancioneril* poetry of the fifteenth century, St Augustine's "mansions," and even some biblical passages only vaguely related to the trope.[23] Finally, it seems an act of critical near-desperation when some scholars opt for an extra-literary solution to explain St Teresa's sudden inspiration. In 1919 Miguel de Unamuno put

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of the thirteenth century); Frei Roberto (whose *Château Perilleux* circulated widely in Portuguese in the fifteenth century); and Frei Diego Rosario (in the sixteenth century), among others.

[22]We should mention, however, the case of the *Remedio de cuerpos humanos y silva de experiencias* ["Cure of Human Bodies and Miscellany of Experiences"], written by the physician Luis de Lobera de Avila and published in 1542, which is a compendium of human anatomy under the allegory of a fortified tower, and which does have certain general parallels with the symbol as used in St Teresa. We are grateful to our colleague Francisco Marquez Villanueva who lent us a copy of his study on this subject, "El simbolismo del castillo interior: sentido y génesis," which he read at the MLA meeting in Chicago in 1967 when it was still unpublished. Since then it has been expanded for the 1982 publication in the *Actas del Congreso Internacional Teresiano,* Salamanca, pp. 495-522.

[23]St Teresa herself paraphrases the much-quoted passage John 14:2, "In my father's house are many mansions [or, in her case, 'dwellings']," but critics also sometimes refer to the text from I Peter (5:8), which speaks of the protection of the flock (as though a fortress) from the devil, but in a most superficial way: "*quia adversus vester diabolus, tamquam leo rugens, circuit quorens quem devoret; cui resistite fortes in fide"* ["Be sober, be watchful! For your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goes about seeking someone to devour"; or, in the King James Version, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour"].

forth the hypothesis that the walled city of Avila had served as a model for the Seven Castles, and Robert Ricart in 1965, at the end of an article whose initial incisive rigor promised better, chose to accept Unamuno's conclusion (*cf.* above, note ?). More recently, in 1970, Trueman Dicken also decided to adopt a similar phylogenetic solution, except that now it is not Avila which is St Teresa's supposed source of inspiration, but rather the Mota Castle at Medina del Campo. Dicken strengthens his argument by minutely (and not, in our opinion, at all successfully) comparing this real castle with the seven imaginary castles of St Teresa's mysterious trope.

Given these critical attempts, so generally unsuccessful, any attempt to impugn the supposed literary originality of St Teresa would appear distinctly ill favoured, if not misguided. And yet that supposed originality *was* challenged, many years ago now, by the great Spanish Arabist Miguel Asín Palacios, in an essay which, surprisingly, few recent critics have taken into account. Originally published in 1946 in *Al-Andalus* (2, pp. 263-274), the essay's title was "El símil de los castillos y moradas del alma en la mística islámica y en Santa Teresa"; it has now been reprinted in my 1990 edition of Asin's work (179-216). In this essay, Asin documented the basic Teresian schema among the mystics, specifically in a little work titled *Kitāb al Tajrâd* ("The Book of Spiritual Nakedness") by AÁmad Al-Ghazzālâ, the brother of the famed philosopher, wherein the soul is portrayed in terms of concentric circles. Here, Asín contended, the trope "acquires completeness and offers itself to us as a true precedent to the Teresian [figure] in a single passage, unfortunately anonymous, in the *Nawādir*, a curious compilation of stories and religious thoughts attributed to AÁmad al-Qalyëbâ and written down towards the end of the sixteenth century" (266). The passage, which Asin himself translates from the Arabic into Spanish, is as follows:

> God set for every son of Adam seven castles, within which is He and without which is Satan barking like a dog. When man lets a breach be opened in one of them, Satan enters by it. Man must, therefore, keep most careful vigil and guard over them, but particularly the first castle of them, for so long as that one remains sound and whole and its foundations firm, there is no evil to be feared. The first of the castles, which is of whitest pearl, is the mortification of the sensitive soul. Inside it there is a castle of

> emerald, which is purity and sincerity of intention. Inside this there is a castle of brilliant, shining porcelain, which is obedience to God's commandments, both the positive and the negative. Within this castle there is a castle of rock, which is gratitude for Divine gifts and surrender to the Divine will. Within this castle there is a further one, of iron, which is leaving all in the hands of God. Within this, there is a castle of silver, which is mystical faith. Within this there is a castle of gold, which is the contemplation of God–-glory and honor to Him! For God–praised be He!–hath said (*Koran*, XVI, 191), "Satan has no power over those who believe and place their trust in God" (267-8).

Indeed Asín had come upon a somewhat schematic but nevertheless precisely rendered precedent for St Teresa's image. Although we do not find in the *Nawādir* the exhaustive mystical elaboration that St Teresa gives the trope, nonetheless all the principal elements of an image that St Teresa believed to be the offspring of her own inspired imagination are there present. Yet the specific problem of the origin or origins of the castle-symbol was never totally solved by Asín Palacios, because the documentary evidence in his possession was a manuscript dating from the end of the sixteenth century (and therefore contemporary with or even following St Teresa), and Asín believed that the symbol had been perfected in Islam at about that date. It has been my good fortune, though, to be able to resolve some of the doubts about the origin of the symbol in St Teresa that were left by Asín, for I have come upon documentary evidence which was not available to him in his 1946 essay. This document is the ninth-century *Maqāmāt al-qulëb* ("Stations of the Hearts") by Abë 'l-Àasan al-Nërâ of Baghdad. (Indeed, the document may be even earlier.) It does not seem incautious, then, given this document, to suspect that we are in the presence of a metaphoric motif recurrent in Islamic thought and writing. The two examples which Asin and later I have been able to document—with so many centuries' difference between the manuscripts (between, that is, the ninth and sixteenth centuries)—argues, we can fairly assume, for a long literary tradition for this figure, replaying itself across the centuries.

Abë 'l-Àasan al-Nërâ's mystical tract is of particular interest because until now no other author among those documented to have used the castle-

symbol (with the exception of the anonymous writer of the *Nawādir*) organised the symbol's elements so similarly to the way they are structured by St Teresa. Let us examine how precisely the Sufi master Nërâ foreshadows the *Nawādir* and draws—a full eight centuries before the mystical saint from Avila—the image that St Teresa considered personal and inspired. We have translated from the Arabic the chapter dealing with the symbol of the seven interior castles; its title is or "The Castles of the Believer's Heart":

> Know thee that God—praised be He!—created in the heart of believers seven castles surrounded by walls. He commanded that believers dwell within these castles and He placed Satan without, barking at them as the dog barks. The first enclosed castle is of corundum [*yāqët*, a crystalline stone which may have several colours; here, probably "ruby" or "sapphire," perhaps "emerald," or perhaps even a clear crystalline stone that resembled a diamond], and [this castle] is mystical acquaintance with God—praised be He! —; and about this castle there lies a castle of gold, which is faith in God—praised be He! —; and about this castle there lies a castle of silver, which is faithfulness in word and deed; and about this castle there lies a castle of iron, which is surrender to the Divine will—blessed be the Divinity! —; and about this castle there lies a castle of brass, which is carrying out the commandments of God—praised be He!—; and about this castle there lies a castle of alum, which is keeping the commandments of God, both the positive and the negative; and about this castle there lies a castle of baked clay which is the mortification of the sensitive soul in every action. . . .
>
> As the word of God—praised be He!—states, "Against my servants thou shalt have no power" (Qur'ān XII, 40). The faithful man is thus within these castles; and him who is within the castle of corundum Satan has no manner of reaching, so long as the faithful man observe the rules of the mortification of the sensitive soul. But if he once fail to observe them and say "it is not necessary," then Satan wins the castle from him which is of baked clay; and covets the next. When the faithful man grows negligent in keeping the commandments of God both positive and negative, Satan wins from him the castle that is of alum; and covets the third. When the

faithful man abandons surrender to the Divine will—praised be God!—then Satan takes from him the castle of brass; and covets the fourth, and so on until the last castle.[24]

It is obvious that this symbolic schema is of the same family as the sixteenth-century *Nawādir* and that it also contains (though perhaps embryonically) all the principal elements of St Teresa's figure: the soul—or, better said, the soul's mystical path—is conceived of as seven successive dwellings or rooms represented by concentric castles. Satan lurks about the first castles, especially, awaiting his chance to seize them, while the faithful man who manages to penetrate to the most inward castle achieves union with God. There are specific parallels of great interest: St Teresa speaks of the "dwellings" or "mansions" (*moradas*) of the soul, no doubt remembering the verse from John 14:2, "In my father's house there are many mansions." However, as Miguel Asín Palacios has shown in his *Šādilâes y alumbrados,* the concept of the dwelling as the *permanent* state of the soul (as opposed to a state more ephemeral or transitory) seems to derive from the Islamic concept of the stage on the path of perfection as *maqām*, or "station/dwelling," which the Arabic word exactly signifies. This technical usage is uncommon in medieval Christian spirituality, but Sufis such as Nërâ and Al-Hujwârâ freely and frequently employed it hundreds of years before it acquired currency in the Carmelite school.

Nërâ compares the devil, the enemy of the soul, to a dog; St Teresa, to filthy beasts or vermin. The Saint would appear to be closer to the Shādhilite brotherhood of the thirteenth century, which concretised the enemies of the soul as a mob of beasts and vermin which assault the interior castle. But it may be that the Baghdadian mystic Nërâ is not so distant from St Teresa after all, if we should recall the impact which any image of threatening impurity would have on a Muslim, accustomed to purifying rituals such as

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[24]The original Arabic text is printed in Paul Nwyia: *Textes inédits d'Abë-l-Àasan al-Nûri*, Vol. XLIV, F.9, pp. 135-6. The text quoted here is on p. 135. Nwyia also discusses the *Maqāmāt* in his *Exégèse coranique et langage mystique: Nouvel essai sur le lexique technique des mystiques musulmans,* and it is curious that in that study he does not take into account the essay written by Asín Palacios (against whom Nwyia published such polemics) on the symbol of St Teresa's castles and their relation to Islam.

ablutions. In Islam the dog is the impure animal *par excellence*: a member of the faithful is not allowed to pray where a dog has passed. Thus Nërâ's "dog" translates, emotionally, into the "filthy beasts" or "vermin" with which St Teresa metaphorizes our impurities, or into the devil himself.

One obvious difference between St Teresa's castles and those of the Arabs is the precious materials with which they are constructed. Interestingly, St Teresa seems to have changed the polychrome castles of the Islamic symbol into diamantine, transparent palaces. The two authors do doubtless diverge here, but we should note that in constructing his castles Nërâ of Baghdad availed himself of building materials that would symbolically indicate the spiritual progress of the soul within itself, and so in that sense does not greatly differ from the mystical itinerary of St Teresa. Taken from outside to inside, the constitutive materials of the Arabic castles ascend in quality as does the sublime path they represent: the castle of clay (a fragile, friable substance) symbolises the mortification of the sensitive soul (that is, the principles of the spiritual life). And from there we continually rise—through alum, brass, iron, silver, and gold—until we come to the most inward castle, union with God, which is of corundum (*yāqët*) and which would appear to be, in a lovely artistic and symbolic culmination, the precious gem for which the precious metals serve as a mounting.

Although the schematic spiritual levels or stages of the *Maqāmāt al-qulëb* do not correspond perfectly to the extremely complex stages enunciated by St Teresa in her much longer treatise, it is noteworthy that in both cases there is a very clear ascending scale of spiritual perfection. And we must note that the first and seventh of both Teresa's and the Muslim's castles do coincide exactly: in the first the sensitive soul is mortified and in the seventh God is at last possessed.[25]

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[25]The idea of the concentricity of these seven successive castles is more than clear in St Teresa. In the following passage from her *Interior Castle* she describes the dwellings from the inside outward, exactly as Nërâ does: "You must not imagine these mansions as arranged in a row, one behind another, but fix your attention on the centre, the room or palace occupied by the King. Think of a palmito [Peers footnote: 'The palmito is a shrub, common in the south and east of Spain, with thick layers of leaves enclosing a succulent edible kernel.'], which has many outer rinds surrounding the savoury part within, all of which must be taken

But we do not in any way wish to imply by all this that the immediate source for St Teresa was Abë-l-Àasan al-Nërâ. What we do propose is that the raw materials for the symbol of an interior castle, subdivided into seven concentric dwellings or apartments or castles, are imported from Islam. Muslims continued to elaborate on this motif throughout the Middle Ages; Nërâ and the author of the *Nawādir* are but two isolated (though very significant) examples of the Islamic use of the symbol of the mystical castles. What the matter comes down to, indeed, is a true commonplace of Sufi literature: In his *IÁyā' 'ulëm al-dân* ("Revivification of the Religious Sciences"), Al-Ghazzālâ repeatedly alludes to the spiritual castle whose gates must be defended against the attacks of the devil, and the celebrated thirteenth-century Murcian poet and mystic Ibn 'Arabâ portrays his own esoteric illuminations as a citadel composed of a multitude of chambers and doors successively passed through as mystical knowledge grows (*Futëéāt* [II, p. 768-774]). The Persian author Niïāmâ in his *Haft Paykar* ("Seven Princesses") illustrates the mystical progress of the soul as seven castles (or of one castle with seven towers or cupolas which are in turn themselves castles), corresponding to the colours and characteristics of the seven planets. In these seven castles reside seven princesses dressed in the seven colours associated with those planets. In the seventh castle, which is white or transparent, the mystical union with God metaphorically occurs. The metaphorical transfiguration of the soul into a castle is so dear to Islam that it has passed into the vernacular: in Arabic one often hears "*muéaÅÅana*," which means something like "may the castle of God around you protect you."

St Teresa, then, did not introduce the figure of the concentric castles into the history of mystical literature. So great is the weight of documentary evidence linking St Teresa's seven concentric castles to that same figure in Islamic mystical literature, that we are obliged to ask ourselves whether this is not in fact a question of Islamic cultural filiation. This would be the most dramatic case of such a thing, perhaps, but as we have seen, it is far from being the only such instance in Western mystical literature.

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away before the centre can be eaten. Just so around this central room are many more" (*Castle,* I:2, ¶8, p. 37).

Summary

We will not linger on the doctrinal motifs that St John of the Cross and St Teresa (among other spiritual writers of the Siglo de Oro, including the *Illuminati*) share with the Sufis, because these motifs have already been outlined by Asín Palacios or his disciples, and especially because many of them would require a doctrinal analysis that falls outside the scope of this study, which is intended to deal with a shared *literary* Symbolism or terminology. But we might recall in passing some very eloquent cases, simply to dramatise the fact that Muslim and Christian mysticism have more points in common than we have touched upon here. The pure love which neither fears hell nor yearns for heaven and which St John of the Cross and numerous other spiritual writers of the Siglo de Oro share with the anonymous author of the sonnet "No me mueve, mi Dios, para quererte," would appear to have some connection with the spiritual literature of Islam, as I have noted in another essay.[26] Likewise, as Asín noted, other spiritual postures—the rejection of charisma and miracles; the emphasis on the appreciation of the divine favours (the school of the Divine Benefices that Bataillon discusses at length in his *Erasmo y España* was foreshadowed by Al-Ghazzālâ); the virtue of the *murāqabah* (*cf.* Pareja 313; Nicholson, *Poetas místicos* 76; Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions* 29), which is to act as though God, omnipresent, were watching the devout man's every action; the use of meditation without images hundreds of years before Erasmus; the prayer of quietude that leaves the soul *muèma'innah* or "pacified / at peace" (*cf.* Nwyia, *Ibn 'Ata'* 255; Corbin, *L'homme* 104; Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages* 35); impeccability or *shath* (exchange, trade) by means of which so many Illuminati believed themselves to be sinless because God possessed them and acted through them (Nasr 115)—all these attitudes and postures seem to resemble Islamic attitudes that are prior to them chronologically.

Even the famous little saying attributed to St Teresa, "Nada te turbe. . . ", would appear to have been antedated by the Shādhilites: "He who hath God, lacks nothing," says Ibn 'Abbād, in a formulation not at all unlike St Teresa's. And contrariwise, lacking God, nothing avails one: "Once a

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[26]"Anonimia y posible filiacion espiritual islamica del soneto. . .," *NRFH* 2 (1975), pp. 243-268.

dwelling has been reached, or a favour granted thee, neither desire nor ask to keep it, nor suffer in losing it, because only God suffices" (Ibn al-'Arâf, in Asin, *Obras escogidas,* Vol. I, 269). And finally, although Asin has noted (*Islam* 158) that St Nilus and St John Climacus had already outlined the figure, there is the tremendous insistence by the Muslims on a motif that St Ignatius made famous, the *perinde ac cadaver* ["like unto a cadaver"], which was employed by Tustarâ (*cf.* Massignon, *Essai sur le lexique* 42), Al-Naqshabandâ (*cf.* Arberry, *Sufism* 131), Ibn 'Arabâ and Al-Ghazzālâ. For Al-Ghazzālâ this trope figured in the conception of the highest degree of trust or *tawakkul* (*cf. IÁyā'* 385), which Pareja describes in the following terms:

> The third degree [of *tawakkul*] consists in the soul's trusting in Allah in its acts of movement or repose, like the cadaver in the hands of him who washes it in order to wrap it in the shroud, with the sole difference that the living person sees himself as though dead, and moved by the omnipotence of Allah (308).[27]

Let us recapitulate, then, the conclusions of this study. St John of the Cross and St Teresa did not introduce into European literature such mystical symbols as the *dark night,* the *lamps of fire,* and the *castles of the soul,* although their Christian elaboration of those symbols is touched with genius and has made those tropes famous in the spiritual literature of the West. St John of

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[27]Did St John of the Cross somehow have indirect access to a poetic image so often used in secular Arabic poetry? This would be the flowering garden as a starry sky, which critics consider to be a motif characteristic of Arabic poetry and which has produced an entire genre called *nauriyya* (*cf.* Pérez, *La poésie andalouse* and Bargebuhr, *The Alhambra*). Among many examples that we might cite, there is Abë Firās, prince of the Hamdanid dynasty (d. 968): "The sky wept upon the drizzling of its tears / whereupon she [the meadow] began to smile showing stars of the sky [i.e., flowers, like a mouth showing teeth]" (Bargebuhr, 336). The image is so widespread that it is inherited by such Hispano-Jewish poets as Moshe ibn Ezra: "the trees with the stars of their / flowers to the sun serve as firmament" (Díez Macho 45). And there is also St John, who gives a somewhat unexpected twist to his gloss on the ver "¡oh prado de verduras!" when he understands it from the point of view of the *nauriyya*: "This is the consideration of the sky, called "meadow of green" because the things that are in it are always of unwithering green, and neither perish nor wither with time, and in them as though [in] fresh green things do the just take pleasure and delight. In which consideration is also comprehended the entire difference of the lovely stars and other celestial planets" (*CB,* 4:4; *VO,* p. 642).

the Cross and St Teresa de Jesús carried these figures to such heights of literary and spiritual beauty that the distant Eastern origins of the metaphors indeed pale. On other occasions, however, it is the mystical Symbolism of the two Carmelite reformers that appears sketchy in comparison with the exquisite (and extraordinarily complex) literary elaboration of their Islamic counterparts. In any case, St John of the Cross and St Teresa are never passively derivative, but rather constantly creative with these possible Muslim sources, adapting, transforming, and melding them into their own Western Christian heritage, which is immeasurably enriched by them.[28]

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[28]We wish once more to note that in other essays (our book *San Juan y el Islam* and the essay in collaboration with María Teresa Narváez cited in Note 1) we have concerned ourselves with the thorny problem of how the Carmelite mystics could have echoed these Islamic figures in the sixteenth century. But they were not the only ones to use these figures: the works of many medieval European spiritual writers appear to have been influenced by Islamic motifs; we have not gone into these for reasons of space.

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But the Sufi influences present in the work of St John and St Teresa are so abundant and so significant (as we have tried to indicate in this study) that they irrevocably mark their work. If we are unfamiliar with these Islamic tropes, the work of the two writers (and many more) becomes unnecessarily mysterious and often falsely original. We cannot, in intellectual honesty, not take into account the fact that St John of the Cross and St Teresa employ a technical language and a Symbolism that the Muslims had moulded into a complex spiritual literature hundreds of years before the Carmelite reformers were born. St John and St Teresa are no less Christian for that; they can be seen as more fertile and imaginative. In the face of certain features of their work, we should begin to speak not of a "Christianised Islam" as Asín once proposed, but rather of an "Islamicized Christianity." Thanks to the Islamic influences on Christianity, the religious literature of these writers of the Spanish Siglo de Oro, shot through with Muslim motifs, is one of the most mysterious, complex, and brilliant in all of Europe, and one of the most fertilely hybrid.

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