

Public Abstract

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Since St. John of the Cross's canonization in 1726, scholarship in Sanjuanist study has flourished, often times exceeding the limitations of baroque hagiographies that had portrayed him. For example, Dámaso Alonso stands as a pioneer for his research on literary contributions to St. John's writings, while many years later, Lucy López-Baralt unravels possible Semitic influences of his poetry. María Jesús Mancho Duque, Elizabeth Davis, and María Jesús Fernández Leborans have observed formal and linguistic nuances while Jean Baruzi and Geoffrey Mondello have examined his work through the guise of philosophy. In religion, to name a few of a very long list of writers, N. Aaron Grace, Edward Howells, Adolphe Tanquerey and Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange defend St. John's catholicity and theological appeal. Today, research continues to offer interesting perspectives on our saint's writings. From thoughts akin to Emmanuel Levinas's philosophy, influences from Northern Europe, Matthew Fox's creation spirituality, the Corpus Hermeticum, Plotinus and Plato, to psychological and psychoanalytical interpretations, contributions abound offering both depth and dimension to St. John of the Cross.

In this study, I make both biographical and literary contributions to Sanjuanist studies by exploring and negotiating his life, literature and philosophy as a coherent, contextualized and continuous expression, a poetics of heroism, and heroism of poetics. In Chapter 1, I demonstrate a dialectical circularity between St. John's early years through the year 1568 and his theological, vocational and literary achievements. Chapter 2 offers a verbal and nominal analysis of the "Cántico espiritual" from which I show three new strains of interpretation: First, a personal dialogue on the attainment of true love; second, the inclusion of sacramental imagery; and third, a heroic trajectory of the poetic soul. In Chapter 3, I present an analysis of "Noche oscura" and "Llama de amor viva," whereby I demonstrate that both poems belong to the same poetics. All in all, this paper shows that St. John's biography, vocation and mystical heights merge, only later to emerge, as lyrical expressions of life, theology and divine experience.