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HISTORICIZING TERESA: REFLECTIONS ON NEW DOCUMENTS REGARDING SOR TERESA DE CARTAGENA

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While Teresa de Cartagena's works have received an increasing amount of critical attention in recent years, her enigmatic figure remains veiled in speculation. Since Francisco Cantera Burgos definitively confirmed her kinship with the powerful and influential Santa María/Cartagena family in 1952—daughter of Pedro de Cartagena, niece of Alonso de Cartagena, granddaughter of Pablo de Santa María—virtually no new information has been uncovered to help us to contextualize and better understand her two texts, *Arboleda de los enfermos* and *Admiración operum Dey*. The years of her birth and death, the dates of composition for *Arboleda* and *Admiración*, Teresa's relationship with her family, her educational background, her religious order, her age when she was afflicted with deafness are all open to scholarly conjecture. Besides the scraps of presumably autobiographical information embedded in her works, the only concrete historical data we have regarding Teresa remains what Cantera Burgos recorded over fifty years ago: in his testament dated July 6, 1453, Alonso de Cartagena (ca. 1384-1456) bequeathed one hundred florins to his niece, Teresa the nun: "A Teresie moniali centum fl. ad aliquod subsidium sustentacionis" (537).

This dearth of historical information, nevertheless, has not dissuaded her critics from reconstructing her vita which may be summarized

as follows. Teresa was probably born between 1420-35,¹ the second daughter and third or fourth child of Pedro de Cartagena (1387-1478) and María de Sarabia.² She grew up in the family home on Calle de Cantarranas la Menor in Burgos, a center of social, political, and cultural activity in the city and frequent stopover for visiting national and international dignitaries.³ In the Cartagena tradition, Teresa and her siblings must have received an excellent educational formation.⁴ Accessing the available resources of the various family libraries, she was probably tutored at home and then sent to Salamanca to study in a convent, for in the late Middle Ages religious houses trained not only their own novices but also the sons and daughters of the nobility and wealthy bourgeoisie.⁵ Her privileged position as a Cartagena must have provided an exceptional foundation in religion and moral phi-

¹ First proposed by Cantera Burgos (538) and generally accepted by subsequent critics; Alan Deyermond ("El convento") suggests 1420-1425. Dayle Seidenspinner-Núñez (*Writings*) proposed earlier dates of 1415-1420 based on the accepted birthdate (1424) of Teresa's nephew, Íñigo de Mendoza, son of her older sister Juana.

We gratefully acknowledge the suggestions of George Greenia and Francisco Hernández that have improved this report and the ongoing support of Alan Deyermond, to whom we dedicate this study.

² Pedro de Cartagena first married María de Sarabia, with whom he had five children: Alonso de Cartagena (d. 1467), Álvaro de Cartagena (d. 1471), Juana, Teresa, and María Sarabia. He later married Mencía de Rojas and fathered two children: Lope de Rojas (1444-1477) and Elvira de Rojas. He also recognized three illegitimate sons: Pablo de Cartagena, Gonzalo Pérez de Cartagena (d. 1519), and Pedro de Cartagena. Family documents (the will of Alonso de Cartagena or the 1446 right of primogeniture of Pedro de Cartagena from which Teresa is absent) list first the male children in order of birth (Alonso, Álvaro, Lope de Rojas) and then the female children (Juana, Teresa, María Sarabia, Elvira de Rojas), complicating the establishment of a relative chronology. In 1424 (?), Pedro de Cartagena killed Juan Hurtado de Mendoza in a duel and to re-establish peace between the two families, he married his firstborn Alonso to the daughter of the deceased, María, and his oldest daughter Juana to Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, the deceased's son. Presumably either Álvaro or Teresa would be the next sibling.

³ In the summer of 1440 Princess Blanca de Navarra was lodged at the Cartagena household on her way to Valladolid to marry Crown Prince Enrique; in 1453, the Condestable Don Álvaro de Luna was staying at the residence of Pedro Cartagena when he was arrested (Cantera Burgos 432, 471).

⁴ The family's care in educating their daughters as well as their sons is indicated obliquely in the inventory of the library of Teresa's great-uncle, Alvar García de Santa María, that lists a copy of Boethius in Latin and Castilian that he had loaned to her older sister, Juana de Cartagena, and that she had never returned (Cantera Burgos 200).

⁵ Teresa remarks in *Arboleda* that she had studied at the University of Salamanca prior to her deafness: "los pocos años que yo estud[i]é en el estudio de Salamanca" (103); all references are to Lewis Joseph Hutton's edition. An updated bibliography of studies on Teresa and her texts is included in the Works Cited.

losophy that she later expanded and deepened with her own solitary readings.

The transforming event in Teresa's life—and occasion for writing *Arboleda de los enfermos*—was her affliction with deafness. At the beginning of *Arboleda*,⁶ she allegorizes her pain and confusion as she is cut off from the world in an anguished "exillyo e tenebroso destierro" where, feeling more dead than alive, she is estranged from her family and friends: "los amigos nos olvidan, los parientes se enojan, e avn la propia madre se enoja con la hija enferma, y el padre abor[r]esçe al hijo que con continuas dolencias le ocupare la posada" (63). At this time, most critics have assumed, Teresa must have entered the convent.

Either accidentally or intentionally the name of Teresa's religious order was omitted by the copyist, Pero López del Trigo, but it is generally believed that she belonged to the Franciscan Order and probably lived in a convent house in Burgos, possibly the monastery of Santa Clara. Manuel Serrano y Sanz believed that Teresa belonged to a convent in Toledo or Calabazanos, the latter patronized by Gómez Manrique, husband of Juana de Mendoza, to whom Teresa directs her second work, *Admiración operum Dey*. Cantera Burgos notes Teresa's frequent citing of St. Augustine and suggests that her reference to "muy glorioso padre nuestro Sant Francisco" indicates her affiliation with the Poor Clares. Hutton traces certain Franciscan features in Teresa's works, especially the influence of Ramon Llull and her use of light imagery. Carmen Marimón Llorca notes that Teresa's convent must have been one of those for daughters of wealthy families where a certain degree of social life was permitted (111). In *Arboleda*, Teresa speaks of social visits paid to her and complains of requests that she visit others; clearly she maintained contact with the outside world (41-42). As is frequently the case with women in the Middle Ages, when Teresa died and where she is buried are unknown.

Recently, however, two additional historical documents published in the *Bulario de la Universidad de Salamanca* have been brought to light that add significantly to our knowledge about Teresa de Cartagena.⁷ The first is a petition granted April 3, 1449 (*Registra*

⁶ "[G]rand tiempo ha, virtuosa señora, que la niebla de tristeza tenporal e humana cubrió los términos de mi beuir e con vn espeso toruellino de angustiosas pasyones me lleuó a vna ýnsula que se llama 'Oprobrium hominum et abieçio plebis'" (37).

⁷ The only mention and discussion, to our knowledge, is in Mary Elizabeth Frieden's doctoral thesis (40-43); Frieden primarily uses the documents to establish Cartagena's

Supplicationum 436, fol. 114^v-115, from the Vatican Archives), submitted by Alonso de Cartagena, bishop of Burgos, on behalf of his niece, Teresa Gómez de Cartagena, seeking papal dispensation for her transfer from the Franciscan Order to the Cistercian Order.⁸ The second document is a petition granted less than a month later on May 2 (*Registra Supplicationum* 436, fol. 145), also generated by Alonso de Cartagena on behalf of his niece, requesting that, upon reaching the age of twenty five, she be eligible for office in the new monastery.⁹ We will examine the April petition first.

This document identifies Teresa Gómez de Cartagena¹⁰ as “a nun of the monastery of Santa Clara outside the walls of Burgos,” who had entered the Franciscan Order at this monastery but “is no longer able to remain comfortably with peace of mind” with the Poor Clares “for specific and reasonable causes.” The monastery of Santa Clara on the outskirts of Burgos from which Teresa seeks to transfer can be identified with virtual certainty as the extant convent founded in 1234 and located on Calle Santa Clara 26. In the Middle Ages, the walls of the city embraced the right bank of the Arlanzón river, which served as a protective moat; the present-day Monasterio de Santa Clara on the left bank of the river would indeed lie “extra muros Burgen[ses].”¹¹

acquaintance with the *ars dictaminis* as a course of study in cathedral and monastic schools and later universities. The *Bulario* was published by Vicente Beltrán de Heredia in 1966-67, that is, at the time of Hutton's edition of Cartagena's works, but has passed unnoticed by readers of Teresa's texts until Frieden (2001). The two petitions as transcribed and presented in the *Bulario* are appended to this study with translations into English.

⁸ Beltrán de Heredia's heading reads: “Dispensa a Teresa Gómez de Cartagena, sobrina de Don Alonso, obispo de Burgos, para pasar de las franciscanas a las cistercienses. –Roma 3 de abril 1449.” He erroneously discusses the petition under the papacy of Eugene IV, who died in Rome on February 23, 1447; it presumably addresses and is granted by Nicholas V (1447-1455), the pope who also intervenes in the Toledan Rebellion of 1449.

⁹ The editor's heading reads: “Dispensa a Teresa Gómez de Cartagena, para que, en cumpliendo 25 años, pueda ocupar cualquier dignidad en su religión. –Roma 2 de mayo 1449.”

¹⁰ To date, we have been unable to consult the original document and, in some places, the transcription by Beltrán de Heredia is questionable. The last name “Gómez” de Cartagena is puzzling since her name is given as Teresa de Cartajena in the Escorial manuscript and “Gómez” is not associated with other family members. This may be a misinterpretation of an abbreviation for García. Her uncle did not officially adopt the surname Cartagena until 1441; prior to that, he was known as Alonso García de Santa María.

¹¹ Yonsoo Kim conducted an *in situ* investigation of convents in Burgos during the summer of 2003 and concluded that this convent is the only possible referent in the petition. Her research was funded by the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, Boston College. Unfortunately all convent archives were destroyed during the Napoleonic invasions; Teresa's affiliation with the Convent of Santa Clara in Burgos is

The profession of solemn vows would have marked Teresa's entry into the convent of Santa Clara. Profession was at the age of consent or majority, which for girls was generally seen as twelve in the early Middle Ages but increased to fourteen or fifteen years by the thirteenth century as the church emphasized the need for adult oblations (Penelope D. Johnson 106).¹² Johnson perceptively analyzes family strategies of monastic profession and outlines several principles useful for our consideration of Teresa's initial entry into the Franciscan Order and subsequent transfer to the Cistercians:

For most medieval people, choice did not belong to the individual because one's life was viewed as part of a whole—the family—rather than as an autonomous entity. This social perspective was shared by the noble and the peasant, rich and poor, females and males in the medieval world, which believed that individuals benefitted if their own families prospered. It behooved kinships to seek advantageous relationships through marriages, god-parenthood, monastic professions, and political alliances; the whole family also had an interest in preserving its patrimony, and therefore in limiting as well as controlling the marriages of its members so as not to fragment property among too many inheritors ... Variations existed, but generally society was structured so that the well-being of the kin group was a key consideration in the major life decisions of its members. (14-15)

While the creation of what Johnson terms “localized material and spiritual networks” served to advance family interests, at the heart of these strategies for sending members into monasteries was a profound belief in the spiritual efficacy of monastic suffrages (26). Family ties,

reaffirmed in the second *Bulario* document: “Teresae Gomez de Cartagena, monialis expresse professae monasterii monialium sanctae Clarae, ordinis ejusdem sanctae Clarae extra muros Burgen.” (Beltrán de Heredia *Bulario* 1: 40).

¹² Johnson notes that the nuns of Saint-Aubin took vows at fourteen, while the nuns of Saint-Amand entered the novitiate at fourteen and could take vows at fifteen (106 n4). Johnson focuses on northern France; the monasteries she studies represent all the major orders (Benedictine, Cistercian, Fontevrist, Clarissan, Augustinian, and Premonstratensian). A significant advantage of her study is that she concentrates her research on “documents of practice” (pragmatic records, legal and economic charters recording transactions and activities of monastic life) that show the world as it was, not as it should be. The “documents of theory” (prescriptive treatises, hortatory sermons, theological tracts, bulls, laws and rules) are referred to in comparisons to the documents of practice (7).

moreover, were not severed when a woman took her vows but remained strong; the walls of medieval convents were remarkably permeable:

The bonds that tied individuals to their families were not slipped when a person entered the monastic life. Far from it. The choice of monastery, the entrance gift, reasons for professing, and both support for and strains on that profession were determined by family considerations. Although relatives could make unfair demands on a monastery, they could also buttress it with their financial gifts and emotional support, and both self-interested and altruistic motives galvanized this lay backing. Since family networks did not stay neatly in the secular world but dangled their complications and contributions over cloister walls, the interests of the local community became thoroughly enmeshed with those of the monastery. (33-34)

Advocating Teresa's cause, Alonso de Cartagena states his agreement and approval of his niece's devotion to the Benedictine rule and Cistercian Order, "agreeing with and approving of her devotion for good and fitting reasons". As bishop of Burgos, he would have provided episcopal oversight for monasteries of both women and men under his jurisdiction.¹³ Episcopal visitations, courts, and informal interchanges created multiple connections between regular communities (those that followed a rule) and the secular church. Bishops had two primary responsibilities with regard to monastics: to minister to them sacramentally, and to oversee and, if necessary, reform their individual lives as well as the corporate conventual life of the house. By the central Middle Ages, bishops consecrated nuns and monks and received their vows, as well as consecrating those who became abbesses and abbots. They served as advocates of monastic houses and had the authority to adjudicate conflicts that involved monasteries. In the April petition, Alonso combines his roles as bishop and uncle to persuade the pope to grant the dispensation.

¹³ The following summary is excerpted and paraphrased from Johnson's study of the relationship between bishops and monastic houses (62-74). Alonso de Cartagena's interest in and devotion to monastic houses under his jurisdiction materializes in the numerous donations to monasteries in his testament. More than fifteen are individually mentioned by name to receive donations or special considerations and others by category (for example, all houses with four friars or more) or location (Aguilera, Abrojo) without specifying name or number (see Cantera Burgos 434-37).

From the central Middle Ages on, leaving the Franciscan or Dominican orders was considered apostasy. As early as 1244, Innocent IV issued a bull authorizing the capture and imprisonment of apostates from the Franciscan order, wherever they might be found and in whatever habit or religious order that they might have found refuge (Jill R. Webster 170). In *Partida* 1.7.29, Alfonso X el Sabio refers to the punishment of apostates who abandon orders, suggesting that they forfeit eternal life; he states, however, that it is acceptable to move from a lesser to a more severe religious order (173 n78). Webster cites the case of Jofre de Foixà:

In 1295 Pope Boniface VIII dispensed him from the obligation to remain in the Franciscan order, which he had entered twenty years earlier. He, like many other apostates, wished to follow the rule of Saint Benedict ... He was probably granted this dispensation because of the reputation he had acquired as a troubadour, but the rule of Saint Benedict was regarded as more severe than that of Saint Francis, making Fr. Jofre's request acceptable to the pope. *In other cases, the possession of an influential family or evidence of exceptional ability were distinct advantages, and those who were fortunate enough to enjoy them benefited in numerous ways.* (173; emphasis mine)¹⁴

By the fifteenth century, these restrictions may have eased somewhat, and while throughout the Middle Ages, as Webster reminds us, in practice influential people often seem to have been able to do whatever they wanted,¹⁵ clearly Teresa's transfer is sufficiently extraordinary to require papal dispensation, "absolving and freeing her from all the perpetual claustration, authority, and observance of the Rule of the Friars Minor and of the monastery of Santa Clara, and of that Order". The justification of the dispensation probably relies less on the requisite but unspecified "reasonable causes" that undermine her peace of mind than on her privileged position as niece of the bishop of Burgos; her uncle takes care to highlight their relationship in the petition: "your humble servant Alfonso, bishop of Burgos, to

¹⁴ Johnson, however, notes: "[F]emale Dominicans and Franciscans shared a monastic life virtually identical to that of traditional nuns, in contrast to their male counterparts, the friars, whose public preaching mission set them apart from cloistered monks" (5).

¹⁵ Johnson's documents of practice indicate the same bias. For example, although theoretically the seriously handicapped child was not accepted into religious life, Johnson finds that in actual practice this did happen (22), often after a generous donation.

whom the aforementioned Teresa is kin, since she is the legitimate daughter of his brother according to the flesh”.

Since this is a petition for papal approval to transfer from one religious order to another, there was no need to specify the Cistercian monastery that would receive Teresa; the arguments that Alonso de Cartagena presents are appropriately generic rather than specific: “that she may transfer to any of the aforementioned monasteries of the Cistercians or Benedictines, in which observance of the monastic rule flourishes, and in which she has found a kind welcome”.¹⁶ The implication, of course, is that she did not encounter a kind welcome in the Franciscan order, which brings us back to the formulaic “specific and reasonable causes” that compelled her transfer; while *ex certis rationabilibus causis* may refer to personality conflicts among the Poor Clares, the legal formula may also mask circumstances more sinister.

It is difficult to dismiss the convergence of dates between the *Bulario* petitions and the Toledan Rebellion of 1449 that introduced the first discriminatory statutes of *limpieza de sangre* against the *conversos*. Initiated in January 1449 as a tax revolt against the centrist fiscal policies of Alvaro de Luna and Juan II, the rebellion was rapidly transmuted into a racist attack on the biological deficiencies of New Christians whose Jewish bloodline allegedly obviated any true conversion to Christianity. The *Petición* from the city of Toledo to Juan II (May 2, 1449), contemporary to the *Bulario* documents, represents the culmination of three months of inflammatory anti-*converso* propaganda and the first public pronouncement of the rebels that lays the political, ideological, and rhetorical groundwork for the subsequent statutes of *limpieza de sangre*:

[P]or quanto es notorio que el dicho don Alvaro de Luna, vuestro condestable, públicamente a defendido e recebtado e defiende e recebta a los conuersos de linaje de los judíos e vuestros señorios e rreynos, los quales por la mayor parte son fallados ser ynfieles e erejes, e han judaizado e judaizan, e han guardado e guardan los más dellos los ritos e cirimonias de los judíos, apostatando la crisma e vautizo que receuieron, demostrando con las obras e palabras que los receuieron con cuero e non con el coraçón ni en la voluntad, a fin que so color

¹⁶ The second document confirms that Teresa transferred because of certain reasonable causes that undermined her spiritual calm and because she felt a special devotion to the Benedictine rule and Cistercian Order.

e nombre de cristianos, prebaricando, estroxesen las ánimas e cuerpos e faziendas de los cristianos viejos en la fee cathólica, según lo han fecho e fazen. E otros muchos dellos an blasfemado muy áspera e grauemente de nuestro Saluador Jesucristo, e de la gloriosa Virgen María, su madre: otros dellos an âdorado e adoran ýdolos. (Benito Ruano, 187-88)¹⁷

As Albert A. Sicoff reminds us, “[d]e todas las órdenes religiosas de España, los franciscanos fueron, al parecer, los primeros en dar la alarma en el siglo XV sobre el tema de los falsos conversos contaminados por la presencia de los judíos... Además, los franciscanos estaban inquietos por las mezclas entre cristianos, cristianos nuevos judaizantes y judíos, que producían disensiones en el seno mismo de todos los cristianos” (92).¹⁸ Intimately involved in negotiations throughout the two-year standoff with the Toledan rebels and author of an influential pro-*converso* theological treatise,¹⁹ Alonso de Cartagena, as bishop of Burgos, would have had a nuanced awareness of the receptivity toward conversos among the various orders under his jurisdiction; it is possible that, in the interests of safety and diplomacy, he preferred to transfer his niece to the more politically neutral Cistercian Order.

The monastery that Teresa transferred to may disclose possible additional motives. Without documenting her reasons, Frieden (40)

¹⁷ On the rhetoric of the Toledan Rebellion, see Ben Zion Netanyahu 296-712, Eloy Benito Ruano *Los orígenes* 39-132, Benito Ruano *Toledo en el siglo XV* 33-81, and Seidenspinner-Núñez (“Prelude”). Anti-*converso* animus escalates in the Sentencia-Estatuto (June 1449) and culminates in the *Memorial* of Marcos García de Mora (November 1449) where, given the impossibility of conversion, the term *converso* itself is now replaced by the oxymoron “judío baptizado”.

¹⁸ See also Jeremy Cohen who attributes to the mendicant orders the growing intolerance toward Jews in Europe from the thirteenth century on. Mendicant fervor was renewed in Spain by the intense proselytizing campaign of the Dominican Vicente Ferrer at the beginning of the fifteenth century and at mid-century by the fanatic Franciscan Alonso de Espina, who preached sermons against the conversos during the 1450s; his *Fortalitium fidei contra iudaeos*, written between 1458-1460, vividly documents the Jewish/*converso*/Islamic/demonic threat to Christianity and provides a blueprint for the later Inquisition. Although Sicoff refers specifically to events subsequent to the Toledan Rebellion, his remarks may indicate a predisposition toward anti-*converso* animus among the Franciscans prior to the 1450s.

¹⁹ Early drafts in Castilian of the *Defensorium Unitatis Christianae* apparently circulated in 1449 and influenced the *Instrucción del Relator* of Fernán Díaz de Toledo (1449); Cartagena’s concluding exhortation to the pope to intervene against the rebellion precludes the September 1449 bulls issued by Nicholas V condemning the rebels. On the *Defensorium*, see Netanyahu 517-83, Bruce Rosenstock, Sicoff 61-85, and Seidenspinner-Núñez “Prelude”.

proposes that in 1449 Teresa entered the Cistercian monastery of Santa María La Real de Las Huelgas in Burgos.²⁰ Located, like the Monasterio de Santa Clara, on the left bank of the Arlanzón river but at the southern end of Burgos, Las Huelgas was founded as a royal monastery by Alfonso VIII in 1187, and throughout the Middle Ages remained under monarchical protection and favor as a privileged site for royal marriages, ceremonies to knight princes, and the coronation of kings; as a Cistercian convent to receive Castilian *infantas* and daughters of the high nobility into religious service; and as a pantheon for the royal family.²¹

Otro síntoma de la prosperidad de Las Huelgas en estas centurias lo confirma la afluencia de vocaciones que concurren en la abadía y las posteriores fundaciones que se llevan a cabo, algunas de ellas materializadas con religiosas procedentes del cenobio Real. Esta situación era una señal tanto del florecimiento de la comunidad como de la fama y poder de que gozaba el monasterio. La abadía burgalesa se mostraba ante el panorama monástico de su tiempo como cabeza de un conjunto de instituciones religiosas que seguían las observancias cistercienses en los reinos de Castilla y de León. (Martínez Antón 191)

²⁰ Kim's investigations in Spain lead her to the same conclusion. The only other Cistercian monastery at the time would have been Santa María Villamayor de los Montes, some forty kilometers from Burgos.

The Colegio Universitario de Burgos has published eight volumes of archival material from Las Huelgas, *Documentación del Monasterio de Las Huelgas de Burgos*, up to the year 1376; the project has been stopped with no foreseeable prospect of continuing into the fifteenth century. Entry into the rich archives of unpublished fifteenth-century materials at Las Huelgas is exclusively limited to the current abbess; to date we have been unsuccessful in our attempts to access these promising archives for any mention of Teresa de Cartagena.

²¹ "Fernando III el Santo, Rey de Castilla (1217-1252) y de León (1230-1252), nieto del Monarca fundador, quiso ser el primero en elegir la iglesia abacial de Las Huelgas como escenario para armarse Caballero el 27 de noviembre de 1219. Alfonso X, el Sabio, Monarca que tanto influyó en la cultura española del siglo XIII, armó de Caballero en el mismo lugar y en el año 1254 a Eduardo, Príncipe heredero de Inglaterra. Por su parte, el Rey Alfonso XI, el Justiciero, dispuso en Las Huelgas la ceremonia de su coronación el año 1331, lo mismo que lo hicieron el 1366 su hijo bastardo Enrique II de Trastámara y en 1379 el hijo y sucesor de éste, Juan I y su esposa Doña Leonor. Todos honraron con mercedes, derechos y franquicias al Real Monasterio. Celosos por salvaguardar los intereses de la abadía, los grandes de la época, ya fuesen reyes, nobles, infantas que profesaron vida de religión en este Cister ... contribuyeron a engrandecer el nombre, el prestigio y la magnificencia de Las Huelgas" (Miguel Martínez Antón 190). By the fifteenth century, Las Huelgas had served as the resting place for twelve monarchs of Castile, the most recent being Alfonso XI, Pedro I, and Enrique II (de Trastámara).

And while, like other religious communities in the fifteenth century, Las Huelgas was no longer in its heyday at the time of Teresa's transfer, in the constellation of peninsular monasteries it remained a four star convent. Certainly Las Huelgas was the premier monastic house for daughters of the nobility envisioned by Marimón Llorca, open to the kind of active social life described by Teresa in *Arboleda*.²²

There are several reasons why Las Huelgas is the likeliest candidate as Teresa's new monastery. Historically both Pablo de Santa María and Alonso de Cartagena cultivated family connections with Las Huelgas by bequeathing donations in their testaments and, as bishops of Burgos, would have dealt frequently with the influential monastery.²³ Teresa's initial placement in the Monasterio de Santa Clara indicates that the Cartagena family sought to have her in a monastery close to home; assuming this preference (and there is no reason to suppose that conditions would have changed in 1449), Las Huelgas is the only Cistercian monastery as close to the family seat in Burgos as her previous convent with the Poor Clares. Moreover, the privilege and status associated with Las Huelgas would have been attractive for two reasons: to protect Teresa from the rising anti-*converso* animus generated by the Toledan Rebellion and to promote the social profile of the Cartagena/Santa María family:

²² "La misma Teresa nos habla de las visitas que recibían '... como acaece quando alguna persona de gran estado e dimidad nos quiere venir a ver ...' (*Arboleda* ..., 97-98) y parece no haber perdido por completo el contacto con el mundo durante su vida conventual a juzgar por la relación que mantuvo con Doña Juana de Mendoza; porque -según ella misma nos cuenta-debía salir con cierta frecuencia del convento: '... me enojan algunas personas quando me ruegan y dizen: Yd a fulanos qu'os quiere ver e aunque vos no lo oygaes, oyran ellos a vos' (*Arboleda* ..., 41); porque le llegan noticias del exterior 'muchas veces me es hecho creer, virtuosa señora, que algunos de los prudentes varones ...'. 'E por que me dicen, virtuosa señora, que el ya dicho borrador de papeles borrados aya venido a la noticia del señor Gómez Manrique y vuestra ...' (*Admiración*, 113-14); y, sobre todo, porque no hay una sola alusión en los dos tratados ni a sus hermanas, ni al sosiego de la vida conventual, lo que nos hace pensar que el convento no era más que el marco donde Teresa soportaba su propio aislamiento de mundo, vivía su profunda vida interior y de comunicación con Dios y se relacionaba ocasionalmente con sus contemporáneos" (Marimón Llorca 111-12).

²³ A codicil dated August 23, 1435, to Pablo de Santa María's will designates: "A las huelgas de Burgos casulla de seda para el altar de S. Bernardo" (Cantera Burgos 331); in his will dated July 6, 1453, Alonso de Cartagena donates 500 mrs. to the hospital of Sta. María la Real, the famous Hospital del Rey along the Camino de Santiago under the jurisdiction of Las Huelgas (Cantera Burgos 439).

In his *Anacephaleosis*, for example, Alonso de Cartagena records how he traveled to Palenzuela to recover the cadaver of Juan II and accompany the funeral bier to the Monasterio de Las Huelgas where he officiated at the funeral mass (Luis Fernández Gallardo 251).

Although life in a medieval monastery was not luxurious, the urge for upward social mobility made monastic institutions seem particularly attractive and enhanced the appeal of professing in a house where one would associate with daughters, wives, and widows of the nobility. This was particularly true for women from the lower knightly and bourgeois families, which in the central Middle Ages were aspiring to better things ... (Johnson 28)

And also for women from the upwardly mobile *converso* families of fifteenth-century Spain.²⁴

The petition concludes with the stipulation that Teresa be received into her new order “with the conferral of the habit and a full stipend”, that is, that, upon transfer, she achieve full status as a professed Cistercian nun and enjoy customary benefits.²⁵ In the late Middle Ages, nuns received into a monastery were conventionally assigned a *portio* or living stipend provided by the monastery. In addition, private forms of subsidy were also widespread and point once again to the disparity between theory and practice that Johnson documents in her study.²⁶ Although the rule of Saint Benedict instructed a novice to dispose of property before entering a monastery or to donate it to the monastic house, Johnson notes that in practice infractions of the vow of poverty

²⁴ Frieden notes: “By the middle of the fifteenth century many Franciscan communities were experiencing the effects of a reform movement which turned them away from intellectual endeavors. The convent of Santa Clara in Burgos was among those which underwent reform, so the Cistercian environment at Las Huelgas would surely have been more suitable to Teresa’s intellect” (52). She also remarks that Las Huelgas, a monastery for royalty and nobility, would have possessed an important library (41) and that “Teresa’s family most certainly wielded enough influence to facilitate her entrance into this community and would have seen it as a suitable place for a member of the Cartagena family” (40).

²⁵ We are indebted to John Van Engen for his expertise in interpreting several terms and practices (including *portio*, *beneficium*) presented in the *Bulario* petitions.

²⁶ Although the Benedictine rule provided the basis for the Second Order, the rule of Saint Clare distinctively emphasized the ideals of Saint Francis, poverty, and renunciation and closer links with the Order of Friars Minor (Webster 222). Nevertheless, in her study of Clarissan monasteries in Aragon, Webster records notable infractions: “Individual sisters were given clothing, money and jewels, and there is evidence of this practice in more than one convent. The princesses María and Blanca were provided with 30 ells and 2 palens of camelot (camel hair cloth) from Brussels, which was purchased from a Valencian draper, Guillem Rabassà, and was to be used when they took the habit in Valencia. For their cloaks they were given two fur ruffs, for 140 sous from Pere Cescala, a furrier in Valencia. Another noble lady, Sibil.la de Antillón, a Clarissan nun in the Saragossa convent, also received 50 sous for fur for her coat, and another 50 sous for alms the day she professed. The original tenet proscribing possessions had become unworkable ...” (237-38).

were very frequent for women; eighty three per cent of the nunneries that she studies had women who owned property (111).²⁷ Individual nuns frequently received gifts, bequests of property, or income that “amounted to family allowances for a nun’s pocket money but were not intended to support the monastery itself” (108). This was probably the arrangement later provided in Alonso de Cartagena’s will when, in 1453, he bequeathed one hundred florins to his niece. Contrary to the proscriptive rule, Johnson concludes: “Economic need coupled with customary practice made it likely that nuns during the central Middle Ages would hold private property” (111-12).

The second document appears to be a hasty follow up to the first petition, specifying further that Teresa is in no way to be penalized for her transfer to a new order and proposing her eligibility for abbatial office once she reaches the canonical age of twenty five. The petition, granted May 2, 1449, opens with an acknowledgment of papal approval of the earlier request and rehearses its most salient details: Teresa’s name, her affiliation to the monastery of Santa Clara, her discomfort there for specific and reasonable causes, her devotion to the rule of Saint Benedict and the Cistercian Order, her relationship to the bishop, his approval of her devotion, and the permission granted for her transfer to the Cistercian or Benedictine Order. The petition seeks to ensure that Teresa’s status in her new order will not be compromised by her transfer: upon entry, she should receive “whatever stipend is commonly held among the nuns of that Order”, including, if applicable, “that of a priorate, or even a conventual dignity, responsibility, or duty”.²⁸ Furthermore, the petition seeks papal permission so that “as soon as she has reached the twenty-fifth year of her age, she may be appointed, chosen, and raised to any abbatial dignities, and that she may receive and hold them, and rule and govern those nuns, and preside over them”.²⁹ Martínez Antón provides

²⁷ Similarly, during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the entry dowry for male and female monastics was viewed as simoniacal and was officially censured; in 1215 religious women’s dowries were specifically proscribed by the Fourth Lateran Council. Nevertheless, in contrast to male monasteries that effectively discontinued the acceptance of endowments, for women’s houses the entry gift remained a pragmatic requirement and there was little effort to disguise the practice (Johnson 26).

²⁸ Martínez Antón (131-35) lists the typical administrative offices of a Cistercian convent and provides a summary of their duties: *abadesa*, *priora*, *subpriora*, *mayordoma o cillerera*, *secretaria*, *maestra de novicias*, *portera*, *sacristana*, *chantre*, *organista*, *bibliotecaria*, *ropera*, *enfermera*, *hospedera*, *cocinera*, *refitolera*.

²⁹ “Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 regularized the modes of electing abbesses, making them identical to those for abbots and bishops. The three authorized means of choosing

the following description of the role of the abbess in the governance of a Cistercian monastery:

Es la primera responsable del monasterio en lo material y en lo espiritual. Preside todos los actos de la comunidad y anima a las hermanas. Es elegida cada seis años por mayoría absoluta de los miembros que forman el Capítulo Conventual. Nombra a la Priora, Subpriora, Consejeras y otros cargos por el tiempo que cree oportuno, y vela por la buena ejecución de los mismos. Consulta con su Consejo los casos que requiere el bien común. (131)

If the petition is anticipating abbatial office at Las Huelgas, the powers of the abbess are even more daunting. Due to a confluence of royal and papal privileges, Las Huelgas was founded as an exempt monastic house, free from episcopal control and owing allegiance directly to the pope.³⁰

[L]as abadesas de Las Huelgas ostentan gran autoridad jurídica, espiritual y material sobre las Casas filiales. Es innegable el poder y la influencia que alcanzan con la jurisdicción *cuasi episcopal* ejercida en sus extensos dominios señoriales. La abadesa recibía las profesiones religiosas de los frailes del Hospital del Rey, castigaba sus actos de desobediencia y disipación, confirmaba las capellanías, otorgaba licencias para confesar, celebrar el culto y predicar, expedía los enlaces matrimoniales de sus vasallos, daba dimisorias para órdenes sagradas, ejercía

a superior were by unanimous vote (divine inspiration), by a complex and unwieldy system of scrutators who questioned each elector and tallied the votes (scrutin), and by compromise among several candidates without a clear majority" (Johnson 169).

The election of an abbess was, in practice, neither a strictly internal affair or exempt from political pressure. Webster examines the dispute at the new Clarissan monastery at Xàtiva between the Friars Minor who supported the election of Sr. Agnès and the king who proposed Sr. Beatriz: "The king strategically issued letters to all persons concerned: the officials in Xàtiva, the executor of the will of Saurina de Entenza, and the guardian and friars in Xàtiva, informing them that part of the legacy was to be withheld until the matter was settled satisfactorily [i.e., until Beatriz was installed as abbess]" (239). Even after the appointment of Sr. Beatriz, the friars encouraged Sr. Agnès to appeal to the Holy See.

³⁰ This does not imply a complete disconnection from the bishop of Burgos, however, as even exempt houses required the bishop's sacramental services to consecrate monastics and his juridical powers to adjudicate legal cases (Johnson 63). Given the *cuasi episcopal* powers of the abbess of Las Huelgas, one can easily imagine the incentives for Alonso de Cartagena to secure the position for his niece.

justicia, nombraba alcaldes, jueces, merinos, etc. Sus poderes eran amplísimos. Se las ve implicadas en el gobierno absoluto del Monasterio y del Hospital del Rey (fundado por el mismo Monarca para atención de los pobres, especialmente de los peregrinos en su camino hacia Santiago), así como en las relaciones con los reyes y las personalidades de la nobleza. (Martínez Antón 189-90)³¹

As Johnson notes, women chosen as abbesses—especially of rich monastic houses—were almost universally aristocratic and even sometimes from the highest nobility (167). In effect, during Teresa's assumed presence there (1449- ca. 1481), the abbesses at Las Huelgas were María de Guzmán (1436-1457), María de Almenárez (1457-1459), and Juana de Guzmán (1459-1477), the latter identified as the aunt of Fernando el Católico (Martínez Antón, 194).³² The petition closes with a sense of urgency: "And he petitions your holiness that you order haste to be made to draw up an apostolic letter with this dispensation and concession, as a special favor, notwithstanding the constitutions and regulations of any monastery or order, or any other decrees that say the contrary, including any circumstantial provisions in them."

The May document clearly establishes that in 1449 Teresa was not yet twenty five years old, i.e., that she must have been born sometime after May 1424. The apparent urgency of this follow-up petition, presumably submitted immediately after the approval of her transfer, may indicate that Teresa was close to reaching the age of twenty five years and thus to being immediately eligible for office in the Cistercian

³¹ The abbess managed an extensive network of some twelve affiliated monasteries, and her jurisdiction extended well beyond the walls of her monasteries: "La señora de Las Huelgas, desde su primera abadesa doña Sol (1187-1203), ejercía jurisdicción eclesiástica, civil y criminal, no sólo en el monasterio, Hospital del rey y Llana de Burgos, sino también en todos los pueblos y lugares que los reyes, infantes y particulares fueron aportando al Monasterio. Hubo un tiempo en que la Abadesa ejercía jurisdicción en catorce pueblos grandes y cincuenta pequeños. Esta jurisdicción y señorío fue decayendo con el paso del tiempo, aunque hoy conserva su rango dentro de la Orden, pues la Abadesa de Las Huelgas es Madre General de la Federación Cisterciense de la Regular Observancia de San Bernardo en España" (María Jesús Herrero Sanz 15). José María Escrivá devotes over four hundred pages to documenting the extraordinary powers and history of *La abadesa de Las Huelgas*.

³² It is intriguing to speculate about some kinship between María de Guzmán or Juana de Guzmán and Juana de Mendoza, to whom Teresa directs her second text, *Admiración operum Dey*, and who is the daughter of Teresa de Guzmán and Diego Hurtado de Mendoza; our thanks to Ronald Surtz who provided information about Juana de Mendoza's genealogy.

Order, hence the hurry to draft the second petition.³³ Furthermore, the petition itself certainly suggests that, given her social rank and religious qualifications, her family expected her to hold office at the new monastery and proactively promoted her candidacy; otherwise, why would they request a confirmation of her eligibility? This would imply, of course, that Teresa was suited to exercise abbatial powers, that in 1449 she had not yet been afflicted with her deafness, which, while it may not have disqualified her from entering a monastic house, surely would have disqualified her from holding office or a position of conventual authority.³⁴

This evidence that Teresa in her early to mid-twenties had not yet lost her hearing justifies a closer reading of her own account of succumbing to deafness in *Arboleda de los enfermos*. In her discussion of human vanity in *Arboleda* (52-53), Cartagena mentions her chronic sickness in her *puericia o moçedat* (childhood), its continuation throughout her *adolescencia* (adolescence), and her greatly increased suffering—presumably the timely onset of her deafness—in her *jouentut* (youth or prime).³⁵ In the Middle Ages, the span of human life was conventionally subdivided into groups of seven years: in the four-stage scheme that Cartagena uses, *pueritia* lasts from birth to age fourteen, *adolescencia*

³³ The urgency may also reflect that negotiations to transfer Teresa with an assumption of eligibility for office based on the papal dispensation of April 3 met with objections at her new convent that such eligibility was not specifically stipulated. Thus in the second document Alonso de Cartagena hastens to secure the necessary language before effecting the transfer.

³⁴ Teresa tells us in *Arboleda* that once God cut off her hearing, she herself refused to speak (42). Of the range of offices in Cistercian governance listed by Martínez Antón—*abadesa, priora, subpriora, mayordoma o cillerera, secretaria, maestra de novicias*, etc.—all obviously require extensive communication and interpersonal skills.

³⁵ She presents her afflictions as a corporal punishment administered by a loving father to a wayward child: "... como el padre discreto castiga al hijo culpable con amor e piadat bien asý el celestial Padre quiso corregir mis culpas con paternal caridad. E para esto mostrar, veamos qué manera tiene e deue thener qualsequier padre discreto que quiere castigar e hazer bueno a su hijo. Ésta me paresçe que deue ser lo primero: que comience el castigo en la tierna hedat ... Començar el açote en la primera hedat, entiéndese por la puericia o moçedat; e sy menester fuere, que le continúe en la segunda hedat, que se llama adoleçencia. E sy en estas dos hedades el açote no trae emienda, la paternal afecçion no deue desanparar al hijo en la juentut, antes en esta hedat doblar el açote, asý por la rebeldía que muestra en no mejorar sus costumbres ... Pues segunt esto, bien demuestra este mi açote la paternal caridad y descriçion soberana aver tenido y avn tener conmigo esta mesma vía. Y a de començar el açote en la primera hedat e continuarle en la segunda; asaz se declara en aquello que dixi: que mis vanos deseos estauan de la haz. Pues en la juentut doblar el açote, la obra da testimonio, ca en esta propia hedat se acresçentó mi pasyón en la manera que vedes". (52-53)

through age twenty-eight, *iuventus* from twenty-nine to forty-nine, and *senectus* or *vejez* (old age) designates the years afterward. In an alternate six-stage system, *infantia* lasts for seven years, *pueritia* from eight to fourteen, *adolescencia* to twenty-eight, *iuventus* from twenty-nine to forty-nine, *senectus* from fifty to seventy, and *senium* (senility) covers all ages thereafter. *Iuventus*, or *jouentut*, denotes the same age range in both schemes.³⁶ The precision and consistency of Cartagena's terminology and her probable knowledge of her grandfather's *Siete edades del mundo*, which reflects the same conventions, suggest that Teresa assigned the standard numerical value to *jouentut*. In this case, she would have succumbed to deafness between her late twenties and late forties—much later than traditionally assumed.³⁷

Once collated with existing information provided by Teresa's texts and other historical sources, the *Bulario* documents allow us to propose a radical re-dating of Teresa's life and works. The Escorial MS III.h.24 that includes the unique copies of *Arboleda de los enfermos* and *Admiración operum Dey* provides the year 1481 as the end date for when Pero López del Trigo would have copied her texts. Teresa acknowledges in the introduction to *Admiración* a substantial lapse of time due to illness and suffering before penning her defense, so, to allow for the dissemination of *Arboleda*, the disapproval of the *prudentes varones*, and the delayed response by Teresa to her critics, perhaps a year or more separates the writing of the two texts. We can reasonably assume, then, that *Arboleda* was written before 1480; since Teresa states that she has been deaf twenty years before writing *Arboleda*, she would not have become deaf after 1459. On the other hand, Teresa assigns the onslaught of her deafness to her *jouentut*, that is, sometime between the ages of twenty-nine and forty-nine. Since, according to the second *Bulario* petition, Teresa must have been born after May 1424, the earliest date of her deafness would have to be 1453, at the age of twenty-nine. The window for her affliction with deafness, then, would be between 1453-1459 while she was a nun at a Cistercian monastery, which we believe to be Santa María La Real de Las Huelgas in Burgos. Her birth would have the same six-year window, between 1424-1432.

³⁶ "The idea that life progressed in seven-year stages was so well established it hardly required comment" (Elizabeth Sears, 38-39); there are, nevertheless, variations, and in different schemes, youth or prime can assume different values.

³⁷ This theory was originally proposed in Seidenspinner-Núñez *Writings* 37-38 n33-34), based on the studies by John Anthony Burrow and Sears on the ages of man. The new information available in the *Bulario* documents corroborates this interpretation of Teresa's terminology.

The writing of *Arboleda*, based on Teresa's statement regarding twenty years of deafness, can be reasonably assigned to 1473-1479.

With these benchmarks in mind, we might suggest the following revised chronology. Teresa was born around 1425 and around 1440 entered the Franciscan Monasterio de Santa Clara in Burgos. Her entry into a monastic house in the early 1440s is supported, although not pinpointed, by another source: on January 29, 1446, she is notably omitted from her family's document of primogeniture where her married or marriageable sisters (even including Elvira de Rojas from Pedro de Cartagena's second marriage, who must have been under five years old) are listed in descending order of age (Cantera Burgos 471-73). The new evidence provided by the *Bulario* documents establishes that her entry into monastic service was not due to a sudden and unexpected loss of hearing, but rather that her affliction with deafness must have occurred long after she entered the convent. In contrast, we may now surmise that Teresa's profession formed part of an overall Cartagena strategy to advantageously place their children and promote family interests and position. For whatever reason—spiritual inclination, sickly disposition, personality, talent, or a combination of all these—from her childhood Teresa was probably earmarked for and guided toward monastic profession.³⁸ Moreover, it is likely that she was consecrated by her uncle, the bishop of Burgos, who emerges in the *Bulario* documents as her advocate and protector.³⁹ We can assume that

³⁸ Given the illustrious record of service to the church of the Cartagenas (Pablo de Santa María, Alonso de Cartagena, Gonzalo de Santa María), Teresa's assignment to a monastic career should not be regarded as a default. An ecclesiastic career was also designed for her half-brother, Pablo de Cartagena, with the same emphasis on education and eventual office: "A la misma familia pertenece Pablo de Cartagena, hijo (ilegítimo) de Pedro de Cartagena y nieto de don Pablo, nacido hacia 1421-22, que estudió leyes en Salamanca obteniendo en 1443 la abadía de San Quirico en Burgos. Joven todavía, a poco cumplir los 25 años ingresó en la cartuja de Miraflores, como se indica en la súplica de 16 de abril de 1448" (Beltrán de Heredia *Bulario* 1: 139); see also Cantera Burgos 506-07. Likewise, Teresa's younger half-brother, Lope de Rojas "siguió la carrera eclesiástica y llegó a canónigo de la catedral de Burgos, donde falleció a los treinta y tres años el 1477, a 30 de noviembre" (Cantera Burgos 505).

³⁹ After his intervention at the Council of Basel (1434-1439), Alonso de Cartagena returned to Spain and divided his time between Burgos and the court (Fernández Gallardo); as bishop of Burgos, he would have presided over the consecration of nuns and monks under his jurisdiction and received their vows. The service for consecrating monastics was always incorporated into the mass: "The solemn beauty of the service must have deeply impressed those who participated in the liturgy, while the role of the bishop, who symbolized Christ, the bridegroom-espoused by each novice as she took her vows, received her ring, and promised her whole being to Him—could not but underline for her

at the Monasterio de Santa Clara, Teresa continued to see herself as part of a vital family network of spiritual and material interests, that her profession enjoyed strong Cartagena support, and that she maintained close and frequent ties with her nearby family. It was apparently during this time—the 1440s, when Teresa was with the Franciscan order—that she studied at Salamanca.⁴⁰ In addition to the high value that the Cartagena family characteristically placed on education and learning, given the ambitions underlying the second *Bulario* document, we can assume that Teresa's studies at Salamanca were also designed to serve as preparation and qualification for advancement to monastic office.⁴¹

In 1449 she transferred to the Cistercian Order and to the prestigious Monasterio de Las Huelgas in Burgos, where she continued to maintain close contact with her family. In *Arboleda de los enfermos*, Teresa describes the distracting, worldly environment of Las Huelgas, prior to the onset of her deafness:

his indispensable function. As father and head of the family, he had questioned her suitability for the match. As Christ's representative, he had received her vows and accepted her as Christ's bride. The bishop acted symbolically as parent and as spouse for each nun" (Johnson 64).

⁴⁰ The only other time she could have studied in Salamanca would have been after her entrance into Las Huelgas and before her affliction with deafness. This is unlikely, however; since 1335, the Cistercians had attempted unsuccessfully to establish a convent school at Salamanca and ultimately founded an *estudio* at Alcalá de Henares in the 1530s. The Cistercian Colegio de San Bernardo was finally founded in Salamanca during the reign of Felipe II (Beltrán de Heredia *Bulario* 1: 150).

⁴¹ Teresa's reference—"los poco años que yo estud[i]é en el estudio de Salamanca" (103)—may possibly refer to the *estudio* of the Convent of San Francisco in Salamanca, one of four centers for religious studies in the city (San Esteban, San Francisco, and the two chairs of *prima* and *vísperas* at the University of Salamanca) and the principal site for advanced study for the Franciscan order; on the *estudio* de San Francisco, see Beltrán de Heredia *Cartulario* 1: 224-49. The basic course of study in theology was the bible and the *Sententiae* of Peter Lombard (*Libri quatuor sententiarum*): "Para los mendicantes, en nuestro caso para franciscanos y dominicos, que eran los únicos que entonces tenían estudios de teología en Salamanca, se exige que el aspirante haya cursado previamente gramática, lógica, filosofía y teología; que haya sido lector principal en algún estudio de su orden; que ésta en sus capítulos generales le haya asignado como profesor proforma et gradu magisterii al estudio de Salamanca o a otro que tenga categoría de general, leyendo en él durante dos años la biblia, ejerciendo durante un tercero el cargo de maestro de estudiantes y explicando durante dos más todas las Sentencias ..." (232). The exact nature of Teresa's status at the theological studium of San Francisco is unknown; while, as a Clarissan nun, she may have accessed more fundamental training at San Francisco, she refers to Peter Lombard in *Arboleda*: "...me acuerdo de vn tiempo, el qual era antes que mis orejas çer[r]asen las puertas a las bozes humanas, aver oýdo en los sermones traer por testigo y aprovaçión de sus dichos al Maestro de Sentençias" (96).

E asý yo, estando enbuelta en el tropel de las fablas mundanas e bien rebuelto e atado mi entendimientó en el cuydado de aquéllos, no podía oír las bozes de santa dotrina que la Escritura nos enseña e amonesta; mas la piadat de Dios que estaua conmigo en este ya dicho tropel e con discreto acatamiento veía la mi perdiçión [e] conosçía quánto era a mi salud conplidero çesar aquellas fablas para mejor entender lo que a mi saluaçión cunplía, hízome de la mano que callase. (40-41)

Around 1455-56, she becomes deaf and for the next twenty years struggles with her affliction as recorded in *Arboleda*.⁴² The initial period of her deafness must have been a time of extreme loneliness and pain for Teresa, exacerbated by the death on July 22, 1456, of Alonso de Cartagena, her uncle, bishop, and protector, and her gradual withdrawal from her family. Around 1475-76,⁴³ she writes *Arboleda de los enfermos*, a hybrid work—part consolatory treatise, part spiritual autobiography—where she examines her own affliction with deafness as an exemplum to expound the spiritual benefits of illness; in the second part of the treatise, she fashions a utopic *convento de las dolencias* that unites a community of fellow sufferers and is presided over by the abbess Patience. Some two years later, in the prologue to *Admiración operum Dey*, Teresa records the antagonistic reception of *Arboleda* by “los prudentes varones”—presumably the new bishop of Burgos, who would have had jurisdiction, and his entourage—who rejected a woman’s access to writing and disputed her authorship of *Arboleda* by accusing her of plagiarizing male sources.

The *Bulario* documents confer greater historicity to the figure of Teresa de Cartagena that emerges from her own writings: the spirited

⁴² Alonso de Cartagena’s provisions in his testament also might indicate that at this time-1453-Teresa had not yet lost her hearing. In providing for the children of Pedro de Cartagena, Alonso tailors the amount bequeathed to the circumstances of each individual inheritor, assigning only 300 florins to the *primogénito* Alfonso de Cartagena, 500 to the second-born son Alvaro, and 600 to the youngest son, Lope de Rojas; María Saravia, who has married well, receives only 100 florins, while Juana, the oldest daughter, receives 200 “per aliquali auxilio sustentationis sue cum dotata sit et virum habeat”, and the youngest daughter, Elvira de Rojas, without an assigned dowry and, we may assume, as yet unmarried, receives 600 florins. Cartagena directs the modest amount of 100 florins to his niece Teresa to subsidize her maintenance in the convent, possibly indicating that there were no special needs or considerations.

⁴³ Deyermond’s suggestion (following Hutton) that *Arboleda* reflects the tensions after the Toledan Rebellion of 1449 (“Convento” 26) would more likely refer to the aftermath of the anti-*converso* riots in Toledo of 1474.

young woman who with the support of her influential uncle seeks to change religious orders in the first petition, an unconventional move that requires papal dispensation; the talented, confident, and ambitious young woman who, following the pattern of her grandfather and uncles, in the second petition is determined to advance in her career and vies for abbatial office. And although, as Teresa records in *Arboleda*, deafness will rechannel this extraordinary energy inward and change the course of her life, this same transgressive spirit will move her initially to challenge prevailing “gender ideologies and the boundaries they place around woman’s proper life script, textual inscription, and speaking voice” (Sidonie Smith 50) and write *Arboleda de los enfermos* and then, in *Admiración operum Dey*, to courageously refute those prudent men in positions of authority and defend her writing as a special blessing of divine grace.

APPENDIX

THE *BULARIO* DOCUMENTS WITH TRANSLATIONS⁴⁴1.111 Dispensa a Teresa Gómez de Cartagena, sobrina de don Alonso, obispo de Burgos, para pasar de las franciscanas a las cistercienses. –Roma, 3 de abril 1449.⁴⁵

Beatissime pater: Cum devota vestra Teresa Gomez de Cartagena, monialis monasterii sanctae Clarae extra muros Burgen[ses], praedia, possessiones et alia bona in communi habentium ordinem ejusdem sanctae expresse professa, cum animi sui quiete commode nequeat deinceps in hujusmodi monasterio et ordine ex certis rationabilibus causis remanere, et ad ordinem sancti Benedicti et Cistercien[sem] singularem gerat devotionis affectum, supplicat s[ancitatis] v[estrae] devota creatura vestra Alfonsus, episcopus Burgen[sis], cujus ipsa Teresa consanguinea, filia videlicet legitima fratris sui carnalis, existit, ejusdem Teresae affectui, ex bonis et congruentibus respectibus adhaerens et annuens, quatenus ipsam ab omni regulae, perpetua clausura, superioritate et observantia fratrum minorum ac monasterii sanctae Clarae et ordinis hujusmodi absolventes et liberantes, sibi ut ad quodcumque ditorum ordinum Cistercien[sium] aut sancti Benedicti monasteriorum in quo regularis vigeat observantia et benivolas invenerit receptrices, se transferre valeat, concedere et eam inibi recipi cum habitus et integrae portiones exhibitione admitti mandare dignemini de gratia speciali: non obstan[tibus] statutis, institutis et consuetudinibus monasteriorum, domorum et ordinum praedictorum quorum omnium tenores de verbo ad verbum praesentibus pro

⁴⁴ Our thanks to Daniel G. Perett who translated the two *Bulario* documents and whose expertise has informed our interpretation of the two texts.

⁴⁵ Numerous attempts to secure photocopies of the original petitions from the Vatican Archives to date have been unsuccessful, and, in the interests of making these documents immediately available, we present translations of the two *Bulario* petitions. We maintain the headings and numeration from Beltrán de Heredia's collection as a reminder that the translations are of his transcriptions, not of the original documents in the Vatican Archives.

Although in places the Latin text appears to be corrupt, without recourse to the manuscript, it is impossible to tell whether these textual problems are the product of the transcription or the scribe. Therefore, Beltrán de Heredia's Latin text is printed as is, and possible emendations are indicated in the notes to the translations.

expressis habentes, quibus expresse quoad hoc dumtaxat dignemini [dispensare] ceterisque contrariis quibuscumque, et cum clausulis opportunis.

Fiat ut petitur. T.

Datum Romae apud sanctum Petrum tertio nonas aprilis anno tertio.

Reg. Suppl. 436, fols. 114^v-115

Most blessed father: Since your devoted servant Teresa Gómez de Cartagena, a nun of the monastery of Santa Clara outside the walls of Burgos, who has publicly made profession in the Order of those who have lands, possessions, and other goods in common, of that same Saint Clare,⁴⁶ is no longer able to remain comfortably with peace of mind in a monastery and Order of this type, for specific and reasonable causes, and since she bears a special devotion to the Benedictine and Cistercian Orders, your humble servant Alonso, bishop of Burgos, to whom the aforementioned Teresa is kin, since she is the legitimate daughter of his brother according to the flesh, agreeing with and approving of her devotion for good and fitting reasons, petitions your holiness that, absolving and freeing her from all the perpetual claustration, authority, and observance of the Rule of the Friars Minor and of the monastery of Santa Clara, and of that Order, you deign to grant to her as a special favor that she may transfer to any of the aforementioned monasteries of the Cistercians or Benedictines, in which observance of the monastic rule flourishes, and in which she has found a kind welcome, and that you deign to order that she be received there and admitted with the conferral of the habit and a full stipend,⁴⁷ and that, notwithstanding the statutes, rules, and customs of the monasteries and houses of the aforementioned Orders, and considering their meaning to be expressed word for word in this letter,⁴⁸ you deign to suspend these and any other contrary rules insofar as concerns this matter, including any circumstantial provisions in them.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ That is, the communal Order of Saint Clare.

⁴⁷ Reading *portionis* for *portiones*.

⁴⁸ Like much of the later part of this section, this is formulaic. Some rules had to be mentioned explicitly and in detail in order to be suspended, and this is a catch-all phrase that states that for legal purposes, they may be considered to have been mentioned in full.

⁴⁹ *Clausulis opportunis*: these were clauses of limited applicability appended to decrees in order to address the particular end or case at hand without consideration of wider application.

Let it be as requested. T.⁵⁰

Given in Rome at Saint Peter's on April third⁵¹ in the third year of our papacy.

1.113 Dispensa a Teresa Gómez de Cartagena, para que, en cumpliendo 25 años, pueda ocupar cualquier dignidad en su religión. –Roma, 2 de mayo 1449.

Beatissime pater: Nuper pro parte in Christo filiae ejusdem sanctitatis Teresae Gomez de Cartagena, monialis expresse professae monasterii monialium sanctae Clarae, ordinis ejusdem sanctae Clarae extra muros Burgen[ses], s[ancitatu] v[estrae] exposito quod ipsa cum animi sui quiete ex certis rationabilibus causis nequibat inibi amplius remanere, quodque ad sancti Benedicti et Cistercien[sem]⁵² ordinis singularem gerebat devotionis affectum, e[adem] s[ancitas] ad supplicationem dev[otae] creaturae vestrae Alfonsi, episcopi Burgen[sis], cujus ipsa neptis erat et qui bonis et congruis respectibus affectui hujusmodi adhaerebat, ipsam ad Cistercien[sem] vel sancti Benedicti ordinem se transferendi et inibi remanendi licentiam gratiose concessit, prout in supplicatione desuper signata plenius continetur.

Supplicat igitur e[idem] s[ancitatu] praefatus episcopus in personam dictae Teresae quatenus sibi ut, postquam ordinem ipsum ingressa fuerit, quodque per illius moniales regi solitum beneficium, etiamsi prioratus, dignitas etiam conventualis, administratio vel officium fuerit, concedere secumque ut quamprimum vicesimumquintum suae aetatis annum attigerit, ut ad quascumque dignitates abbatiales praefici, eligi et assumi illasque recipere et retinere ac regere et gubernare et illis praesse valeat misericorditer dispensare, litterasque apost[olicas] super dicta supplicatione conficiendas cum dispensatione et concessione hujusmodi expediri mandare de gratia speciali, constitutionibus et ordinationibus monasterii et ordinis quorumcumque et aliis in contrarium facientibus non obstan[tibus] quibuscumque et cum clausulis opportunis.

⁵⁰ From the times of Boniface IX (1389-1404), the general practice was that the pontiff signed with the initial letter of his baptismal name before he became pope. Therefore, Nicholas V (1447-1455), born Tommaso Parentucelli in 1397, signed his consent with a T.

⁵¹ Literally "the third day of the nones of April".

⁵² *Cistercien[sem]* for *Cistercien.*, because *ordinis* should be emended to *ordinem*; cf. "ad ordinem sancti Benedicti et Cistercien[sem]" in the previous petition.

Fiat. T. Et ad abbatiales in vicesimoquinto. Fiat, si eligatur. T.

Datum Romae apud Sanctum Petrum sexto nonas maji anno tertio.

Reg. Suppl. 436, fol. 145

Most blessed father: Recently on behalf of the daughter of your holiness in Christ, Teresa Gómez de Cartagena, a publicly professed nun of the convent of the nuns of Saint Clare, of the Order of that same Saint Clare outside the walls of Burgos, when it had been made known to your holiness that for specific and reasonable causes she could not remain there any longer with peace of mind, and that she had a special devotion to the Order⁵³ of Saint Benedict and that of the Cistercians, your holiness, responding to the petition of your devoted and humble servant Alonso, bishop of Burgos, whose niece she was, and who approved of her devotion for good and fitting reasons, benevolently granted permission for her to transfer to the Cistercian or Benedictine Order and to remain there, as is more fully set out in the above sealed petition.

Therefore the aforementioned bishop petitions your holiness on behalf of⁵⁴ the said Teresa mercifully to grant that after she has entered this order, whatever stipend⁵⁵ is commonly held among the nuns of that Order be granted to her,⁵⁶ even if it should be the that of a priorate, or even a conventual dignity, responsibility, or duty, and that, as soon as she has reached the twenty-fifth year of her age, she may be appointed, chosen, and raised to any abbatial dignities, and that she may receive and hold them, and rule and govern those nuns, and preside over them. And he petitions your holiness that you order haste to be made to draw up an apostolic letter with this dispensation and concession, as a special favor, notwithstanding the constitutions and regulations of any monastery or Order, or any other decrees that say the contrary, including any circumstantial provisions in them.⁵⁷

⁵³ Reading *ordinem* for *ordinis*.

⁵⁴ For *in personam*, which also bears a legal sense. The request is for a decision personally applicable to Teresa, and thus, in a sense, portable by her. It would apply to whichever convent she was in, so a particular convent does not need to be specified.

⁵⁵ For *beneficium* (literally benefice); during this period, in a monastic context, *beneficium* and *portio* were used interchangeably.

⁵⁶ There is a lacuna here, and without recourse to the manuscript, any emendation can only be conjectural. One possible emendation, followed in this translation, would be from *concedere secumque* to *concedatur cumque*.

⁵⁷ See note 49 above.

Let it be so. T.⁵⁸ And to abbatial dignities in her 25th year. Let it be so, if she is chosen. T.

Given in Rome at Saint Peter's on the second of May⁵⁹ in the third year of our papacy.

⁵⁸ See note 50 above.

⁵⁹ Literally, "the sixth day of the nones of May".

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