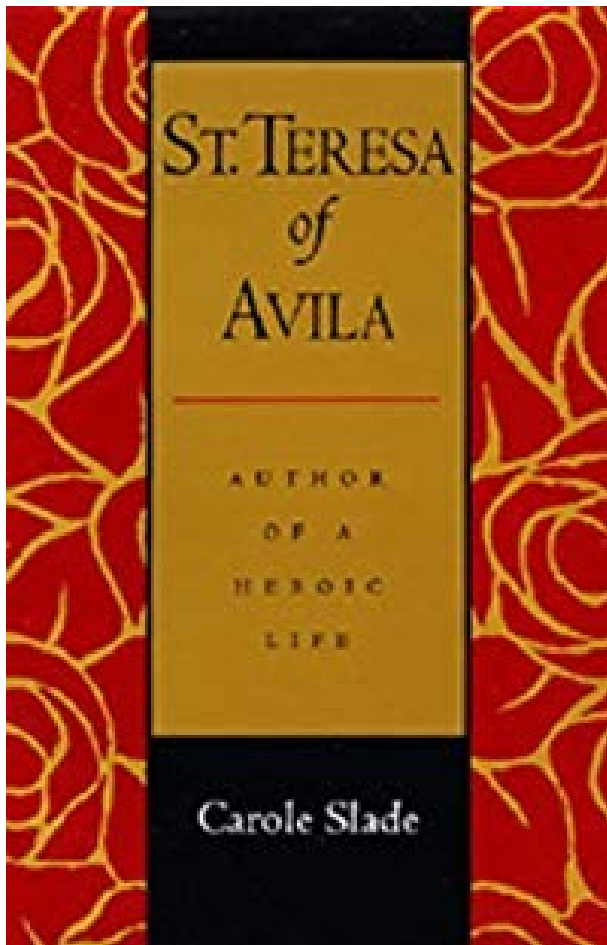


St. Teresa of Avila: Author of a Heroic Life



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With few exceptions, representations of Renaissance women were created by men. The Spanish saint, Teresa of Avila (1515-1582), who chose to represent herself, was one of those exceptions.

What prompted her to write *Book of Her Life*, *Interior Castle*, and other works? What does the self-portrait of this sixteenth-century nun, mystic, and founder of convents reveal about its author, the church, state, and role of women? *St. Teresa of Avila*, an innovative analysis of Teresa's autobiographical writings, explores these and many other questions. Bringing to bear a knowledge of Inquisition studies, theory of autobiography, scriptural hermeneutics, and hagiography, Carole Slade defines Teresa's writings as a project of self-interpretation undertaken mainly as the result of the perceived, later realized, threat of an accusation of heresy.

Being female and of paternal Jewish ancestry, Teresa was vulnerable to such a charge. Teresa's writing project presented her with serious difficulties. Judicial confession, her prescribed genre, presumed the writer's guilt, while the subordinate female script precluded a defense against the suspicion that her mystical experiences came from the devil.

Through careful textual analysis, Slade demonstrates that Teresa exploited the nuances of numerous genres—hagiography, New World chronicle, mystical theological treatise, and early novel—to create an innocent textual persona and depict herself in heroic terms. A signal contribution to our understanding of Teresa's rhetorical and literary talent and life circumstances, this book will engage readers across a broad range of disciplines.