St. John of the Cross: The Poetics of Heroism and the Heroism of Poetics

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ABSTRACT

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.