

commentary approach with a humanistic, philological method. Laurence Boulègue discusses Agostino Nifo's Commentary on the *De Generatione*, which he produced in two parts. An avowed Averroist who softened this stance, his historical and apologetical approach sparked controversy in the sixteenth century.

The following and final articles approach Aristotle's treatise as it appeared juxtaposed with other sources in a variety of works. Volume editor Violaine Giacomotto-Charra approaches the treatment of the traditional four elements in the popularized *Physics* by Pontus de Tyard, Velcurio, Melanchthon, and others, especially by vernacular writers. In the antepenultimate article, Isabelle Pantin asserts that while Melanchthon does not exactly dethrone the Stagirite, his references to the *De generatione* are minimal, and he consults a variety of other authorities as well in his *Initia doctrinae physicae* of 1549. Dominique Couzinet explains Bodin's use of the *De generatione* in his *De Republica* to discuss the rise and fall of political regimes. The influence of *De generatione* on the poetics of Ronsard is examined in the final article, by Anne-Pascale Pouey-Mounou, who asserts that Ronsard routinely finds Aristotle's principles in the "density of words and things, and reinvents their meaning in the exploratory logic of poetry" (334). This important collection of papers contributes substantially to our understanding of Aristotle's eminence in the evolving modes of thought from the medieval commentary to his vying for the place of honor with other thinkers in the course of the Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation. It is an important addition to thought for Aristotelian scholars and for all students of intellectual history.



**Letras en la celda: Cultura escrita de los conventos femeninos en la España moderna.**

Ed. Nieves Baranda Leturio and Maria Carmen Marín Pina.

Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2014. 490 pp. €34.62. ISBN 978-84-8489-788-0.

REVIEWED BY: Jennifer E. Barlow

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Nieves Baranda Leturio and Maria Carmen Marín Pina's collection offers critical perspectives on written culture in the convents of early modern Spain. In the sixteenth century and beyond, women's texts were pushed to the margins of intellectual and literary culture. Even if publication was perceived as contrary to the austere demands of the cloister, however, women's texts served a number of purposes (biographical, historical, and recreational) within convent walls. Expanding previous sources on convent writing, such as Manuel Serrano y Sanz's *Apuntes para una biblioteca de escritoras españolas* (1898), this collection synthesizes developing critical trends, as well as thematic, rhetorical, and formal continuities within women's literary history.

Divided into six thematic parts, *Letras en la celda* explores the questions of early modern women as writers, the relationship between convent and society, and how female authors adopted and adapted male-authored devotional texts. The collection opens with "La escritura en los claustros: Amplitud y variedad," in which Gabriella Zarri, Asunción Lavrin, and Vanda Anastácio explore the potentials and perils of women's spiritual writing in Italy, the Americas, and Portugal, respectively. Zarri asserts that writing in the convent often complemented lessons learned at home, which enabled women to collaborate in forming their collective and individual identities. Lavrin points out that writing allowed women to explore their faith and to develop social personalities, but also argues that creating a public identity meant greater scrutiny from inquisitorial authorities.

Furthermore, Anastácio views religious writing as a way for women who were unable to take vows as nuns to participate in virtuous recreational activities. At the same time, texts by eighteenth-century women such as Doña Leonor de Almeida revealed that nuns could manipulate Catholic models for female writing to serve their own individual agendas, whether for autonomy or a place within intellectual culture. Written culture for early modern women in Europe and the Americas thus offered a number of spiritual and educational possibilities that permitted them limited freedom for self-expression.

In “Convento y sociedad,” the authors examine the relationship between the convent and its social surroundings. Rebeca Sanmartín Bastida and Anne Cruz, for instance, focus on the intricate webs of power between women religious and the aristocracy by demonstrating that a woman’s reputation outside of the convent walls often depended on the patronage she received. Furthermore, as Inmaculada Osuna Rodríguez, Isabelle Poutrin, and Frédérique Morand show, convent cultural production (poetry and accounts of mystic revelations) was not only of interest to extramural society but also served as ecclesiastical propaganda and offered women new opportunities for literary publication toward the end of the eighteenth century. Despite the mandate for strict enclosure, female monastic culture was intertwined with political and ecclesiastical interests beyond the cloister.

“Lecturas y reescrituras” and “Textualidades de la conciencia” explore women’s readings and appropriations of monastic tradition, as well as the search for autonomy in spiritual autobiographies. The visionary Sor Juana de la Cruz (1481–1534) followed the models of her male counterparts when writing revelations (María Luengo) but also revised established ideas by focusing on her own religious experiences (María del Mar Graña Cid). Axayácatl García Rojas and Araceli Rosillo Luque further emphasize the significance of literary tradition in convent writing, citing the influence of chivalric novels in Teresa de Jesús’s *Las moradas* and the importance of the library in the convent of Nuestra Señora Dels Àngels i Santa Clara de Manresa, respectively. In “Textualidades,” the authors illuminate the value of interpersonal communication in convent culture (Elena Giménez Alvira), explore the new genre *cuentas de conciencia* (Mercedes Marcos Sánchez), and argue that women religious sought autonomy and revealed subjectivity through varied discursive practices (María Leticia Sánchez Hernández and M. Isabel Calderón López). Early modern women thus drew from male-authored sources when writing, but they also created genres and constructed subjective identities between the lines of their texts.

The final parts of the collection consider the reception of women’s writing and the transnational dimensions of convent culture. As Isabel Morujão and M. Carmen Alarcón Román demonstrate, Iberian women writers incorporated theater and poetry into their creative writing and employed multiple linguistic registers to encapsulate both spirituality and daily life in the cloister. Valerie Hegstrom’s study portrays the convent as a theatrical space for women veiled from the male gaze. Female-authored plays, such as those of Sor Marcela de San Felix, were not merely read, but they involved the entire community as actors, musicians, and spectators. The authors of “Dimensiones transnacionales” explore the dissemination of convent culture beyond the Iberian Peninsula through Ana de Cristo’s narratives of her journey to the Philippines (Sarah E. Owens), the enthusiastic reception of María de Jesús de Ágreda’s texts in Poland (Joanna Partyka), and poetic practices in the Capuchin convent of San José in Sardinia (María Romero Frías). Moreover, María Dolores Martos Pérez’s study on Sor Violante do Céu’s expression of the poetic self in her lyric poetry, as well as Inés Ornellas e Castro and Isabel Drumond Braga’s work

on the collective authorship of culinary manuscripts in late eighteenth-century Portugal close the volume with the legacy of Iberian women writers across time and space. Sor Violante's poetry served as a model for other authors such as the Mexican poet Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. Portuguese culinary manuscripts, which incorporate terminology from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, display the shift from orality to written culture, as well as the intention to offer a lasting contribution to the religious community.

Through their own collective authorship, the editors and contributors to *Letras en la celda* masterfully piece together a comprehensive narrative of written culture in the early modern convent beginning with the possibilities and pitfalls of writing and ending with the transnational legacy of monastic women writers. As the editors affirm, this book serves as the genesis of renewed scholarship on convent writing (39). The task of future scholars, then, is not only to deepen our knowledge of the female authors presented in this collection but also to explore new manuscripts and to continue the conversation that *Letras en la celda* initiates.



### **Reformation Commentary on Scripture: New Testament IV John 1–12.**

Ed. Craig S. Farmer, Timothy George, and Scott M. Manetsch.

Reformation Commentary on Scripture. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014. lx + 539 pp. \$40.00. ISBN 978-0-8308-2967-5.

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The “Reformation Commentary on Scripture” series being published by InterVarsity Press is a major undertaking, comprising twenty-eight volumes and covering the entire Bible. Begun in 2011, the series has already brought out nine volumes, with several more in production. Following the format of the older “Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture,” each volume offers a selection of extracts from early modern commentaries and sermons on the relevant book of the Bible, all in modern English. Each volume is organized around successive chapters and sections of the biblical book in question, with the extracts from the commentaries and sermons included as explanation and expansion following each section of scripture. As the editors note, few people (apart perhaps from conscientious reviewers) will read the books from cover to cover. The intended audience is primarily pastors and Bible scholars who want to understand how a given passage has been interpreted by various commentators in the Reformation era. The aim of the series is to foster improvements in contemporary preaching and emphasize the importance of scriptural interpretation across the centuries.

Volume 4 of the New Testament series focuses on the first half of the gospel of John, chapters 1 through 12. Reformation-era commentators in this volume include leading humanists such as Erasmus; Reformers such as Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, and Bullinger; but also somewhat lesser-known figures including the Reformed Wolfgang Musculus, the Lutheran Erasmus Sarcerius, and the Catholic Johann Wild. Indeed, one of the strengths of the series is the light it sheds on commentators who might otherwise be overlooked. The extracts vary in length from a ten-line paragraph to two to three pages at a time.

Among the useful tools included in the work are a time line, a set of biographical sketches of the commentators, and a general introduction that lays out the various practices and trends in Reformation-era exegesis. The editors present what they term “schools