catholique mène le combat là où elle le peut et s'attaque durement à l'hérésie et au schisme avec des moyens dont la substance aujourd'hui étonne.

Bien entendu, le champ des motivations de la peur collective reste un domaine délicat à circonscrire, Jean Delumeau le sait. Il n'est pas toujours facile de discerner si telle peur est la cause ou l'effet de l'événement. Et jusqu'où va la projection du mal anticipé? Et quelle est l'exacte réalité de telle obsession, de telle folie, de telle névrose? Nous mesurons vite l'importance mais aussi les limites d'une "psychanalyse de la peur" à partir de documents peu enclins à favoriser cette approche. D'autre part, il serait peu conforme à l'historiographie de la peur que ses propos ne deviennent pas la parabole à peine voilée de toutes les phobies d'époque quand la foi du plus grand nombre subit l'échec et que des minorités plus intégristes refusent de dialoguer avec la réalité.

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Laura Calvert. *Francisco de Osuna and the Spirit of the Letter*. North Carolina Studies in the Romance Languages and Literatures 133. Chapel Hill, N.C.: U.N.C. Department of Romance Languages/Portland, Ore.: International Scholarly Book Services Inc., 1973. Pp. 175. \$6.50 U.S.

Francisco de Osuna, a Spanish Franciscan of the early sixteenth century who wrote a series of popular spiritual guides in the form of "alphabets," has been more admired than studied by posterity. His name appears in all histories of Spanish mysticism as a primary influence on St. Teresa, and his importance for Spanish secular literature is also admitted. The only two modern editions of his work are not readily available, however, and the only full-length study prior to this one was published in French by Fidèle de Ros in 1936. The appearance of the Calvert study is therefore timely.

Osuna's obscurity is due, one suspects, not to fortuitous neglect but to inherent difficulties of access for modern readers. The problem is not so much the unfamiliarity of the genre or any opacity of style as the lack of any obvious consistency either in organization or in the use of images. Calvert attributes this apparent aimlessness, behind which she claims to detect an orderly sequence, to Osuna's intention of providing not elements of a linear argument but rather figures for contemplation. Whatever the difficulties of approach, one soon becomes aware that Osuna was a man both of uncommon perception and of independent judgment. One is not surprised that he criticizes the ecclesiastical hierarchy, for such criticism was neither unusual nor particularly risky. His boldness becomes impressive, however, when one finds him defending converts when they were automatically suspect to the Inquisition, urging persuasion as the best means of dealing with heretics, and openly espousing democracy as preferable to monarchy. Osuna took a lively interest in scientific matters, sprinkling observations about natural phenomena throughout his writings. By his speculations about the heart and the blood he may have contributed to the discovery of the circulation of the blood, as he certainly helped to foster devotion to the Sacred Heart.

The author's primary interest — in this book at least, for she apparently has another on the way — is in Osuna's use of myth, symbolism, and allegory. His general approach, based on the medieval search for levels of meaning within texts, was not particularly original. In his use of traditional methods, however, he was capable of considerable innovation. Calvert calls attention particularly to his extensive drawing on nature as a book capable of providing letters for his alphabets, a book inferior indeed to Scripture but not radically different in kind. In numerous "meditations on the creatures" he used the natural order as a fertile source of analogies. These analogies were more often directed to the intellect than to the imagination, moving by abstraction from the functions of things rather than by description from their appearances, for the path to contemplation was through knowledge formed by love rather than through images appealing to the senses. What Osuna sought was thus "the spirit of the letter"; and he did so with considerable freedom, convinced that fidelity to one faith was consistent with many interpretations either of the book of nature or of Holy Scripture. One wonders how different relations between scientists and the church might have been in succeeding centuries if Osuna's approach had prevailed.

Students of the Renaissance will naturally be interested in possible connections between leading humanists and one who shared their spirit in such measure. A number of parallels are pointed out, notably with Erasmus and Ficino, but they are all fairly general and the trails soon peter out. More promising is the author's suggestion that medieval traditions of rhetoric and homiletics, still very much alive in Osuna and transmitted through him and others to modern secular writers, would repay more study than they have yet received. Among influences of Osuna on later writers, that on the metaphysical poets seems most important.

The author has performed a welcome service and done so with skill and subtlety. Specialists in Spanish literature or in mysticism will derive the most benefits, but the few non-specialists who are likely to pick up a book with such a title will find unexpected rewards. The book does not make easy reading, to be sure, as in the case of Osuna himself not through the obscurity of the subject or through deficiencies in style but through complexities in the sequence of thought. Is this evidence of some lack of clarity, or is it a necessary reflection of Osuna's own complexities? It is difficult to know without a mastery of Osuna's thought, and the author seems to be practically the only expert. By restricting herself to certain aspects of Osuna's use of figures she could undoubtedly have written a neater and more approachable book. But then we should have learned less about Osuna, and this in the present state of research we could ill afford.

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Franz Bierlaire. *Les Colloques d'Erasmus: réforme des études, réforme des mœurs et réforme de l'Eglise au XVI^e siècle*. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1978. pp. 319.

On pourrait soutenir que la pensée et l'art d'Erasmus se trouvent moins dans ses grands ouvrages, tels les *Paraphrases sur le Nouveau Testament*, que dans ses petits