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La princesa de Éboli: Cautiva del rey: Vida de Ana de Mendoza y de la Cerda (1540–1592). Helen H. Reed and Trevor J. Dadson.

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REVIEWED BY: Alison Weber
University of Virginia

Ana de Mendoza y de la Cerda (1540–92), the Princess of Éboli, has long been an object of fascination for opera fans and history buffs. Whether in the imagination of Schiller, Verdi, or anti-Spanish polemicists, Ana de Mendoza has been a Black Legend cliché of the *femme fatale*: seductive, jealous, and unstable. Helen H. Reed and Trevor J. Dadson, drawing on a cornucopia of unexplored letters and legal documents, offer a much more complex and sympathetic portrait of this sixteenth-century aristocrat. Undoubtedly for many of her contemporaries Ana de Mendoza was a difficult woman. At the end of her life she endured infamy as a traitor and Jezebel. But she was also an able administrator of her ducal estates and a fierce defender of her family's patrimony.

The biography is organized around the major periods in Ana's life: her childhood and exceptional humanist education; her marriage to Ruy Gómez de Silva, Philip II's favorite; her years as lady-in-waiting and intimate friend to the young queen, Isabel de Valois; years of contentment with Ruy Gómez in their ducal estate of Pastrana; the shock of widowhood and Ana's failed attempt to become a Discalced Carmelite nun; and finally, her arrest and imprisonment for allegedly conspiring with Antonio Pérez to murder a political rival. Reed and Dadson are not radical apologists for Ana de Mendoza. Rather, by placing her within the context of the enormous demands facing a woman of her status (whether arranging marriages for her children, paying the debts she faced on the sudden death of her husband, or responding to endless lawsuits) they reveal an intelligent, resolute woman who was at times overwhelmed by crushing responsibilities.

To paraphrase F. Scott Fitzgerald, aristocrats are not like us, and this was certainly the case with the Prince and Princess of Éboli. Ana was betrothed to Ruy Gómez when she was twelve and he was thirty-six; she bore him ten children, six of whom survived to adulthood. The couple in turn arranged early marriages for their offspring; in 1572, they won a papal dispensation for marriage contracts for seven-year-old Rodrigo and five-year-old Diego. At the age of five, their daughter Ana was betrothed to the Duke of Medina Sidonia. Their son Pedro (destined to become a cardinal) was instructed in Latin from the age of two. When he was four, his parents bought him a cilice; when he was eleven, a tailor made him a hair shirt.

This aristocratic family was, nevertheless, not unlike some modern dysfunctional families. Ana vastly preferred her younger son, Diego, to her firstborn, Rodrigo, whom she described as "a Judas who would have sold God for money" (392). Ana had expended great effort in arranging a financially advantageous match for her favorite, but the marriage was a failure. Diego abused his wife, who sued and eventually won an annulment. After Ruy Gómez's death, Rodrigo became the sixteenth-century equivalent of a juvenile delinquent. Ana appears to have adored Diego and her youngest daughter as much as she abhorred Rodrigo.

Despite the difference in their ages, Ana's marriage to Ruy Gómez was a happy one. From 1569 to 1573 was a period of relative calm and prosperity, during which the couple retired from the court to their ducal estates in Pastrana. There, Ana supported Ruy's ambitions to make Pastrana a prosperous commercial center. The couple welcomed 250 Morisco

families who had been deported from Granada after the Alpujarras uprising and provided them with the resources to establish a silk industry. Due to Ruy's frequent absences in the service of the king, Ana oversaw many of these civic projects. She organized tournaments and religious festivals, established a house for unmarried girls, and helped implement Ruy's investment in roads and waterworks. Together, they performed as beneficent ducal lords.

This relatively idyllic period came to an end when Ruy died suddenly in 1573 at the age of 56, leaving Ana as administrator of his estates and custodian for their six minor children. He also left her with crushing debt: over 280,000 *ducados*, a staggering sum for the day. (Like many aristocrats, the Prince of Éboli was asset rich and cash poor.) The grief-stricken princess then entered the Discalced Carmelite convent she had endowed in Pastrana, taking as her name in religion Sor Ana de la Madre de Dios. According to contemporary Discalced Carmelites, "Sor Ana" was a disaster as a nun. She disrupted the contemplative life of the strictly enclosed nuns by insisting on receiving visitors (male and female) and by attempting to force the nuns to accept her own candidates as novices. Eventually, the nuns abandoned the convent and fled Pastrana under cover of night. Reed and Dadson point out, however, that Ana's behavior was not unusual or particularly unreasonable for an aristocratic patron of her day. Patronage entailed certain privileges, among them use of a convent as refuge in a time of personal crisis.

The authors offer no new theory of Ana's role in the murder of Juan de Escobedo in 1578. They surmise, however, that Ana was involved romantically and financially with Antonio Pérez, the king's secretary and presumed mastermind of the crime. If Philip had implicitly approved the plot, this would explain the relative lenience with which he punished Ana; he initially ordered her imprisoned, then confined her to her palace in Pastrana. The administration of her estates and those of her minor children was entrusted to a royal appointee. But the Princess's correspondence from these years reveals an indomitable woman who, despite her ignominious reclusion, managed to exert a surprising degree of control over her family and fortune, never ceasing to protest her innocence.

This is more than a biography of a defiant woman; it is a portrait of an aristocratic world that gave some women considerable power even as it imposed on them great psychic and physical burdens. The authors' methodology, thick with citations to letters, account books, and lawsuits, reveals a culture of continual, anxious exchange in material goods, credit, and royal access, in which children were depositories of wealth and prestige but also intimate enemies and friends. Along with Reed and Dadson's splendid edition of Ana's letters, *Epistolario e historia documental de Ana de Mendoza y de la Cerda, princesa de Éboli* (Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2013), *La princesa de Éboli* will be indispensable resources for anyone interested in the history of the family, material culture, and women's history in early modern Spain.

