

"Feeling the Way to Truth: Early Modern Women's Writings and What They Teach Us about Descartes' *Meditations*"

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Abstract: Descartes' *Meditations* is a clever transformation of a genre well known to his contemporaries. Previous scholars have come up empty handed when they wondered, "What great man might have been the source of Descartes' meditative strategy?" This paper shows the result of asking, "What great woman might have influenced him?" It describes a late medieval meditative tradition to which women significantly contributed, displays the striking epistemological similarities between Descartes' *Meditations* and the writings of a famous 16th Spanish nun, Teresa of Ávila, and shows that parts of the *Meditations* look quite different in this context.