Introduction: Performing Religion

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Performance and religion, both as practices and as fields of study, overlap. In religious studies, performance theory has provided a way to understand ritual as action with performative force (Tambiah 1979; Hollywood 2002), while a shared interest in ritual fuelled the exchanges between Richard Schechner and Victor Turner from which grew one branch of performance studies as a discipline (Jackson 2004, 8; see especially Schechner 1985, which has a foreword by Turner and a tribute to him in the acknowledgements). Less explicitly, a reverence among performance theorists for theatre's transformational potential and performance's politically liberatory power inspires some of the field's foundational work (Dolan 2005; Phelan 1993). These commitments in turn draw strength from a long scholarly tradition that traces the mutually constitutive and sometimes contentious histories of theatre and religion (see, for example, Csapo and Miller 2007; Dox 2010; Barish 1981). A fruitful intersection, sparks can occasionally fly at the crossroads between performance and religion. The intellectual terrain shared by performance studies and religious studies became a particularly painful point of debate after Routledge published a volume attributed to Philip Auslander in 2007 under the title *Theory for Performance Studies: A Student's Guide*, the content of which largely reproduced that of a 2004 volume titled *Theory for Religious Studies* by William E. Deal and Timothy K. Beal (For an analysis of this incident, see Schechner 2009, and the other contributions to the Comment section of the same issue). Although each field possesses a distinct "foundation and history" (Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, cited by Schechner 2009, 18), their objects of study, methods, and analytical frameworks sometimes converge.

My own initial experience of this convergence made the relationship between performance studies and religious studies a slow-burning question to which I will likely return again and again as my research matures. In 2012, I participated in a symposium as part of a grant competition for research on New Directions in the Study of Prayer operated by the Social Science Research Council in the US. After I had presented a proposal for an ethnographic project on the evangelical practice of prayerwalking which used a performance studies framework, a senior scholar in religious studies remarked in the elevator that he saw no distinction between what I considered a performance studies project and the way the same research would have been conceived from within a traditional anthropology department. As a graduate student, I did not have an answer ready to the implicit question behind the comment. What does performance studies bring to the study of religion that religious studies does not already have thanks to its ties to anthropology, not to mention history, sociology, political science, and psychology, to name just a few of the disciplinary approaches that find a home in religion departments?

Since 2012, a dynamic body of recent scholarship in theatre and performance studies has reinvigorated the question of what it means to perform religion, providing essential resources to researchers working at the intersection of these fields. Lance Gharavi's edited collection *Religion, Theatre, and Performance: Acts of Faith*, featuring an impressive list of contributors, appeared in 2012, issuing a clear call for degree programs in theatre and performance studies "to take religion and spirituality into account" (2012a, 5). In 2013, Claire Maria Chambers, Simon W. du Toit, and Joshua Edelman published the collection *Performing Religion in Public*, in which they underscored the importance of a performance studies approach by arguing for a performative, rather than normative, conception of religion (2013, 1). Religion, they insist, "is not (just) a set of ethical, ontological or

theological assertions, but a dynamic, lived, and fluidly embodied set of actions, practices, gestures and speech acts at specific points in time and space" (Chambers, Toit, and Edelman 2013, 1–2). Under Carolyn D. Roark's editorial leadership, the journal *Ecumenica* further strengthened the field's capacity to engage critically with religious thought and practice by dedicating a special issue to "Critical Terms in Religion, Spirituality, Performance" in 2014. Support for current and future scholarship on religious performance has also increased. In 2016, the Mellon School of Theater and Performance hosted by Harvard University focused on the topic "Theaters Sacred and Profane," fostering the research of doctoral students and junior scholars. The work facilitated by such endeavours will soon have a new publication venue. Thanks to the efforts of Chambers, Edelman, Kim Skjoldager-Nielsen, and Edmund Lingan, a new journal titled *Performance, Religion, and Spirituality*—affiliated with the Performance, Religion and Spirituality Working Group of the International Federation of Theatre Researchers and the Religion and Theatre Focus Group of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education—will launch later this year.

Of particular significance, a number of excellent monographs have helped move the study of religion from the margins of theatre and performance studies toward its centre. Unlike earlier performance research in the Schechnerian model, which tended to downplay the religious aspects of ritual practice, this newer work focuses directly on religious activities like worship, private devotion, preaching, evangelization, and veneration. Whether analyzing onstage manifestations of Krishna (Mason 2009), evangelical performative culture (Stevenson 2013), proselytization as activist performance (Fletcher 2013), or occult theatre (Lingan 2014), this work examines the theatrical and performance strategies of religious communities and movements. In doing so, this new wave of scholarship has developed tools that reshape the types of study possible from with theatre and performance studies. Jill Stevenson's concept of "evangelical dramaturgy," for example, makes an important contribution to performance theory. It provides a framework for identifying and analyzing the way a wide range of events and practices within a religious tradition—in the case of her study, "contemporary Passion plays, biblical theme parks, Holy Land recreations, creationist museums, and megachurches" (2013, 4)—deploy elements such as space, place, objects, rhythm, and affect to create "experiences designed to foster embodied beliefs that respond to specific devotional needs and priorities" (2013, 4). By thinking dramaturgically, Stevenson crafts a theoretical lens informed by insights from cognitive theory, performance theory, and theatre history that allows her to circumvent the ritual/theatre and sacred/secular binaries that have often structured research in the field.

Methodologically, John Fletcher's study of the methods used by US evangelicals to convert people to Christianity breaks down at least two of the taboos that have kept research on religion on the sidelines of theatre and performance studies scholarship. First, by framing evangelical activities as "performances that aim to change the world" and identifying strategies that could be productively adapted by left-leaning activist performers (2013, 2), Fletcher shows how a field can productively study a group it is more likely to perceive as a political enemy. Second, by clearly articulating his own relationship to evangelicalism—he describes himself as "a liberal, gay, ex-Southern Baptist, United Methodist" (2013, 5)—Fletcher models a "good-faith, critically generous perspective" that enables him to simultaneously describe in detail and with nuance the people and practices he studies while maintaining rigorous academic standards. In other words, Fletcher offers a model for how to keep the *study* of religious performance separate from the *doing* of religion (Ivan Strenski, cited by Gharavi 2012a, 211), while also acknowledging the way his personal experience of evangelicalism as a "preacher's kid" illuminates his findings (Fletcher 2013, 13). Together, Stevenson and Fletcher's

contributions to the field, along with the other authors named above, place new scholarship on religious performance on firmer footing.

The proposals received in response to the call for this special issue reinforced my sense that performance studies does, in fact, offer a unique approach to the study of religion. Although I aspired to an issue that would include an equal number of voices from theatre/performance studies and religious studies, broadly defined, ultimately the papers published here in the Articles section are by scholars situated squarely in or identified with theatre and performance studies. Proposals received from religious studies, while presenting important arguments and analysis of the interactions between religion and culture or religion and identity, tended to treat what this journal calls "the materiality and consequentiality" of performance as secondary. Issues such as looking, seeing, being seen, pretending, playing, framing, narrating, reenacting, representing, and role playing, while integral to the objects of study in such proposals were not examined in a way that would reveal how such activities create religious meaning, structure spiritual experience, or inspire religious feeling. As Gharavi puts it, the "connection between religion and performance . . . is a matter of . . . *the means of production*" (Gharavi 2012b, 19). "Religion," Gharavi continues, "must always be actively made, and be *witnessed* (as performance is witnessed) being made" (2012b, 19). Performance scholarship therefore has important expertise to offer in identifying, describing, and analyzing the building blocks of religion.

In the pages that follow, this issue's contributors turn a critical gaze on the production and effects of religious performance. Donnalee Dox and Amber Dunai analyze a twelfth-century monastic music-drama by Hildegard von Bingen, the *Ordo Virtutum*, based on which they propose a theory of medieval religious emotion. By reading the *Ordo Virtutum* through Saint Augustine's concept of *caritas*, or divine love, they argue that the *Ordo Virtutum*, which was likely performed in Hildegard's convent in a devotional setting, provided its participant-audience with an opportunity to practise spiritual movement toward the good, identified in the play as union with God. Similarly, the final paper in the Articles section, by Ana Fonseca Conboy, considers the relationship between religious practice and theatrical production. Conboy examines the influence of Ignatian spirituality on seventeenth-century French hagiographic drama. Through an analysis of canonical plays like Pierre Corneille's *Polyeucte* as well as lesser-known works like Nicole Desfontaine's *Le Martyre de Saint Eustache*, Conboy shows how early modern audiences would have recognized themes central to Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*, like detachment and repetition, while also being called upon to use their imaginations in a way akin to the "composition of place" practised during Ignatian meditation.

The two middle articles take an ethnographic approach. Scott Magelssen and Ariaga Mucek trace the history of the immersive field game "Romans and Christians," which was a staple of Protestant Bible Camp programming in the US from the 1970s through the 1990s. Based on interviews with former camp leaders and pastors, as well as autoethnography, they show how the game figured into what Stevenson would call a dramaturgy aimed at preparing campers for conversion through a simulated crisis. They argue that the game fell out of favour in the 2000s after events like the attacks of September 11, 2001, prompted devotional communities to shift their emphasis toward inclusion and connection. The types of communities shaped through religious practice is a central theme in Claire Maria Chambers' piece as well. Based on ethnographic interviews and participant observation, Chambers analyzes how the liturgical practices of the Roman Catholic Womenpriests construct a form of relational authority that calls into question both the hierarchical paradigm of the Roman Catholic Church, which is predicated on obedience, heritage, and a literal interpretation of the male

priest as a representative of a masculine Christ, and the masculinist orientations of performance theory paradigms that prioritize doing over being. Relational authority, Chambers argues, like Nicolas Bourriaud's relational aesthetics, draws its power from exchange and transformation, in this case through the participation of the faith community in liturgical work.

This issue's Forum section gathers four short position statements, mini-analyses, or reflections from scholars representing a range of disciplinary positions who study religious performance. Lance Gharavi, reflecting on the title of a conference panel that posed the question "What constitutes secular blasphemy?," underscores the scholar's responsibility to analyze the categories that organize his or her critical apparatus, be they terms like "secular," "blasphemy," "theatre," "performance," or "religion." All such terms, Gharavi reminds us (not without humour) are what he calls "folk categories" in that they "protect and serve the political and economic interests of certain social groups." The scholar must vigilantly attend to the ideological work accomplished by such terms. Insider and outsider status feature prominently in John Fletcher's contribution, too. Fletcher wrestles with critical generosity in the Trump era, when demonizing his supporters would be easier. After reaffirming the importance of empathy while acknowledging its political limits, Fletcher proposes a slightly different, if related, posture which he calls, borrowing from John Paul Lederach, "moral imagination." More pragmatic, even pessimistic, moral imagination "finds ways to acknowledge conflict while also thinking past it to new realities." Ebenezer Obadare's piece also takes up the relationship between religious performance and politics, in an analysis of the way Nigeria's former president, Goodluck Jonathan, used carefully staged displays of piety to gain allies in the Pentecostal community and legitimize his regime by presenting himself as a miraculous outsider-turned-insider. Once in office, though, the political "character" constructed through such performances became difficult to maintain. In the last piece of the Forum section, Karen Gonzalez Rice explores the political ramifications of performance art that draws on religious practice. By analyzing Christian Jankowski's *The Holy Artwork*, in which the artist "prostrated himself at the feet of a televangelist preacher for the duration of a televised worship service," Rice teases out Jankowski's citation of pre-9/11 American imperialism and then argues that art historians can overcome the taboo attached to studying the religious content and context of much contemporary performance art by analyzing such pieces as encounters.

Encounter would be a suitable subtitle for this issue's Materials section, which features two contributions that stage, represent, or play with the continuously shifting insider/outsider distinctions that religious performance helps produce and that the researcher must navigate. In *Jesus Camp Queen* and the artist's reflection that accompanies it, Angela Latham presents an autoethnographic performance about her experience growing up in a Fundamentalist Christian community where her belonging hinged in large part on her successful performance of a carefully policed femininity, at which she excelled until the toll taken by this performance became too great in her early adulthood. Now as a scholar of theatre and performance studies, Latham turns her past religious experience into material that allows her to develop a theory of what she calls "fundamental femininity." A filmed version of her performance and reviews of *Jesus Camp Queen* by Julie Ingersoll and Patrick Santoro further enrich the creative and critical intervention carried out by Latham's piece. Richard Schechner's contribution, too, invites a reflection about the way insider/outsider perspectives evolve over time in relation to ritual performance. Schechner shares excerpts from the fieldnotes for his ongoing research project on the Ramlila of Ramnagar, the first from 1978 and the second from 2013. Vivid and raw, the notes convey something of how the performances that sew together ritual and theatre, politics and religion, culture and community require, in their complexity, repeated encounters.

With the exception of Schechner's fieldnotes, the other contributions, as readers will surely note, focus exclusively on the Christian tradition. The issue could, in retrospect, have been titled "Performing Christianity." This was not planned. It was, in fact, something of a surprise. As Sarah Goldingay has argued, Christianity was "largely ignored" by performance studies' founding scholars and artists, who "looked to the East for their inspiration," while Christianity's cultural and intellectual heritage was simultaneously "naturalized" (Goldingay 2009, 13). This naturalization either made Christianity unremarkable—"put it beyond discussion"—or raised the suspicion that a performance scholar interested in studying Christian practice was a "subjective zealot . . . unable to disentangle their misplaced belief from their research" (Goldingay 2009, 13). This issue is therefore a sign of the degree to which researchers like Stevenson and Fletcher, among others, have denaturalized Christianity and removed the taboos surrounding its study in the field. At the same time, the strong representation of Christian, mostly US and European performance in these pages signals the importance of encouraging new research at the graduate level on global religious performance across a broad spectrum of faith traditions.[1]

Note

1. Responses to the call for papers for this issue suggest that emerging scholarship at the intersection of performance and religion treats a wider range of practices and traditions than represented here, although the projects I had the pleasure of vetting that would have broadened this issue's scope needed more time than our production schedule allowed.

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Sacred Feeling: A Dramaturgy of Medieval Religious Emotion

Donnalee Dox and Amber Dunai

Introduction

Kathleen Woodward observes that in the last two decades of historical research, emotions have increased in prominence as a subject. She points out that, "like any other human experience, the emotions have a history and thus change in fascinating ways over time" (Woodward 2009, 61). Today, films, plays, television shows, and news broadcasts are largely invested in a dramaturgy of emotion that follows the conventions of mimetic realism, inviting audiences to engage with representations of emotion and respond in kind. When we call real-life displays of emotion "dramatic," we rhetorically reinforce the implicit assumption that drama is the site for producing emotions.

However, as Anastasia Philippa Scrutton suggests, emotion bound to the self as a kind of mental and physical feeling is a modern invention. The wide range of internally sensed and externally expressed phenomena we understand today as emotions was largely foreign to the ways classical and medieval philosophy constituted emotion (Scrutton 2011, 13, 34). The pervasive influence of a Christian worldview on spiritual, intellectual, and everyday life in the Middle Ages thus warrants seeking a theory of medieval drama and emotion grounded in Christian theology of human emotions.

Clearly, dramatizations of Christianity's salvation narrative, whether written for performance in churches, religious houses, or public spaces, offered people the opportunity for an embodied, affective response to the abstractions of theology. Drama did typological work that allowed people to participate emotionally in the religious tradition's soteriological view of the world. Here, we ask how that engagement worked. How did emotional engagement with Christian salvation theory work in an example of a monastic, sung text today recognized as dramatic?

We seek this engagement through a close reading of a twelfth-century monastic music-drama, Hildegard von Bingen's *Ordo Virtutum* (1151). The *Ordo Virtutum's* characters are allegorical, rather than characters in a realistic depiction of biblical events as in dramas more typical of the fifteenth and later centuries. Its narrative follows the conventions of a poetic psychomachia and prefigures later medieval dramatic allegories such as the English *Everyman*.[1] A female soul, happy in her desire for God (*felix Anima*), joins with a chorus of Christian Virtues (Humility, the queen of the Virtues) (l.68), accompanied by Charity, Obedience, Hope, Innocence, Fear of God, Contempt of the World, Love of Heaven, Discipline, Modesty, Mercy, Discretion, Patience, and Victory in a fight against temptations of the world and flesh. Anima's vulnerability to the world of flesh cues the entrance of

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the Devil, whose arguments for carnality further persuade Anima. Anima abandons the Virtues, who then confront the Devil in a chorus of individual voices that collectively describe a life lived in Christian virtue. Anima, penitent and contrite, re-joins the Virtues to battle against the Devil. The contest between the Virtues supporting Anima and the Devil brings the play to its narrative peak. The Virtues triumph and join in praising God alongside the Patriarchs, Prophets, and souls still imprisoned in human flesh whose sung exchange with Anima began the performance.

The *Ordo Virtutum's* earliest text is part of a collection of Hildegard's mystical writings and visions, *Scivias*, which situates the drama and music as much in the mystical tradition of internal experience as in the shared community of spectatorship.[2] It was likely performed in Hildegard's enclosed convent, and it is possible that the entire community participated in a devotional rather than performative act emphasizing internal experience. How might that community have responded emotionally to a performance of the *Ordo Virtutum*? What emotions were familiar and recognizable and how might participants have interpreted the emotions produced by the performance? The medieval era left no treatise on drama comparable to those found in other ancient cultures, such as Aristotle's *Poetics* (5th c. BCE, reinterpreted in the European Renaissance) or the Indian *Natyasastra* (c. 200 BCE–200 CE). Such a treatise might clarify for modern scholars how representing human emotion in drama elicited emotions from participants' minds and bodies, or how dramatically-induced emotions functioned in a religious context (Carroll 2015, 313–14).

Though it does not link emotion with drama, Augustine's schema of emotions derived from classical Western sources and integrated with Christian theology can serve as a foundation for imagining a dramaturgy of emotions appropriate to the *Ordo Virtutum*. The *Ordo Virtutum* articulates a sequence of emotional conditions governed by the theological premise of salvation. This dramaturgy need not be bound to familiar modern models of production, reception, and interpretation, but can be thought of as cultivating a shared emotional experience for participants. In the *Ordo Virtutum*, the shared experience is, ultimately, that of divine love.

Accordingly, "emotions" in this paper will refer to the movements of the soul as Augustine describes them in *City of God*: affective responses (such as joy, fear, and desire) to environmental stimuli which are not entirely voluntary, but which are nonetheless subject to the consent of the intellect. Augustine resists the idea that emotions ought to be or can be avoided, even by the most disciplined philosopher. Rather, he links emotions directly to the human will. A person undergoing an emotional response must therefore choose whether to act on the emotion (if it elevates the soul) or resist it (if it misleads or endangers the soul) (*City of God* 9.4). By the twelfth century, what we recognize today as Christian affective piety linked the emotions imitated in dramatizations of Christ's Passion with devotional practices through which people could meditate on, identify with, and share the suffering of Christ (Stevenson 2017, 119). In the *Ordo Virtutum* we see a dramaturgy that articulates specific types of emotions understood to be theologically appropriate for salvation, but which might easily have afflicted women who had left the world for a life of devotion. Its function as a dramatization, then, was to cultivate a person's felt engagement with and cognitive awareness of those emotions to help women calibrate their capacity for sincere contrition and genuine devotion to God.

Context for Drama and Emotions: Early Medieval Christian Thought about Performing Emotion

Sarah Beckwith cautions in her study of the York pageant play cycle *Signifying God* that we inevitably find the emotional dramas of our modern selves mirrored in medieval Europe's public and liturgical plays, even when we try to recreate the conditions in which medieval minds and bodies experienced drama. Though there is no surviving treatise on medieval emotion and drama, medieval writers were certainly aware of the power, positive or negative, of emotional responses in religious life. Writers inclined toward the interiority of mystical experience recognized emotion as a conduit to the divine through prayer, worship, or contemplation, not necessarily in connection with drama (Largier 2008, 371–72). A notable exception that links emotion to a dramatic tableau is St. Francis of Assisi's living nativity at Greccio in 1223 (later than the *Ordo Virtutum*). This is a remarkable link in that, according to Bonaventure, the emotional power of the mimetic representation comes not from *identification* with Christ's suffering as a way to know God, but from *experiencing* the event of the Nativity, an experiential dimension we argue operates in the conclusion of the *Ordo Virtutum*. Bonaventure describes St. Francis's response to a realistic recreation of the Nativity scene, including a manger, torchlight, and music as emotional to the point of spiritual transformation or ecstasy: "[St. Francis's] heart overflowed with tender compassion; he was bathed in tears but overcome with joy" (Habig 1972, 710–11).

This view of drama as heightening emotion by making significant biblical events come to life has been an influential lens through which modern scholars have viewed the emotional content of medieval drama. Through this lens, musical, visual, and poetic genres in the eleventh and twelfth centuries have been interpreted as bringing human emotion to the fore as a mechanism for knowing God. This view is certainly supported by the theological interest in Christ's humanity during these centuries, which focused attention on affective responses to God through emulation of Christ (Dronke 1970; Dronke 2009). Theology emphasizing the humanity of Christ, most prominently St. Anselm's *Cur Deus Homo* (c. 1094–98) and the identification with God through Christ's life and suffering (*imitatio Christi*), supports this interpretive framework (Kobialka 1988). The emotional potential of dramas, music, rites, and ceremonies also famously raised suspicion in the Christian tradition, even as it served devotional goals.[3] These suspicions rest largely on the distinction between representation and life experience, as well as theatre's potential for conjuring false emotion.

By the twelfth century, then, the relationship between theatre, drama, and emotional affect extends from the devotional emotion of the *Nativity* tableaux and the affective piety of mimetic biblical plays to concerns that the emotional excess produced by drama detracts from a Christian's proper attention to God. Dramaturgically, we will see that the *Ordo Virtutum* offers yet another point on this spectrum by linking emotions people experience in everyday life with a theological value system, shaping and directing people's familiar feelings toward a sacred goal.

Theological writings on emotion between 350 and 1300 are not, as noted above, invested in theorizing people's affective response to drama or the production of emotion through drama.[4] Nor do theological writings provide a coherent theory of emotion. Indeed, as Peter King (2010) observes, mindful of the tendency to associate emotion with modern notions of self,

> no single theory dominates the whole of the Middle Ages. Instead there are several competing accounts and differences of opinion—sometimes quite dramatic—within

> each account. Yet there is consensus on the scope and nature of a theory of emotions, as well as on its place in affective psychology generally. For most medieval thinkers, emotions are at once cognitively penetrable and somatic, which is to say that emotions are influenced by and vary with changes in thought and belief, and that they are bound up, perhaps essentially with their physiological manifestations. (167)[5]

How might this "cognitively penetrable and somatic" understanding of emotions in the Middle Ages still offer a framework for thinking about how medieval drama engaged people in salvation-oriented emotions, and the role emotion played in orienting people to living and dying in this cultural environment? How did medieval plays through 1300 articulate a theology of emotions? We turn to our question of theologically appropriate emotions and how they play out in theory, then in performance practice.

Augustine and the Movement of Emotion

Augustine's Christian interpretation of classical thought shaped medieval theories of emotions in Europe through Aquinas.[6] Setting aside his antipathy to the emotional excess incited by Roman drama, which is discussed in *Confessions*, Augustine analyzes emotions in *City of God* in the context of Christian and pagan thinking. Scrutton summarizes Augustine's schema of emotion in broad categories: *passiones,* which can be moderated by the mind (the involuntary, gross movements of body and soul), *affectus* and *affectiones* (volitional acts of will), and *motus animae* (movements of the soul) (Scrutton 2011, 36). Augustine allows emotion as embodied human experience governed by reason (*City of God* 9.5–6). He also allows that Christ, having a soul and a body, himself experienced true emotion in the Passion (*City of God* 14.9). Emotion, in Augustine's somatic and cognitive sense, means movement (*motus*). This is not the movement of a self expressing feeling in form (pressing out emotion into speech, writing, dramatic presentation and so forth), but as a human will toward something. Ideally, that something is the good (*caritas*), and ultimately the movement goes to God. Thus, and against the Stoics, Augustine does not call for purging emotions because they are harmful to the human body and mind (*apatheia*). His adaptations of philosophical categories of emotion, understood as movement within a human body and mind, are useful tools for reading a music-text like the *Ordo Virtutum*. Broadly, in *Confessions* and *On the Trinity* as well as *City of God*, Augustine adapts the Stoics' four basic categories of emotion: delight (*laetitia*), desire or appetite (*libido/cupiditas*), distress (*dolor*), and fear (*metus/timor*), and from the Platonic-Aristotelian tradition two categories that describe emotion as human engagement with the world: irascible (desires that resist; repulsion) and concupiscible (desires that attract; pleasure). (King 2010, 169, 171; Knuuttila 2004, 156; Wetzel 2008, 354–55).

Key to applying such a schema to the reflection encouraged by a moralistic, allegorical dramatization such as the *Ordo Virtutum* is the link Augustine makes between emotions and the uniquely human capacity for cognition. Augustine also acknowledges that the human body registers emotion and is the medium for how we recognize transient emotional states in other people (*City of God* 14.15). However, awareness of bodily sensations we recognize in ourselves as feelings and see in others by the performance of physical gestures (a face contorted in grief, a fist clenched in anger, a smile of pleasure or joy) require the cognitive capacity of will. By extension, engaging with a narrative drama as a shared affective experience with other people requires not only feeling and interpretation of

expressive gestures, but cognition, the movement of the mind. As Knuuttila (2004) notes, for Augustine,

> occurrent emotions are usually accompanied by bodily changes in facial expression, complexion, gesture, and the system of humours. The emotions themselves are special states of the soul involving evaluative judgements, behavioural suggestions, which are voluntarily complied with or repelled, and pleasant of unpleasant feelings (158).

Despite his antipathy for Roman theatre, Augustine recognized the potential for people's bodies to convey emotion, imitation of which is the stock and trade of mimesis.

How, then, do emotions provide a way for people to calibrate their own devotion, and how does the allegorical struggle between virtue and vice for the human soul (Anima) in the *Ordo Virtutum* use that conscious calibration as a kind of dramaturgy? We have seen that for Augustine, emotions are a kind of willing (*voluntas*), a motion of the human mind and body toward God (*City of God* 14.6; King 2010, 170; Knuuttila 2004, 159; Wetzel 2008, 361). Emotions aligned with rightness thus align a Christian soul with the good, with God. Emotions that conform to right reasoning are thus morally good, whereas those that do not align with right reason are morally bad (Byers 2012, 133; Scrutton 2011, 39; *City of God* 14.9). For Augustine, as for the characters of the stalwart Virtues and the wayward Anima in the *Ordo Virtutum,* "emotions belong to the present condition of human beings, and can even be of some moral value," and reason can quell perturbations of the soul (Knuuttila 2004, 157).

The aspect of Augustine's thinking on emotion most important for a dramaturgy of emotions in the *Ordo Virtutum* is love, the emotion in which the action of the drama concludes. Love encompasses all other movements of mind, body, and soul; love is recognized by its direction toward the good—more precisely, God—which is the entire narrative movement of the *Ordo Virtutum*. Augustine describes love as the fundamental emotional condition for the four categories of emotion in Stoic thought noted above (sorrow, fear, desire, and joy):

> When a man's resolve is to love God, and to love his neighbor as himself, not according to man's standards but according to God's, he is undoubtedly said to be a man of good will, because of this love. This attitude is more commonly called "charity" (*caritas*) in holy Scripture, but it appears in the same sacred writings under the appellation "love" (*amor*). (*City of God* 14.7)

This love is not generic but distinctly Christian. Love in this passage refers to a set of values, and here we adopt the word *caritas* (Knuuttila 2004, 160). Further, this higher sense of love as in God and of God, infusing all other emotions, is itself given by God. Scrutton (2011) summarizes *caritas* in Augustine's thought as itself divinity. For a dramaturgy of emotion, love is literally lived in the present moment in the human experience of God:

> The *caritas* Augustine propounds is sourced in the divine love, as is shown by the fact that Augustine radically equates God and love, and writes that in order that we may love God, we must allow God to live in us, and so "let him love himself through us, that is, let him move us, enkindle us, and arouse us to love him." All human *caritas* is in fact God present in humans, the participation of the Christian in the life and love of God, and not a human phenomenon that is possible independently of God. . . .

> God draws human beings into his own inter-trinitarian self-love, thus allowing us to share in the enjoyment of himself. . . . In this life, human love of fellow humans is in fact love of God, and is good (*caritas*) only when it is rooted in God (41).

The *Ordo Virtutum* shows us a dramaturgy that effectively generates this emotional-theological condition in which a person and God are intertwined through love. We might assume that the synthesis of music, speech, and physical movement in the *Ordo Virtutum* produces the gestures of emotion through mimesis, which are produced, received, and interpreted. However, as we shall see in the following analysis, Augustine's theology provides a map not only for identifying emotions produced by this particular dramatization but for the ultimate spiritual goal expected of medieval Christian devotees: participation in God's divine love. The schema of theologically oriented emotions discussed above explains very human, felt emotions at individual moments in the *Ordo Virtutum*. The representation of emotions within the narrative moves toward resolution into a sense of divine love (*caritas*).[7]

The Dramaturgy of Emotion in Hildegard of Bingen's *Ordo Virtutum*

The schematic organizations of emotion Augustine offers, while far from cohesive or consistent, theorize movement of the will (mind), body (physiological changes), and soul (union with God). Significant in these analyses of religious feeling is the connection between emotion and will. For Christian drama, this connection suggests that a person's engagement with the embodied, mimetic representation of Christian virtue is in part an act of will. In other words, the experience of transient emotional responses is itself an act of volition. We might think of a spectator's willingness, for example, to experience the complex registers of Mary's grief as expressed in the form of lamentation and visual imagery during a mimetic re-enactment of Christ enduring the cross in the fifteenth-century N-Town play (McBain 2016, 310–12).[8] In these mimetic situations, an audience responds with emotions appropriate to the event depicted theatrically. These are presented as, in Aristotelian terms, imitations of historical people's actions recreated in the present moment. Four centuries earlier, the allegorical *Ordo Virtutum* requires of its audience and performers a willingness to experience and move through their emotions, and to configure those emotions to the narrative drive of women's lived Christian lives. In both cases, we would argue that in Augustine's framework drama functioned to elicit from people *the will to love God*. In the framework of medieval theology, then, the devotional expectation is that the effect of drama creates the overarching affect of *caritas*, or feeling divine love.

How does the overall effect of participating in a drama engage the movement of a person's will toward the highest Christian virtue, Christian charity informed by love (*caritas*) dramaturgically (Lombardo 2010, 149)? If music, facial expression, gesture, words, and staging in dramatizations could elicit transient emotions within participants, how does the intended overall effect of dramatizing those emotions resolve into this feeling of *caritas*? How, dramaturgically, are the mundane, transient emotions of everyday life stilled, purged, balanced, or resolved in service of greater connection with the divine? The idea of love as that emotion through which people come to rest in an ultimate good suggests a dramaturgy that creates conditions for the experience of transient emotions to collapse into love with the close of the narrative. The *Ordo Virtutum's* narrative structure, language, music, and characterization show a similar movement from mundane human emotions to *caritas*.[9]

The *Ordo Virtutum's* central theme is the opposition between a spiritual life of Christian virtue and life engaged with the material world and the human body. In the theological language of emotion, the narrative juxtaposes *caritas* (the morally good love in which a person's will, soul, and body align with God) and *cupiditas* (desire for worldly things and for happiness in the world) (Scrutton 2011, 39). In the *Ordo Virtutum,* the happiness of a virtuous life (marriage to Christ, *regali talamo,* l.76) is contrasted with an unhappy life of sin (carnal desires, *delectatio carnis*, l.53). The contrast between female virtue and worldly pleasure is embodied in rational arguments between the personified Virtues, Anima, and the figure of the Devil.

In Augustine's schema, the *passiones* oppose the *affectiones*. In the *Ordo Virtutum,* the male Devil is the only role spoken rather than sung and the only personification fully committed to Augustine's conception of bodily *passiones*: a disturbed body-soul, lacking a will toward the good (*City of God* 8.17). The Virtues all articulate the higher, rational *affectiones*, and Anima's will to overcome her baser desires ultimately shows her to be a truly rational soul and moves her to love only God. Dramaturgically, the *Ordo Virtutum* registers the effects of the arguments between *passiones* and *affections* through language, sound, and physical movement. Examples of each modality are described below.

The language of the *Ordo Virtutum*, as Audrey Ekdahl Davison points out, is "marked by movement and activity": in particular, movement toward and away (1993, 13). This pattern of language mirrors not only the movement of emotions, but also the movement toward (*concupiscible* emotions) and away (*irascible* emotions) from *cupiditas*. The woeful lament of a chorus of fallen Souls longing for redemption begins the drama, in stark contrast to Anima's joyful anticipation of transcending her earthly body. Anima signals her desire for this good in her sighs for the Virtues (*ad te suspiro*, l.19). The Virtues recognize Anima immediately as a soul whose highest wisdom knows God and, following Augustine, one whose love is rightly directed toward God (*multum amas*, l.21–22). Anima's will moves her to join the Virtues (*O libenter veniam ad vos*, l.23), though with a spiritual and physical love of the heart (*osculum cordis*) that will be revealed as a transient emotion (l.24). Anima's very human emotions move quickly from joy to sadness (*gravata*). Her lament, unlike the lament of Mary at the cross, mourns her grievous labour as she deals with the disturbance of *passiones,* her own sinful corporeality (*carnem pugnare*) (l.26–28). The display of Anima's distress (*dolor*) in tears (l.30) accompanies her sung lament, "o woe is me" (*O ve michi*. l.39), which initiates the emotional struggle that will be played out until its resolution in *caritas*.

Scrutton notes that for Augustine, "emotion itself is morally neutral, but how it is instantiated in the human being makes it good or bad" (2011, 43). In keeping with Augustine's general organization of emotions, Anima's will governs her emotional responses to her sense of her soul and the temptations put before her by the Devil. Anima reasons that God created the world; therefore, she does God no harm by enjoying its pleasures (l.46–48). Her very human emotions move from happy (*laetitia*, *felix* in the text) before l.23 to unhappy (*dolor*, *infelix*) by l.36 as she veers toward her libidinous desire for worldly things, *cupiditas*. Thus, her will is not aligned with a higher good and her involuntary passions not moderated by reason. The narrative will correct this moral condition with her experience of contrition, then the embrace of *caritas*. The two classical categories of emotion, concupiscible and irascible, are evident early in the narrative as well. Anima's own attraction to the physical world attracts the Devil to her. His desire to woo Anima articulates Augustine's sense of *passiones* precisely: uncontrolled, even demonic, emotion.

At this point in the movement of emotions that structures the narrative, Anima's misaligned will draws from the Virtues their lament of sorrow (*O plangens vox est hec maximi dolores*) (l.50) as they mourn for a soul whose longing for God has been disturbed, and who has physically fallen away from virtue. The Virtues, who proclaim themselves to be living on the high plane from which the Devil himself was cast out, each describe their own affinities for God (l.68–158), and Humility calls them all to rejoice (*gaudete, ergo, filie Syon!)* (l.158). The back-and-forth movement from joy to sorrow, *laetitia* to *dolor*, continues. Anima's physical departure (*plangamus et lugeamus*) (l.159) moves the Virtues *Gaudete, filie Syon* into a lament with which they greet her return as a penitent (*penitentis*) stinking of gangrenous wounds (l.161, 175; 170–73). A. E. Davidson notes that the melody here is based on the Phrygian (minor) mode and "with the lamenting words, is affectingly sorrowful" (1993, 15). Yet, theologically, the return of one fallen soul to virtue is cause for all heaven to rejoice (*Et omnis celestis milicia gaudet super te*) (l.193), and the Virtues accept Anima's contrition with assurances of God's redemption after she has returned from a sojourn in the world (*veni, veni ad nos, et Deus suscipiet te*) (l.165).

Up to this point, the drama's affective potential is evident. Joy, sadness, love, fear, and contrition are explicit emotions expressed, and presumably felt, by characters and recognized by the devotees likely to participate in the *Ordo Virtutum*. The emotional narrative invites participants to move through these same emotions, as the dramatization mirrors how their own Christian souls struggle against the temptations of the world. The affective lament, familiar from the *Planctus Mariae* growing in popularity in the twelfth century, recurs throughout, as do songs of rejoicing, which reflect on the movement of the dramatic action (Anima's conflicted attractions).

Forgiveness reconciles the penitent Anima with the Virtues, and her transgression is re-interpreted as suffering: Humility sees in Anima the wounds of Christ's Passion (l.190). Anima and the Virtues do physical battle with the Devil, who is physically tied up and subdued. In addition to words that move the emotional register from anger at the Devil to joy, the aural aspect of the *Ordo Virtutum* is particularly notable here. The melody is written high in the female voice (C–A). The affect "is that of unrestrained joy, high and 'lifted up' in ecstatic exultation" (Davidson 1993, 19). At this point, the narrative moves toward its soteriological conclusion. The thematic emphasis shifts from human emotions to those of a soul whose will and body are, finally, properly aligned with God.

At this final moment of the drama, Anima's alignment of her will with Christian virtue, as well as the assurance of forgiveness and salvation, yield the love that Augustine and later Aquinas indicate is the quality common to all other Christian emotions: *caritas*. The dramatic effect here is less an affective quality of sympathetic emotion than it is descriptive of a theologically rational condition in which Anima is united with God after the trials that demanded emotional suffering and left her with scars (*multas cicatrices michi imponens*) (l.187). *Caritas* is the permanent condition of belonging with the divine, which transcends the emotional states the drama shows her going through (a reminder that for Augustine, a Christian soul undergoes emotion but does not generate emotion on its own). In this dramaturgy of emotions, *caritas* is presented differently than the transient love for God in which Anima began the play.

Dramaturgically, the Virtues' final chorus shifts participants from transient to transcendent love. The final chorus praises God, from whom a mountain of fiery love flows to all people who approach with humility (*ex te fluit fons in ignio amore*) (l.258). At this point, Hildegard's dramatization of how the condition of all-encompassing divine love feels in a Christian woman's body and mind is not conveyed mimetically but through dramatic structure. For the first time, Anima and the Virtues sing

together at l.252, the beginning of the epilogue. The text suggests a staging in which Anima would likely physically move to stand within the circle of Virtues, for the first time singing *with* them rather than singing *to* them. The final moment of the *Ordo Virtutum*, then, is an aural, visual, and physical unity of souls. Hildegard's dramaturgy brings Christ's suffering to the foreground. The communal song affirms that only a life lived with God through Christ is a true and fully alive existence.

At this point, all the souls still bound to sin at the beginning of the *Ordo Virtutum*, the redeemed and forgiven Anima, and the steadfast Virtues together sing an invocation to all present. This is a moment reminiscent in effect of the Eucharistic communion itself. Participants enacting the drama invite those participating by listening, watching, and feeling into the shared Christian community, a community of spectators schooled in the theological interpretation of everyday emotions. Those who have passed through the emotional journey of the drama are invited to join themselves to God by coming to God with humility, in imitation of Christ, and by the physical gesture of taking God's hand. The *Ordo Virtutum*'s conclusion articulates dramatically the Augustinian "gladness associated with faith and love" (*City of God* 14.10; Knuuttila 2004, 161). We suggest that this has been achieved not only by allegorical representation (linguistic, visual, and musical), but also by a mimesis of emotions shared by participants throughout the *Ordo Virtutum*. This dramaturgy resolves the fluctuation of mundane, transient, everyday emotions into the transcendence of a Christian construction of divine love, *caritas*.

Conclusion

Hildegard of Bingen's *Ordo Virtutum* provides a remarkable example of an unusual dramaturgy that can be read as grounded in a theological theory of emotion. The *Ordo Virtutum* dramatizes a female soul's journey: her temptation away from a life of religious chastity and her return to a virtuous life through contrition, forgiveness, and finally life lived in full union with God, experienced emotionally as *caritas*. We have suggested that the representation of everyday, transient emotions in the persons of the Virtues and Anima, as well as the narrative movement toward the experience of God's love, correspond to the way emotions were thought to function in a Christian life as set out by Augustine (and reinforced in the thirteenth century by Thomas Aquinas). The conceptual correspondence between theology and an allegorical dramatization of sin and salvation offers a dramaturgy oriented around the movement of transient emotions and structured by the ultimate condition of *caritas*. A performance of this particular narrative—a rite conducted in an enclosed community of women—also suggests that the *Ordo Virtutum* provided a way for participants to cultivate the condition of *caritas* within the community. Perhaps the most curious aspect of this dramaturgy is how it engages emotions relevant to the women's lives, wrought by the expectations of a chaste life and the temptations of the outside world. Mimesis, familiar in later biblical cycles and evident in Mary's lament at the Cross, collapses in this correspondence between people's "real" emotions and those articulated in the *Ordo Virtutum's* allegory. The reading through Augustine shows how the emotions one might experience in one's daily life must be re-configured in a paradigm that can only resolve in union with God, and, more importantly, provides the context in which that transformation of a person's soul might happen.

Notes

1. A shorter version of this analysis appears in the forthcoming essay, "Classification by Affect: Medieval Repertoires and Genres," in *A Cultural History of Theatre, Vol. 2*, edited by Jody Enders (London: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama).

2. For a brief analysis of the *Ordo Virtutum*, including sources and critical commentary, see Fassler 2011, 376–81.

3. Gerhoh of Reichersberg, for example, complains that overly expressive priests "turn the churches themselves, the houses of prayers, into theatres and fill them with feigned spectacles of plays" (see Tydeman 1978, 113–14; Young 1933, 527), and the Cistercian Aelred of Rievaulx specifically criticized singers who imitated "the agonies of the crying and the terror of those enduring eternal torment" with exaggerated gestures like those of actors in the ancient theatres and not appropriate for Christians: "the lips twist, the eyes roll, the shoulders heave, and at every note the fingers are flexed to match" (see McGee 1998, 23–24).

4. The Vedic treatise *Natyasastra* (c. 200 BCE–200 CE), as an example from a non-Western culture, theorizes the relationship between people's felt responses to drama and religious feeling. The *Natyasastra* defines drama as a devotional practice and lays out how the performance of *natya* (drama) gives rise to eight specific, subjective states, called *bhavas*. These states (*bhavas)* correspond to specific human emotions: love, joy or mirth, wonder or astonishment, anger or fury, courage or heroism, sadness or grief, fear or terror, and disgust. *Natya* (drama) creates the *bhavas* by a synthesis of mimesis, architecture, music, dance, costumes and makeup, and narrative. In the aesthetic theory of the *Natyasastra*, drama created a communal sharing of *bhavas*, which served a spiritual purpose. The *Natyasastra* presents a theory of drama that engages emotion in the effort to draw closer to the divine. The goal of drama is not to purge or excite emotions but to balance them. This is a spiritual as well as aesthetic process, and emotions are integral. For details on this summary of the contents of the *Natyasastra*, see Rangacharya's 1996 translation, especially pp. 53–77 on the *rasas* and *bhavas* and pp. 330–36 on internal and external qualities of characters.

5. For the physiology of emotions in observable bodily changes such as body heat and blood flow, attributions of temperament and states such as depression to the four humours (black bile, yellow bile, phlegm, and blood), and transformations of spirit through bodily organs, see Knuuttila 2004, 212–18.

6. Like Augustine, for whom "a rightly directed will is love in a good sense and a perverted will is love in a bad sense," Aquinas also posits emotion as movement toward or away from something, with love as motion in the direction of union with God. Writing at the end of the thirteenth century, Aquinas takes a more Aristotelian approach to the emotions but stays within the framework crafted by Augustine. Aquinas provides a schematic of emotions, *passiones animae*, as transient expressions of appetites and their attendant physiological responses (see Pfeiffer 2011, 37–44 for a summary of Aquinas and the *passions animae*). Aquinas also brings emotion under the will, where it becomes an aspect of a virtuous Christian life. Emotion balanced by the will ensures the virtuous condition of right feeling and perception. For Aquinas, emotion must be activated in a soul and pass through the soul (or in the case of the *passiones,* affect the body). The soul is not the source of the emotion it receives or undergoes. The cause of love, following from Augustine, is also its object and observed in an inclination toward the good. For Aquinas, no other passion comes before love in the causal order, and love is the first act of human will and appetite (see Miner 2011, 126, 60). Good "is the *sola causa amoris*," and the movement of love can only, by definition, move toward the good (see Miner 2011, 127). Aquinas further parses love into sensory love for worldly objects (*amor sensitivus*) and a more abstract intellectual love for concepts of the good (*amor intellectivus seu rationalis*), including God (see Scrutton 2011, 50).

Love is the first and encompassing concupiscible passion, and the most complex because it is both a desire (a passion or movement toward the good) and, more significantly for our purposes here, a condition. *Amor* for Aquinas "is an inclination or a kind of complacency, and as such, the principle of desire and pleasure and the rest of the passions" (Lombardo 2010, 59). Aquinas' struggle to distinguish among registers and qualities of love as distinct from desire and pleasure does not yield as clean a sense as, for example, the Sanskrit *shanti* (peace) described in the Indian *Natyasastra* (see Rangacharya 1996). However, the movement toward God as the tendency of the soul carries through from Augustine (see Lombardo 2010, 55–62 and Knuuttila 2004, 249–51).

7. The first chapter of thirteenth-century mystic Mechthild von Magdeburg's *Flowing Light of the Divinity* provides an interesting analogue to Hildegard's emotional drama. It is comprised of an allegorical dialogue between Lady Love and the Queen (a human soul), who are engaged in a debate over the hardships of the

Christian life. The Queen's grievances (regarding the loss of her youth, friends, relatives, worldly riches, and so on) are evocative of the courtly lover's complaints against his beloved; each accusation, however, is countered by Lady Love, who reminds the soul that the rewards of the Christian life far exceed the sacrifices which accompany it:

> "Lady Love, You have taken from me the world, worldly honor, and all worldly riches."
>
> "Dear Queen, for that I will repay You with one hour with the Holy Spirit according to Your will on earth." . . .
>
> "Lady Love, You have devoured my flesh and my blood."
>
> "Dear Queen, by that You were cleansed and drawn into God." (*Flowing Light* I.I)

The dialogue thus progresses until the Queen finally ceases her complaint and embraces the rewards of her chosen life. While there is no evidence that this dialogue was ever set to music or performed, its focus on the nature of divine love (particularly in contrast with the worldly, courtly love suggested by the Queen's language) bears a striking similarity to Hildegard's dramatic exploration of *caritas*.

8. Dramatizations of the crucifixion were particularly emotionally, and theologically, charged. Variations of the *Planctus Mariae* were incorporated into dramatizations of Christ's passion (most notably in the Montecassino Passion Play in the twelfth century and the German Benediktbeurn Passion in the thirteenth), which enhanced the affective power of sacred grief (Sticca 1988, 119). See Davidson 2008.

9. For the standard translation and line numbers upon which citations here are based, see Dronke 2008.

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Romans and Christians: Bearing Witness and Performing Persecution in Bible Camp Simulations

Scott Magelssen and Ariaga Mucek

> It was very realistic. Too realistic for some. Looking back it resembles what you see in the news today of terrorist attacks. That being said, I heard from a couple a campers years later that said that night they decide[d] to follow Jesus no matter what. It became their faith in Christ not their parents. It was an interesting night.
>
> Bruce, "Communist Leader"
> Luther Park Bible Camp

> The Christians are in there! We're gonna get the Christians!
>
> Rev. Christy Fisher
> Wesley Club

> You just can't do that kind of thing these days.
>
> Luke Halverson
> Lake Wapogasset

For those who grew up campers, summer camp conjures utopian images of dips in the lake, evening campfires, and cool, tanned, college-aged staff with sandals and acoustic guitars. Bible camp (variously called confirmation camp or church camp) is no exception, and in addition harkens former young Christian campers' nostalgic memories of chapel and Bible study, and, at least in the Lutheran variety, a kind of benevolent zeal on the part of the counsellors for Jesus and the Holy Spirit not generally found in church services during the year.[1] But Bible camps have not always relied exclusively on the types of programming that generate good feelings. Along with these idyllic associations, campers may also remember activities that elicited sadness, anxiety, and fear, whether through teary commitment rituals of confession and absolution of sins and participatory passion plays featuring characters in Holy Land costume (i.e., bathrobes), or through emotionally rigorous role playing games. This essay presents a history of the immersive field game called "Romans and Christians," a simulation of the early Church in which Roman soldiers hunt down and round up illegal followers of Jesus Christ as they try to find and gather in a secret location to worship.

Offered as a way of teaching Church history and Christian identity through play, "Romans and Christians," we argue, has its origins in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century social reform practices associated with YMCA and Boy Scout camps. The model transferred to Bible camps sometime around the 1970s, where it took on a Church historical narrative. The game's narrative, as well as its use of dramatic elements like props, costume, and surprise, continued to develop and shift in response to the changing political context, and especially in response to major events like the Cold War, until it peaked in emotional charge and affectivity during play and popularity in the 1980s.

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With changes to childhood education paradigms favouring child safety starting in the 1990s, and further in response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Romans and Christians quickly waned in popularity and fell out of use in mainstream protestant camps. "It's not a game that's very pervasively experienced in any of our Lutheran Bible camps [today]," says Don Johnson, executive director of Lutheran Outdoor Ministries, which currently oversees Bible camps affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (Johnson 2016). Modified versions of Romans and Christians are still played by church youth groups in North America, and variations of the rules can be found online in religious education resource materials and online youth ministry sites, as we will describe later in the essay.

In the game, the youth simulated the persecuted Christians under an oppressive regime, and the goal was to make it to the secret worship place without being captured—and, if capture did occur, to escape or even convert the guards by giving a testimony. To be sure, how a game that simulated persecution became such a compelling experience for Christian groups during the late twentieth century is worth further consideration. Especially when, at least in the United States, Christians have seemed to be one of the least oppressed religious groups in the nation—and our nation, many believers claim, is a Christian one. Was Romans and Christians a kind of devotional bearing witness to the early martyrs through performative embodiment? Was it a kind of conservative allegorical positioning of the Church against the threat of a godless secularism? Was it a rehearsal—a kind of "boot camp" for equipping young people to practise their faith and evangelize in the public sphere? And in what cases could the game have gone too far, manipulating the emotions of adolescents high on the Spirit and low on sleep by terrorizing them with threatening adult strangers, using elements of chase and ambush to trigger "fight-or-flight" states, and not always framing the simulation with orientation and debriefing exercises? Particularly vulnerable to these less desirable outcomes would have been campers of colour or other at-risk groups, or those who already found activities associated with organized religion alienating or intimidating. In the following pages we draw on performance theory and personal interviews with camp leadership and staff, as well as Scott's own experience in a compelling "Communists and Christians" adaptation in the 1980s, to historically situate Romans and Christians in a larger scope of play and immersive simulations ("simmings") as educative practices, analyzing how the game made use of performative motifs and dramaturgical elements to maximize emotional arcs.[2]

Theoretical Approaches, Background, and Context

To date, there are no published historical analyses of Romans and Christians as a religious performance practice. A historical analysis is valuable in that it can give a better picture of the manner in which educational play has been used in religious settings to inform or reinforce values and identity formations, and to connect to fellow members of the community of belief. The challenges posed by such an inquiry, given the lack of scholarship, include the relative paucity of archival evidence that would provide specific dates in which the game was played, as well as the scarcity of reliable documentation of its origins or points of transfer from other cultural practices to Bible Camp programming. Nevertheless, through corroborating oral histories from our interviews we are able to identify key date ranges over which Romans and Christians emerged and developed, and significant events that informed changes to and the gradual demise of the game. In order to delimit the scope of our research for this essay, we focus in particular on the versions of Romans and Christians designed for pre- and early-teen participants of approximately eleven to thirteen years

of age and practised in camps affiliated with mainstream Protestant denominations: Lutheran, Methodist, Episcopalian, and so forth.

The structure of Romans and Christians is rooted in other field game models. At its heart, it is a modified tag game, with elements of hide-and-seek, kick the can, and cops and robbers. In this case, the sanctuary or secret worship place is "gool" or "dell," and the Romans are "it." In one variation we found, for example, Christians could get out of jail if tagged by another Christian (bootec50 2009). The successful maintenance of the game's narrative template, in which players represent persecuted Christians—custodians of a budding religious movement in danger of being snuffed out by occupying imperial forces—may not, in fact, be as necessary for the game's completion. The players must, in essence, all get to "gool" before those who are "it" can get them. Other learning institutions, like museums and schools, deploy similar immersive "good-guy-bad-guy" games as a way to teach about history or social issues. Conner Prairie Interactive History Park outside Indianapolis offers "Follow the North Star," an immersive Underground Railroad experience where visitors play fugitive slaves trying to escape to freedom in the north while the bad guys are slave owners, bounty hunters, and just plain inhospitable racist northerners (Magelssen 2013, 29–47. The Hñañu community in El Alberto, Mexico, have created the "Caminata Nocturna" in which tourists from all over the world come to pretend to be migrants attempting to illegally cross the Mexico–U.S. border while avoiding the Border Patrol, drug cartel soldiers, and other threats (96–112). David Jortner, a theatre scholar at Baylor University, remembers the Jewish Summer Camp activity "Escape to Palestine" where campers had to get themselves out of German-occupied Europe before it was too late (Jortner 2016). With other attractions and institutions adopting such a seemingly successful performance mode for teaching, what was it about Romans and Christians that prevented its continued broad use as an effective mode of pedagogy for communicating history or religious identity? We explore some answers in the following pages.

We situate our historical analysis within recent scholarly discourses on evangelical performance.[3] Our work is informed primarily by that of John Fletcher and Jill Stevenson, each of whom draws explicit connections between performance and religious belief. In particular, we refer to the idea Fletcher outlines in *Preaching to Convert* and elsewhere that some iterations of Christianity position themselves as fighters in a global war against the forces of secularism, the battlegrounds being schools, popular culture, and the legislative arena. We argue that an immersive game in which participants play underdogs hunted down by those who disagree with their beliefs can easily serve as an example par excellence of what he calls a "dystopic performative" (Fletcher 2013, 171). We also take up Fletcher's invitation to direct scholarly attention to religious performances with just as much rigour and responsibility as we would any other form of activist performance, even if we take ethical issue with some of the activities we examine (Fletcher 2007, 22; Fletcher 2010, 116). We find Jill Stevenson's work on religious performance in *Sensational Devotion* helpful in her articulation of "evangelical dramaturgy," which she defines as a set of practices "designed to foster embodied beliefs that respond to specific devotional needs and priorities." These practices, contends Stevenson, "constitute a worldview even as they reinforce it" (Stevenson 2013, 4). We also, however, look to Claire Maria Chambers, Simon W. Du Toit, and Joshua Edelman, who, in the introduction to their edited collection *Performing Religion in Public,* caution scholars to be mindful of perpetuating a binary opposition between public and religious realms. Rather than viewing these realms as fixed and stable with their own competing sets of truth claims, argue the editors, the religious and the public should be seen as always already "imbricated" in one another, and their relationships constituted performatively, though experience, affect, and presence (Chambers, Du Toit, and Edelman 2013, 3). In this regard, we maintain that Bible camp performances can be understood as

both taking place in a separate religious realm, apart from the world, but also very much within and constitutive of the public sphere.

Regarding how we theorize Romans and Christians as a performance, we situate our study within scholarship on gaming and play. As an immersive, participatory simulation, Romans and Christians can be understood as what Scott has referred to as a "simming of witness," which "use[s] performance to express empathy or solidarity with the victims of a present or a past injustice, trauma, or to commemorate an event that helped constitute the fabric of a community's identity." It can also be seen as a "simming of reification," which "confirm[s] and cement[s] values, dilemmas, political states, or doctrines that already exist in the abstract in a community's perception, but which the community feels must continually be policed and maintained." Given that Romans and Christians ostensibly performs the past, it can even be interpreted as a "simming of invocation," where a successful escape from the Romans to join with fellow Christians to spread the Gospel "rehearse(s) for a future reality and advocate(s) for that future reality" (Magelssen 2013, 13–15).

With Johan Huizinga and other theorists of play, we recognize that play is fundamental to human activity and helps establish and reify values, relationships, and identity, and is as such foundational to human development (Huizinga 2004, 117). Romans and Christians may be examined both in terms of narratology, that is, how the overarching activity plays out a "text" with characters, plot, and a beginning, middle, and end, but also with "ludology," the way in which each participant's experience can be understood as unfolding autonomously, governed by the rules of play and the game interface, and in which the plot as such is not experienced as directing the action. Gregory Batson writes compellingly about situations in which the metacommunicative elements of play ("this is a game") often blur with real life in the minds of the participants, so that they have a hard time dissociating themselves psychologically from the game in which they are immersed (Bateson 1972, 180; Bateson 2004, 121–31). "Deep play" can comprise situations approaching psychological or physical danger, or in which the safety net of game rules are otherwise unclear or compromised (Schechner 2002, 118). Instances of campers or counsellors taking the game "too far" and pushing the envelope of emotional safety, risking psychological trauma, not to mention the loss of the intended message, can be conceived especially as examples of deep play.

Simming Early Christians: Community through Deep Play

The Romans and Christians scenario is ostensibly drawn from the first centuries of Church history and the lives of the early martyrs, when the budding religious group based on the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth was condemned by both Jewish authorities and the Roman Empire, until Christianity became legalized in the fourth century. The game found biblical foundation, for instance, in the story of Paul's imprisonment and preaching about the Holy Spirit in Acts 28. Paul's letters to the churches in Rome and Corinth also contain passages of encouragement in the face of persecution. In his letter to the Romans, Paul tells believers to "Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer" and "bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them" (Rom. 12:12, 14). In 1 Corinthians he says, "be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain" (1 Cor. 15:58). Most persecution of followers of Christ in Christian scripture, however, is at the hands of Jewish authorities, rather than the Romans. The Romans are the villains only insofar as they administered the justice demanded by Jewish authorities against Christian offenders. In one of the more notorious examples in Acts of the Apostles, Paul and Silas are turned over to the Roman authorities by the Jewish leaders after Paul

cast a fortune-telling spirit out of a slave girl, which ruined her owners' financial prospects. This is the episode in which an earthquake frees all the prisoners, but Paul and Silas remain to convert their jailer, who is about to kill himself for losing all under his wardenship (Acts 16:16–40). The Romans seem to have been disapproving but fairly tolerant of Christians until the reign of Marcus Aurelius (ruled 161–180) in the second century. This is where the stories of the martyrs in the arenas and death by lions and other wild beasts start, and what church father Tertullian rails against in his "On the Spectacles" (ca. 197–202). In other words, the iterations of Romans and Christians we have found in our research anachronistically either conflated dozens or hundreds of years of early Church history into a single temporal representation or simply tended not to focus on a particular historical period.

The purposes behind adopting the game become clearer if we consider the emphasis on learning and identity formation through physically challenging or rigorous play coupled with the elevated psychological states brought about through heightened competition and narrative templates of "good guy–bad guy" or "us vs. them." To be sure, the impact and success of Romans and Christians depends on affective and experiential playing out of a campaign in which persecuted underdogs outrun and outwit the frightening and oppressive authority figures. Through problem-solving, field tactics, and subterfuge, the persecuted Christians gain ground which up to that point has been held by the opponent. As in a drama, the stages of the campaign are marked by the heightening of conflict and emotional engagement, peaking at a climax, and resolving in a denouement. In this case, the conflict concerned the question of whether the community of faith would be captured and assimilated or punished, or would succeed through commitment to the ideas that bind the community together. Furthermore, as we will argue, the Romans and Christians activity functioned dramaturgically as an emotional and physical climax within the larger scope of a week at Church Camp. The game created an experience where play was at its darkest and emotional safety was at its lowest so that the remainder of the week could be devoted to reaffirming communal values in a larger denouement.

The use of immersive programming to create an emotional climax belongs to a familiar dramaturgy used in many initiation cycles ranging from military boot camp to fraternity and sorority hazing rituals. It is the pattern Victor Turner parsed out in his writings on anthropology and performance, from the social dramas he argued were played out in aboriginal puberty rites and Greek tragedies (breach → crisis → redressive action → schism or reintegration) to his elaborations on Van Gennep's *rites de passage* in which the magic and efficacy of the ritual happens in the liminal betwixt-and-between stage between the initiate's past and future states (Turner 1982*,* 69; Turner 1996, 532). In Romans and Christians, the participants' liminal phase comprised most of the game. When camp counsellors representing Romans initiated game play, campers were transformed into frightened fugitives from the law, with no access to the rules or resources with which they were familiar only moments earlier. Through dramatic play in which they had to determine friend from foe and discern the skills they must employ in this topsy-turvy world to survive, these initiands ritually became tried and tested young adult Christians, and they were recognized as such at the end of the game when welcomed back into the community.

In *Medieval Theatre of Cruelty: Rhetoric, Memory, Violence,* theatre historian Jody Enders traces the trauma-learning link all the way back to the ancients. Aristotle, for instance, teaches us that truth can most properly be achieved for tragic audiences through representations of pity and fear, and Cicero and his contemporaries believed that anything spoken under torture was probably more *true* because

physical pain gives the speaker the "force of necessity" (Enders 1999, 2, 1). Hence, the idea that if a nun raps a student's knuckles with a ruler in parochial school, the learning will better stick. Richard Schechner defines deep play as play in which "there is very high risk physically, fiscally, and/or psychologically" (Schechner 2002, 118), and where "much of the fun of playing, when there is fun, is in playing with fire, going in over one's head," and "the risks to the player outweigh the potential rewards" (92). When representational play and games like Romans and Christians introduce elements of risk in an environment otherwise characterized by physical and emotional safety, such as when the authority figures shift from benevolent caregivers to opponents bent on capturing and punishing, they create precisely such high-risk situations for campers and thus fit squarely into deep play.

The deep play model of summer camp simming was established by the creators of summer camp, the Boy Scouts and the YMCA and their descendants, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Initiation-style immersive activities were very much in keeping with Progressive-era doctrine for building character through a survival-of-the-fittest paradigm (Macleod 1983; Mechling 2001; Rosenthal 1986). In Boy Scout handbooks throughout the twentieth century, for example, can be found the philosophy that the best and most efficient path to moral and physical hygiene at an abbreviated span (one or two weeks) in the outdoors was through exhausting the subject with rigorous tasks, breaking his ties to immoral things, and then prompting a pledge of allegiance and submission to a higher order. One of the Scout Virtues states: "He should so learn to discipline and control himself that he will have no thought but to obey the orders of his officers" (Boy Scouts of America 1911, 7).

Racist and masculinist from the beginning, the Boy Scouts were conceived by founder Lieutenant General Robert Stephenson Smyth Baden-Powell as a way to pull England's young men from the country's national inefficiencies—irreligion, indiscipline, want of patriotism, corruption, disregard of others, cruelty, showing off, loafing and shirking, low moral standards, and social ills from crimes of violence to mental and physical deficiency—through demanding regimens that would build character, mental and moral toughness, and a military-grade preparedness (Rosenthal 1986, 5). Historian David I. Macleod adds "effeminacy" to the list of deficiencies causing national anxiety and writes that the Boy Scout invention of the camp experience was a culmination of Boy Scout and YMCA leadership's ambitions. "Summer camp," he writes, would be "one of those ideal institutions in which Progressive Era Americans sought to reshape personal values and social relationships" (Macleod 1983, 233). Camp was both an opportunity for licensed misbehaviour and a period of indoctrination to patriotic and parareligious ideals. The time away from the city would "enable campers to vent their boyish savagery under close control" but at the same time "campfire rituals and natural beauty would induce mild cases of adolescent romanticism" (234). In addition, the exposure to the outdoors would harden campers' bodies and sharpen their senses. In the words of early camp planners, two weeks at camp would make the young men "tough as Indians" and "brown as berries" (234). Such Progressive-era survival-of-the-fittest rhetoric became embodied in the move to Romans and Christians games, which emphasized grit and resilience as a way to survive until the end of the game when the Christians successfully outwitted and outlasted the Roman oppressors.

Indeed, within the structure of the week(s) at Boy Scout camp, writes Jay Mechling, Boy Scout campers are routinely and consistently subjected to situations which test and reify their membership in the community as well as their male heterosexual identity. This testing, in the years of Mechling's fieldwork in the late twentieth century, would come in the form of constant youth-on-youth and adult-on-youth perpetrations of unease through informal ribbing, hazing, and teasing as well as more

formalized games like Treasure Hunt and Capture the Flag. In these games, which are in essence ritualized male combat, the maintaining of the "play frame" is key to the efficacy of the ritual. For instance, in a game that requires boys to wrestle in a semi-naked state while playful accusations of homosexuality are hurled at one another, the play frame is meant to guarantee the subject can emerge heterosexual, that is, free of sexual attraction or stimulation by the other boys' bodies (Mechling 2001, 82–83). The danger, writes Mechling, is the threat of disrupting the delicate balance that needs to be maintained between frames. If initiation to the community comes through ritual humiliation (accusations of homosexuality), and either the perpetrator or the victim refuses the play frame or takes it too seriously (actual cruelty, actual offence or internalization), the ritual divides the community rather than creating a stronger communal bond (108–9). Highly competitive and violent camp-wide games of Capture the Flag at Scout Camp, argues Mechling, ritually play out social conflict with the goal of establishing group fraternity and, in Victor Turner's sense, communitas. As with informal rituals, maintaining the play frame is key to Capture the Flag's success. "The 'as if' mood of play," he says, "gives it the power to comment upon everyday life in ways that would be too frightening or too disruptive if done 'for real.' Both ritual and play help the participants reflect upon themselves and upon the social order" (157–58).

The games of Capture the Flag Mechling witnessed in his fieldwork strike the reader as savage, dangerous, and violent, yet somehow the Boy Scout troupe initiands emerged from the game year after year that much more closely connected. "How a game, one of the most structured forms of play," wonders Mechling aloud, "can lead the players through the conflict of competition, through disorder and doubt, to a new integration of communitas is surely among the most miraculous transformations of play" (158). Here again, with the "winning" of the game in Romans and Christians, the campers not only prevail over persecution but shore up the values and identities associated with the Christian community.

Given the absence of documentation regarding the transfer of the Capture the Flag model of initiation game to simming early Christians in Bible camps in the mid-to-late twentieth century, it is likely that it was not prompted by a recommendation from executive levels, but rather a rapid spread through word of mouth among a "community of practice" (see Boud and Middleton 2003; Wenger 2008), that is, a loose informal learning coalition of camp leaders and counsellors who identified value in the way the game relied on fright and physical and emotional rigour. In Enders' model of learning through pain and intensity, the affective states brought about by Romans and Christians, it would seem, are affected by the manner in which the game fits dramaturgically into the schedule of a week at camp. The ethnographic interviews we conducted with camp leaders show that Romans and Christians was typically played on the third night of a five-day week at camp, where campers were at an emotional high and running on adrenaline. Strategically scheduled to be a climactic experience, Romans and Christians physiologically and affectively prepared participants for a more profound faith experience.

In Scott's Bible camp week, the placement of Romans and Christians fit into the ideal dramatic arc or pyramid plotted out by Gustav Freytag in his *Die Technic des Dramas* (The Technique of Drama) in 1863, which include inciting incident, rising action, climax, falling action, and denouement. Sunday through Wednesday afternoon were devoted to rise-and-shine wake-up devotionals, Bible study, community building among cabin groups, mealtime skits and prayers, camp songs introduced and rehearsed at morning and evening chapel and campfire, and long soul-searching conversations with cabin-mates and counsellors into the wee hours lit by flashlight, all of which contributed to the "rising action" of the emotional arc of the week. Romans and Christians, a climactic point that

occurred on Wednesday night, then subverted the relationships of trust established between campers and counsellors. By the time the hunt began, the campers had been equipped with a muscle-memory of the grounds and woods, and the tunes and words to the songs they could sing for solidarity with other fugitive Christians—and, if they dared, to evangelize to the soldiers and guards. By the end of Wednesday night, the campers were emotionally shattered, physically and mentally exhausted, and grasping for structures by which they could put their lives back together: ripe, in other words, for a recommitment to Jesus and to one's traumatized fellows. The rest of the week, Thursday through Saturday, comprising the falling action part of the week, could be devoted to cool down and denouement: building the campers back up with corny variety shows and maudlin teenage confession and forgiveness rituals. At Luther Park, for instance, the campers would write their sins on a square piece of paper, which would then be nailed to a cross in stacks and set aflame, where the sins would curl up into nothing less than black roses.

Bayli Hochstein, Campus Minister and youth coordinator with the Catholic Newman Center at the University of Washington, confirms the dramaturgical arc described above is an intentional part of achieving spiritual goals. She told us that she structures weekend sleep-away retreats with an emphasis on an emotional arc that explicitly focuses on an intense high point for "deepest impact": "The emotional impact of each activity, game, and talk is taken into consideration. Our retreats typically achieve one or both of the following objectives: to learn about a specific Church teaching or religious figure, or to establish or rejuvenate a retreat participant's intimate relationship with Christ" (Hochstein 2016). For the latter goal in a typical weekend retreat, Hochstein "follow[s] an emotional arc" beginning with "relatively shallow activities (getting to know names of participants, meeting your reflection small group) and gradually develop[ing] into a more introspective, emotional, and eventually cathartic experience." Hochstein offers the example of the Jesus Dance, a "high impact skit portraying Christ's Mercy and Love," followed immediately with reflection, "healing and prayer." The last day of the retreat, according to Hochstein, is dedicated to helping campers process what they have learned and to develop ways to implement it in their lives.

Romans and Christians, The Cold War, and "Fear Mongering"

In the accounts of Romans and Christians above, the simulations used representational play to evoke a historical narrative of the first centuries of the budding Christian movement. We refer to these practices, used throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, as the first wave of Romans and Christians at Bible Camps. As the camps continued to practise the game into the mid-1980s, program leaders and staff adapted the Romans and Christians narrative template to reflect the times, responding, in particular, to the heightening of the Cold War and the arms race between the United States and the Soviets, ushering in a second wave of practice. The mid-1980s were a particularly anxious time for middle school children, with heightened political rhetoric between the US and the Soviets, even as détente approached in the following years. At any given time, young Americans were led to believe, the proliferation of nuclear weapons would allow for devastating nuclear attacks that would wipe out life on the planet, an angst-ridden scenario over which they had no control. The 1984 teen movie *Red Dawn*, the first film to garner a PG-13 rating from the Motion Picture Association and featuring a Soviet invasion of rural America, capitalized on these public anxieties. Romans-and-Christians-style games began to adopt a narrative of an invading force antagonistic to Christian religion in order to take advantage of anxieties with which young people could personally relate. Because the game began to intentionally erode or elide the boundaries between an imagined, distinctly "other" world and the present reality, these adaptations could be framed no longer just as

historical empathy and bearing witness, but as anticipatory scenarios for which young people might actually need to prepare. All these elements made the game quite effective in eliciting emotions of alarm and fear.

Scott experienced Romans and Christians as a junior high camper in the mid-1980s at a Luther Park Bible Camp in Chetek, Wisconsin, which was an outdoor ministry of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin, part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Scott remembers that the event began one evening midweek, as the eleven- to thirteen-year-old campers were at evening chapel. Several armed soldiers in camouflage fatigues led by an adult that none of the campers recognized burst through the back doors and took position around the small congregation. The leader of the invasion then crossed up to the front of the chapel and said that they were communists and that worship was now illegal under the new occupying force.[4] The campers were to report to their cabins for further instructions. Then, to illustrate his disdain for Christianity, the communist leader shoved the altar cross to the floor. The campers screamed; some cried. The youths were escorted by armed guards who earlier that day had been their counsellors to their cabins where they were told to lie in their bunks while a guard browbeat them about the stupidity of faith in an imaginary God. One of Scott's bunkmates tried talking back to the guard. "Do I hear you being a smart ass?" the guard demanded. The swearing was mild, but by far the most shocking and threatening the campers had heard uttered by any adult that week. With that—if any camper's willing suspension of disbelief hadn't been achieved at the outset with the frightening adult stranger leading the storming of the chapel—any remaining hint of ironic or detached attitude was quickly stifled.

The details of the narrative blur after that for Scott, both because the scripted part of the scenario fell away to the more ludic playing out of the game, and also because the rigour and the chaos of the proceedings probably made a stable through-line difficult to discern. But the main elements were as follows: the campers, cabin by cabin, were able to escape their captors and run into the darkening woods. Word started to spread that there was a secret gathering down by the lakeshore, and Scott and his fellow fugitives eventually made it to safety, where they sang gentle camp songs like Peter Scholte's 1968 folk hymn "They'll Know We Are Christians by Our Love." At the end of the evening, the campers and grownups had a long postmortem discussion about the experience. Several of the campers were still crying as the activity broke up.

As research for this essay, Scott contacted Luther Park staff alumni through a Facebook group, which has about 470 members, and asked if any remembered the game. He mentioned the communists and Christians version he played as a camper. Several from the group responded that they remembered the activity, which had been called "Underground Worship." "Laura" describes this activity as one in which campers "were banned from gathering for worship and had to carefully navigate through the woods to a secret worship space . . . without getting caught by the authorities" (Laura 2016). "Tina" commented, "the underground service was very intense. I remember feeling very sorry for the lake neighbors as we, as counselors, were always really believable screamers in the woods" (Tina 2016). In an unexpected answer to his query, the frightening adult who played the leader of the invading communists the night Scott experienced the game as a camper posted a comment. "I was the commie leader that night," writes "Bruce." "It was very realistic. Too realistic for some. Looking back it resembles what you see in the news today of terrorist attacks. That being said, I heard from a couple a campers years later that said that night they decide[d] to follow Jesus no matter what. It became their faith in Christ not their parents. It was an interesting night" (Bruce 2016).

Bruce's memory of the evening corroborates that of Scott: it wasn't just profound and frightening because Scott was an awkward sixth-grader being chased by adult strangers in league with counsellors no longer as he knew them. Even to Bruce, the communists and Christians game may have been "too realistic," "resembling terrorist attacks." Luther Park was not alone in pushing the boundaries of taste and safety with Romans and Christians-style games in the 1980s. We spoke with Luke Halverson, the program director at Lake Wapogasset Bible Camp (Wapo) in Amery, Wisconsin. Halverson grew up as a "camp kid": His father was on the staff at Wapo for several years. He remembers playing the role of a fugitive Christian trying to find the secret Bible study, and running and hiding from the "soldiers" to avoid imprisonment. His father would tell stories, in fact, of increasing the level of realism and distress some summers: "He couldn't do this today, he'd carry around his shotgun as an extra mode of fear, cars would pull up and he'd bring them into the game—and you just can't do that kind of thing these days" (Halverson, 2016). Such representational practices, no longer simply simulating a historical period but actually playing on perceived possibilities of enemy invasion and imposition of atheist martial law, illustrate the game's evolution into its second wave, characterized by a distinct turn toward dark play.

Novelist Smith Henderson wrote a one-page story for the *New York Times Magazine* in July of 2014 in which he similarly looks back at a frightening simming of terrorists apprehending Christians in their quotidian camp activities. When he was an eleven-year-old at sleep-away camp in Montana, he and his fellow campers were ambushed by raiders with rifles on horseback wearing bandanas over their faces, who started rounding them up and loading them into a trailer pulled by a pickup. Henderson got away, only to learn later that this was a staged event,

> a part of the camp experience, some edifying fear-mongering, like the Christian haunted house I visited the Halloween before. . . . These were no bandits or kidnappers. The children in the trailer were hauled up some switchbacks to a nearby vista and given a lecture on what it was like for Christians in the Communist world. How kids just like them were, even today, rounded up for re-education. Christians weren't safe in China, the Soviet Union and maybe even here in America one day, if they weren't vigilant. (Henderson 2014, n.p.)

The new levels of surprise and "fear-mongering" that emerged with camp practices in the 1980s elicit some amount of ruefulness and embarrassment on the part of past camp programming directors. We spoke with Rev. Christy Fisher, who now serves as a pastor at the Wesley Club at the University of Washington, a progressive, LGBTQ-affirming community in the University District of Seattle. Fisher served as a program director at a Presbyterian Bible Camp in Colorado for several years. In their version of Romans and Christians, the counsellors stealthily surrounded the chapel while the campers were at worship, then in a flash attack boarded up the windows and banged on the planks, yelling, "The Christians are in there! We're gonna get the Christians!" Fisher and her colleagues "were never super-conscious" of how they might be "'othering' people," or of whether there were kids who might have a history of trauma that could be triggered by the game. But it is a game she finds "totally cringe-worthy now," she says, especially given some of the kids who were in at-risk portions of the camper demographic. "It would have been really upsetting." She finds ironic the idea of representing Christians as persecuted, when "Christianity is the biggest religion in the United States. It's kind of like an Empire. *We're* the ones doing the persecuting. It's been so oppressive to the LGBTQ community and people of color." Moreover, she says, there did not seem to be a real reason for doing the game, other than a tradition her staff inherited. We asked if there was a follow-up conversation or debriefing with the

campers at the end of the game, putting the game into context. "Oh no," she answered. "There was no context" (Fisher 2016).

At Fisher's camp, at Lake Wapogasset, in the version Scott experienced, and in the Montana ambush of Henderson's account, there was an emphasis on psychological immersion, realism, and a believed-in investment in the fictive world of the game. A blurring of boundaries between game and reality in keeping with the mode of deep play described by Geertz and Schechner then added to and heightened the learning-through-trauma model articulated by Enders. Both Bruce the "Commie Leader" and the programmers at Henderson's Church Camp clearly link the emotional and affective intensity of the game to the powerful learning and/or spiritual experience the game purported to offer. It was again in these instances, however, where the educational game slipped into the seductive and exciting realm of deep play. As such, a discernable baseline for youth emotional and physical safety became relative to individual adults' notions of what was permissible, as in the example of adult aggressors wielding real firearms—rifles, a shotgun—to amplify terror of the imaginary world.

The End Times for Romans and Christians at Bible Camps

Our interviews with camp leaders suggest that after the 1980s, churches used Romans and Christians less and less often, and the game moved from a chaotic field game—"the action was all over the place," as former camp director Randy Youngquist-Thorow describes it—into modified, more staid versions in indoor environments, signalling the beginning of a third wave of development. The risks to the emotional safety of campers may seem to have led to the end of Romans and Christians summer camps, which became inappropriate for the changing world as quickly as they had emerged. Jon Skogen, who was a camp program director at Luther Crest Bible camp in Minnesota until 1998 and is now the administrator for Lutheran Outdoor Ministries, which oversees camps affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, told us how his staff stopped playing the game "because of the amount of fear that it brought up" in the campers. "Pitting [the campers and adults] against each other was more detrimental than positive" when the goals were to "focus more on positive experiences and [to] bring people together and be more inclusive," Skogen told us. "As a director you are hoping that your staff will gain the trust of campers. Campers look up to the staff as role models. To me, [Romans and Christians] played on their trust and in some cases really split that" (Skogen 2016).

Howard "Skip" Reeves, who was a director at Imago Dei Bible Camp in Wisconsin during the years Scott experienced Romans and Christians as a family camper, and who is now pastor at Calvary Lutheran Church in Golden Valley, Minnesota, feels that there is potential in experiential games like Romans and Christians. "'Thrill' is a good word," he says. But he cautions that immersive games should be used for the right reasons and that "follow-through" is vital. Fear, he says, is a quick way to fulfil the goals of an exercise: "You play on emotional fears of the people—like the election this year," he added, referring to the campaign strategies of Donald Trump. "Worship is disrupted . . . and of course you've got people who've been displaced and they're in this brand new place, so fear is part of the fulfilment." But, more than fear, he says, "the experiential part is crucial. Where the rubber meets the road. What we're dealing with here is there is innate substance in us in our subconscious to understand the freedom we have to grow up in this time in history." Such a powerful experience, however, won't make a difference spiritually without a proper follow-through to connect the emotions with the learning. "If it's a history lesson it's one thing. . . . What we try to

do is individualize commitment to Christ and to supply, by any means we can, the gifts of the Gospel and strengthen commitment to the Gospel and be the hands and the feet of the Gospel." Reeves had opinions about why adaptations like Christians and communists were happening in the 1980s at camps. "It would be good for preachers to go back to their congregations and tell them what they're doing at camp," i.e., that they're fighting the good fight in the Cold War. "But if it's a life lesson," he says, "if you can go beyond that, and think about the Gospel, that's a gift" (Reeves 2016).

Randy Youngquist-Thurow, now executive director of Agapé/Kure Beach Ministries in North Carolina, similarly quit the game about thirty years ago. At the camp in which he first started as support staff and then worked as a counsellor, Romans and Christians had been practised from the late 1970s into the early 1980s, with mixed reactions from the campers from "this is powerful" to "I'm just scared." But the move to discontinue the game actually came from the counsellors, "who started saying they didn't want to do it anymore." Youngquist-Thurow told us that the counsellors "didn't like it when some of campers and even some of the counsellors took it too far" or when "there was strife between counsellors when there was disagreement about effectiveness of the game" (Youngquist-Thurow, 2016).

In addition to growing unease fomenting among camp staff, Romans and Christians faced changes in attitudes to youth programming in general as attitudes about child safety and mental health changed in the next decades. Romans and Christians and Boy Scout Games like Capture the Flag all glaringly come before September 11, 2001, which marks a threshold moment in approaches to youth and young adult activity programming, parents' expectations of sleep-away camp, and the survival-of-the-fittest ideals of childhood grit, risk-taking, and resilience. In the face of the 2011 terrorist attacks, youth counsellors and educators became more attuned to the emotional well-being of pre-teen and teenage children, and many educators began incorporating more lessons and activities that promoted tolerance of others and strategies to avoid stereotyping of religious and ethnic groups (See, for instance, Castle 2001; Towns 2011). The us-and-them scenarios created by games that developed out of Boy Scout initiations, like Romans and Christians, now strike many camp programmers and directors as contrary to the goals associated with camp today. Youngquist-Thurow explicitly linked 9/11 to the philosophical changes in camp programming between the days of Romans and Christians in the 1980s and today, especially when it comes to the idea of establishing camp as a safe environment. "The world has changed quite a bit," he told us. "The idea of being safe was not an issue back then. Safety became an issue after 9/11, especially for the parents." The kind of camp shenanigans and practical jokes made popular by movies like the 1979 Ivan Reitman movie *Meatballs*, starring Bill Murray, is the perception the camping world is still trying to distance itself from, he said. Today's camp experience is intolerant of bullying, and the programming is focused on building self-esteem. In other words, building up without the old step of tearing down. Youngquist-Thurow also identified 9/11 as the turning point for representations of religious and ethnic others in camp programming. He could see the problematic representational practices that would result in a Christians vs. communists game like Scott experienced. "Our world is much more aware of the stereotyping in a game like this" (Youngquist-Thurow 2016).

It should be said that not everyone in camp leadership was glad to see the end of Romans and Christians at Bible camp. For Luke Halverson, the game was a highlight of his summers growing up at Lake Wapogasset. "Uncomfortability breeds growth," he maintains. "Even if they cried," he continued, "afterward, they could reflect and say the impact on them was great." Halverson acknowledges that safety has become much more of a concern since his youth in the 1980s. Wapo

tried an immersive experience similar to Romans and Christians in the summer of 2005 called the Refugee Hike, and it did not continue longer than that summer of programming. "Picture this happening on a property of 200 acres. It's woods and trails and doing this at night. A kid did something, she sprained her ankle, and the time to respond was complicated," so the activity had to be scuttled. "It's really about the safety of the kids," he agrees, but "we become more and more limited on the risk we can take even if it's part of the experience." Enrolment is even down in some of the more rustic programming Wapo operates, like Wilderness Canoe Base in Northern Minnesota, deep in the Boundary Waters region far from the reach of technology.

> Air conditioning is now a requirement for a parent to say yes to camp. Technology—Kids can't have cell phones at camp and that is enough for [a] parent to say no. "How am I going to trust you if I can't get hold of my kid every day?" . . . We need to cater more towards—I'll just say it—what the mother would expect if she would go to camp. (Halverson, 2016)

As Halverson sees it, Romans and Christians disappeared not because of any executive action, but because of the gradually changing expectations for safety. "It just kind of worked its way out." But Halverson regrets the loss of the spiritual opportunity Romans and Christians offered and maintains that camps shouldn't feel guilty about having put campers in a bit of peril back in the 1970s and 80s. "There's a certain amount of power that comes with putting yourself in situations that you don't have to worry about on a daily basis," he says, "and to realize the power of community and worship that surpassed the time of fear. And it was well worth the risk" (Halverson, 2016).

Finally, for some Christian denominations, like the Lutheran Church to which Imago Dei, Luther Park, and Lake Wapogasset Bible Camps are attached,[5] Romans and Christians posed the danger of straying from central theological tenets that confirmation and Christian youth education programs purport to teach. Lutherans' doctrine of salvation, for instance, is that Christians are saved by grace through faith, which draws on Paul's letter to the Ephesians: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8). In this regard, a game that requires maintaining outward faith, testifying to the Holy Spirit and evangelizing to win strikes some Lutherans as theologically tangential to Evangelical Lutherans. Don Johnson, executive director of Lutheran Outdoor Ministries, agrees. "It could easily digress," he told us. "I'm not sure that the lessons learned . . . would be consistent with the lessons we would want to be learning at church camp." Johnson went on to say that "the competitiveness of Romans and Christians is not what we would hope that people would be having as biblical learners" and that it emphasizes "perhaps some works-righteousness that wouldn't be consistent with our Lutheran understanding" of salvation (Johnson 2016).[6] Given not only the changing landscape of pedagogy and child safety philosophy, but also the theological and evangelical problems with the game, first- and-second-wave Romans and Christians could not be sustained and justified after 9/11 in Bible camp programming as evangelical dramaturgy, which Stevenson notes is most efficacious for a community when it is responding to and in concert with their needs and values.

Implications for Religion and Performance History

Is it possible to extrapolate larger or generalizable ideas and theories about the efficacy of immersive religious youth performance programming for Christian education and identity formation from the historical case of Romans and Christians? Our research reveals the ways in which elements of the

game were preserved or adapted for other experiential activities lend themselves to such takeaways. Key practices adopted by church groups include at the most obvious level an avoidance of programming that deliberately incorporates shock and fright into the pedagogical strategies. When performance programming looks to simulation games or activities that invite empathy with persecuted groups, successful learning is more likely to happen if there are intentional efforts to couch the performances within a clear play frame ("this is play") and ample time for orientation and debriefing. Jim Badke, on the directorial staff at Camp Imadene in British Columbia and author of resources on camp counselling and leadership, has experienced Romans and Christians at the level of church youth group activities but does not feel it would be the best game for the camp setting. If the focus is on learning about persecuted Christians in the world, he says, "it could promote good discussion," but if the game depends on "tension and emotion" and confronting campers with "the choice of professing or dying for their faith" it "carries the danger of being overly persuasive if not coercive."

> To create a very realistic setting (i.e., making it seem like a real situation) could be traumatizing; anything less will not likely achieve the purpose. Do any of us know how we would respond in such a situation? May we never have to find out, and if we do, I believe God will give grace to us in the moment that he will not offer to participants in a game. (Badke 2016)

Instances of third-wave Romans and Christians-style simulations played in church youth group settings most often use a different field of play than the grounds of a sleep-away camp, such as a darkened building during a church "lock-in" overnight retreat. Some versions seem to be essentially church history live action role-playing games, without an emphasis on realism. As the variation on the resource site www.youthpastor.com describes it, "The object of the Game is for the Christians to spread the word to other Christians, and for the Romans to kill/imprison all of the Christians" (baronsamedi212 2000). This version is intended to be played in the dark with flashlights. After the youth are divided into teams of Romans and Christians, the Christian leader reads a Bible passage from Romans 12, in which Paul admonishes the believers to "Bless those who persecute you" rather than seeking to repay anyone evil for evil. "For it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' No, 'if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."[7] As play begins, the Christians seek clues around the field of play that lead them to the location of the secret church, while Romans hunt down and catch them by shining a flashlight on them, as in laser-tag games. For each small group of Christians the Romans capture, some individuals die, and some go to jail. Those who die with clues in their hand must leave the clues in place. Jailed Christians are released after two and a half minutes (unless they act un-Christian, in which case time is added by the jailer). If the Romans get to the secret church before all the (still alive) Christians, the Romans win. In the event the Christians win, this version lets them do so spectacularly: "[The] only way to know that the Christians win," according to the game rules, "is that all dead and alive shine their flashlights in the air (this symbolizes the Holy Spirit descending on the Christians)" (baronsamedi212, 2000).

Other third-wave iterations of the game stress a devotional component and emphasize connections between the persecution of early Christians and the secular world's challenges to contemporary faith. In one of these versions, on CreativeYouthIdeas.com, "youth learn what it means to stand up for one's faith and to totally trust God even in situations where they may face incredible adversity." This

version begins with a lengthier devotional intro, in which participants imagine themselves as part of the early Church:

> Everybody close your eyes. You are no longer at camp. You have been transported to the first century A.D., where disciples of Christ are being persecuted. . . . Anyone who publicly acknowledges that they are a Christian is condemned to be thrown to the lions. . . . There is a secret gathering of Christians in a yet-to-be-disclosed location. Your goal is to find your way to the secret location and join your brothers and sisters in this secret "underground church" meeting. Along the way you may be approached by one of the guards, who will simply ask you, "Roman or Christian?" If you reply, "Roman," you will not be held any longer and you will be sent on your way. If you reply, "Christian," you will be taken to a holding cell to await your fate with the lions. Picture yourself in such a society. What will you do? (Creative Youth Ideas, n.d.)

This variation does not automatically let the Christians out of jail after two and a half minutes as in the example above. The Christians can either convince the guards to let them go (a certain number of the guards are already secretly Christian), or Angel characters can release them (There's biblical rationale, here, for Angel jailbreak: in Acts 12:1–11, an Angel miraculously frees Peter from his imprisonment under Herod during the Festival of Unleavened Bread). Just as this game begins with a substantial framing introduction, the game debrief, according to the website, "is the most important part of the entire game, and it must be done in a very sensitive way" (Creative Youth Ideas). In the first of two debrief options, the leader asks the participants to recall when they may have denied their faith in order to escape a soldier or because winning was more of a priority than bearing witness to their faith, and this is an opportunity to "really reach the kids on what it means to stand up for one's faith and to totally trust God even in situations where they may face incredible adversity." In the second option, the leader makes connections to the youths' contemporary lives, in which they may be faced with the choice of whether to make their faith known. "If you admit you are a Christian, friends might ridicule you, [y]ou might not get that job promotion," for instance. "You might be deemed as old fashioned and out of touch with today's reality. The threats are more subtle and the consequences may seem less severe" than it was for the early Church, "but there are still pressures. Are you bold enough to stand up for your faith regardless of the circumstances?" (Creative Youth Ideas). The game closes with more scriptural passages: "and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved" (Mark 13:13); "Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain" (1 Cor. 15:58); and "Keep alert, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong" (1 Cor. 16:13).

The web resource Kids of Courage version of Romans and Christians opts for an "adult Christian with a flashlight decorated to look like a candle," who then roams the field of play for the youth to find, as opposed to a gathering or worship place in a secret location. Roman soldiers armed with "pool noodles" for swords search for and capture the Christians. As with the Creative Youth Ideas version, Christians can get out of jail by "witness[ing] to the guards by quoting Scriptures and singing worship songs." The goal of this game is for the Christians to "find the light," and to convert the Romans when they can, and while the instructions do not explicitly link the activity to the campers' own experience (the game is framed as a way "to illustrate persecution endured by the early church" [Kids of Courage 2015]) the game is in keeping with the Kids of Courage organization's emphasis on evangelizing. The site heavily disseminates material in particular on

children living in non-Christian countries where persecution is a reality (hence the name Kids of Courage). Thus, the fact that winning the game depends strongly on evangelizing and witnessing to the guards is the "only" way to get out of jail makes this version seem very much like a training exercise for these "kids of courage" to go out and evangelize on their own.

In other third-wave instances, church leaders have found ways to emphasize the principles behind Romans and Christians, in particular the devotional connection with Christians facing persecution in the past and in the world today, through other immersive and non-immersive activities. We talked to Drew Flathman, who was also program director at Imago Dei Bible Camp in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Flathman is now pastor at Lake Nokomis Lutheran Church in Minnesota. Flathman remembers playing the game, but, like the other former Bible camp leaders with whom we spoke, he is glad the game is no longer practised. The historical content of the game was "pretty sketchy" he recalled. There was one element where a participant could draw a half circle in the sand in the baseball infield in front of another, and the other could complete the sign of a fish with another half circle, a coded sign to be shared among Christians to convey membership in the secret community. While there was some accuracy to this particular element, there weren't more than a few minutes devoted to the historical perspective (Flathman 2016). For Flathman, if the goal is to bear witness to the experiences of Christians who do not have the same freedom to worship as do Christians in the US, a much more powerful and "intense" activity would skip the simulation altogether. "Today," he says, "it might be as helpful to say [instead of] Romans and Christians, let's [consider] Nigeria or Laos or Cambodia to think about some of our brothers and sisters in faith in those places." In the US, we have the freedom to worship wherever we want to. It's like a menu: "we're in a bubble," he says. "There are churches on every corner, every size, of every faith. An individual today in the US doesn't think twice that that's a gift. We don't have to think, whether it's to walk into a mosque, or a synagogue and worship the way we want to." But Lake Nokomis Lutheran Church has a companion congregation in the northeast part of Nigeria, and Christians there are targeted by the Islamic extremist group Boko Haram, so much so that "they have family members that have risked their life to go to worship." Flathman brought up the word "intense," saying, "It's a good descriptor, but you can do that because it's dark and you've got adults being the bad buys while these junior high kids are trying to figure out what to do." In some Nigerian congregations, "women sit in the interior of the church and men on the outside aisles because they are protecting them. Something is more likely to come through the windows, like a bomb." So, he concludes, "I would do that differently. Rather than "Oh no it's getting dark," the real intensity and the real story is more powerful and more lasting (Flathman 2016).

In their summer 2009 camp, Good Shepherd Roman Catholic Church in Long Island kept the early Church historical context and created a simulated world of the first-century Roman Empire without the traumatizing hunter-prey tag-game format from kick-the-can and capture-the-flag models. For Good Shepherd's Vacation Church Camp, the programmers created an immersive environment simulating first-century Rome, where camper participants, aged five to ten years old, could see chariot races at the Coliseum, visit a Roman market (and make their own abacuses and harps), and "buy delicacies of the day such as grapes, dates and olives, using replicas of Roman coins" at a food shop. The Church's illegal status was part of the simulation as well, but it was handled much more quietly and less violently than in games like Romans and Christians. Part of the campers' experience included, for instance, attending an underground church, where they would speak in whispers, and paying a daily visit to the home of Paul, dressed in a white robe (played by "John Newhall, sixty, a retired Wall Street stock broker and a deacon at the church), who told them what it was like to be a persecuted believer (Jones, 2009, n.p.).

Conclusion

For historians, the performative simulation game Romans and Christians, as practised in US summer Bible camp programming between the 1970s and the 1990s, left behind very few documents, curricula, or programming literature that mark official acts of introduction, dissemination, or discontinuation. Rather, our research shows that the game was adapted and then fell out of popular use through a kind of organic word-of-mouth sharing of experiences between camp leaders and counsellors aligned through a community of practice. At its core, its origins share roots with nineteenth-century rituals of indoctrination and social reform, and with even earlier ancient and classical notions that learning works better if trauma and discomfort are involved. Many groups still practising Romans and Christians in non-camp settings have adopted the scenario without the intentional fear and hazing of an initiation game. For these practitioners, any version of the game ought to have clearly established goals, a full debriefing component that guides participants toward making connections vis-à-vis those goals, and competent, trained staff who can be mindful of risk and who can take steps to avoid putting campers in physical or psychological peril.

It is possible to suggest, then, that the versions of Romans and Christians played at Bible camps in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, are an artifact of pre-9/11 evangelical practice, both in terms of the culturally-specific pedagogical strategies for teaching faith, devotion, history, and spirituality, but also the worldview the game assumed about children—a worldview in which fear, humiliation, surprise, and confusion are the path to resilience, grit, and a stronger empathetic bond with members of the community who do not have it so lucky. Eliciting a kind of kinesthetic empathy with Christians in peril, then giving them a dose of that fear in a controlled virtual environment seemed to camp leaders and staff to be an effective way to achieve empathy. But these same leaders and staff found that empathy was difficult to achieve or maintain if the participants were too scared or too deep in play, that is, invested in the rules of the hunt, to make the connection to the Christians for whom they surrogated. Because of its emphasis on creating emotional crisis as a mode of affective and emotional religious experience, and less so on teaching the history of the Church in the first two or three centuries AD, the game's scenario lacked the kind of specificity or accuracy of detail that might have allowed it to continue as a historical educational simulation exercise. Further, as a teaching tool for how to be better Christians in the present-day secular world, Roman soldiers or communist raiders may have ultimately been poor analogies for evangelizing and bearing witness in the twenty-first century. If the goal was to build community through ritualized play, the obstacles to success ranged from degradation of established trust in adult leaders to the post-9/11 demands for safe spaces that disallowed what amounted to licensed terrorizing and bullying. Therefore, as historians looking to Romans and Christians as a case study for the ways in which the performative strategies of simulation and play have been adopted for youth programming in religious education and identity formation, we can conclude the following. Communities of evangelical practice associated with Bible camps found that dramaturgical practices emphasizing emotional conflict and steep dramatic arcs were effective means for achieving psychological and affective heights in experience. These same dramaturgical strategies, however, stood in the way of achieving pedagogical success in teaching religious history and disseminating community identity and values.

Notes

1. As the child of a Lutheran pastor, Scott spent many weeks of his summers as a youth at Bible camps in the Midwestern United States and served two summers as a Bible camp counsellor himself in college. Ariaga grew up in the Roman Catholic Church and never experienced Romans and Christians in her youth church. For

Scott, though, Romans and Christians occupies his earliest camp memories: he remembers as a child pulling his sleeping bag up over his head to muffle the terrifying blood-curdling shrieks in the darkness outside his family's cabin as the counsellors and confirmation-aged (sixth- and seventh-grade) campers enacted the narrative in the surrounding campgrounds.

2. For more on camp planning and philosophy, see, for instance, Badke 1998 and 2013; Bogardus 1955; Burrow 1987; Spath 1966.

3. We use "evangelical" as a mode of Christian religious practice centred in preaching and bearing witness to the events of the Gospels, namely the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the salvation of believers by God's grace through faith, as opposed to "Evangelical" as the churches associated with the recent conservative Evangelical movements and preachers linked to the Great Awakening tradition (e.g., Billy Graham, Robert H. Schuler, and so forth).

4. In a version of the game called "Underground Church," submitted by "Joshua" to jubed.com, the participants play Christians in a town where it is illegal to openly admit being a follower of Christ, and they must avoid jailing by police (Joshua, n.d.). An activity on the Australian site youthgroupgames.com.au called "Bible Smugglers" is set in a communist country in which the participants must make it across the field of play, with a piece of wool tied around their wrist representing a Bible. Communists hidden throughout try to capture the Bible smugglers and take the wool from their wrists. "This game must be played at night!" the site insists, "Heaps of fun!" ("Bible Smugglers" n.d.). Not all readers find this one intelligible: "This is the weirdest game I've ever heard of," writes "Bek" in the comments. "Agreed, what an outdated premise—christians vs communists? I mean really." Others come to the game's defence, citing the persecution of Christians in China and Korea. Then more critics weigh in on the offensive vilification of non-Christians and the us-vs-them mentality the game seems to promote, to which "Clint" replies "Call it Romans and Christians if you're afraid of offending someone" ("Bible Smugglers" n.d.).

5. Luther Park and Imago Dei ministries are now part of the Evangelical Church in America (ELCA), which in 1988 merged the American Lutheran Church (ALC), the Lutheran Church in America (LCA), and the Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC) to become the largest US Lutheran denomination. The ELCA is typically more socially and theologically progressive than some of the other Lutheran denominations in the US, such as the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS) and Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS).

6. "Works-righteousness" is Martin Luther's term for the doctrine of works that says that salvation not only comes through divine grace but must also be justified through faith and works. Luther attributes this doctrine to the New Testament book of James: "So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead" (James 2:17). Luther's critique of works-righteousness was that it was impossible to achieve righteousness in the eyes of God through human merit. Interestingly for us, Romans and Christians hews much more closely to the doctrine of salvation maintained by the Roman Catholic Church, for instance in its emphasis on righteousness and charity, bearing witness to one's faith, and the regular practising of sacraments as the channels instituted by Jesus Christ for the grace of God and necessary for salvation. One might assume, then, that Romans and Christians would be a natural devotional and educational activity for Roman Catholic youth camps and retreats. But when Ariaga inquired whether there was a history of the game in the Roman Catholic Church, she got a surprised response. Hochstein, the Newman Center campus pastor, was horrified with the idea of trying to do such an activity at an outdoor camp, but not for the reasons we expected. For her, the game was a nightmare for maintaining protocol. With all the work the Church has been doing with policies and procedures to put limitations on individual adult-child contact in the wake of sexual misconduct proceedings, a game in a camp setting where chaos reigns and it is impossible to track the location of every individual participant at any point in time would set things back terribly. (Protocols for best practices and risk management in ministries and activities involving youth in the Roman Catholic Church are managed by VIRTUS, a branch of the National Catholic Risk Retention Group. See "Virtus Online: About Us," https://www.virtusonline.org/virtus/virtus_description.cfm).

7. Romans 12-19-21, New Revised Standard Version.

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"I Name Myself in Power": The Roman Catholic Womenpriests and the Performance of Relational Authority

Claire Maria Chambers

Introduction: Relational Authority

Western culture has yet to construct the social normativity of women as figures of authority. United States Supreme Court justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg, when asked when there will be "enough" women on the Supreme Court, answered, "When there are nine" ("When Will There Be Enough Women on the Supreme Court? 2015). The resulting buzz around her response (which ranged from cheers to accusations of sexism) illustrates how difficult it continues to be for the cultural imaginary to conceive of women as human, natural, and normal, especially when it comes to embodying authority. Such resistance to women as powerful authorities may be invisible to many in culture at large, but in the Roman Catholic Church, the discussion of the possibility of women in the priesthood—that is, as literally embodying the authoritative presence of Christ on earth—has split opinions across the world (Patrick 2015).

Traditionally, the Catholic priesthood has been reserved for men alone, and canonically, that law still holds. Canon law 1024 states that "A baptized male alone receives ordination validly" (Vatican 2017b). While most Christian denominations accept female leadership in some form, and the Anglican and Episcopalian orders have been ordaining women at least to the deaconate since 1974 (although there have been historical exceptions), the option for ordination of women in what some term the "hierarchical" Roman Catholic Church remains, in the words of Pope Francis, a "closed door" (Goodstein 2016). However, a number of Catholics have challenged the authority of the Vatican. As opposed to the "hierarchical church," independent, "break-away," or "inclusive" Catholic communities have existed since the 1870s (Byrne 2016; Plummer 2006). Among them, the Roman Catholic Womenpriests (hereafter Womenpriests), a reform movement internal to the Roman Catholic Church, are something of an exception. In 2002, the Womenpriests responded to the gendered exclusivism of the priesthood with decisive action: since the Vatican would not approve the ordination of women priests any time soon,[1] these faithful women sought the sacrament by other means, resulting in the ordination of seven women on a vessel in the international waters of the Danube River. The river provided a neutral place for the ceremony, outside the jurisdiction of any local bishop who would be obligated to respond to irregular sacraments taking place within their diocese. Although the Vatican has accused the Womenpriests of inciting schism, they understand themselves to be independent but also fully Roman Catholic, with their priests in full succession in the line of Peter. By sidestepping papal authority on the matter of ordination, they not only challenge the perceived sexism and discrimination within the Catholic Church, but also rewrite the sacramental theology of priesthood, as well as the priest's sacerdotal function.

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This article will explore the Womenpriests' performance of the authority of women in ways that challenge institutional hierarchy and affirm inclusivity and equality, but still maintain forms of power. The Womenpriests' performance of priesthood names the individual as well as the community as sources of power in a manner that creates what I will call "relational authority." Relational authority regards dwelling with others and the recognition of inherent, human worth as sources of meaning that are creative, co-creative, and re-creative. The spiritual narratives, rituals, and liturgies of the Roman Catholic Womenpriests offer the scholar of performance studies another paradigm for performance itself as relational, one that helps us think creatively about poststructuralist criticisms of authoritative meaning. While the poststructuralist deferral and dispersal of meaning may sometimes lead to nonproductive relativisms, such forms of criticism also highlight the web-like interdependency of signifiers. De Saussure's famous paradox that "in language, there are only differences, without positive terms" opens up the relational space of meaning-making as a process while it empties notions of authoritative origins of their power (de Saussure 1959, 120). I take my cues from existing theories that consider the social dimension of participation, rather than the individual viewer or actor, in collaborative performance. Such theories work toward the "elimination of the audience" in order to erase the authority of theatrical convention (Kaprow 1966) and the subversion of power via "deterritorialization" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 141–42), and follow the "anti-theological" trajectory of the refusal to fix meaning to performances or signifieds of any kind (Barthes 1977). As Claire Bishop notes, the "constructed situations" of participatory art practices "produce new social relationships and thus new social realities" (Bishop 2006, 13).

"Relational authority" recalls the "relational aesthetics" of Nicolas Bourriaud. Bourriaud suggests the possibility of relational art, that is, "art that takes as its theoretical horizon the sphere of human interactions and its social context, rather than the assertion of an autonomous and *private* symbolic space" (Bourriaud 1998, 160, emphasis original). The work of art—which for the purposes of this article can include performance, ritual, liturgy, and personal narratives of spiritual awakening—is a social interstice. Bourriaud adopts the term from Marx, who used it to speak of trading communities that escape capitalist economy (barter, gifts, etc.). "An interstice is a space in social relations which, although it fits more or less harmoniously and openly into the overall system, suggests possibilities for exchanges other than those that prevail within the system" (161). Aesthetically, relational art is mutational, rather than autopoietic; it is its own discovery in the wake of collective action, rather than proffered as an object to a viewership. Relational authority, I suggest, follows in the wake of relational aesthetics. It is authority that transforms and is also transformational, rather than unilateral. It is the discovery of its own power in the wake of community discernment, rather than a demand for obedience. The performance of priesthood by women in the Roman Catholic Church is such an interstice of new possibilities for the exchange of authority and power. Their actions have been a matter of some controversy in the Catholic world at large, to say the least.

The Womenpriests are an international organization, but this article will focus on my interviews and participatory observations with communities in California and Washington in the United States. Although the Womenpriests debate the meaning of priesthood within their ranks, by and large they are committed to a progressive politics that not only is open to women in the priesthood, but also non-celibacy and the inclusion and affirmation of all genders and sexual identities (Reuther, Via, and Hunt 2011). They hope to call out the inadequacy of the Vatican-led hierarchy, creatively revising its structure of power relations by practising ritual ordination of women priests in the full line of apostolic succession. As resistance leaders, they exist in a grey zone between male and female, ordained and non-ordained, legitimate and illegitimate in order to destroy the dichotomies they understand to be destroying their church. In blunt language, the Womenpriests see the Vatican's

theology as rigidified ideology, while they see themselves as arguing for a fluid theology of liberation and inclusivity. The greatest challenge that the Womenpriests pose to the Vatican and the traditional Catholic community is that they affirm the priesthood of all believers in a radical way, insisting that any person can speak and act *alter christus*—as Christ, and as another Christ. The Womenpriests' affirmation of the priesthood of all is a radical re-visioning of the Church itself as being brought back to its first-century roots, when, some historians contend, special sacramental roles did not create an elite class of ministers held apart from the general congregation, but where a community of adult believers served one another as equals (Wijngaards 2002).

There are several facets of the relationship between the Womenpriests and the institutional church which I shall introduce below, but the issue of priestly representation is central. The dogma is that only a male priest can act *alter christus*—as Christ. The Womenpriests' objection to this tradition and theology is that excluding women (and queer people, and non-celibate people) from the priesthood stultifies the ability of anyone to be Christ for everyone and makes the priesthood into a club rather than a vocation to which the Holy Spirit may call anyone (Rue 2008, 18). They understand the role of the priest to be representative of a community in flux. For the Vatican, representation is a direct and stable lineage from Christ, through Peter, and onward down to the present Pope and the college of Roman Catholic male priests. For the Womenpriests, representation is a relationship with both the human other and the divine that cannot be made exclusive to one kind or type of "legitimate" body. They seek to undo the violent determination of patriarchal language by unsaying oppressive structures of fixed gender roles. They strive to speak the ineffable quality of their experience as excluded from the very community they feel called by God to serve.

After reflecting on the meaning of performance as a relational "dwelling with" via an interview with Womanpriest Diane Whalen of Holy Wisdom Inclusive Catholic Community in Olympia, Washington, I will turn next to the issue of speaking the priesthood both against and alongside the institutional church. As the Womenpriests are *un*said by the Vatican, which denies their ordinations, rendering them null "imitations" of sacraments, their interpellation into the language of hierarchy also gives them a place from which to unsay it on their own terms. This discussion sets the stage for an exploration of the liturgical practices of womanpriest-inclusive communities. Along with Magdalene Catholic Community in Los Gatos, California, led by Juanita Cordero, I will consider the performance of liturgy as a collective performance of authority (the relational authority of the community), and with Sophia in Trinity Community in San Francisco, led by Victoria Rue, I will explore the "priesthood of all believers" through individual acts of participation in the larger context of a radical Christian theology (the relational authority of the individual).

Wisdom and "Dwelling" as Performance: Reflections on An Interview with Reverend Diane Whalen

Richard Schechner describes the infinitive "to perform" as in relation to "being," "doing," "showing doing," and "explaining 'showing doing,'" where "being" is existence itself, "doing is the activity of all that exists," "showing doing" is performing, and "explaining 'showing doing'" is performance studies (Schechner 2013, 28).[2] In Christian theology, the conflation of being and doing undergirds Christology and the understanding of salvation in a liturgical and community context. Not only is Christ the word *incarnate* (in his being, he is God made manifest to creation), he is the active presence of God, the word as *spoken* (Heyward 1976, 35–38). The Christian priesthood is a direct response to the call of Christ to follow him, to not only *do* but also to *be* as Christ. Christ's is an *active*

presence in the world (a being that is a doing).[3] Traditionally, the conflation of being and doing has masculine connotations. This is because the sacrament of priesthood has been interpreted as ontologically reproducing the maleness of Christ. For the feminist theologian, the difficulty of the traditional priesthood does not stem from Christ's gender. Rather, as Elizabeth Johnson writes, "Jesus' maleness is construed in official androcentric theology and ecclesial practice [in a] way that results in a Christological view that effectively diminishes women" by "reinforcing a patriarchal image of God" (Johnson 2002, 152–53) and creating an ontological connection between the maleness of the historical person of Jesus and Logos as a "male offspring and disclosure of a male God" (Reuther 1993, 117).

The difficulty is not only with a tradition that excludes women from the priesthood; feminist theology more importantly critiques the limitations of a cultural imagination that cannot conceive of the divine as other than male. The old dichotomy holds true: the essence (being) of the masculine is in its ability to act (doing), whereas the feminine is passive and receptive. I suggest that this limitation of the power to conceive of God as other than male extends to the limitation of the broader cultural imaginary to conceive of authority itself as anything other than male. By another extension, I suggest that our (in)ability to conceive of performance as something beyond being, doing, and its permutations through showing and explaining, also has gendered ramifications. Rather than authority stemming from being and doing, the Womenpriests demonstrate authority that issues from knowing (wisdom) and relating.

For the feminist theologian, Christ can also be "Jesus-Sophia," Wisdom who dwells among her people (Reuther 2005; Fiorenza 2001). I propose that we consider "dwelling" as another kind of performance built on knowing and relating rather than being and doing. Neither distinctly a being nor a doing, "to dwell" is both, and more. From a theological perspective, to dwell with Wisdom made flesh in the person of Jesus is to *recognize*—not enact, not "do," but to listen and attend to—the priesthood not only of the individual called to the sacrament but also of all believers. To dwell in contemplation of the holy *is* the work of justice and community-building in this religious context, in much the same way that justice for womxn[4] the world over means recognizing their *already inherent* humanity, not giving them something that was already their due, or allowing them voices that were already theirs. In this way, the Womenpriests and the feminist challenge to the patriarchy of the priesthood exposes the hidden preference for the masculine that may still lurk beneath theoretical categories of performance (Bell 2002; Diamond 1996, 3–4), when the ability to perform is built upon the necessity of being and doing, and ignores or forgets other forms of performance that are not immediately or aggressively about asserting and demonstrating, but about dwelling: recognition, relating, and attending.

Schechner's discussion of "actuals" in his performance theory exemplifies such masculinist assertion. "This special way of handling experience and jumping the gaps between past and present, individual and group, inner and outer, I call 'actualizing'" (Schechner 2003, 32). An actual is a process that happens in the here and now; it is consequential, irremediable, and irrevocable; a contest where something is at stake for performers and spectators; with initiation and change in status for participants, and space is used concretely and organically (46). Jumping the gaps between participation and exclusion, the Womenpriests dwell within a community from which they are often actively excluded, even as they work to broaden the doors of the Roman Catholic community. In this regard, Schechner's "actuals" vividly describe their performance from the perspective of being and doing. However, I am interested in ways that the Womenpriests, through their work as ministers,

counsellors, and priests, perform their authority in ways that do not necessitate an ontological change, but instead, with wisdom, recognize already existent realities.

According to Roman Catholic doctrine, an ontological change occurs to the man becoming a priest during his ordination. As Cardinal John O'Connor writes, "We don't just put on vestments; we don't just receive an assignment. Neither makes us priests. We *become* priests at ordination. There is an 'ontological change' in our spiritual nature" (O'Connor 1996). This ontological change mirrors the transubstantiation of the elements during the ritual of the Eucharist as well. O'Connor continues, asking, "Is it too bold an analogy to compare the [ontological] change to Christ the Son of God's retaining His Divinity while becoming a man? Or to observe that after bread becomes the Sacred Body of Christ, it still tastes like bread and feels like bread, but is now the Body of Christ? . . . At ordination an *ontological* change takes place" (O'Connor 1996). O'Connor's continuation of ontological change through the person of the priest to the transubstantiation of the elements is significant because it illustrates how closely the male priest is understood not only to act *on behalf of* Christ but *as* Christ himself, especially by uttering Christ's own words. This is the overt conflation of being and doing that upholds the patriarchy of the traditional priesthood, and the doctrinal element with which many Womenpriests vehemently disagree, some even going so far as to call it a kind of sinful idolatry because it worships the male body as divine (Rue 2009).

For Reverend Diane Whalen, a Womanpriest ordained in 2010 and priest to Holy Wisdom Inclusive Catholic Community in Olympia, Washington, learning to broaden the doors of the meaning of priesthood meant gradually letting go of the notion of ontological change. She recounted with amusement a moment in her journey after her ordination where she spoke with a Lutheran pastor about the meaning of ordination. According to the Lutheran pastor, when they are on the job, they are pastors, and when they are not on the job, they are not. Even though Whalen does not believe in ontological change, she does not believe the Lutheran attitude describes her position either. When I asked her, "What is priesthood for you?" she responded:

> For me, ordained priesthood is a gift. It's a leadership role within a community that has as its foundation a baptismal priesthood that everyone shares. Each person participates in priesthood by virtue of being part of the community. The Catholic Church teaches that priests, through their ordination, are ontologically changed, that they are in some essential way, different from the rest of humanity. I don't believe that. I can say that at my ordination, I experienced a profound, joyful shift within my whole being which has deepened ever since, but I do not believe that is due to an ontological change. I believe I am filled with such deep joy because I am able to use the gifts that I have to serve a community of people whom I love and who love me. What more could anyone ask for? It's an incredible gift! (Whalen 2017)

Priesthood as gift implies not a change in status so much as the recognition on the part of a community of the gift of spiritual leadership already present in a minister like Reverend Whalen. For a priest like Whalen, a church blossomed around her as a gift recognized simultaneously at an individual and a social level. She was not sent out from a headquarters into the world; instead, a community called her from within.

Throughout my interview with Whalen, I noted a recurring theme of allowing gradual change to come to her, rather than actively pursuing it. She noted how her first encounter with the Womenpriests challenged her sense of divine authority at the time:

> D: I knew about RCWP through Women's Ordination Conference, which I had been a member of for many years. They covered the story of the first ordinations on the Danube in 2002 in the WOC newspaper. In reading the article, I thought, "Oh good for them, they think they're priests. Good for them!"
> C: They *think* they're priests.
> D: Yes! And I was really happy for them, but I didn't believe it.
> C: What did you mean by, "They think they're priests"?
> D: Probably what a lot of people have said about me. You know, you've gone through this ceremony, you think you're a priest. I know what it feels like to be called to that, to want it, and to pursue checking it out, but I couldn't believe that it was really real.
> C: Forgive me because it's kind of difficult from an outsider's perspective to understand what "really real" might mean in that context.
> D: Well, from a catholic, catholic, *catholic* perspective really real would mean that it was sanctioned by the institution.
> C: So, without that, how can it be real?
> D: Without that, how can it be real? That was my understanding in 2002. I'm no longer in that place at all. I have grown into a deeper sense that we have our own authority, individually and communally as People of God, *and*, not or, we needn't believe that the authority of the institution is greater than our own.

For Whalen, the journey toward recognition that the authority of the institution was not greater than her own or greater than the authority of a lay community paralleled her learning to accept feminine language for God as well. She spoke of recognizing the difficulty within her own thinking, where she knew on an intellectual level that using feminine language for God helped the church progress in ways with which she agreed, even though on a visceral level it was hard for her to accept: "In the early 1970s people were exploring feminine metaphors and images of God. I knew that made sense intellectually, but internally I couldn't make the switch. So, I decided to 'fake it 'til I make it' and used the words 'she' and 'her' when I referred to the Divine. That was helpful to me in broadening of my understanding of what God is." To "fake it 'til you make it" would seem the quintessential example of the conflation of being and doing; Whalen's doing (speaking feminine language for God) eventually became her being (a "broader" understanding of God). Rather than breaking a habit with the authoritative whip of devotion, Whalen allowed the language to work from the outside in, in a creative relationship with the practice of speaking itself.

Such broadening of understanding applies to the Womenpriests' relationship to the institutional Roman Catholic Church as well. From the outside, the scenario may appear as another version of David's battle with Goliath. But rather than performing her role as a lone warrior facing off with an authoritarian institution, Whalen describes the work of Womenpriests and their communities as attending to people's spiritual needs *alongside* the institution:

> We are not interested in doing this with the Roman Catholic Church [*strikes knuckles of her closed fists together*], we are interested in a parallel path [*extends hands out, palms down*]. Here is another image I've used: A lot of people have jumped off the RCC institutional ship for a variety of reasons and we are a life boat. When we see people jumping off and coming over to the lifeboat, we invite them in, and ask if this is a good lifeboat for them. If it is, we invite them to be part of our community. If it's not we say, "How can we help you find the lifeboat you need?" It's about trying to

> give people options so they can continue their spiritual journeys in a community in which they are nurtured and encouraged to grow. Our community has offered that to me and to many others. We would like everyone to have that opportunity and that joy.

Perhaps reflecting how the feminism that supports Womenpriests' thinking comes out of critical academic discourse, they perform a similar challenge to the authority of the Author-God that Barthes and Foucault held out for the possibilities of literary interpretation in the nascent years of poststructuralism. "To give a text an author is to impose a limit on that text" insists Barthes in *The Death of the Author*; the "authority" of signification aligns itself with the oppression of the institution (Barthes 1967, 147). The "birth of the reader" is not the birth of an individual but the recognition of a "tissue of quotations" toward and through which a text is directed; that is, a reader is an intertextual relationship, and it is that relationship that makes up what we might call a "text." For a literary scholar like Catherine Belsey, the process of interpretation is "the effect of a *relation* between a reader and a text" (Belsey 2013, 166). Meaning is never "pure intelligibility" or an ontological necessity, but a plurality. Derrida's notion of signification upholds this: we work through ever-deferred signifiers, never with actual signifieds (Derrida 1977, 40). When a Womanpriest like Whalen and communities like Holy Wisdom insist that authority comes from within a community, they perform authority in a similar way that Barthes recognizes the birth of the reader at the death of the author: as a relational presence that has been there all along, rather than meaning that has been sanctioned by a "higher" authority.

This theoretical-critical understanding of meaning-making can inform our performative interpretation of the Womenpriests' creation of a new kind of priesthood and their outreach to spiritual seekers in need of a "lifeboat." Their experience of exclusion from the institutional church affirms their recognition of authority on an individual and communal level. Naming oneself as priest is a passionate act of empowerment of both self and others. This is why naming God matters so very much; to name the divine in ways that reflect the spiritual experience of women is still a radical act. Being denied a name that one rightfully possesses, moreover, is a "loss of the experience of God" (Johnson 2002, 65). As Mary Daly notes, feminist theologians are not interested in simply sticking new female names on God, but in the affirmation of the self in a "dynamic reaching out to the mystery of God in whose being we participate" (Daly 1986, 33). This relational dynamic does not fix meaning, but rather, to use Whalen's words once more, "broadens the door" for meaning's ongoing revision and renewal.

Speaking of Priesthood: The Authority of Women and the Relation of the Sign

While Whalen may understand the Womenpriests as offering "lifeboats," it is undeniable that for many women the issue of priesthood is a struggle for justice and gender equality. Does priesthood itself serve this cause? One prominent debate internal to the group is about the necessity of apostolic succession and ordination titles in a renewed church of equals. Some argue for a "discipleship of equals," where the work of ministry would be shared equally by women and men with no need for ordination, formal titles and offices—much in keeping with a historical first-century Christian model. Others believe that making women visible in the priesthood is the first step to making such equality a reality, even though it means reproducing the "hierarchy" of priesthood, even if only in name (Reuther 2010). This debate points to the primacy of the importance of valid

ordination and apostolic succession internal to the life of the Roman Catholic Church. In many ways, apostolic succession is what makes the Roman Catholic Church Roman *Catholic*, and the Womenpriests in no way want to part with their RC identity. They both debate the validity of succession while also asserting that they are in full accordance with it. According to the Vatican, the women effectively place themselves *outside* the Catholic Church by participating in the ritual of ordination. But the women receiving the holy orders understand the ritual as placing them more securely *within* the community.

According to the Womenpriests, women ordained are in the full line of succession and therefore valid as priests. This is possible in two ways: first, because the first Womenpriests were ordained by renegade male bishops, who participate in the succession and so hand it on in kind according to the intrinsic, unchangeable nature of the sacrament of ordination; second, because they have a different understanding of the tradition of succession. In May of 2008, the Vatican issued its strongest decree against the ordination of women yet, upgrading the penalty for being ordained or ordaining women to excommunication *latae sententiae*, meaning that the crime is so significant that the actor is excommunicated automatically upon the undertaking of the crime. Here is what the Womenpriests say in response, and about the validity of their ordination:

> Roman Catholic Womenpriests reject the penalty of excommunication issued by the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith on May 29, 2008 stating that the "women priests and the bishops who ordain them would be excommunicated *latae sententiae*." Roman Catholic Womenpriests are loyal members of the church who stand in the prophetic tradition of holy obedience to the Spirit's call to change an unjust law that discriminates against women. Our movement is receiving enthusiastic responses on the local, national and international level. We will continue to serve our beloved church in a renewed priestly ministry that welcomes all to celebrate the sacraments in inclusive, Christ-centered, Spirit-empowered communities wherever we are called. (Response 2009)

The Womenpriests further reject the cycle perpetuated by the hierarchy of male ordination—that a person who feels called to the priesthood must submit to rigorous spiritual discernment at the hands of their male bishop, most of whom, in harmony with the Vatican, assume a theological *a priori* stance: it is not possible to ordain women to the priesthood. The discriminate speech of the Vatican targets the very *identity* of these women, both as priests and as *female* members of the church. The Womenpriests' rejection of excommunication counters the Vatican's attempt to punish them not only for their actions but for who they are—women.

One argument levelled against the Womenpriests is that the women complain of a discrimination that doesn't exist. The Catholic Church affirms what Pope John Paul II called "the dignity and vocation of women" which exists between virginity and motherhood, of which the Virgin Mary is exemplary (Pope John Paul II 1988). If women would simply embrace their vocational calling as women, so the thinking goes, rather than attempting to usurp a position not *naturally* theirs, then such complaints could be eased and forgotten. This argument frames womenpriests as attempting to mark themselves with a status that limits their "dignity," in a similar way that Western secularists may understand Muslim women choosing to wear the veil. In Saba Mahmood's discussion of the performance of piety among women of the mosque movement within the Egyptian Islamic revival, she uses the practice of veiling to deconstruct various feminist discourses that would see this practice as either indicative of women's oppression, or pointing to women's grasp on power within

an oppressive system. Mahmood would like to move away from a position that contrasts women's inability to speak as subaltern subjects with women's ability to work within a system for liberation. Instead, she suggests a third way. The mosque participants treat their veils not only as *markers of* or *signs for* an identity that is either being oppressed or asserted, but as a *medium* for the self (Mahmood 2005, 166). The veil may mark a woman as pious, but it is also the "ineluctable means by which one trains oneself to be pious. While wearing the veil serves at first as a means to tutor oneself in the attribute of [piety], it is also simultaneously integral to the practice of [piety]" (Mahmood 2005, 158). The Womenpriests practise priesthood itself in a similar way, not as a marker of status so much as a means by which to fulfil a life calling. The Vatican frames the Womenpriests' actions as creating a problem where there is none, meaning that the Womenpriests are claiming an authority which does not belong to them. As pious Muslim women claim the veil, so do Womenpriests claim the calling of priesthood.

By creating house churches, congregations, liturgies and rituals that live out these callings, the Womenpriests prophetically speak the impossible into the present. It is impossible, the Vatican says, for the Church to ordain women. And yet, argue the Womenpriests, there are ordained women, and there have been ordained women in the church's past. As Karen Armstrong writes hopefully:

> In the early church there were no priests, but prophets were extremely important and influential. Women were prophets alongside men. In an established Church it is difficult for priests to fulfill a prophetic role. After centuries of marginalization and prejudice, women are not yet insiders and could perhaps remind their brethren of the old prophetic function. It would be a fine thing if male and female priests confronted secular and ecclesiastical authorities in the spirit in which Isaiah and Jeremiah once voiced unpopular views to their kings in the name of God. (Armstrong 1993, 230)

The ossification of the institution makes women priests an impossibility for Rome but a possibility for living congregations, who often operate outside the bounds of formal Church law anyway.

So how does the Vatican respond? Another argument made for the inclusivity of women's ordination is by historical precedent. Further, according to the theological precept of *lex orandi, lex credendi*, the Church's historical practices are the surest indicators of its faith (Wijngaards 2002, 52–53). If the practice of the Church indicates its faith, then the growth and success of the Womenpriests movement is the surest argument for their cause. Instead of engaging with the practices of the wider church, the Vatican speaks itself out of direct response. The rhetorical tactic most often repeated in Rome-issued letters and decrees on the ordination of women is not one of simple denial, which would mean that there is an opposite alternative in affirmation, but a more complex stance that allows the institutional church to effectively remove itself from the argument and therefore preserve its original intentions and avoid challenge.

After the initial ordinations of the "Danube Seven," Cardinal Ratzinger's "Monitum," or warning, issued on July 10 of 2002 by the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith states that

> the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith wishes to recall the teaching of the Apostolic Letter *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* of Pope John Paul II, which states that *"the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgment is to be definitively held by all the Church's faithful"* (n. 4). For this reason, the above-mentioned "priestly ordination" constitutes the simulation of a sacrament and is thus

> invalid and null, as well as constituting a grave offense to the divine constitution of the Church. Furthermore, because the "ordaining" Bishop belongs to a schismatic community, it is also a serious attack on the unity of the Church. Such an action is an affront to the dignity of women, whose specific role in the Church and society is distinctive and irreplaceable. (Ratzinger 2002)

The basic arguments, which are outlined in the 1976 "Declaration of the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: On the Question of the Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood" or *Inter Insigniores*, run thus: a.) It has been the constant tradition of the Church to reserve priestly ordination for men; b.) Christ did not call any women to become part of the Twelve; c.) It is the continued practice of the apostles to pass the priesthood to men alone; d.) This attitude of Christ and the apostles must be considered a permanent, normative stance for the Church; e.) Because the priest reflects the mystery of Christ, the priest must be a man because the image of Christ can only be presented through a man (Seper 1976). The Vatican maintains that it is not that the Church is *authorized to deny* women the priesthood; rather the Church is *not authorized to grant* women the priesthood. In response to a challenge to its authority, the Vatican responds that it has no authority; it performs a seemingly passive role in order to deflect accusations of aggression. By relinquishing authority to the tradition of "the Church," the Vatican asserts and maintains its authority, even as it remains in obedience to tradition and the precedent the Vatican understands to be historically set by Christ's own actions.

Furthermore, the Vatican removes agency from women who seek ordination by reminding the faithful that the call to priesthood is not a right, but a service to which one is called by God. "The priestly office cannot become the goal of social advancement; no merely human progress of society or of the individual can of itself give access to it; it is of another order" (Seper 1976). These words undercut the discourse developed by the Womenpriests and feminist theologians who look back to their early Christian roots and the spirit of "ekklesia" and "diakonia" to remind themselves and their beloved Church that a life of faith must maintain itself in perpetual renewal. Writes feminist theologian Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza,

> To understand the *ekklesia* as a discipleship of equals means to incarnate the vision and to realize the promise of the *basileia*, the commonweal, or . . . the kingdom of G*d. It means to articulate a vision of radical equality for creating a world of justice and well-being. It means to make real the vision of justice and love which Jesus, the prophet of Divine Wisdom, has proclaimed. As the daughters and sons of Divine Wisdom, we are made in her image. We are equal. (Fiorenza 1994, 59)

Karen Armstrong looks back to the letters of Paul in the New Testament to understand again the calling of "diakonia," with its multiple meanings of humility, ministry, and servanthood. She reminds readers that it is the women of the New Testament who understand Jesus's radical vision of service (Armstrong 1993, 52–54). As Jesus tells his apostles:

> You must not allow yourselves to be called Rabbi, since you have only one Master, and you are all brothers. . . . Nor must you allow yourselves to be called teachers, for you have only one teacher, the Christ. The greatest among you must be our servant [*diakonos*]. (Matthew 23:9-11)

While the Womenpriests attempt to remind the Church of a lost calling in "ekklesia" and "diakonia," the Vatican characterizes this language as "mere human progress." Through such rhetorical negations, the Vatican unspeaks the language of women attempting to speak the priesthood.

The Vatican's exclusion of women from even the possibility of discussion is another illustration of the cultural impossibility of women signalling authority, even for themselves. This can be seen in another way that the Vatican silences women speaking priesthood: through the language of crime and punishment, with its corresponding language of repentance and forgiveness. In his *Monitum*, Ratzinger makes clear that the particular offences of the schismatic Bishop Romulor Antonio Braschi and the seven women he ordained were punished "with excommunication, reserved to the Apostolic See," but that this very punishment was executed "expressing the hope that they might be moved to conversion." Here, the onus is put on the person committing the crime—in effect, womenpriests *punish themselves* by wilfully denying the Church law. The Church is not dispensing punishment so much as the women and men ordaining women are disobeying the law, which dispenses its own consequences. Ratzinger continues: "It is hoped that, sustained by the grace of the Holy Spirit, they might discover the path to conversion and so return to the unity of faith and to communion with the Church, *a communion broken by their action*" (Ratzinger). The Church law, and the patriarchal Church culture that upholds it, is an established discourse that maintains its exclusionary power. It is because they are excluded from the discourse of the hierarchy by virtue of being women that the Vatican hierarchy sees women priests as anathema; it is a self-perpetuating cycle based on the incomprehensibility of female identity that lies totally beyond the realm of the knowable male order.

To be an authority is to be able to signify. The Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith's official commentary on *Inter Insigniores* again discusses the "readability" of the priest as an image of Christ: "It would not accord with 'natural resemblance,' with that obvious 'meaningfulness,' if the memorial of the supper were to be carried out by a woman; for it is not just the recitation involving the gestures and words of Christ, but an action, and the sign is efficacious because Christ is present in the minister who consecrates the Eucharist" (Seper 1976). If a woman takes on the role of priest, her action is null and void—she becomes an empty signifier. The Vatican does not go so far as to assume women priests make heretical signs that have a heretical meaning; instead, their actions are simply empty and denied significance.

Although under the current reign of Pope Francis dialogue seems more of a possibility, the official ruling is that women are not acceptable signs of the authority of Christ's priesthood. But perhaps even more devastatingly, the refusal to recognize the authority of women destroys the possibility of signification itself as a process of discovery and recognition. The Womenpriests' performance of priestly authority as "dwelling-with" defies comprehension within a hierarchical dynamic that privileges authority as dogmatic control. Judith Butler speculates, "the violence of language consists in its effort to capture the ineffable and, hence, to destroy it, to seize hold of that which must remain elusive for language to operate as a living thing" (Butler 1997, 9). "Dwelling-with" approaches meaning as something made in the moment, in response to both individual and communal need; such meaning is ineffable because it is responsive, not denotative. The impossibility of women's authority is the destruction of meaning as relational, responsive, and negotiable. This can be seen in Ratzinger's assertion that women's ordinations constitute "the *simulation* of a sacrament and [are] thus invalid and null, as well as constituting a grave offense to the divine constitution of the Church." Note that a false sacrament could still have meaning *in relation to* real sacraments, whereas a "simulated" sacrament cannot. The Vatican holds that the faithful will not recognize the sacramental

nature of a woman's mass because it is simply an empty gesture—not even a perversion of a sacrament, but a simulation. The rhetorical nullification of the Vatican's role in objecting to women's priesthood extends to the woman herself, not only nullifying her speech and her actions, but also refusing to create a sustaining relationship with women and the possibilities for women's *meaning* within the Church.

Liturgy and the Relational Authority of the Community

Despite the strained relationship between the Womenpriests and the Vatican, the Womenpriests' insistence on community and inclusivity can be understood as flowing out from dialogue begun during Vatican II (1962–65) under Pope John XXIII and John Paul II. Vatican II was the Church's response to its changing position in the modern world. The council addressed issues of global politics, ecumenical relations between Catholics and the non-catholic world, new and renewed liturgical and ritual practices, ecclesiology, the laity, and especially the relationship between the priest as pastor of his parish and the laity as personally involved in their community's worship experience. It was not until after Vatican II that saying mass in the vernacular, rather than Latin, became the norm, and liturgies started to reflect the interests, particular cultural practices, and talents of the community, while still following a basic format shared by all the faithful worldwide. It was also after Vatican II that women began to be seen more frequently at the altar as Eucharistic ministers and lectors, especially as young girls began to serve as acolytes and at the altar, alongside the traditional "altar boys." This was partly because Vatican II encouraged liturgical experimentation, and also as a result of interpretation of Canon 230 of the 1983 Canon Law, which addresses the lay person's role in liturgical practice, and could be read as including both males and females in any lay service, which includes service at the altar (Vatican 2017a, paragraph 2).

But the innovation and experimentation of Vatican II also need to be read alongside its grounding in tradition and its understanding of the historical church. Leonardo Boff argues that *Lumen Gentium,* the dogmatic constitution of the Church produced by the Vatican II council, "presents a confrontation between two ecclesial paradigms, that of church-society and that of church-community; there is undeniably a presence of a juridical ecclesiology alongside that of the ecclesiology of communion" (Boff 1993, 31). The church as hierarchical society and the church as community (or "People of God" in Boff's parlance) are two historical traditions within Roman Catholicism that divide the hearts and minds of the church today, and Boff's article does not mince words when he explicitly denies the possibility that both paradigms might be able to live in harmony. The section of *Lumen Gentium* on the priesthood could be read as an attempt to heal this stark divide between ordained and laity by emphasizing the interrelation between the priesthood of all the faithful as assumed by their baptism and the hierarchical priesthood:

> Though they differ from one another in essence and not only in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are nonetheless interrelated: each of them in its own special way is a participation in the one priesthood of Christ. (Pope Paul IV 1964, section 10)

Liturgy scholar Richard McCarron writes about the paradoxical position in which this "interrelation" puts the priest himself, because he is in both the foreground and the background of the performed ritual. As presider, he leads in the foreground, but being "before God" and the mystery of the sacrament, he is also in the background, servant to God and the congregation. "The chief celebrant

of any liturgy is Christ in the Spirit. All the presider says and does must be done with such depth that it leads the assembly to God through Christ in the Spirit" (McCarron 1997, 105). Although McCarron emphasizes that in worship all are "before God," the priest's special ontological status allows him to *be* "Christ in the Spirit" in a way that is not accessible to a layperson.

The Womenpriests' liturgical theology contradicts *Lumen Gentium*. As priests, they are "Christ in spirit" only insofar as they represent every other in the priesthood of all believers. Only then might they represent Christ. This is an inversion of the traditional sacerdotal function of the priest, who, by virtue of the ontological change undergone through ordination, is, like Christ himself, the medium/relationship between divine and human, between ordained and lay, to the Church. In the Womenpriests' liturgy, however, the priest is not the relationship; she merely facilitates the liturgy that expresses the relationship between a people and their God that is already theirs. A Womanpriest's presence at the altar is the recognition of the priesthood of all.

My first encounter with the Womenpriests was in the spring of 2009 when I visited Magdala Catholic Community, a house church in Los Gatos, California, led by Juanita Cordero. There, in preparation for the Easter vigil liturgy, Cordero stood beside a simple wooden table in her home, preparing to preside over the evening mass. The table served as an altar, and like everything else, it was elegant in its simplicity—dressed in a white altar cloth, with lilies blooming at its feet. The memories are still visceral: I am in Cordero's living room along with about thirty other people eager to welcome in the new liturgical year with silence, darkness, ceremony, and eventually candlelight and song. We've reached the Eucharistic portion of the liturgy, which I've anticipated with great curiosity. Cordero turns to Kathleen, another Roman Catholic Womanpriest, who helps her don the chasuble, a formal vestment that priests wear when saying the mass. Significantly for this particular community, Cordero has held off putting on this symbolic vestment until the time of the celebration of the Eucharist, choosing instead to remain clothed simply in the white alb that any baptized Catholic might wear while participating in a sacramental action. This emphasizes the deeply held belief, common among the Womenpriests and those who worship alongside them, that in baptism, all are priests of Christ. As Cordero explained to me later, the congregation gathered here tonight all participate in her taking on the chasuble. Her actions are their actions. They work as one people as they affirm their common calling: priesthood (Cordero 2009).

Two young children bring the bread and wine to the altar for the presentation of the gifts, threading their way through the congregants who stand next to cozy couches and kitchen chairs brought in from the other room. We all make an oblong circle around the altar. Cordero lifts her hands open and out, and we speak together words that for me are at once utterly familiar, and uncannily strange:

> Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have this bread to offer, which earth has given and human hands have made. It will become for us the bread of life. Blessed be God forever.
>
> Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have this wine to offer, fruit of the vine and work of human hands. It will become our spiritual drink. Blessed be God forever.

But when we come to this passage, the "presentation of the gifts," I find my tongue tripping over itself—my brain knows these words from years of attending mass in my childhood, but my mouth does not. I suddenly realize that although I know these words intimately, I've never in my life

spoken them aloud, because they are reserved for the male priest in the traditional Catholic mass. But here in Magdala Community, everyone speaks them together.

Rather than speaking with a single voice while addressing her community, Cordero speaks together with Magdala Catholic Community in a plural voice. Their Easter liturgy performs this plurality by attending to the interplay between the personal and the symbolic as much as any Christian liturgy expresses the cosmological relationship between the local and the universal. The authority of symbolic action is expressed through proclamation and response on the part of this community, not only through voices in unison, but also through personal acts of participation. Lutheran liturgical theologian Gordon Lathrop offers this interpretation of *koinonia*, often translated as "communion" or "participation": "For Christians, *koinonia* within and among churches must be, at root, a liturgical phenomenon if what we primarily mean by 'church' is liturgical assembly. In any case, what we mean by unity is the common participation in Christ of a richly diverse body, not the ideological uniformity of a single idea, the organizational uniformity of a single institution, or even the emotional uniformity of a single feeling of 'fellowship'"(Lathrop 1999, 121). The liturgy, the *ordo* of worship, "always carries the relationship of locality and 'universality' within itself. It is a washing in local waters to bring our candidates into the catholic church . . . 'celebrated in ways appropriate to the dignity and gifts of each local place,' for the care for that local dignity is also a universal Christian concern"(130). Lathrop's argument is meant to apply to the common practices of Christian churches the world over, but his words fluently describe the careful way in which Magdala Catholic Community integrate not only the local with the universal but also the personal with the symbolic. Such *personal* acts of participation are the "shared things," *koina*, which enable *koinonia*, *mutual* participation or communion.

In *The Inoperative Community*, Jean-Luc Nancy argues that communities arise by subtracting the infinite and the universal in order to expose the finite and the particular. It is in the *lack* of a sustained, over-arching, all-pervasive and embedded identity that a community comes to know itself, and that makes communication possible. A community must actively seek this lack, to rupture itself from such identity with an absolute transcendence: "The community that becomes a single thing (body, mind, fatherland, Leader . . .) necessarily loses the *in* of being-in-common. Or, it loses the *with* or the *together* that defines it. It yields its being-together to a being *of* togetherness. The truth of community, on the contrary, resides in the retreat of such a being. Community is made of what retreats from it" (Nancy 1991, xxxix). Where Nancy writes "exposure," I would offer "recognition." It is not that members of Womenpriests communities expose particulars to one another so much as they recognize in their differences the mutuality of their common needs and concerns. Otherwise, the work of justice disintegrates as a common cause, and the authority of the plural voice of the community dissolves. The authority of the community is in its relationality among its members; its authority *is* its plurality, which is still composed of difference.

Earlier on that same Holy Saturday, we all stood together in anticipatory silence in Cordero's back yard. It was a silence that was anything but empty as we watched the two womenpriests puncture the smooth whiteness of the Paschal candle with the ceremonial red pins that represent the wounds of Christ. We were out in Cordero's backyard, where her cat twined itself around between our legs and we could smell her roses blooming and see her deceased husband's homemade telescope sinking slowly into the grass. There was a little fire in a dilapidated brick barbecue fireplace from which the Paschal candle was eventually lit. It was an intensely personal space, and as an outsider I was highly aware of my privilege in being able to witness this community's celebration of its most important holiday. This liturgy was so intensely personal and intimate that I hesitate to speak of it, but am

propelled by the knowledge that this very intimacy is part of this Womenpriest community's vision for renewal. We were in Juanita's *home*—her husband's ashes were in a silver urn above the fireplace. Photos of children in various stages of childhood and adolescence filled the walls. The older people in the congregation had known Juanita and her husband for years as they worked and lived together in their local Catholic community, had grieved with Juanita through her partner's death, and had celebrated the joy of her ordination. The way in which they celebrated this liturgy emphasized that they were persons in relationship to persons: they handed one another the bread and wine—fed one another, literally. After the blessing of the baptismal waters, they passed the bowl of water to one another, and, dipping their thumbs into it, traced a wet cross onto one another's foreheads, saying, "Bless you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." After the presentation of the gifts, they extended their hands and blessed the elements. Whenever the priest would have acted alone at the altar in a traditional Catholic mass, Magdala Catholic community acted together. Whenever the priest would have spoken in one authoritative voice, Magdala spoke together. And whenever the priest would have maintained a silent reverie unto himself, Magdala wrapped around itself a powerful, cohesive, communal silence.

The relational authority of the community may even take a prophetic stance. The prophetic voice, whether silenced or spoken aloud, is always plural. "Even if a prophet's word seems originary, it is always already a repetition of a divine one, a quotation with or without quotation marks" (Balfour 2002, 105). Because prophetic speech repeats the divine word, it shares in the original quality of the divine proclamation, but the original assertion of the divine is not the prophet's, only God's, and therefore other than and apart from the prophet. This means that prophetic speech brings the Other (the otherness of God, the unbridgeable distance between self and stranger, the friend, the others in one's community) into relationship within the body of the faithful. When the Womenpriests speak prophetically about the renewal of their church, they speak with a relational authority that includes not only the community of believers but also their God.

Liturgy and the Relational Authority of the Individual

In the hierarchical church, only male priests can say certain prayers, touch certain objects, do certain things. One example of potent inclusivity of the Womenpriests' mass is in the doxology, which takes place at the end of the Eucharistic Prayer and precedes the "Our Father." In the common Roman Catholic mass, these words are reserved for the priest alone: "Through Him, with Him, and in Him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honour are yours almighty Father, forever and ever." This is followed by the Great Amen, which is sung by the congregation in response. Dennis Smolarski in *How Not to Say Mass* is careful to note that although the congregation may feel led to join in the doxology, this should not be allowed, quoting John Paul II's 1980 letter *Instruction Inaestimabile Donum*: ""The doxology itself is reserved to the priest.' This is preceded a few sentences earlier by the statement, 'It is therefore an abuse to have some parts of the Eucharistic Prayer said by the deacon, by a lower minister or by the faithful'" (McCarron 1997, 106). The Womenpriests might question what or who is exactly being abused by the spirited participation of the faithful in a prayer.

In the Eucharistic celebrations I've attended led by Womenpriests, the entire congregation symbolically speaks their affirmation of radical equality by saying the doxology in unison, and then launches immediately into the sung Great Amen, significantly using words that reflect their inclusive and communion-oriented values:

> Through Christ, with Christ and in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is Yours, O God, forever and ever.
>
> or
>
> Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ in union with Sophia Spirit to the honor and glory of God. (Sophia in Trinity 2009)

Traditional Roman Catholics consider this the highest point of the mass, which is gesturally marked by the priest raising the bread and wine high above his head for all in the congregation to see, a further instantiation of the priest as "Christ in the Spirit"—he who literally holds the transubstantiated elements of the body and blood of Christ. The hierarchy is embodied: the sacred flows from top to bottom—from heaven, through Christ in the elements raised above the priest's head, through the priest himself who stands below the elements but at a raised altar, and finally out to the receptive people, who are nearest the ground. At Sophia in Trinity Catholic Community in San Francisco, led by Victoria Rue, the doxology is not so much a dramatic climax to a mass with a protagonist priest, but a shift in intention as the celebration moves from preparation of the meal to the feeding of one another.

In the celebrations I've attended with Sophia in Trinity Catholic Community, several details of the liturgy stand out as examples of the Womenpriests' theology of inclusivity and equality. The small congregation sits in a circle on wooden chairs in a chapel of Trinity Episcopal Church, a parish of a different denomination that hosts this community in ecumenical partnership. After a gathering song, the Kyrie (petitions), opening prayer and readings from both the Old Testament and the Gospel, Rue opens the homily with a brief anecdote or reflection and then asks the participants how they would like to respond or what they would like to share. The shared homily can occupy a significant portion of the time spent together that morning, with community members bringing their own stories, concerns, and reflections. In my observation, the shared homily not only implements a theology that performs God as diffuse in a community of believers rather than directed through the conduit of a priest, but it also serves the practical function of introducing the congregants to one another in a personal and substantial way, so that the intimacy of preparing the table and eating with one another is a deepening of relationship within the group. The personal often becomes the spontaneous, as persons react to one another with delight and surprise. The prayers of the faithful follow the homily or could be said to open out of the homily as the stories shared flow into prayers and intentions. It is then that the preparation of the bread and wine begins.

One thing that especially caught my attention the first time I visited Sophia in Trinity was the way that Rue personally met and greeted each person who walked through the chapel doors. As the time to start mass neared, Rue would approach people with simple questions: Would you like to read the Gospel today? Would you like to take the bread to the altar? When a person acquiesced to one of these tasks, Rue proffered a handful of colourful stoles, along with the next question—Which would you like to wear? The person would draw a long piece of cloth from Rue's hands, and she would help him or her put it on in the appropriate way (draped over the back of the neck, with the long ends dropping down the chest to hang above the knees), perhaps with a personal story about how she acquired the stole or where it came from. Several times I noticed that this was a profound experience for the person taking on the stole, or for other community members watching the interaction.

The modern stole is probably an interpretation of the long, decorated scarf that Roman officials used to connote office. In early Christian Rome, clergy members became Roman officials (McCloud

1948; Doherty 1971). But at Sophia in Trinity, the stole means something very different, especially on an emotional, visceral level, even while bringing to the symbolic fore power, authority, and leadership. One morning, Rue offered a stole to a middle-aged woman, who took it awkwardly and said, "I've never worn one of these before." Rue responded by helping her put it on, saying, "We all can wear one of these. It feels good, doesn't it?" The woman replied, "Yes!" On another morning, Rue approached a teenage girl to help with altar preparation. As Rue's hands were full, the girl's father stepped in and helped his daughter don the stole. The woman sitting next to me caught her breath and whispered, "I never thought I'd see such a thing—and her father helping her!" Her emotion was visible on her face. According to Rue, the wearing of the stole reminds the community that as they act together in ministering to one another in the sacraments, they all wear the priesthood of Christ (Rue 2009). This sentiment is reinforced by the symbolic placement of a stole on the altar during the liturgy of the Eucharist to signify that the altar belongs to the "People of God."

After the introductory rites, the altar itself is carried from outside the circle to the inside, where all gather closely around it. Then, the designated "bread person" and "wine person" bring in those elements, speaking to the congregation the words of dedication the priest would speak in a traditional mass. Together, the bread and wine people say, "Pray that our offering is one that God desires." A person fluent in the traditional mass would notice that this is in place of the congregation's traditional response to the dedication, which is "May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands, for the praise and glory of His name, for our good and the good of all His church." In this liturgy, the "sacrifice at your [the priest's] hands" becomes "our offering." The bread and wine people also process the elements around the circle, and each congregant lays a hand on the pitcher of wine or extends a hand over the loaf with a blessing or intention. Furthermore, the community members serve one another, calling each other by name as they share the meal. During one Easter season celebration, everyone turned to the person on their right and left, taking hands, looking into the other's eyes and saying, "This is my body, this is my blood." These words intentionally blur out any hierarchical distinction between the body of Christ and the body of the church, the priesthood of the ordained minister and the priesthood of the people, the liturgical voice and the spontaneous, prophetic voice. All wait until everyone has a piece of bread before they all eat together, including the presider—there is no first or last.

These liturgical practices at Sophia in Trinity and other communities led by Womenpriests intentionally disrupt and resist what Stanley Tambiah would call the "code" of Roman Catholic ritual. The traditional and hierarchically endorsed rites of the mass create conventions for worshippers to follow, and through the repetition of convention not only within parishes but across parishes worldwide, Roman Catholics experience the strength of a global community through the ritual coding of faith practice. Tambiah reminds us that the "conventions" that rituals code, however, are not always what they purport themselves to be—he would argue that the traditional missive rites "code not intentions, but simulations of intentions" of the worshipping people (Tambiah 1985, 499). Conventionality of ritual, while bringing a community together, may also distance the subject from the enactment of ritual. "Rituals as conventionalized behavior are not designed or meant to express the intentions, emotions and states of mind of individuals in a direct, spontaneous, and 'natural' way. Cultural elaboration of codes consists in the distancing from such spontaneous and intentional expressions because spontaneity and intentionality are, or can be, contingent, labile, circumstantial, even incoherent or disordered" (Tambiah 1985, 499). At Sophia in Trinity, however, I have witnessed ways in which the code of ritual can bring together convention and intention, spontaneity and tradition. Through their "imitation" of Christ and recuperation of first-century inclusive "ekklesia," they work to blend tradition and the stability of what Tambiah calls "simulated"

intentions with active and spontaneous worship. The Womenpriests do not consider themselves a schismatic group. Even though their liturgies may sometimes differ greatly from the local Catholic parish's traditional understanding of the mass, they build upon an ancient and living tradition in their rituals of renewal. Part of that tradition is adaptation to local culture and need, a notion that, as noted above, the second Vatican council did much to reinvigorate.

At Sophia in Trinity, the Prayers of the Faithful usually take place after the homily and before the preparation of the Eucharist in a traditional mass. Usually, a designated lector will read these petitions, and the congregation will respond in unison, "Lord, hear our prayer." Congregants offer praise, thanksgivings, or petitions to the group, who respond silently with a series of gestures offered by Rue. While the petitioner is speaking, all cup their hands in a bowl shape above their laps. When the prayer is done, all bring their cupped hands to their hearts, then open their arms up and out "to the universe," bring hands back to heart once more, then back to rest above the lap in the receptive bowl position, waiting for the next speaker. The gesture is repeated after the next prayer. This is an embodied response to the intimacy of praying aloud within a group, and as I performed the gestures along with the congregants, I found myself noticing the whisper of clothing on moving bodies, the way opening the arms encouraged a deep breath, and the different kind of awareness that moving in unison brings to a group. This gestural response is not any less codified than the traditional "Lord, hear our prayer," but the way Sophia in Trinity treats this process as mutable and adaptable, even (or especially) in the moment of worship, responds to the intentions of the people present. On one morning during the homily, a woman shared a moving story about witnessing another woman who had stood up against church authority. This woman had approached a bishop, planted her feet firmly, extended a straight arm with palm out, and said, "This is not our Church." The woman telling the story demonstrated the strong gesture. As we moved into the prayers of the faithful, Rue suggested that we adapt this gesture as a response in place of the bowl-hands gesture. We did so, creating a new rhythm and a new intention for this portion of the mass.

That spontaneous gesture following the prayers of the faithful became for the people gathered that morning a religious symbol, even though it had never been used this way before. As Talal Asad writes, religious symbols "cannot be understood independently of their historical relations with non-religious symbols or of their articulations in and of social life, in which work and power are crucial" (Asad 1993, 53). Indeed, this spontaneous gestural response became religious *because* it articulated a critical understanding of the People of God in relationship to hierarchical power. This is a perfect example of another aspect of Asad's ritual theory, which is that rituals are manners of speaking and acting through which faith is actively played out. He is careful to emphasize that rituals are not stimuli which provoke faithful responses, but performative processes that actively construct faith. In *Genealogies of Religion*, Asad confronts well-known anthropologist Clifford Geertz on this issue, because Geertz maintains that rituals are where "the moods and motivations which sacred symbols induce in men and the general conceptions of the order of existence which they formulate for men meet and reinforce one another" (Geertz 1973, 112). For Geertz, a sacred symbol and its meaning pre-exist the ritual, where for Asad, sacred symbols and their meanings are processually created through ritual, and these symbols and what they represent are fluid, responding to culture and context.

In a similar manner that the community, as plural, is its own authority, I further assert that the individuality of each faithful participant, responding out of their own individual need and concern, is also essential to the performance of relational authority. As the members of Sophia in Trinity drape their own and others' shoulders in the stoles of divine presence, as the members of Magdala

Catholic Community deepen their interpersonal connection with each tracing of the holy-water cross, as individual priests like Whalen, Cordero, and Rue express their unique callings to the priesthood through facilitation and leadership of likewise unique communities, the Womenpriests, as a movement, perform the authority not only of the people of God, but also of the individual response to the divine call. Both kinds of authority, personal and communal, are relational; they do not hold themselves to traditional dichotomies splitting priest from layperson, holy from mundane, or even divine from human. Their authority lies in recognizing the already authoritative voice of the individual believer in response to the call to a life of holiness, the already divine nature of the everyday, and the already human nature of the divine.

Conclusion

To be an authority is to be able to signify on the part of the individual. To be able to signify is to be granted authority by the community. The example of the Womenpriests deserves the attention not only of the religious world but also of culture at large if we are to recognize the already inherent worth and humanity of womxn not only as signifiers of authority, but *already* authorities in our own right. I have argued that the performance of relational authority of the Womenpriests within and alongside the Roman Catholic Church serves as a microcosm in which we can witness performance as "dwelling with," in a paradigm that both challenges and opens up the understanding of performance as elaborations of being, doing, showing, and explaining. To consider "dwelling with" as performance invites knowing and recognizing as pivots around which communities and individuals signify to one another, drawing from a feminist understanding of God (and even Christ *her*self) as Wisdom/Sophia. Feminist theology has sometimes been wary of the mystical side of the Wisdom tradition in Christianity because it often speaks of the dissolution and abnegation of the self in order to achieve unity with God, and this smacks too painfully of the ways in which women have, historically, been subjugated to self-denial and sublimation through the labour of caring for others in order to be allowed marginal positions in society (Lanzetta 2005). Wisdom has also been violent in the Christian imaginary; in a feminist re-telling of the story of King Solomon's "wise" ruling over the two nameless women who claim the same child, "the King resolves the dispute by silencing the women, raising violent hands above the child and finally revealing the 'true mother' as the one who, out of love, renounces her own rights to justice" (Walton 2001, 3). However, images of the feminine divine have survived through spirit (*ruah*), indwelling (*shekina*) and wisdom (*hokmah*/*sophia*). In fact, one explanation for Christian theology's forgetting of the feminine aspect of Spirit (as a component of the Trinity and elsewhere) is that it is because it was allied so closely with the roles and persons of actual women marginalized in church and society (Johnson 1997, 128–31). To claim feminine imagery of the divine demands a corresponding claim for authority based on knowledge through spirit, indwelling, and wisdom.

From a feminist-Wisdom point of view, meaning-making is the search for deeper understanding and insight into the self and the world in order to clearly see structures of power and the work to be done in service to justice for all. For example, Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza proposes a different approach to biblical hermeneutics, one that does away with the dualistic model that begins with interpretation and then proceeds, in appropriative fashion, to application. She offers instead interpretation as emancipation: "Becoming a feminist interpreter means shifting your focus from biblical interpretation construed as an ever better explanation of the text to biblical interpretation as a tool for becoming conscious of structures of domination and for articulating visions of radical democracy that are inscribed in our own experience as well as in that of texts" (Fiorenza 2001, 9).

Interpretation as consciousness-raising does not necessitate hierarchical structures of experts, authors, or performers "showing-doing," but invites empathic widening of awareness. Such communication privileges listening over demonstrating; understanding is not an act of appropriation but an entrance into solidarity, or dwelling-with.

In another part of our interview, Reverend Whalen reflected that responding to others in community as well as answering the call to priesthood was about "claiming our authority" (Whalen 2017). Elizabeth Johnson similarly reflects, "As women name themselves in power, responsibility, freedom, and mutual relatedness . . . new ownership of the gift of the female self as *imago Dei*, *imago Christi* is transacted" (Johnson 1997, 75). In this transaction that is also a claim, the woman as an authoritative representation of God and Christ returns authority to God. Such an economy of power is also the exchange of a gift, and the mutual recognition of value and worth. When members of Magdala Catholic Community bless or feed one another, they do not simply "do" a ritual action, nor do they "show" one another what they are doing in order to demonstrate its significance. They attend and respond to one another. When Sophia in Trinity members offer personal reflections during their homily or dress one another in their colourful stoles, they need not appropriate meaning before applying it; through their liturgies, they simultaneously give and receive. Performances like these are their own authority by power of the interrelatedness of intention and reception, attention and response. "Dwelling with" recognizes forms of performance that work beyond the confines of representational "being/doing/showing," and that signify not through the conflation of being and doing, but through such relational authority.

Notes

1. Women in ordained ministry have a complex history. Rites of ordination, inscriptions, and artwork yield evidence that the Church gave women ordained deaconate status up until the ninth century (Wijngaards 2002). In 1970, Ludmila Javorova was ordained in an underground Roman Catholic Church during Communist rule in Czechoslovakia in order to keep the church alive during a time of persecution (Winter 2001). The "irregular" ordination of eleven women as Episcopal priests in 1974 also served as a catalyst for women working within the Roman Catholic Church. In 2004, the Orthodox Greek Church adopted the ordination of women deacons, citing historical, literary, and biblical evidence.

2. I am grateful for an e-mail conversation with Joy Palacios which pushed me to reconsider basic performance theory.

3. "Provided the sign is an effect of God the dispenser of grace, it is true to say: this grace is conferred here and now because embodied, and by taking concrete form, in the sacramental manifestation" (Rahner 1963, 40).

4. This term has grown in recent use and popularity. Like "womyn," "womxn" also avoids classifying women as dependent on men, but further extends the term to include all those who identify as women. Some feminists may prefer "womxn" to "womyn" because the "x" is seen as trans-inclusive, and "womyn" may have transphobic connotations in some circles.

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ARTICLES

Awakening Imagination: Glimpses of Ignatian Spirituality in Seventeenth-Century French Hagiographic Theatre

Ana Fonseca Conboy

After being severely injured in combat, Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556) underwent a profound conversion during his convalescence. Influenced by the lives of saints, by his personal pilgrimage and mystical experience, Ignatius later bequeathed his Jesuit companions with what are known as the *Spiritual Exercises*. Just as physical exercise maintains equilibrium in the human body, an individual makes[1] the *Exercises* so as to attain spiritual health and balance. The *Exercises* are meant to be a systematic spiritual journey and a "logic of concrete decision in which the person's individuality and the individuality of God's Will surpass the merely normative character of general principles" (Rahner 1976, xiii). They propose an active method of exercising spirituality through meditation, prayer, and imaginative contemplation. Beyond mere spectators, Ignatian disciples are invited to exercise their free will and become actors in the scene unfolding in their sensory imaginations throughout the four weeks of spiritual retreat. In that sense, the *Exercises* possess a performative force, as W. B. Worthen defines it in *Shakespeare and the Force of Modern Performance*: the person who engages in the exercises (referred to as exercitant or retreatant), creates, through enactment and embodiment, a space and a place that generates a meaning beyond Loyola's text (Worthen 2003, 8–9). The significance of the *Exercises'* performative force is attributed through conventions within which the scenes progress, in a personal context, respective to the one making the exercises.

Given the theatrical nature of the *Spiritual Exercises*, it is possible to recognize some of their motifs in the development of protagonists of seventeenth-century French hagiographic plays. Moreover, the implicit freedom inspired in the retreatants as co-creators of their own inner plays echoes the call to the imagination of the spectator of the hagiographic drama.

My aim in this article is to investigate how the spirit of the *Exercises* may be present in the conception of hagiographic drama, specifically, by investigating a selection of seventeenth-century French hagiographic plays for the presence of Ignatian spirituality and of practices included within the *Spiritual Exercises* of Saint Ignatius of Loyola. I will first explore the content and form of the *Spiritual Exercises* and give a brief overview of the Ignatian charism, using a dramatic lens. I will follow that analysis with a look at the potential influence of Ignatian spirituality in terms of content in select hagiographic plays: I will investigate the prevalence of repetition in *Le Véritable Saint Genest* (1647) by Jean de Rotrou and will also draw attention to the ideas of spiritual and material detachment promulgated in the *Exercises* in order to address how they are expressed and lived out by hagiographic protagonists, namely in Nicolas Desfontaines's *Le Martyre de Saint Eustache* (1643) and *L'Illustre Olympie* (1645). Furthermore, I will allude to Puget de la Serre's *Thomas Morus ou Le Triomphe de la foi et de la constance* (1642) and *Sainte Catherine* (1643), to the abbot d'Aubignac's *La Pucelle d'Orléans* (1642), and to La Calprenède's *Herménigilde* (1643). Pierre Corneille's *Polyeucte, martyr* (1642) and *Théodore, vierge et martyre* (1646) are perhaps the most well-known and widely studied hagiographic plays from the period. This is, in part, due to the author's fame, but also because the first of the two plays is considered the paragon of the genre, while the latter play's failure is cause for it often to be

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regarded as the symbolic demise of the hagiographic genre in the seventeenth century. Whereas I will allude to the first cornelian play, I have chosen to focus on lesser-known plays of the period that were performed on the Parisian stage.[2] Finally, I will address how a form analogous to imaginative contemplation may have inspired hagiographic spectators to supplement missing visual clues on stage and to become directors of their own internal and personal plays, much like the retreatant, in the *Exercises*. In both cases, the ultimate purpose is that of transformation and a call to action in daily life.

The Theatrical Nature of the *Spiritual Exercises*

The purpose of the *Exercises* is to help the retreatant discover God's will for his or her life and to link theophany—the individual's experience of God's revelation—with self-identity.[3] It is a dual method, involving humanity and divinity, in keeping with the dual nature of Christ.

The structure of the *Exercises* is methodical and rational, divided into four weeks, for a thirty-day retreat. Each week focuses on a particular form of prayer and encourages the use of imagination, memory, and the five senses in an overall context of "indifference." The first week consists of a more personal introspection, of a "purgative life" (Ganss 1992, Ex 10, 24), with the purpose of meditating on the retreatant's place amid God's creation, exploring beauty, but also personal and worldly sin. The later weeks involve a cultivation of friendship with the Christ figure through direct experience with Scripture and the stories therein. By placing themselves in the scene and imagining their surroundings, the exercitants closely follow, experience, and live Christ's birth, private and public life, death, resurrection, and ascension. In the four weeks of the *Exercises*, the retreatants aim to imitate Christ (*imitatio christi*) and to immerse themselves fully in a scene so as to react naturally and authentically to their surroundings and happenings. In Exercise 114, for example, part of the Contemplation of the Nativity, the retreatants are asked to "see Our Lady, Joseph, the maidservant, and the infant Jesus after his birth." They are to embody the role of a "poor, little, unworthy slave, gazing at them, contemplating them, and serving them in their needs, *just as if [they] were there*" (my emphasis). They are to follow up the contemplation with a reflection in order "to draw some profit" from it (Ganss 1992, Ex 114, 58–59). In order to consolidate and reinforce any interior movements experienced previously, the exercitant is asked to review and repeat certain exercises: "I should notice and dwell on those points where I felt greater consolation or desolation, or had a greater spiritual experience" (Ganss 1992, Ex 62, 45). These activities result in an inherent corporeality of the *Exercises* and depend on a strong focus on the engagement of the five senses, and of the imagination.[4]

The foundation of the exercises is, therefore, the human body and the objective is to reach a personal anamnesis, that is, the memorial or remembrance of Christ's Paschal mystery, of his passion, death and resurrection, through the imitation of and the living with Christ (Barthes 1971, 65). The *Exercises* are, in effect, a call to action, a call for conversion and a call for transformation. The exercitants are actively involved in a formative and transformative practice, using all capacities to interact with Scripture and with God on an individual basis and in the world surrounding them. Through the experience of the loving presence of God, exercitants gain self-knowledge through an initial interiorization of the exterior world, whereby they reflect on their relationship with the world around them, followed by a process of self-emptying, through material detachment, which can engender self-acceptance, self-possession, and self-discovery (Egan 1976, 66). In turn, this progression engenders an opposite movement of externalization of the interior, beginning with a

deep movement at the core of the individual, which is followed by an outward form of meditation and action taken in one's daily life (Egan 1976, 19–20). The retreatants' experience is a holistic one and echoes the incarnational foundation of Christian history. This approach gives Ignatian prayer, as Harvey Egan suggests in referring to Fridolin Marxer's commentary on Ignatian spirituality, an anthropocentric character:[5] "The exercitant's bodily, imaginative and spiritual senses are coordinated to produce a prayer of total experience involving all levels and every dimension of the exercitant's being . . . throughout the Exercises, the bodily, imaginative and spiritual senses are awakened, deepened and transformed" (1976, 20). The exercitants are disciplined and completely engaged, employing the faculties of body, will, memory, understanding, emotions, and affections.

Each week progresses from the previous one, with the continuous objective of allowing the exercitants to become closer to God, all the while freeing themselves of inordinate attachments and cultivating spiritual indifference.[6] This sense of indifference, as denoted in the *Principle and Foundation* of the *Exercises*, provides radical freedom over all materiality and allows for a better relationship with God, through which exercitants receive consolation or desolation.[7] The latter two experiences accompany and inform the ultimate goal of making a life decision, an "election,"[8] be it big or small. The retreatants are open to divine will but are also endowed with free will. They therefore take charge of the course of their actions in a previously uncertain path. Yet, they are asked simultaneously to discern every decision in order to make an appropriate election. The election is frequently viewed as the focal point of the *Exercises* and represents a giving of self to the divine director of the theatre of the world, the *theatrum mundi*.

The motif of *theatrum mundi*, prevalent in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and hailing back to the classical age, refers to the drama of everyday life and holds that God and the company of celestial beings look down on the stage of life's theatre, acting as its directors. In the perspective of performative anthropology, as suggested by Shannon Craigo-Snell, life itself is a performance, a theatrical scene, on which "we act our being, act our way into being, and act within a broader company and context" (2014, 63) to become ourselves. This theatrical scene possesses the same sort of performative strength as drama, and as the Ignatian *Exercises*. It follows, as well, the early modern ethos and the topos of *theatrum mundi*. Not unlike humans in the perspective of *theatrum mundi*, the Ignatian disciple, throughout the weeks of retreat, is actor, director and scenographer, collaborating with God in the unfolding of a personal and interior play.

The *Exercises* thus integrate the concept of theatricality as explored in Tracy Davis and Thomas Postlewait's edited collection, *Theatricality*. The editors enumerate various definitions of the multifaceted concept throughout history, but for our purposes, we interpret it as a rapport established among text, performer and spectators so as to provide meaning to the performance:

> A play is not just a literary text but a blueprint for theatre, written to be performed. It achieves its substantial meanings and import in performance, and so is judged by its theatricality. . . . The specific modes of behavior, expression, and response determine the meaning of the performance, as recognized and interpreted by the spectators. Theatricality is thus located both on the stage and in the perceiver. (Davis 2003, 21–23)

In the *Exercises*, the retreatants (simultaneously actors and audience of the Scriptures) are fully engaged with the text and respond according to their lived experiences in a particular social, historical, and cultural context. They are guided in a process of composition of place, using all five

senses, so as to articulate their imagination and memory as they undergo a process of self-discovery and connectedness to the Christ figure.[9] The call to imagination, the senses, and memory emphasizes the *Exercises'* theatrical nature and performative force, in the sense that through their creation of place and scene, retreatants mould their path of self-discovery. It is in imagining and creating with the physical senses and in contemplating with the spiritual senses that the retreatants become more self-aware and self-knowledgeable. Through the *Exercises*, retreatants can shape their identity. In urging retreatants to create a narrative structure, Ignatius constructs something theatrical, his "scenes." As Roland Barthes explains, "It is asked that the exercitant live, in the manner of a psychodrama . . . the Ignatian theater is less rhetorical than it is fantastical: the 'scene' is, in fact, a 'scenario'"[10] (1971, 64–65). Barthes went as far as calling Ignatius of Loyola a scenographer (1971, 10), and the theatrical nature of the *Exercises* can be discerned in the strategies of composition of place, imaginative contemplation, and the application of the five senses.

Composition of place expresses a performative force insofar as it establishes a performative relation between the written Scripture and the place created in the exercitant's imagination, therefore providing it with meaning. Composition of place is a mental operation necessary for different types of exercises: "When a contemplation or meditation is about something abstract and invisible, as in the present case about the sins, the composition will be to see in imagination and to consider my soul as imprisoned in this corruptible body" (Ganss 1992, Ex 47, 40).

Even abstract concepts are to be given a corporeality and materiality so as to be more easily accessed and therefore ease the transition to the retreatants' understanding and reflection. Like actors preparing for a role, the retreatants making the *Exercises* are called to empty themselves of material attachments and thoughts and to become completely available to the presence of another reality. In order to attain such a state, exercitants engage with the scriptures by taking a role as a character present in the story. Retreatants embody a personality (or themselves) and live out scriptural stories using their imagination, which animates their spirit. The practice integrates a material aspect by calling on the use of specific details that the retreatant then uses to stimulate his or her senses, which further underscores the *Exercises'* inherent corporeality and theatricality.

So, the *Exercises* are, in their nature, an active form of prayer and contemplation, and they invite the retreatants to explore their faith by using essentially theatrical strategies. The exercitants are in dialogue with God and with scripture through imaginative contemplation, which includes methods such as assuming a character and composition of place. Marcel Raymond described imaginative contemplation as an attempt to "render things that are absent present, through imagination, through the imagining force, which imprints images deep in the flesh, and changes one's life"[11] (Raymond 1985, 22). It involves placing oneself in the biblical action and living scripture readings in real time, as a character in the scene, in order to "feel in relationship with Jesus in the pattern of his life" (Craigo-Snell 2014, 59). Imaginative contemplation implies setting the scene (composition of the place) with minutiae: the exact topographical elements of the location; meteorological conditions; precise details about people's faces, clothes, or words; and specific sensorial reactions to the unfolding of the scene. It also implies living the scene alongside Christ, his disciples and all others present:

> we should take notice of the following. When a contemplation or meditation is about something that can be gazed on, for example, a contemplation of Christ our Lord, who is visible, the composition will be to see in imagination the physical place where that which I want to contemplate is taking place. (Ganss 1992, Ex 47, 40)

This process involves using the imagination to "see," and to create a "physical place" with all its elements: landscape, weather, people, sounds, smells. The retreatants place themselves in their creation and let the scene emerge naturally as they take notice of what they witness.

Associated with the two theatrical methodologies of composition of place and imaginative contemplation is the application of the senses, which are to be fully occupied during the *Exercises*. Ignatius urges the use of "the sight of my imagination," of "my hearing," of "smell" and of "the sense of touch" (Ganss 1992, Ex 122–125, 60). By awakening the bodily senses in meditation, the spiritual senses can also be heightened and are present to any movement of the Spirit (Egan 1976, 78). In the Meditation on Hell, for example, Ignatius invites his retreatants to "see with the eyes of the imagination"; to "hear the wailing, the shrieking, the cries . . ."; to "perceive the smoke, the sulphur, the filth . . ." with the sense of smell; to "experience the bitter flavors of hell" with the sense of taste; to "feel how the flames touch the souls and burn them" (Ganss 1992, Ex 66–70, 46–47). In another contemplation, that of the Incarnation, Ignatius invites the exercitant to contemplate the house where Mary dwells in the city of Nazareth, to see the angel Gabriel greeting her and hear what he says to her and how she responds. The use of sight, touch, smell, hearing, and even taste in Ignatian prayer enhances the sensorial and corporal nature of the *Exercises*, as well as the work's performative force.

To further exemplify the performative force of the *Exercises*, both Shannon Craigo-Snell, in *The Empty Church: Theater, Theology, and Bodily Hope* (2014), and Max Harris, in *Theater and Incarnation* (1990), explore the dialogue between Constantin Stanislavski's strategies for the actor and those prescribed by Ignatius of Loyola for his retreatants. Stanislavski's strategies of Emotion Memory and Method of Physical Action constitute a logical "system" for the formation of actors and their preparation for a role. The system possesses a similar incarnational nature to the Ignatian *Exercises*, insofar as the actor is asked to use the physical body, will, intellect, imagination, and experience to awaken emotions and reactions. This all-inclusive process helps in the development of characters and their embodiment. Like the *Exercises*, Stanislavski's system is a holistic experience that combines internalization and externalization of motives and emotions and combines the physical with the psychological and, one may argue, the spiritual. In that sense, as well, both Stanislavski and Ignatius of Loyola advocate a performance that is not hypocritical, since its roots lie in the individual and therefore tap into the actor's (in the case of theatre) or the exercitant's (in the case of the spiritual retreat) identity. The performance can act as a catalyst in the process of becoming one's best self and of teaching the individual how to attain that goal.

In the following subsections, we will provide ample textual examples from seventeenth-century French hagiographic plays that support and advance our central argument of the clear relationship exhibited between the experience of an exercitant of the *Spiritual Exercises* and the experience of protagonists from the hagiographic corpus.

Spiritual Indifference and Material Detachment in the Hagiographic Corpus

The *Spiritual Exercises* and Ignatian spirituality were highly influential in the arts of the seventeenth century. As Marc Fumaroli, Kevin Wetmore, Claude Bourqui and Simone de Reyff have shown, Jesuits exerted significant influence over French theatrical production in the seventeenth century, not only for the indirect inspiration they likely had on dramatists who attended Jesuit *collèges*, such as Corneille or Molière, but also in the conception of French baroque theatre.[12] Jesuit dramatists were

prolific in the late 1500s and early 1600s, creating and putting on plays in and out of European schools, on feast days, or other religious festivals (Wetmore 2007, 9). These plays, often retelling the lives of saints and Christian martyrs, "correspond in an unmistakable manner to the hell and passion drama prescribed by Ignatius in the *Exercises*" (Fülöp-Miller 1930, 409) and recall the theatrical nature of the *Exercises* themselves.

The influence of Ignatian spirituality on French hagiographic plays of the seventeenth century is most evident in the way they depict what Ignatius called spiritual indifference and material detachment. Hagiographic protagonists will to live and die in indifference and for their God, to whom they devote and give themselves. They know they will receive divine order and a renewed life on the day they die, and they therefore aim to separate themselves from the corruption of this world as they commit to a spirit of Ignatian indifference during their earthly life of human chaos.

The Ignatian charism, that is to say, Jesuit values or their "way of proceeding," is also noticeable in seventeenth-century France's hagiographic corpus in the appeal to the senses made through words spoken on stage, through indirect speech, and through hypotyposis, but also in the protagonists' path to indifference and detachment, in the protagonists' transformative experiences, and in their "election" to die voluntarily in the name of their newfound religion. This way of proceeding can be discerned in Nicolas Desfontaines's *Le Martyre de Saint Eustache* and *L'Illustre Olympie*, as well as in Puget de la Serre's *Sainte Catherine* and *Thomas Morus*, in the abbott d'Aubignac's *La Pucelle d'Orléans*, in La Calprenède's *Herménigilde* and, finally, in Jean de Rotrou's *Le Véritable Saint Genest*.

These plays have plots that follow the narrative arc of the *Exercises* and Ignatius's life, with possible direct references to Ignatian spirituality. In *Le Martyre de Saint Eustache*, for example, editors Claude Bourqui and Simone de Reyff comment on the probable intertextual allusion to the Standards in the *Spiritual Exercises*. On the fourth day of the second week of the *Exercises*, Ignatius introduces the Meditation on Two Standards, which presents the idea that there are two standards to choose from, one of "Christ, supreme commander and Lord" and the other of "Lucifer, the mortal enemy of our human nature" (Ganss 1992, Ex 136, 65). At the very opening of the *Le Martyre de Saint Eustache*, the protagonist states: "For you alone I am ready to die, or to live / I saw your Standard, you will see me follow it"[13] (act 1, scene 1, vv. 9–10). The play opens, *in medias res*, with Eustache reacting to a divine vision of a stag with a cross over its head. Immediately preceding the beginning of the play, the protagonist had been witness to a vision and a voice coming from above that would provoke his conversion and decision to lead an ascetic life until meeting its end, in a sacrifice and martyrdom alongside his wife and two children. At the end of the play, the family races to the burning bull of martyrdom, creating an embodied performance for their persecutors.

While it is not clear whether Desfontaines was educated by Jesuits, he was a learned man. This may indicate a Jesuit education, which would resemble the path followed by many of his contemporaries (Simone de Reyff, email message to author, April 10, 2017). It is also known that Eustache was a favourite in the Jesuit drama corpus of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, especially in Germanic countries (Bourqui and de Reyff 2004, 56). If Desfontaines indeed had a Jesuit connection, Eustache may have been in the author's memories from his time in *collège*. Given the impact that Jesuit education had on artists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Europe and the visibility of Jesuit literature in intellectual circles, it is possible that Desfontaines made a direct allusion to the Meditation on Two Standards.

In the same way that Ignatian disciples progressively learn to detach themselves from material concerns, for hagiographic protagonists, earthly life constitutes nothing but "a trial of endurance" (Street 1983, 185), and death is a joyful culmination of the uncertain pilgrimage that is human existence (Marcel 1958, 75). In La Calprenède's *Herménigilde*, a secondary character describes the protagonist's death in these words:

> Never has an ambitious Prince climbed to a throne so happily as he climbed the scaffold, and never has a Prince presented his head so happily to the crown, as he presented his own to the lethal blade, he scorned the last summons we made on behalf of the King, with insurmountable courage, and he made one last profession of his faith before those who witnessed his death, he proclaimed until his last breath his God's name and yours, and the fatal sword that separated his head from his body, split in half the name of Indegonde which he still had in his mouth.[14] (act 5, scene 6, vv. 93–94)

The end of mortal life is only a beginning. Time spent on Earth, on the *theatrum mundi*,[15] is simply a prelude to "real" life, played on a different stage above this one. Protagonists believe that they do not suffer in death, for it is Christ that suffers through them. Not unlike Ignatian contemplative imagination, hagiographic protagonists' experience of conversion and awakening to self-identity, rooted in the newfound religion, possesses an apotropaic function: in the perspective of the protagonists, their conversion is salutary and will ward off any evil that may come upon them. The saintly figures reach a state of peace and full union with God, in which their sole will is God's will (Moore 1956, 78). This state engenders a voluntary acceptance of martyrdom and a confidence and faith in the life to come.

The path of the protagonists on stage follows a structure similar to the four weeks of the Ignatian retreat. In a first movement, protagonists are awakened to their sinfulness and choose to alter their ways by becoming indifferent and detached to earthly concerns: for example, when Trajane, Eustache's wife, asserts that "In my closed heart I feel a sweet transport / I do not resist, I give in effortlessly / And my soul quickly burns with impatience / To make this holy prescription lawful"[16] (act 1, scene 2, vv. 61–66); or when Corneille's Polyeucte refers to his "crimes" during life and that it becomes necessary to "Neglect, in order to please [God], one's wife, possessions and rank / Expose for his glory and shed all one's blood"[17] (act 2, scene 6, vv. 687–88).[18] After the first moment of realization and transformation, the protagonists are ready to move on to the next step of action.

Reminiscent of the second week of the *Exercises*, the second movement in the narrative of hagiographic protagonists follows: they take inspiration from the life of Christ. In Desfontaines's *L'Illustre Olympie*, Alexis gives up his wealth, his status and his new wife to be for others and give to the poor, while in *Le Martyre de Saint Eustache*, Eustache urges his wife to go on pilgrimage to the Holy Land to see and experience the place of their saviour's birth and death.

The second movement flows into the third and fourth movements, with protagonists living their own passion and anticipation for resurrection to a new life as they continue following in the footsteps of Christ, in their path of *imitatio christi*. They continue to cultivate their progressive detachment and indifference until death. In Puget de la Serre's *Sainte Catherine* or the abbot d'Aubignac's *La Pucelle d'Orléans*, the martyrs are described as being stoic and steadfast, determined in their desire to die, because of what they are convinced they will find on the other side of material

death. The Pucelle (Joan of Arc) insists that, in giving up her life, and in disregarding the perishable world, she reaches ultimate freedom:

> I finally reach the happy moment of complete freedom, because I leave prison to leave the world. . . . I am expected in a peaceful glory and a bliss that is always free: And I sense that the holy conductor of my life, is still surrounding me. This hope that elevates me to Heaven, and *this absolute disregard that joyfully separates me from earthly things*, are concrete proof of my weakness.[19] (act 5, scene 1, 136–37, my emphasis)

In the spirit of *imitatio christi*, hagiographic protagonists desire to be raised up by the same spirit that raised up Christ. Likewise, stemming from the topoi of *theatrum mundi* and *contemptus mundi*—the notion that the world is filled with vice and vanity, that one should be ambivalent towards it and that mankind is to be disregarded—they "hope for a better land and see no horizon" (Romero 2003, 75) in the life here below.[20]

The sequence of events and actions taken by hagiographic protagonists parallels the arc of the four weeks of the *Spiritual Exercises*: from realization to transformation, through inspiration in Christ and culminating in the ultimate self-realization in the imitation of Christ. The latter step appears in the form of the martyrs' own passion, while for retreatants it involves walking with the Christ through his passion and resurrection. The spiritual journey of the hagiographic protagonists as well as the retreatants' spiritual journey follows a sequence of meditative experience, profession of faith and, finally, of death, and is meant to be deeply transformational and to have long-lasting consequences.

During the plot development of hagiographic plays, protagonists surrender and undergo a process of self-discovery and self-identification through which they realize that their purpose is to serve and live for God, implying an indifference to material attachments and a change in behaviour. Desfontaines's Eustache remarks:

> The one whose charms we saw this morning
> . . . also took our troubles upon himself;
> And the cross completed his illustrious deeds.
> It is then not fitting, if we want to follow him,
> That amid pleasures, pride drive us to live,
> And that power and wealth, luxury and treasures,
> These cowardly partisans of bodily desires,
> Impede us from seeing and properly recognizing
> The path that such a good Master traced for us.[21] (act 1, scene 4, vv. 217–26)

Similarly, Alexis affirms that to follow God's laws, "I must obey, / To follow its precepts, it is necessary that Alexis hate himself, / That he go without, and that this same day, / He renounce himself and his love"[22] (act 1, scene 5, vv. 331–34). Polyeucte views earthly life with disdain and sets his sights higher, on the divine world:

> Death takes them away [passing fancies], and destiny is decided,
> Today on the throne, tomorrow in the mud . . .
> I have ambition, but it is nobler, and more beautiful,
> This grandeur perishes, I desire an immortal one,

A guaranteed joy, without measure and without end,
Above jealousy, above destiny.[23] (act 4, scene 3, vv. 1187–94)

Rotrou's Genest demonstrates his indifference and *contemptus mundi* at the moment of revelation of his conversion on stage:

This ephemeral world, and its frivolous glory,
Is a comedy where I ignored my role;
I ignored the fire from which my heart should burn,
The devil dictated to me, when God wanted to speak;
But since the care of an angelic spirit,
Leads me, redirects me and teaches me my lines
I have corrected my role.[24] (act 4, scene 7, vv. 1303–8)

Genest, like other saints and martyrs from the hagiographic corpus, is convinced of the corruption of society, and of its vice. As a consequence, he voluntarily separates himself from the materiality of the world to pursue his goal of reaching a divine sphere.

Puget de la Serre's Thomas Morus personifies material detachment and freedom from earthly distractions in the knowledge that on Earth, "all possessions are fake and all troubles are true"[25] (act 4, scene 4, 87). In the poignant scene imbued with stichomythia that closes act 3, the protagonist is ready to abandon his only daughter, Clorimène, for the sake of regaining his identity in God. He expresses indifference toward her request that he rescind the statements that have earned him a fate of martyrdom. In his captivity, Thomas Morus finds "bonheur," happiness, and he describes his imprisonment as worthy of jealousy, "digne d'envie" (act 4, scene 4, 83). Clorimène pleads with her father, claiming that his death will engender her own suffering and ruin. Notwithstanding, the protagonist waits impatiently for death, in confidence that his daughter should not fear, for she will be consoled and cared for by God: "You beg me, but God requests that I discard your requests, and be deaf to your complaints, as well as blind to your tears. . . . In the port where I am, there is no danger of shipwreck"[26] (act 4, scene 4, 84). He sees himself as being more useful to his daughter in Paradise than on Earth and urges her to be pleased with his joyful fate. In the end, after bearing witness to his death, Clorimène is converted and aspires to follow her father in martyrdom, in honour of his values and God. The play closes with her sacrifice.

In another example of material detachment, after a profane life of materialism and power seeking, and following conversion and baptism, we see Desfontaines's Eustache embark on a spiritual pilgrimage with his family.[27] Eustache's physical and material loss stimulates a desire to travel from Europe to Asia, calling to memory Ignatius of Loyola's own pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The protagonist wishes to retrace the steps of the newfound Saviour and to live simply, as was asked of him in his miraculous vision prior to the opening of the play:

A divine movement which strikes my soul,
Inspires me to go from Europe to Asia,
And there, with a heart seized by a holy fervour,
See the places where my Saviour was born and died
. . .
In these places, far from Rome, far from its slavery,
We will be allowed to freely pay homage

> To this immortal being who can lift us up,
> And who has lost us, only to save us.[28] (act 1, scene 4, vv. 265–68; 277–80)

Trajane, Eustache's wife, responds positively to his request to follow, and in her reply emerge other possible allusions to the Ignatian charism:

> Heaven has assuredly placed in your soul
> This honourable *desire*, this noble *flame*,
> Which passing through me,
> Imprints in my heart a similar intent
> . . .
> Let us leave, leave an ungrateful homeland without sorrow
> *To this detachment my spirit commits itself.*[29] (act 1, scene 4, vv. 285–91, my emphasis)

The "désir" that was placed in Eustache's soul may be interpreted as the holy desire that one seeks during the journey of the *Spiritual Exercises*. Furthermore, the use of the verb "imprimer" to express the influence on Eustache may recall the impressions or the marks that are left in the retreatant's memory or imagination during their spiritual journey. Ignatius would tell his disciples to "Go set the world on fire" when they left on pilgrimage or on mission (Manney 2017). Can this "noble flame" be read as a reference to the flame of Ignatius in his appeal to disciples departing on a spiritual journey? While "flamme" and "désir" are commonplace in the vocabulary of seventeenth-century drama, it is nonetheless reasonable to posit that in the context of a martyr play these terms also reflect the Ignatian charism. If indeed the earlier allusion to the "Standard" is, as Bourqui and de Reyff suggest, a reference to the meditation on the Standards from the *Spiritual Exercises*, and if Desfontaines was, believably, a product of a Jesuit *collège*, the mention of "flamme," "désir" and "imprimer" may result from a personal choice of the author to continue the expression of Ignatian themes in the play.

Finally, the "éloignement" of which Trajane speaks is, explicitly, of a physical nature. However, the "patrie" that is left behind and this "éloignement" are certainly also, implicitly, of a spiritual nature. The life of material attachments, their former homeland, will be left behind. The act of detachment becomes their indigenous space, one they were originally unaware of but to which they are returning. They will draw away from the materiality of "these fateful places" ("ces funestes lieux") filled with "funereal objects" ("*objets* funèbres") (act 1, scene 4, vv. 247–49, my emphasis). By distancing themselves, the protagonists can find a new life of spiritual engagement, indifference, and detachment, through a lived experience of the imitation of Christ, in the physical locale of the Messiah's life. Christians are called to be saints, to live out their lives in an exemplary way and to follow the footsteps of Christ—this is their essence and the place they return to upon completing their process of self-emptying and self-reflection.

Desfontaines also explores material detachment and spiritual indifference in his *L'Illustre Olympie ou Le Saint Alexis*. Here, the author chooses to focus on the viewpoint of Olympie, Alexis's wife, and the turbulent relationship with her contenders in the absence of her husband.[30] Nevertheless, the play follows, on a secondary plane, the hagiographic account of the life of Saint Alexis. In doing so, it also sparks reminiscences of Ignatius's *Exercises*, his pilgrim life, his charism, and his desire to devoid himself of all material attachments.

At his father's request and as an honourable son, Alexis agrees to marry Olympie. However, heeding a call from the Virgin Mary, the saintly protagonist departs from his home on his wedding night:

> But whatever Heaven wills, because its law
> Supersedes my own wishes.
> I tried to resist, I must obey,
> To follow its precepts, it is necessary that Alexis hate himself,
> That he go without, and that this same day,
> He renounce himself and his love
> . . .
> I will go where your voice today invites me
> . . .
> I hear [the Virgin Mary], she wants me to depart,
> And all I can do, is to say Goodbye to you.[31] (act 1, scene 5, vv. 329–34, 339, 353–54)

Alexis is confronted with a choice—to disrespect his brethren and his loving bride or to follow the voice of the Virgin that requests him to depart. He elects to "go without" and "renounce himself" and make his way east. Similarly, after Ignatius's life-changing battle injury, the founder of the Society of Jesus was confronted with a choice to return to his life as a soldier and of *galanterie* or to transform his life and follow the model of the saints whose lives had inspired him during his long convalescence.

At the end of act 2 of *Le Saint Alexis*, we see the concretization of the protagonist's election. He appears on stage, devoid of all material possessions, holding in one hand the vestments of his previous life of wealth and in the other, modest beggars' clothes. The contrast between the two is underlined by Alexis's descriptions. He juxtaposes the "Seductresses of the senses who flattered my desires, / Deceptive ecstasies, ridiculous pleasures, / Luxury, games, pastimes, dangerous delights, / Treasures of their errors, partisans and accomplices"[32] (act 2, scene 6, vv. 617–20) to the "Vestments of my joy, glorious instruments" which he pleads to "Be hereafter my most beautiful ornaments, / May power concede to you, and may you serve as trophy / Over my ambition, stifled with your help"[33] (act 2, scene 6, vv. 613–16). Alexis strips himself of the former accusing them, "For too long, you have deceived me / But henceforth your trap is shattered"[34] (vv. 621–22), and giving them to two paupers.

The *Saint Alexis* episode certainly echoes the legend of St. Martin of Tours, Christian convert and former knight, who, according to legend, stripped himself of his cloak to give to a poor passerby. It also echoes an incident in Ignatius of Loyola's life at the beginning of his journey east. When he reached the town of Montserrat, in Spain, he left his sword at the Benedictine shrine of Our Lady of Montserrat and proceeded to give away his rich garments to a poor man. From then on, he would wear beggars' clothes (Thiry 1956, 60–62). While this is a common motif in religious accounts, for both Alexis and Ignatius, the gift of the opulent clothing emblematically demonstrates a desire to detach themselves from the material world. Furthermore, the poor vestments they henceforth don represent a victory over the weakness of the flesh and any spiritual temptation.

In Alexis's attempt to travel to Edessa, his vessel is shipwrecked and he is obliged to return to his home in Rome, unrecognizable to his family because of the turmoil he has endured. His profound and internal transformation is externalized in his outward appearance and comportment, in his

desire to remain incognito among his kin. When Olympie asks the "beggar" if he had any news of Alexis during his travels, he answered in ambiguous terms, not lying, but also avoiding self-revelation. His election reflects a desire to maintain detachment without betraying his Christian values. Alexis remains unrecognizable until after his death, when his father finds a note in the deceased's hand describing his adventure and identifying him as his lawful son. Olympie is filled with grief in the moment of anagnorisis, of recognition of her husband, and swiftly joins her husband in death, after being separated from him during life.

Given the influence exerted by the Society of Jesus on the arts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it is possible that Alexis and Eustache's accounts could have been among those that inspired Ignatius of Loyola. Like Eustache or Alexis, the Spaniard was inspired by a desire to visit the Holy Land. Unlike Alexis, after many obstacles, Ignatius did make it to Jerusalem. However, he did not stay for long, as he was threatened with excommunication for the danger posed by his presence in the Holy Land. Consequently, he too had to return home. Ignatius's life and writings conceivably acted as a source of inspiration for hagiographic dramatists, such as Desfontaines, in the plot development of their plays. These illustrate exemplary lives of saints and martyrs who, like Alexis or Eustache, or like Catherine or Joan of Arc, can detach themselves from the material temptations of this world and live in spiritual indifference until the transition, through death, to a new beginning, in the world above.

Ignatian Repetition in Rotrou's *Le Véritable Saint Genest*

Rotrou's Genest from *Le Véritable Saint Genest* also opts for a life of detachment and indifference. However, the strength of this play, in its embodiment of the Ignatian charism, comes from a different source. For our argument, the most compelling aspect of the play is the relationship to repetition and its power in engendering the conversion and devotion of the protagonist. This methodical and judicious action is at the root of Genest's transformative experience, of the revelation of the true or "véritable" Genest, and of the "apprehension of the sacred dimension of existence" (Ligo 2009, 403). Genest transforms his lines through performance. He appropriates them so that he is, literally, performing his identity. It is through his vocation as actor that Genest heeds the calling to divinity.

Genest, a Roman actor celebrated for his parodic representation of Christian baptism, converts and declares himself a Christian in the middle of his performance of the life of Adrian, Roman soldier-turned-Christian convert and martyr. Genest decries the theatre of the world by affirming his vocation has metamorphosed from actor of the Empire to actor of God:

> This ephemeral world, and its frivolous glory,
> Is a comedy where I didn't know my role;
> I was not aware of how ardently my heart should burn,
> The devil dictated to me, when God wanted to speak;
> But since the care of an angelic spirit,
> Leads me, redirects me and teaches me my lines
> I have corrected my role . . .[35] (act 4, scene 7, vv. 1303–8)

The sacred and the profane intersect and even merge in this play. Genest describes himself as being in a liminal state between the machinations of the devil, traditionally associated with the

netherworld, and the soft nudging of God above. He was stuck on the world's stage, pulled from above and from below. Once his eyes are opened and he experiences conversion, he can confidently detach himself and "correct his role." In a similar fashion to the exercitant of the *Exercises,* Genest "does not disappear, but shifts in the place"[36] (Barthes 1971, 67). This is the moment of discovery of pre-existing and authentic identity. He has experienced, reflected and now can move on to action. In his transition from actor on the earthly stage to actor of the divine sphere, and in his return to his indigenous space, Genest bridges theatrical performance with Christian identity. His representation of Adrian, originally meant to be simple mimesis, garners meaning and a theological reality as he transitions from performing the character to performing and consequently becoming himself. It is through this transition that he actualizes his theatrical character and professes his identity through embodied performance.

Genest, as an actor, is accustomed to employing repetition for the purpose of rehearsing a role: "I know that, in order to experience it, through a long study / The art of transforming ourselves becomes a habit"[37] (act 2, scene 4, vv. 405–6). It helps in what Fr. James Martin, SJ calls the "spirituality of acting," whereby the actor grows in knowledge of and compassion for the character (Jackson 2001, 82). Curiously, the term "répétition" in French can refer to both the recurrence of an action, as in the English sense, and, in dramaturgy, it refers to the act of rehearsing a scene. Acting, by nature, however, is not repeatable (Wright 2013, 53).

Rotrou plays with the double meaning of the verb "répéter," since it is through the protagonist's repetition of the role that he makes "foreign something familiar in order to realize its incongruity with the gospel and to reorient [his] performance toward faithful witness" (Lugt 2014, 577). It is in the unfamiliarity of the familiar that newness arrives, that the invisible becomes visible. That which was already present in the depths of the being is revealed and becomes tangible: "Gods, employ against me my defense and yours / In gesture and in name, I find myself to be another / I feign Adrian less than I become him / And take with his name Christian sentiments"[38] (act 2, scene 4, vv. 401–4). Genest concretizes Adrian's identity and from his repetition come discernment of spirits, an election and, ultimately, conversion.

Genest meditates on his role as the Christian martyr Adrian during rehearsal, hears a voice of a divine being urging him to pursue his real role and finally realizes his conversion on stage. The interiorization of his role through repetition concludes with an outburst and revelation of his newly discovered vocation:

> I must remove the mask and share with you my thoughts
> The God that I have hated inspires in me his love;
> Adrian has spoken, Genest speaks now!
> It is no longer Adrian, it is Genest who breathes,
> The grace of baptism, and the honor of martyrdom.[39] (act 4, scene 5, vv. 1244–48).

In his declaration that it is no longer the character Adrian that speaks, but the protagonist Genest who takes the stage, he externalizes the prior process of interiorization and contemplation. He assumes his identity and projects it until his earthly life is taken from him.

Genest perfectly reflects Barthes's interpretation of the Ignatian exercitant's self-representation through the use of imagination:

> All is done so that the exercitants represent themselves to themselves: it is their body which occupy them . . . an actual someone (Ignatius, the exercitant, the reader, it doesn't matter) takes his/her place and his/her role in the scene: the *I* appears. . . . Their plasticity is absolute: they can transform themselves, minimize their presence according to the needs of the comparison . . . the exercitants (supposing that they are the subject of the meditation) do not disappear, but shift in the place.[40] (Barthes 1971, 66–67)

Barthes spoke of the *Exercises* as a form of "théâtralisation" and as a dramatic text (Barthes 1971, 47), where the retreatant should not know what would follow. It is in a similar way, where "the exercitants are similar to a subject that would speak while not knowing the end of the sentence they are uttering; they live out the incompleteness of the chain of speech"[41] (47), that hagiographic protagonists, like Genest, behave when faced with their election. Genest goes as far as remarking that the Spirit is now his prompter and it is through his own lips that God's word and desires are proclaimed: "An angel is the prompter, an angel sets me straight / . . . the care of an angelic spirit / Leads me, straightens me and teaches me my lines"[42] (act 4, scene 7, vv. 1300, 1307–8). In this moment, Adrian/Genest's actions echo perfectly how Egan describes the anthropocentric moment of the *Exercises,* as a

> radical return to himself as subject, the active disposition of his entire person, his creative self-presence, his presence to his own deepest mystery as man, a self-presence which sums up, concentrates and fulfills the expectations of his own created self-transcendence to surrender itself to loving Mystery in Christ Jesus. (Egan 1976, 66)

The protagonist becomes who he was meant to be, in a moment of what Laurence Wright might label as "irreplaceable acting" (Wright 2013, 53). Genest puts on his "new self" through baptism and realizes what he already was and knew at the core of his being.

As was noted earlier, repetition is a crucial element in the pedagogy and methodology of the *Exercises*. Ignatius explains his use of repetition in the following terms: "I have used the word repetition because the intellect, aided by the memory, will without digressing reflect on the matters contemplated in the previous exercises" (Ganss 1992, Ex 64, 46). For the founder of the Order, repetition allows for reflection and interiorization supported by memory. It can also function as purgation. In Ex 118–34, the retreatants are asked to do repetitions of previous contemplations and then build on these by applying the five senses in yet another repetition:

> The exercitant should make a repetition of the first and second exercises [contemplation of the Incarnation and contemplation of the Nativity]. Always he or she will note some more important points where some insight, consolation, or desolation was experienced. . . . In this repetition, and in all those which follow, the order of procedure will be the same as what was used in the repetitions of the First Week [62–64]. The subject matter is changed but the same procedure is kept (Ganss 1992, Ex 118–19, 59).

In his analysis of the *Exercises*, Barthes mentions two types of repetition: literal repetition and varied repetition. The former consists of redoing an exercise in its content and its form, much like the repetition Genest does at the beginning of the play to memorize his role as Adrian. Varied repetition

involves slightly changing the perspective in conducting a repetition. Whereas in the *Exercises* this may involve reflecting upon a decision from the viewpoint of one's deathbed or looking back on it when entering Paradise, in Genest's case the repetition of the role changes as the actor's viewpoint fuses with that of his character and he fully appropriates Adrian. In neither case, as Barthes argues, is repetition mechanical. Instead, it is meant to bring some form of conclusion or consolidation to a previous reflection, reaction or decision (Barthes 1971, 63–64). With Genest's metamorphosis comes a life decision, his election, to relinquish human control and embrace spiritual indifference and material detachment.

The play inspires dialogue between dramatic spheres through the doubling up of characters and plots, and it unveils the inner workings of theatre, as it discloses its fundamental fictitiousness. By doing so, it can also spark the audience's reflection (Pasquier 1995, 172). The second act opens with a description of the inner play's scenography. Genest, troupe director and actor, argues with the set designer about the best way to conceive the set for the upcoming performance of the life of Adrian. The set designer contends that, given their lack of time for preparation of the performance, a simpler set provides a better perspective for the audience because "One sees better from afar"[43] (act 2, scene 1, v. 327). Genest, on the other hand, insists that the set be enriched, ornamented and detailed. This exchange provides commentary to the use of optics in set design, a fairly new and prominent science applied to the theatre (Pasquier 1995, 156–57), as well as to the typical hyperbolic décor of baroque theatre. Yet, it is also possible to look at the insistence on scenography, and analogously, on the composition of the stage where Genest's conversion will occur, as a foreshadowing of Genest's impending conversion and availability to (Ignatian) indifference.

Genest's original obstinacy in composing the scene for his play is influenced by Adrian's openness and availability and metamorphoses into Genest's different, more spiritual and Ignatian composition of place, which will lead him on his path of self-discovery and self-identity in a composition of self (Peters 1968, 30). Genest, the actor/director, who was originally very vocal about certain details and changes to the material set, becomes progressively detached from the physical world and allows for the role of director and stage manager to be appropriated by an external force. He gradually embraces a spiritual freedom and detaches himself from material worries.

As the plot unfolds, the protagonist follows the recommendation of the set designer to step back and take the long view of the set, in order to get the full effect and see better. This attitude is transposed to his life off-stage, but still on the *theatrum mundi*. In an act of letting go, and of freeing himself from the details of material life, Genest has a better perspective on his purpose and true vocation. He is to remain an actor but will make the transition from actor for the Emperor to actor for God. It is in the preparation stages of his role as Adrian that the audience first becomes aware of this transition to come. It is in the rehearsal and the repeated actions and words of Adrian that Genest is exposed to hints of the divine:

> If your God wants your death, you have lived too long already.
> I witnessed, Heavens, you know, by the number of souls
> I dared to send to you through paths of flames,
> Over the burning grills and within the bulls,
> The singing of the condemned and the shaking of the executioners.[44] (act 2, scene 4, vv. 392–96)

These verses are repeated three times during act 2. From persecutor, Adrian had become persecuted, but he gave himself freely to his new vocation and destiny. In internalizing Adrian's conversion during his rehearsal of the role, Genest has the opportunity to reflect more deeply on the meaning of his character's actions. In repeating these words, Genest also foreshadows his own martyrdom at the end of the play. Finally, it is in the repetitions of Genest's lines that we can, once again, catch a glimpse of Ignatian spirituality in the hagiographic corpus.

Overall, saintly figures, including Ignatius and these hagiographic protagonists, strived for a life of material detachment and spiritual indifference. Detachment and subsequent openness were accomplished by Ignatius as well as by Eustache, Genest, and Alexis, among others. They accept and welcome everything that is God-given, and they conduct themselves for God's honour, *ad majorem Dei gloriam*.[45] These were approaches they could also inspire in others.

A Call to the Awakening of the Audience's Imagination

Not only did the content of seventeenth-century French hagiographic plays draw on Ignatian motifs, but these plays also invited spectators to use their imagination in a way that resembled the Ignatian practice of composition of place. In the context of hagiographic theatre, discursive processes such as hypotyposis, a vivid verbal description of events, encourage contemplation, in that the latter "engenders the disposition to await an epiphany of God" (Ligo 2009, 414). Discursive strategies permit a visualization of what is otherwise concealed and invisible from the public eye. Much like imaginative contemplation and composition of place, the discursive processes are a call to imagination and emotional memory, to the creation of internal and personal plots and imaginary performances, in the minds of those observing. Though Eustache and Genest are martyred at the end of their respective plays, spectators are not privy to the spectacle of death. This was in part due to aesthetic constraints stemming from Neoaristotelian restrictions that would drive French tragedy after 1630. It was also due to the difficulty in representing death and miraculous events on stage. Without the ability to strike at the visual reception of the audience through depictions of martyrdom, playwrights had to privilege other senses, namely the spectators' hearing, while still adhering to the rules. In his *Lettre sur la règle des vingt-quatre heures* (Letter on the Rule of Twenty-Four Hours), addressed to Antoine Godeau (1630), Jean Chapelain suggested that it was necessary to introduce narratives ("récits") on the stage that would supplement the plot.[46] For this purpose, playwrights frequently introduced indirect speech or hypotyposis to describe the trials of martyrdom.

Hypotyposis allows for something that is absent to be represented as if present. In the hagiographic corpus, this figure of speech contributes to and reinforces its Christian message, since it can introduce "in literature the possible appearance of the unsustainable, in other words, of the *divine*"[47] (Le Bozec 2002, 7). In Genest's case, for example, there is an abolition of Adrian so as to promote the (re)apparition of Genest, who takes his place and his role on a new stage, different from the theatrical stage on which he had lived all of his life. For hagiographic protagonists, the "I" is displaced to reveal an enhanced identity in unity with God. In the plays analyzed, the key elements of the faith journey, those of miraculous vision, conversion, baptism, and death are omitted from the stage. The visualization of what is said captivates the imagination of the addressees, be they internal or external to the plot, and can engender conversion or, at the very least, reflection on the part of those who listen.

The omission of a visual illustration of violence and martyrdom on stage may more effectively inspire admiration, astonishment, and compassion, as well as other emotions called for in dramatic development. It inspires the use of affective memory in order to compose the scene in the spectator's imagination. As a consequence, external spectators may experience for themselves the pain and loss caused by martyrdom, but also the abounding joy that ensues in the divine presence. In effect, this omission may have contributed to a different and more powerful reaction, reflection, and transformation of the spectators. As Gabriel Marcel states, the dramatic representation,

> interests the human being behind the spectator, the human being engaged in this sort of precarious pilgrimage that is human existence . . . it is necessary, I insist, that this human being . . . recognize in the dramatic action which takes place before him/her something of vital concern to him/her, something where he/she feels implicated.[48] (Marcel 1958, 75)

The appeal to the sense of hearing in order to recount the martyr's experience, which is invisible to the audience, is equally as evocative as the imaginative contemplation prescribed by Ignatius's *Exercises*.

The employment of discursive processes recalls the experience of the retreatants in the *Spiritual Exercises*, who are invited to react to Scriptural passages by acting simultaneously as director, actor, and audience to the scene composed. By conjuring a scene in the exercitants' minds, they are called to visualize and live out the story. Just as evoking emotions "is a part of how the Exercises help the Christian shape her own life into conformity with the arc of the redemption story that is the pattern of the Exercises as a whole" (Craigo-Snell 2014, 44), so does the use of imagination to evoke emotion have the potential to transform the life of spectators of hagiographic drama. The playwright elicits the audience members' imagination, even if they are not explicitly guided by a director. The appeal to the sense of hearing is an invitation to external spectators, which they are free to accept or decline. By accepting the offer, spectators can also become their own directors, actors, and scenographers to supplement what they hear on stage.

The role of the internal spectators to martyrdom on stage may reflect the role of the external spectators in the theatre. Spectators internal to the hagiographic plot react to martyrdom in such a way that they may become models for spectators external to the play, in their reactions to what is witnessed. After bearing witness to the sacrifice of the martyrs, many secondary characters, like Desfontaines's Olympie or Puget de la Serre's Clorimène, are spiritually and emotionally converted.[49] Perhaps the most poignant example of conversion of secondary characters is that of Pauline and Félix at the end of Corneille's chef d'oeuvre *Polyeucte, martyr*. Pauline witnesses the death of her husband off-stage and returns changed, having received a blood baptism and declaring her conversion to her father, Félix:

> In dying, my husband left me his light,
> His blood, with which his executioners covered me,
> Unbound my eyes, and opened them for me.
> I see, I know, I believe, I am disillusioned,
> By this blessed blood you see me baptized,
> At last, I am a Christian, is that not saying enough?[50] (act 5, scene 6, vv. 1724–29)

Pauline's recounting is enticing and inspires compassion in those listening to her narrative. It also awakens their imagination. Pauline's father, Félix, is so moved by his daughter's faith and devotion that he also converts in the very last moments of the play. Her reaction to the trials and tribulations endured by her husband are revelatory and may act as an invitation to external spectators, as well, to react and convert.

Even if no overt depiction of blood and gore exists onstage, the descriptions coming from the mouths of characters may also inspire the external spectators' imagination. In the absence of a visual depiction of violence, the action portrayed should stimulate surprise and admiration in the audience members. External spectators witness the torment through the eyes and reactions of secondary characters. They may recreate martyrdom in their imaginations to supplement the missing visual cues, in a process reminiscent of Ignatian composition of place. Moreover, in a process reminiscent of imaginative contemplation, external spectators' senses are activated, and they are encouraged to react as do the secondary characters, that is, the internal spectators.

Conclusion

Theatre's revelatory power to unravel the character of human experience can engage and awaken active participation from the audience. Given the emotion stirred in internal spectators to the spectacle of death, and the reaction of conversion or repentance engendered in some of these onstage witnesses, it is plausible that external spectators experienced similar emotion and affective intuition. Neoaristotelian tenets called for spectators to be filled with pity and fear at the end of a tragedy. If we are to follow that paradigm and make the assumption that external spectators were marked by the tales of suffering and death on stage, we may pursue the idea that they were driven to a sense of admiration for the protagonists. Moreover, the hagiographic plots could inspire active participation from the audience, in a call to contemplation and communion with the experience of theatre.[51] Theatregoers could be moved to follow in the footsteps of the saintly figures and, after an initial experience, proceed to their own processes of reflection and action, the three hallmarks of the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm that emerged from the *Exercises*.[52] In that sense, they could actualize the goal of metatheatre, as it is defined by Lionel Abel, to foment social action and change.

Theatre's dramatic force lies in the relationship that is established between the spectators and what is performed. This is especially true of hagiographic theatre, which can engage and awaken awareness to what had always been present, but not necessarily perceived. For external spectators to the hagiographic drama, the reflective and transformative journey begins at the close of the play when they are brought back to the reality of their own lives and continues with the emotional memories stirred by the lived experience of theatre. The use of discursive processes in hagiographic plays reinforces how imagination and performativity can be used in the service of faith. In this way, the corpus resonates with Ignatian methodology in the *Spiritual Exercises*.

In the spirit of self-discovery, Ignatius promulgated the use of imaginative contemplation and the application of the five senses, two practices that are deeply meditative, spiritual, and personal. Furthermore, he insisted on repetitions of previous meditations or on meditations that built upon each other in his *Spiritual Exercises*.[53] In the context of the *Exercises*, repetition deepens the moments of consolation or desolation in specific meditations and provides more "spiritual relish and spiritual fruit" (Ganss 1992, Ex 2, 21) for the individual making the *Exercises*. Repetition therefore

complements the learning process, as was also demonstrated in the plot development of Rotrou's *Le Véritable Saint Genest*.

In their spiritual journey, all protagonists referenced in this essay adhere to a pedagogy of contemplation based on a triad of experience, reflection, and action. They contemplate and experience Christian mysticism, in the sense described by Bernard McGinn, by following the sequence of "preparation for, the consciousness of, and the reaction to what can be described as the immediate or direct presence of God" (McGinn 1991, xvii). The call to the use of imagination and memory, in both the *Exercises* and in hagiographic plays, reinforces this pedagogy. Like the hagiographic protagonists I have described, the exercitants become re-connected to their identity and their God as they strive to live in a state of detachment and indifference. They are transformed and renewed in a process that goes beyond the cerebral and touches on the affective and even their visceral intuition (Ligo 2009, 405–6). Both exercitants and protagonists evoke in their behaviour the performative force of the *Spiritual Exercises*.

In this paper, I have attempted to illustrate the dialectic between Ignatian spirituality, in the specific example of the *Spiritual Exercises*, and the performance of seventeenth-century French hagiographic theatre. The dialogue between the two is exemplified through historical analysis of the *Exercises*, textual analysis of select plays and, finally, informed conjectures regarding audience reaction and action following the theatrical performance. I have aimed to demonstrate that the experience of conversion of the martyrs and saints portrayed on stage follows a similar path to that lived by exercitants making the *Spiritual Exercises*. In both cases, the process of self-emptying and self-reflection leads to self-discovery and finally to the act of self-gift to the ultimate spiritual director, God. All character studies, as Stanislavski would prescribe, also require a progression of self-emptying and self-reflection, followed by the actor's self-gift to the audience. The process of embodying a character on stage, best illustrated by the protagonist of Rotrou's *Le Véritable Saint Genest*, is composed of steps parallel to those described above for the *Exercises*, therefore underlining their theatrical nature.

It is, of course, important to distinguish the Ignatian *Exercises* from theatre, even though they possess a performative force and are theatrical in nature. That is, they are meant as a deeply spiritual method, with faith as their foundation, to enter into greater relationship with the divine. The Ignatian method shares commonalities with theatrical strategies and has a relationship to theatre, but it aims for authenticity and belief in the context of its religious experience and spiritual journey. Conversely, hagiographic plays, while including aspects reminiscent of the *Exercises* as we have aimed to demonstrate, are not spiritual. They may provide for a spiritual experience, should the spectators choose, but their objective is not exclusively religious.

Regardless of which saintly figure is represented onstage, the conduct of hagiographic protagonists, reinforced by strategies of reflection and contemplation, exemplifies spiritual indifference and material detachment. It inspires admiration and calls for imitation by the witnesses of their tales, be they internal to the plot or external to the theatrical scene. In the Ignatian sense, hagiographic theatre has the potential to awaken the imagination of spectators, encourage reflection on lived experience, and invite imitation, intentionality, and transformative action in the quotidian.

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Notes

1. Scholars consistently use the terminology of "making" the *Exercises* in their writings. I have maintained this language in my writing. See Ganss 1992; Rahner 2014; O'Malley 2017.

2. The hagiographic corpus also includes plays that were performed in the countryside (the *province*). See Teulade 2012.

3. Ignatius describes his *Exercises* as

> every method of examination of conscience, meditation, contemplation, vocal or mental prayer, and other spiritual activities. . . . For, just as taking a walk, traveling on foot, and running are physical exercises, so is the name of spiritual exercises given to any means of preparing and disposing our soul to rid itself of all its disordered affections and then, after their removal, of seeking and finding God's will in the ordering of our life for the salvation of our soul. (Ganss 1992, Ex 1, 21)

4. «L'image est la matière constante des Exercices: les vues, les représentations, les allégories, les mystères [. . .] suscités continûment par les sens imaginaires, sont les unités constitutives de la méditation» (Barthes 1971, 69–70).

5. Egan's problematic gives Ignatian prayer a three-part character, anthropocentric, christocentric and mystagogical. For the purposes of this article, the most pertinent of these characters is the first of the three.

6. The hallmark of spiritual indifference, in the Ignatian sense, does not mean disinterest or carelessness. Instead, it implies extreme availability and absence of any personal inclinations. This attitude provides a vulnerability to the influence of God.

7. The *Exercises' Principle and Foundation* states that "it is necessary to make ourselves indifferent to all created things, in regard to everything which is left to our free will and is not forbidden. Consequently, on our own part we ought not to seek health rather than sickness, wealth rather than poverty, honor rather than dishonor, a long life rather than a short one, and so on in all other matters. Rather, we ought to desire and choose only that which is more conducive to the end for which we are created" (Ganss 1992, Ex 23, 32).

In Ex 316–24, consolation is defined as "that which occurs when some interior motion is caused within the soul through which it comes to be inflamed with love of its Creator and Lord" (Ganss 1992, Ex 316, 122) and desolation is defined as "everything which is the contrary of what was described in the Third Rule [consolation]; for example, obtuseness of soul, turmoil within it, an impulsive motion toward low and earthly things, or disquiet from various agitations and temptations. These move one toward lack of faith and leave one without hope and without love. One . . . feels separated from our Creator and Lord" (Ganss 1992, Ex 317, 122).

8. The election, which appears in the second week, is an act of freedom in its "non-choice": "I ought to focus only on the purpose for which I am created, to praise God our Lord and to save my soul. Accordingly, anything whatsoever that I elect ought to be chosen as an aid toward that end" (Ganss, 1992, Ex 169, 74).

9. In the Meditation about the Three Sins, for example, the retreatant is asked to create a "composition made by imagining the place. . . . When a contemplation or meditation is about something that can be gazed on, for example, a contemplation of Christ our Lord, who is visible, the composition will be to see in imagination the physical place where that which I want to contemplate is taking place. By physical place I mean, for instance, a temple or a mountain where Jesus Christ or our Lady happens to be, in accordance with the topic I desire to contemplate" (Ganss 1992, Ex 47, 40). Later, in the Meditation on Hell, the retreatant is asked to "see with

the eyes of the imagination," to "hear the wailing," to "perceive the smoke, the sulphur," to "experience he bitter flavors of hell" and to "feel how the flames touch the souls and burn them" (Ganss 1992, Ex 66–70, 46–47). Later even, in the Meditation on Two Standards, the exercitant should imagine the place of the two standards, by imagining "a great plain in the region of Jerusalem, where the supreme commander of the good people is Christ our Lord, then another plain in the region of Babylon, where the leader of the enemy is Lucifer" (Ganss 1992, Ex 138, 65).

10. «Qu'il est demandé à l'exercitant de vivre, à la façon d'un psychodrama [. . .] le théâtre ignacien est moins rhétorique que fantasmatique: la "scène" y est, en fait, un "scénario"».

11. «Rendre présentes les choses absentes, par l'imagination, par la force imaginante, qui imprime les images au plus profond de la chair, qui change la vie».

12. For a more in-depth discussion of this subject, consult Fumaroli 1996.

13. «Pour toi seul [Dieu] je suis prêt de mourir, ou de vivre / J'ai vu ton Etendard, tu me le verras suivre».

14. «Jamais Prince ambitieux ne monta si gayement sur le trosne qu'il est monté sur l'eschafaut, & jamais Prince ne presenta si gayement la teste à des couronnes qu'il l'a presentée au glaive mortel, il a dédaigné les derniers sommations qu'on luy a faites de la part du Roy, avec un courage invincible, & a fait une derniere confession de sa foy devant ceux qui assistoient à sa mort, il a proféré jusqu'à son dernier souspir le nom de son Dieu & le vostre, & la fatale espée qui a separé sa teste de son corps, a partagé par la moitié le nom d'Indegonde qu'il avait encore à la bouche».

15. *Theatrum mundi* is ubiquitous in plot development of hagiographic plays and echoes the theatrical nature of the *Spiritual Exercises*. It also reinforces our choice of analysis of hagiographic theatre in the context of its performative force. It is important to note that death on a scaffold can be reminiscent of representations on a theatrical stage, as illustrated in Charles Regnault's *Marie Stuard, reyne d'Écosse*:

> The people, however, in waves
> Move with us amidst darkness
> And runs to the scaffold so that without obstacle
> It can observe this tragic spectacle
> Spectators speak in their own way
> And each judge according to their own sentiment
> One says that this torture is a poor example
> At the same time as he contemplates [the spectacle] without feeling
> Another says that this judgement shocks all laws
> That respect, in the least, the sacred blood of Kings.
> Lastly, we hear from a people that whispers
> Either of your order or of this adventure (Regnault 1639, act 5, scene 4, p. 102).
>
> [Le peuple toutesfois en ondes agité
> Se coule avecque nous parmy l'obscurité
> Et court à l'échafaut afin que sans obstacle
> Il puisse regarder ce tragique spectacle
> Chacun des assistans parle diversement
> Et chacun veut juger selon son sentiment
> L'un dit que ce supplice est de mauvais exemple
> Lors que sans passion son ame le contemple
> L'autre que cet arrest choque toutes les lois
> Qui respectent du moins le sacré sang des Rois.
> Enfin, l'on oit par tout un peuple qui murmure
> Ou de vostre ordonnance ou de cette advanture]

The passage exemplifies well the theatrical nature of martyrdom. The masses, composed of individuals who judge differently and independently what they see, are drawn to the stage of martyrdom so as to observe and be witness to the "tragic spectacle," much in the same way that spectators are drawn to the theatre, to watch, interpret, and discuss its "spectacle." The nature of the spectacle of death is not dissimilar to the nature of a theatrical performance. In turn, the theatrical nature of martyrdom itself and the embodied performance of the protagonists of hagiographic theatre in their path towards death to the material world are reminiscent of the theatrical nature of the *Spiritual Exercises* of Saint Ignatius of Loyola.

16. «Dans mon cœur interdit je sens un doux transport / Je ne résiste point, je cède sans effort, / Et mon âme aussitôt brûle d'impatience / De réduire en effet cette sainte ordonnance».

17. «Négliger pour lui plaire, et femme, et biens, et rang, / Exposer pour sa gloire et verser tout son sang».

18. Thus recalling in his audience's mind the biblical passage from the Gospel according to St Mark "Amen, I say to you, there is no one who has given up house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the sake of the gospel who will not receive a hundred times more now in this present age" (Mark 10:29–30).

19. «Je touche enfin l'heureux moment d'une entiere liberté, puis que je sors de prison pour sortir du monde [. . .] je suis attendue dans une paix de gloire & une félicité tousjours libre: Et je sens bien que le sacré conducteur de ma vie, est encore alentour de moy. Cette esperance qui m'éleve au Ciel, & ce mespris absolu qui me separe avec joye des choses terrestres, en sont des preuves sensibles à ma foiblesse».

20. In doing so, they also heed St Paul's advice to the Ephesians to "put away [their] old self of [their] former way of life, corrupted through deceitful desires, and be renewed in the spirit of [their] minds, and put on the new self, created in God's way in righteousness and holiness of truth" (4:22–24).

21. «Celui dont ce matin nous avons vu les charmes / [. . .] prit aussi nos maux; / Et la croix a fini ses illustres travaux. / Il n'est donc pas séant si nous le voulons suivre, / Que parmi les plaisirs, l'orgueil nous fasse vivre, / Et que la pourpre, l'or, le luxe et les trésors, / Ces lâches Partisans des voluptés du corps, / Nous empêchent de voir et de bien reconnaître/ Le sentier qu'a tracé pour nous un si bon Maître».

22. «Il faut que j'obéisse [. . .] [qu'] Alexis se haisse / Qu'il se prive de tout et qu'en ce même jour, / Il renonce à soi-même ainsi qu'à son amour».

23. «La mort nous les [biens passagers] ravit, la fortune s'en joue, / Aujourd'hui dans le trône, et demain dans la boue [. . .] / J'ai de l'ambition, mais plus noble, et plus belle, / Cette grandeur périt, j'en veux une immortelle, / Un bonheur assuré, sans mesure, et sans fin, / Au-dessus de l'envie, au-dessus du destin».

24. «Ce monde périssable, et sa gloire frivole, / Est une comédie où j'ignorais mon rôle; / J'ignorais de quel feu mon cœur devait brûler, / Le démon me dictait, quand Dieu voulait parler; / Mais depuis que le soin d'un esprit angélique, / Me conduit, me r'adresse, et m'apprend ma réplique, / J'ai corrigé mon rôle, [. . .]»

25. «Tous les biens sont faux, & les maus veritables».

26. «Enfin, vous m'en priez, mais Dieu me commande de rejetter vos prieres, & d'estre sourd à vos plaintes, aussi bien qu'aveugle à vos larmes [. . .] Dans le port où je suis, il n'y a point de peril de naufrage».

27. Amid turmoil and turbulence, as well as physical separation, imposed on the family by pirates and wild animals, they wander in search of an ascetic, but meaningful life:

> Let us abandon without displeasure this delusion of grandeur,
> This happiness that is but passing
> This shadow that misleads us, and this illusion
> Which places in your mind this confusion
> . . .
> Accept without moaning these material ravages,
> And know that today our calamity
> Opens for us the way to immortality (act 1, scene 4, vv. 197–200; 214–16).

In time, they mature in faith and eventually reencounter each other, only to accept the paradoxical victory of dying to destroy death and find eternal life, through selflessness and martyrdom. Eustache and his kin give up materialism after their spiritual awakening. They exemplify Ignatian detachment on the path to martyrdom and new life.

28. «Un divin mouvement, dont mon âme est saisie, / M'inspire de passer de l'Europe en Asie, / Et là d'un cœur épris d'une sainte ferveur, / Voir les lieux où naquit et mourut mon Sauveur. / [. . .] Dans ces lieux, loin de Rome, et de son esclavage, / Il nous sera permis de rendre un libre hommage / A cet être immortel qui nous peut relever, / Et qui nous a perdus, afin de nous sauver».

29. «Le Ciel assurément a mis dedans ton âme / Cet illustre *désir*, et cette noble *flamme*, / Qui se faisant passage au travers de mon sein, / *Imprime* dans mon cœur un semblable dessein / [. . .] Laissons, laissons sans peine une ingrate patrie, / *A cet éloignement mon esprit se résout*».

30. This is done in order to render the plot more appealing to the audience, who would have been familiar with the life of the saint.

31. «Mais quoi le Ciel le veut, et son commandement / Dessus mes volontés agit absolument. / J'ai beau lui résister, il faut que j'obéisse, / Que pour suivre ses lois Alexis se haïsse, / Qu'il se prive de tout, et qu'en ce même jour / Il renonce à soi-même ainsi qu'à son amour/ [. . .] Je vais où votre voix aujourd'hui me convie / [. . .] Je l'entends, elle veut que je quitte ce lieu, / Et tout ce que je puis, est de te dire Adieu».

32. «Charmeresses des sens qui flattiez mes désirs, / Trompeuses voluptés, ridicules plaisirs, / Luxe, jeux, passe-temps, dangereuses délices, / Trésors de leurs erreurs, partisans et complices».

33. «Habits de mon bonheur, glorieux instruments [. . .] Soyez dorénavant mes plus beaux ornements, / Que la pourpre vous cède, et servez de trophée/ A mon ambition par votre aide étouffée».

34. «Trop longtemps vous m'avez abusé, / Mais pour moi désormais votre piège est brisé».

35. «Ce monde périssable, et sa gloire frivole, / Est une comédie où j'ignorais mon rôle; / J'ignorais de quel feu mon cœur devait brûler, / Le démon me dictait, quand Dieu voulait parler;/ Mais depuis que le soin d'un esprit angélique, / Me conduit, me r'adresse, et m'apprend ma réplique, / J'ai corrigé mon rôle, [. . .]».

36. «Ne disparaît pas mais se déplace dans la chose».

37. «Je sais, pour l'éprouver, que par un long étude / L'art de nous transformer nous passe en habitude».

38. «Dieux, prenez contre moi ma défense et la vôtre; / D'effet comme de nom je me trouve être un autre; / Je feins moins Adrian que je ne le deviens, / Et prends avec son nom des sentiments chrétiens».

39. «Il faut lever le masque et t'ouvrir ma pensée; / Le Dieu que j'ai haï m'inspire son amour; / Adrian a parlé, Genest parle à son tour ! / Ce n'est plus Adrian, c'est Genest qui respire / La grâce du baptême et l'honneur du martyre».

40. «Tout est fait pour que l'exercitant s'y représente lui-même: c'est son corps qui va l'occuper [. . .] quelqu'un d'actuel (Ignace, l'exercitant, le lecteur, peu importe) prend sa place et son rôle dans la scène: le *je* apparaît [. . .] Sa plasticité est absolue: il peut se transformer, se rapetisser selon les besoins de la comparaison [. . .] l'exercitant (à supposer qu'il soit le sujet de la méditation) ne disparaît pas mais se déplace dans la chose».

41. «l'exercitant est semblable à un sujet qui parlerait en ignorant la fin de la phrase dans laquelle il s'engage; il vit l'incomplétude de la chaine parlée».

42. «Un ange tient la pièce, un ange me redresse; / [. . .] le soin d'un esprit angélique / Me conduit, me redresse et m'apprend ma réplique».

43. «On voit mieux de loin».

44. «Si ton Dieu veut ta mort, c'est déjà trop vécu. / J'ai vu, Ciel, tu le sais par le nombre des âmes / Que j'osai t'envoyer par des chemins de flammes, / Dessus les grils ardents et dedans les taureaux, / Chanter les condamnés et trembler les bourreaux».

45. "For the greater glory of God." This is the Latin motto of the Society of Jesus.

46. «Introduire aussi les messagers, pour faire entendre les choses qu'il fallait qui se passassent ailleurs et décharger le théâtre d'autant» (Chapelain 1936, 120).

47. «Dans la littérature la possible apparition de l'insoutenable, autrement dit du *divin*».

48. «Intéresse l'être humain derrière le spectateur, l'être humain engagé dans cette sorte de pèlerinage hasardeux qu'est l'existence humaine [. . .] il faut, dis-je, que cet être humain [. . .] reconnaisse dans l'action dramatique qui se déploie devant lui quelque chose qui le concerne essentiellement ou vitalement, quelque chose où il se sente lui-même impliqué». Later in his book, Marcel states that «la tâche suprême de l'auteur dramatique chrétien est de mettre le spectateur non pas en tant que spectateur, je le répète, mais en tant qu'être humain, *en présence de Dieu*» (86, his emphasis).

49. In Rotrou's *Genest* only the main character converts, contrary to what occurs in most hagiographic theatre. This element distinguishes the play from others of the corpus and adds to its ambiguous nature. Desfontaines's *L'illustre comédien,* a play we do not address in this paper, but which also tells Genest's narrative, hints at a possible conversion of Dioclétian at the end of the play. The Emperor makes clear that he regrets having martyred Genest and Pamphilie and that he repents and will pay homage to the Christian couple and ensure their posterity. He does not explicitly convert, however. Any conversion of the character Dioclétian would go against historical evidence.

50. «Mon époux en mourant m'a laissé ses lumières, / Son sang dont tes bourreaux viennent de me couvrir / M'a dessillé les yeux, et me les vient d'ouvrir. / Je vois, je sais, je crois, je suis désabusée, / De ce bienheureux sang tu me vois baptisée, / Je suis chrétienne enfin, n'est-ce point assez dit?».

51. As an example of theatre within theatre, *Le Véritable Saint Genest* demonstrates the power that acting can have on an audience, and how it can move and inspire emotions in the observers. At the end of act 2, notably, the internal play is interrupted by exclamations and compliments of Dioclétian's court in regard to Genest's brilliant presence and performance. Contrary to what occurs in most plays from the hagiographic corpus, while the court is moved by Genest's acting, they are not converted in the end.

52. In the *Ratio studiorum* (1599), the Jesuits laid out a teaching methodology based on the elements of Experience, Reflection, and Action. This teaching methodology would later become labelled the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm, and its precepts were already visible in the *Spiritual Exercises*. The progression from week to week in the retreat can be described, as Barthes suggests, from deformation to reformation (week 1), from reformation to conformation (week 2), from conformation to confirmation (week 3) and finally from confirmation to transformation (week 4) (1971, 63). This process depends highly on strategies addressed in the *Exercises*, namely patterns of repetition, meditation, contemplation and colloquies, a sequence that accompanies the first two moments of the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm, those of Experience and Reflection, with the aim of flowing into the third, that of Action.

53. "In this way the person who is contemplating, by taking this history as the authentic foundation, and by reflecting on it and reasoning about it for oneself, can thus discover something that will bring better understanding or a more personalized concept of the history—either through one's own reasoning or insofar as the understanding is enlightened by God's grace. . . . For what fills and satisfies the soul consists, not in knowing much, but in our understanding the realities profoundly and in savoring them interiorly" (Ganss 1992, Ex 2, 22).

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Blaspheming Against Ourselves: Folk Categories in Religion and Theatre

Lance Gharavi

Prelude

In the summer of 2015, I was invited to sit on a religion and performance panel at a national conference. The panel was moderated by Megan Sanborn Jones of Brigham Young University, and, apart from myself, featured two equally distinguished panellists: Bill Doan of Pennsylvania State and John Fletcher of Louisiana State. The subject of the panel was blasphemy. Each panellist prepared papers and exchanged them with one another prior to arriving at the conference. Rather than present our papers during the session, we used them as jumping off points for a discussion of the topic.

None of this is unusual. The only thing mildly unusual about the panel was the difference between the papers. Professor Doan's paper was an excerpt from a solo piece he was working on. It was a text intended for cultural performance. Professor Fletcher's paper and my own were works of academic scholarship. I would trouble this distinction, but it's a rabbit hole I'd rather not plunge into at present.

Doan's solo performance was a biographical work, a reflection on his gritty, rural working class, "food insecure," Roman Catholic upbringing. His performance wore its folk character plainly (in both senses of the word), as a badge of honour, a tattoo, or a set of scars that communicated authenticity, a harrowing, and proletarian *bona fides*. Professor Fletcher and I, by contrast, wore our scholarly robes unabashedly (if metaphorically) in the assumption that we'd dressed appropriately for the occasion.

Of course, Fletcher's work and my own were *about* religion and performance. Doan was *doing* religion and performance. Fletcher's and my perspectives were etic, "outsider" analyses; we stood explicitly outside of and apart from our subject matter. Doan embodied his subject matter; he lived, with varying degrees of (dis)comfort, inside its skin. Fletcher and I cited Wendy Brown, Talal Asad, and Stanley Fish. Doan invoked Mary Poppins, the Gospel of John, and Little Debbie. The distinctions were not simply methodological. The differences traced—patently, performatively, through every moment of the panel—a never-acknowledged class divide. This divide was not simply the product of a set of specific cultural references and would have endured had Doan swapped out Little Debbie for Alice Waters. Rather, the implied class divide was a product of the ways in which binary divisions like scholar/artist and about/doing align with and are mapped onto a set of other value-laden labour- and class-related binaries: mental/physical, white-collar/blue-collar, elite/popular, and upper-class/working-class.

The Problem with Blasphemy

The program blurb for the panel posed the question, "What constitutes secular blasphemy?" The actual existence of something called "secular blasphemy," its coherence as a category or type, is

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assumed by the query. Though we never discussed it beforehand, the panel was predicated on the participants' agreement that secular blasphemy is a thing in the world. There are reasons to be suspicious, however, reasons that lead me to the question that will be the focus of this essay: *Is there such a thing as secular blasphemy, or is this even an appropriate question?*

That's two questions. I'm skeptical of the first. The second needs elaboration.

Are we, as academics, to concern ourselves with trying to identify what things fit comfortably within what some scholars would term a folk category?

By *folk category*, I mean a unit of vernacular or popular classification distinct from scientific or scholarly classification. Such categories are not always the province of an amorphous *volk*, but are also produced and sustained by institutions, religious and secular. The categories *infidel* or *spirit*, for instance, may have an important place in the documents, discourses, and actions of powerful religious bodies, immense bureaucracies commanding formidable state or state-like forces, but these terms are data for the scientist or scholar, not serious analytical taxons. Folk categories are units within folk taxonomies, popular classification systems that are themselves situated in contrast to scientific or scholarly taxonomies. But the passive voice in the previous sentence elides the fact that this situating is an act performed by and for the scientific/scholarly community, not the popular one.

William E. Arnal and Russell T. McCutcheon are two religious studies scholars who engage explicitly in such situating. They complicate the relatively straightforward definition of folk systems outlined above and identify the covert political work such systems perform. Folk taxonomies, they maintain, are "conceptual systems that members of social groups use to delimit and thereby manage their environment and, in so doing, determine their place within it" (Arnal and McCutcheon 2013, 2). Such systems, I would add, function like ideology. They determine, among other things, who we are, who they are, the bounds of our world, and of theirs.

The point to remember is this: Classification is not innocent. It is not simply jargon. It does not appear without purpose. It is evidence of prior political interests and desired future consequences. But classification does not just passively gesture to such interests; it actively carries the water for them. It operates within the present world, even as its operations draw the divisions and contours that produce and define that world. Classification is not simply the fingerprint left by ideology; it is the hand that does the work.

It has become a commonplace for scholars of religion, Arnal and McCutcheon among them, to note that religion is a folk category with a comparatively recent and specifically Western origin. Blasphemy, as a generic term (as in a genus or class) within the domain of religion, is thus itself a folk category. Because of the oppositions already noted between popular and scholarly communities, certain questions inevitably arise from these observations. In trying to identify what qualifies as blasphemy, secular or otherwise, do we, as scholars, ourselves authorize that folk category and the set of other folk categories and oppositions upon which it depends (sacred/profane, religious/secular, etc.)? Do we thereby tacitly cast our lot in with those who are the objects of our analysis? Shouldn't we instead be trying to identify the historical, social, and political conditions that made possible and plausible the deployment of these categories in the situations in question, as well as the pre-existing political commitments of those who deploy them? Are we uncritically adopting the terms and folk analytical matrices of our subjects? Are we, as Bruce Lincoln (1999) warns us

against in his "Theses on Method," allowing our subjects "to define the terms in which they will be understood"? If so—and Lincoln's judgment here is forbidding and unambiguous—we have "ceased to function as historian or scholar" (398). Given this grim warning, I fear we must answer all the above questions in the affirmative. This is a serious matter. It cuts to the heart of the scholarly enterprise itself. It is a matter not simply of values, but of identity.

An analogous example may help clarify the perspective I'm describing. In 2015, civil rights activist, instructor in Africana studies, and president of the NAACP chapter in Spokane, Washington, Rachel Dolezal became the centre of furious controversy when allegations surfaced that she was actually a white woman "passing" as black. Critics of Dolezal accused her, among other things, of cultural appropriation, a grave offence against the very groups whose interests she claimed to be personally and professionally committed to advancing. Just as serious, or more so, Dolezal was widely considered to have committed fraud by "masquerading" as black. Could such claims be settled by academic authorities? Or are scholars playing a folk game by even posing the question, "Is Rachel Dolezal black?"

Race is a local, generic folk category, a relatively recent taxon originally produced to protect and serve the political and economic interests of certain social groups. The sustaining of this fabricated folk category continues to do work in the world; it serves discursive and material purposes of power. The question, "Is Rachel Dolezal black?" and the various responses and arguments for or against are therefore not the purview of the scholar. They are the *data*. They are the objects of our analysis, not the queries we pursue. The task of the scholar is to analyze, among other things, what historical situations made possible and meaningful such a question, and what prior political interests and anticipated consequences are served by the deployment of the related categories. To seriously pursue an answer to the question, "Is Rachel Dolezal black?" is to actively sustain a folk category, to reinscribe a cultural fiction and the set of political interests it supports. This is importantly outside the role of the scholar. For though we may maintain that the work of the scholar is always in some sense political, we must also acknowledge that it is likewise the job of the scholar to avoid propagating acknowledged fictions, regardless of her prior political preferences.

In this sense, the scholar's job is distinct from that of the state, which needn't concern itself with fictions, acknowledged or no. It is the role of the liberal nation state to act as producer, sustainer, and arbiter of certain categories by means of, among other things, legal discourse and official actions. Through such means, it determines and produces distinctions like religious/secular, private/public, and performance/speech, and also, historically in the US, distinctions between racial categories. The state polices these distinctions through conventions that define some things as empty, meaningless, inconsequential, harmless, and tolerable, and therefore in less need of regulation on the one hand, *or* as full, meaningful, consequential, potentially harmful, or intolerable and therefore in need of regulation on the other. Such conventions are not absolute, for the terms do not innocently denote "things in the world." They are therefore subject to constant negotiation to fit the ever-changing political scene, the needs of the moment, and the goals of the interested players. Scholars must therefore always query not simply how such categories—whether produced by folk or state—are utilized and in what contexts, but what prior political interests are served in doing so. This is the purpose of analysis.

There may be occasions when one can *profitably* (a term I will return to shortly) invoke distinctions between, say, performance and analysis—as I did at the beginning of this essay—or between the sacred and profane, or religious and secular. But there are likewise occasions when the utility of such

distinctions, and even the terms themselves (e.g., blasphemy), is so compromised that it makes little sense to continue to employ them as analytic tools. They become, rather, a part of the problem to be analyzed. In some situations (perhaps, for our purposes, in most), they are not properly the *tools* of analysis, but rather the proper *objects* of analysis (see Arnal and McCutcheon 2013, 2). My concern is that, for the scholar, the situation is always the latter rather than the former because the use of these distinctions and terms is always *for profit*, that is, always in the service of some previous ideological commitment and desired material outcome. I would submit that it is the political economics of this profit, not the ontological status of the currency, that is the most appropriate object of our attention and our critique. "Is there such a thing as secular blasphemy?" cannot be, insofar as blasphemy is a folk category, a legitimate question for scholars.

We Have Met the Problem, and It Is Us

But we must extend this analysis further to see where it gets us. For the observations and assumptions that lead me to reject the question posed in the panel have more far-reaching implications.

Theatre is older than religion. Religion, in the sense indicated by modern usage, emerged roughly around the time Shakespeare's plays were premiering in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries (see, for instance, Smith 1998, 270). Both theatre and religion are similarly local folk categories. The manufacture of religions—i.e., the production of *religion* as a generic category for something imagined to exist in every culture across the globe and across history—through both folk and academic discourses is analogous to the manufacture of *world theatre* in similar discourses. As part of its formation as an academic discipline, *theatre* became a generic term for a transcultural, transhistorical set of practices. Eventually, in the late twentieth century, this term ceased to be sufficiently generic and was partly displaced by a higher genus called *performance*, a term produced as more surely cutting across all boundaries of culture and history. As a generic category, it is far more recent and more local than the one it was intended to supersede and make quaint.

Long before I became a theatre scholar and began presenting on panels with people like Bill Doan, John Fletcher, and Megan Sanborn Jones, I grew up watching and occasionally making Western theatre. I developed an understanding of what theatre was prior to my formal studies, and this prior understanding informed and shaped those studies. Even prior to my acts of professional looking, I developed a sense for what to look for when looking for theatre in the world. If asked, I could have picked theatre out of a line-up. The folk preceded and inevitably formed the academic. My eventually professional efforts to describe theatre to others are therefore an effort to refine and deepen, to embed and reify, to question, qualify, shatter, and complicate the folk category I began to learn sitting in darkened auditoriums as a child. All of this, far from making me unique, makes me precisely like almost every other theatre scholar in the US.

It is much the same for religious studies scholars (see Saler 1999, ix). This is a problem, and not just for religious studies. The precession of the folk, its ineffaceable presence in the discourse of the scholar, must be papered over for the legitimacy of the folk/scholar distinction to hold.

Part of the challenge for scholars like Arnal and McCutcheon, for whom the situation described above is so troubling, and who trade in arguments of discursive formation, is to avoid being trapped in an ouroboros of reasoning, of tripping and falling on the sword of their own arguments.

Distinctions that generate something called *folk categories* are themselves local and recent. And if the folk category is used to produce, authorize, and maintain a given social group and its environment, that is, if it functions like ideology, then its opposite must involve the production of some Edenic, extra-historical, extra-locative, transparent discourse termed scholarly or scientific. But this is precisely how language does not work. There is no prophylactic that can protect a given discourse from history, from culture, or from politics. Language, scholarly or otherwise, is not transparent. That terms like *religion*, *secular*, *blasphemy*, or *theatre* or *performance* arose at a particular time and place, that their emergence was connected to power and to the political interests of groups or individuals, is not in the least surprising. Nor should it be to scholars who trade in historicization and discursive formations.

What Arnal and McCutcheon ask of those who trade uncritically in distinctions like *religion* and *secular* or *Catholic* and *Protestant*, we should ask of those who propose distinctions between *folk* and *non-folk*, between *artist* and *scholar*, or between *doing* and *about*. It may be helpful in this regard to read the following passage from Arnal and McCutcheon as though they were querying the artist/scholar distinction:

> why do we as scholars continue to use it, as if it names two obviously different things in the world, rather than seeing this way of naming and dividing people as someone else's social strategy that itself deserves study rather than uncritical reproduction? Are we not as scholars free to move beyond participants' use of folk taxonomies and self-definitions? For, as suggested earlier, uncritically reproducing—instead of studying—local classification systems will lead us to normalizing and thus legitimizing participant distinctions and the interests that drive (or once drove) them. . . . Sadly, in most cases, we fail to ask, *different according to whose criteria and for what purposes?*—a question that, once posed, would allow us to examine, rather than uncritically reproduce, the mechanisms by which identities are created and contested. (2013, 12–13)

Perhaps referring to the sacred and the profane, the religious and secular, and blasphemy as folk categories involves not just an obvious elitism but a kind of scholarly legerdemain. It stipulates a "dirty" language and strives to keep it separate from the "pristine" language that is the proper speech of the scholar. In so doing, it denotes the scholar's endeavours and discourses as somehow "set apart and bounded by prohibitions," that is, as sacred in Durkheim's definition. And if the scholar's discourse is sacred, then folk discourse, as its opposite, must be profane. But this leads to an odd situation. Scholarly discourse that trades in talk of folk categories in this sense *reproduces and becomes* the object of its critique. The sacred becomes the profane in an inevitable act of blasphemy. The scholar becomes the folk that she was all along.

The term *folk categories*, though it is produced by scholars to stand in contradistinction to their own categories, is itself a folk category. It is a term that has ideological work to do; it performs operations in the world and is itself evidence of prior commitments and desired social arrangements. *Folk* is a category produced by the scholar for her own purposes, which is to distinguish herself and her language from the objects under her investigation and their languages. Like all folk categories, it functions precisely to identify who "we" are, who "they" are, and what are the borders between groups. The category of *folk* (and its opposite) is a means by which a social group produces, maintains, authorizes, and contests its identity. *Folk category* denotes a local, historical, political distinction—the scholar's own. McCutcheon as much as acknowledges this when he notes that, "the

very efforts to privilege and protect any object of study, let alone the community of scholars that studies it, come with generally undetected social and political baggage" (2001, 10). What follows from this should be obvious: There is nothing outside the folk.

The class distinction I noted between Bill Doan, John Fletcher and I has little to do with anyone's "actual" class history; the difference is wholly about performance in the ways so familiar to our field. It is produced by a set of historically situated, sedimentary signs (e.g., citations of Wendy Brown vs. Little Debbie) and the associated contexts that map an about/doing academic distinction onto class distinctions. This class divide is more commonly and comfortably described as a distinction between scholar and artist, but it likewise traces as one between the also classed categories of scholar and folk. The folk and the artist, of course, are both data for the scholar. The scholar is subject; the artist and folk are her objects. McCutcheon is not vague about the importance of this distinction, even as he vividly describes it in performance studies terms. It is a "distinction that lies at the base of all human sciences"; it is a distinction "between theoretically based *scholarship on* assorted aspects of human *behavior* and those very *behaviors themselves*" (2001, 17, emphasis added). These classed divisions—folk/scholar, artist/scholar, behaviour/scholarship-on-behaviour—are not simply built from the discourses of theatre and performance studies, but themselves built the material institutions and structures of those fields in the academy.

I seem to have fallen down the rabbit hole after all. By asserting and then troubling the distinctions between folk and scholar, disrupting the artist/scholar distinction I asserted at the opening of this essay inevitably followed.

Is there such a thing as secular blasphemy? Or is it better to ask why such a question is being posed at all, what its appearance tells us, and what interests the category of blasphemy serves? The distinctions we draw between these questions produce, authorize, and maintain social groups. They do work in the world. They function like religions, like ideologies, like performances. To draw distinctions, of this or other sorts, is an explicitly creative act; it is creation, for all practical purposes, *ex nihilo*. Such creation is the work of gods, philosophers, and artists. And whatever their differences, few of them are well paid.

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FORUM

Deep Stories of the Demonized: Empathy and Trump Evangelicals

John Fletcher

When Joy kindly invited me to participate in this forum in the summer of 2016, she mentioned her interest in how I use performance analysis to study religious practices and groups. Specifically, she noted my efforts to write critically about conservative evangelicals without demonizing them. In my scholarship (Fletcher 2013), I engage ideological difference, religious conservatism, and social change. Specifically, I study conservative evangelical Christians in the United States, a group to whom I am theologically and politically opposed.[1] Faced with demographic and cultural shifts that displace them from their former status as the moral majority, US American evangelicals mobilize a robust array of techniques—many amenable to performance analysis—to win converts in a world increasingly indifferent or hostile to their message. I highlight two particular elements I admire in evangelical outreach practices: their acknowledgment of the reality and complexity of deep differences of belief and their efforts to reach across that difference. The dialectic of opposition and outreach has come to inform my own political convictions. Writing now in December 2016, I am having difficulty keeping a balance between those poles. Like so many in the US after November's presidential election, I am reeling. Stuck in a moment, struggling to think beyond the now, I find it hard not to demonize those who helped usher in a Trump regime.

I typically address my work about evangelicals to the progressive left, a heterogeneous but coherent enough *we/us* label whose reach, I submit, captures the basic political orientations of most performance scholars and artists working in the Anglosphere. I have challenged this *us*, arguing that we have much to learn about and from evangelicals and their activist performances. I have urged my ideological cohorts to look past the in-group/out-group polarizations that so often move us to flatten evangelicals into enemy caricatures. I argue for seeing evangelicals as more nuanced and complicated than their worst or most public representatives. In doing so, I strive to practise what David Román terms critical generosity, a stance that emphasizes finding nuance, complexity, and the assumption of good faith in my subjects (Román 1998, xxvi–xxviii; Fletcher 2010, 110). In this piece, I use the terms *empathy, understanding,* and *critical generosity* as rough synonyms, naming the practice of rigorous and non-reductive curiosity about and research on the lifeworld of those outside of or opposed to my own. Critical generosity, however, does not imply indifference. My critical generosity operates alongside a conviction about the rightness of my side, the side of radical democratic visions, of critical race perspectives, of feminist and queer activisms, and of anti-capitalist and postcolonial critiques. I consider my own stances on these issues as not just different but better than those of the political and theological "them" I write about.

But more than just thinking my side is right, in the months leading up to what I thought was sure to be Hillary Clinton's election to the presidency, I also felt that we were slowly but surely *winning*. I imagined the arc of history bending toward my-our version of justice. The utopian future I valued was *our* future, and it was imminent. Trump's popularity (I never seriously considered that he might win), I felt, amounted to little more than the noisy death-throes of a waning white-supremacist patriarchy. Hope-drunk, I regularly posed a question to friends and colleagues in the months leading up to November 2016: *What do we progressives do the day after Trump loses*? That is, how shall

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progressives learn to live with our neighbours (acquaintances, friends, and family members) who voted for Trump—and vice versa? The time had come, I assumed, where we could start imagining the day after victory. We could contemplate the project of coexistence with the losers of our moral revolution, those whom history was leaving behind.

That thinking strikes me as so naïve, so wrongheaded. Donald Trump won, a man born into wealth, a man whose only lifelong service has been to further enrich himself, a man cheered by groups who openly advocate a whites-only state, a man who boasted about the ease with which he can objectify and assault women, a man who traffics in rank mendacity and revels in bad faith. The forty-fifth President of the United States of America promises to be an avatar of bigotry, misogyny, racism, nationalism, environmental depredation, and crony capitalism. Granted, he owes his win to the intricacies of the Electoral College, not to a numerical majority. Nevertheless, over sixty million fellow citizens of mine voted for him. Trump is what they wanted; Trump is what we're all getting. God help us all.

This reality complicates critical generosity toward my political opponents, particularly conservative evangelicals. Exit polls indicate that 81 percent of white self-identified evangelicals voted for Trump, making them one of his strongest, staunchest bases of support.[2] This group apparently found it possible to ignore just how little a conjugally unfaithful, smugly avaricious, biblically ignorant candidate such as Trump resembles any recognizable version of a faithful Christian. Neither did the vocal opposition to him from several evangelical leaders dissuade rank-and-file white evangelicals (Derrick 2016; Shellnutt 2016; Green 2016). Offered the spectacle of a xenophobia-spreading, sexual-assault-bragging, disability-mocking, falsehood-tweeting Republican, white evangelicals voted much as they ever have (Smith and Martínez 2016).

For many progressives who are or who work with evangelicals, the 81% figure was the last straw. In the hours and days and weeks after Trump's victory, a number of tweets, blog posts, and articles appeared along the lines of "Dear John" letters to evangelicalism (see, for instance, Miller 2016). "White evangelicals," tweeted Yolanda Pierce (2016), a professor at Princeton Seminary, "you've decisively proven that you love your whiteness more than you love your black & brown brothers & sisters in Christ." Progressive evangelical disillusionment echoes a broader progressive backlash against calls to understand, reach out to, or otherwise empathize with Trump voters. This response began earlier in the campaign. One *Washington Post* piece (Ikowitz 2016) published the week before election day drew particular ire. In "What is This Election Missing? Empathy for Trump Voters," journalist Colby Itkowitz interviews Arlie Russel Hochschild, a sociologist studying conservative whites in Louisiana. Affirming (when asked) that a lack of empathy was part of the problem of polarization, Hochschild urged progressives "to get out of their corner and reach out" to those beyond their cultural enclaves.

The clickbait-y title circulated widely, provoking immediate, sharp criticism from the online left. "'Empathy' for Donald Trump voters isn't just misguided," writes journalist Tom McKay (2016), "it's wrong." "Good rule of thumb," reads a Josh Marshall tweet, "empathy comes after calls for genocide/ethnic cleansing have been abandoned" (quoted in Baragona 2016). Such pushback intensified after the election. Many critics pointed out the racial and gendered dimensions of calls to understand. "We ask women (white and non-white) and men of color to exercise empathy," notes Miguel Clark Mallet (2016), "as if the ability to empathize with and understand white men has not been part of the survival toolkit of the oppressed in the United States for hundreds of years." *Slate* editor Jamelle Bouie (2016) fires back at post-election pleas to consider Trump voters as something

other than racist or sexist. Reviewing Trump's rhetoric as well as the marked uptick in anti-minority violence after election day, Bouie spares nothing:

> To face those facts *and then demand empathy for the people who made them a reality*—who backed racist demagoguery, whatever their reasons—is to declare Trump's victims less worthy of attention than his enablers. To insist Trump's backers are good people is to treat their inner lives with more weight than the actual lives on the line under a Trump administration. At best, it's myopic and solipsistic. At worst, it's morally grotesque. (emphasis in original)

There is no such thing, Bouie declares in his article's title, as a "good" Trump voter.

Bouie's argument is more complicated than its hyperbolic title suggests. He does not call for polarization; rather, he insists that we recognize the polarizations that already exist by virtue of Trump voters' choices. Far from showing disrespect to Trump voters, Bouie takes their electoral choices seriously. He treats his political opponents as fully legitimate players on the democratic field, political equals invested with agency and responsibility for their decisions. As equals, Trump voters can and must be held accountable for the real impacts their vote has on the rest of us (especially women, Muslims, and people of colour). Bouie objects to "understanding" not only because it diverts attention from material threats against people other than white men but also because it excuses the reality of Trump voters' political actions. Against what he sees as infantilizing, they-didn't-really-mean-it apologia, Bouie demands mature accountability from Trump voters, expecting them to face up to the effects of their decisions.

In this sense, Bouie's stance resonates with philosopher Carl Schmitt's ([1927] 1995) arguments about the concept of the political. Schmitt defines the political as a matter of distinction and contention between friends and enemies (26). Contention—deep, irreconcilable antagonism between parties who pose existential threats to one another—is the sine qua non of the political. Schmitt criticizes appeals to third-party mediating criteria like rationality (a matter of misunderstanding) or morality (a matter of emotional maturity) to resolve such disagreements. Political disagreements, he holds, proceed from fundamentally incompatible visions of how the world is and how it ought to be, visions that are neither ignorable (in an "agree to disagree" manner) nor reducible to matters of intellectual understanding or ethical goodness. In my work, I draw heavily on Mouffe's (2000) revision of Schmitt in *The Democratic Paradox* and elsewhere. Like Schmitt, Mouffe insists that liberal democracy depends on deep disagreements, or agonisms (2000, 102–3). The structures and outcomes of such agonisms cannot be determined via appeals to neutral rational or ethical criteria; primarily the definitions and operations of such criteria are themselves the object of political contention (129–30). The hard reality of such a view is that political contests result in winners and losers. Compromises that tamp down or magic away disagreements, for Mouffe, are inherently inimical to the liberal democratic enterprise (32).

Crucially, however, agonistic victories and losses are never absolute, never final. Vanquished opponents are neither annihilated nor exiled. They remain part of the liberal democratic field, capable of participating in different struggles and even potentially able to re-stage the struggle they just lost. As a result, neither victories nor defeats can be taken for granted. In the lead-up to the elections, I forgot that the essence of hegemonic struggles is contingency. And, as I allowed myself to forget in my blithe dismissals of Trump's chances for victory, contingency can bend the arc of history away from my preferred ends. As Stanley Fish (2007) explains, democracy "is not attached to any pre-given political or ideological ends, but allows ends to be chosen by the majority vote."

Therefore "democracy is the only form of government that, at least theoretically, contemplates its own demise with equanimity." That is, nothing automatically blocks a democratically elected government from eroding or repealing the rights and protections that distinguish a democracy from a theocracy or monarchy. "Some would say," Fish observes parenthetically, "that this [erosion of rights] is exactly what has been happening in the last six years"—that is, during the George W. Bush administration.

I remember those years, of course. They were dark times for progressives, an era of coercive jingoism, neoliberal hubris, sanctioned torture, and increased surveillance. I recall, particularly after Bush's 2004 re-election, a now-familiar sense of shock, disillusionment, and disappointment in my fellow citizens for supporting a regime I considered undeniably imperialistic, anti-intellectual, and cruel. It has been oddly stabilizing for me lately to go back and read reactions from Romney-supporting conservative Christians after the 2012 re-election of Barack Obama. I don't do so for schadenfreude, the ha-ha-you-lost thrill at my opponents' misfortune. I mean that so many postmortem pieces on the right in 2012 sound practically the same emotional notes as those I'm reading from progressives in 2016. "It makes me wonder who my fellow citizens are," says one disappointed Romney supporter the day after Obama's victory. "I feel like I've lost touch with what the identity of America is right now" (quoted in York 2012). "This time it's different," asserts Catholic pundit Carl Scott (2012). Like Bouie writing four years later, Scott considers and rejects calls for conservatives to let go of their hurt, fear, and anger to turn toward the work of reconciliation. The time for empathy has passed. Romney supporters, Scott says, had been sustained by a bubble of belief in a shared presumption of mutual decency and common sense. "Obama was so obviously bad," Scott tells Romney supporters, "that you couldn't believe that enough of your fellow citizens wouldn't see it and act upon it." That belief-bubble, built on a respect shading into fraternal love for fellow citizens, popped in 2012. "The duties of love become more rigorous," he counsels. "Gentleness now enters the room with a grim face and an urgent tone." Scott, like Bouie, pushes a Schmittian realism about the substance of political contention and the real consequences of elections.

Let me be clear: I do not think one can equate Trump's campaign or Trump's promised presidency with Obama's, Bush's, or even (hypothetically) Romney's. The explicit threats Trump and his followers have made (such as excluding Muslims, "locking up" his electoral rival, "revisiting" libel laws to prosecute journalists) pose a clear and immediate threat incomparable to any of Obama's acts. Few politicians in my memory seem as close to pressing our democracy's auto-destruct button as Trump does. And I concur with Bouie's warning not to equate the "inner lives" of conservatives with the "actual lives on the line" under Trump. That said, Bouie's and my thoughts about the legitimacy of conservative feelings matter not at all to conservatives except insofar as they confirm to them a narrative of preemptive progressive dismissal of any and all non-progressive views. The comparison I'm drawing between Scott's and Bouie's reactions relates to *affect*, not *fact*.[3] The decisive factor for friend/enemy distinctions, Schmitt maintains, concerns the *perception* of threat from another group, not the reality of threat as measured by some objective observer (Rae 2015, 262).

For this reason, I remain an advocate for studying one's political enemies and for doing so with critical generosity. "As a historian and ethnographer," writes Timothy Burke (2016), "I've often had to understand people that I personally or politically dislike. . . . Not because I'm a saint . . . but because *I have the skill to do it* and because if I use that skill I gain productive knowledge about the world, how it came to be, and what it might mean to change it." I do not read Burke as mandating empathy at all times or for all people. It would be obnoxious to insist that the most vulnerable

should chat nicely with those who would incarcerate them, beat them, shoot them, suppress their votes, control their bodies, police their sex lives, or expel them forcibly from the country. But it is not a betrayal of progressive solidarity to recognize that there may be those who can safely reach out to and attempt to understand neighbours who support candidates, parties, or programs that we progressives view as direct threats.

Such knowledge is Arlie Russell Hochschild's goal in her ethnography, which (despite the much-retweeted *Post* story) aims not at scolding progressives for empathy deficits but at understanding what she calls the "deep stories"—the framing narratives—of conservative whites in Lake Charles, Louisiana (Hochschild 2016, 16, 135). Over the course of five years of qualitative interviews, she finds that her subjects' deep story involves an overwhelming affect—reinforced at just about every level of her subjects' lives—of being left out, ignored, denigrated, and downtrodden by liberal elites in favour of other (non-white) groups. Though not all of her subjects are comfortable with Trump, he at least (in their view) gives voice to this sense of powerlessness and frustration. Now, the deep story these people cherish is in many respects flat wrong, and harmfully so (for instance, in its suspicion that racial and ethnic others unfairly steal resources). Trump is in my view the last person likely to remedy the more legitimate, material causes of their powerlessness or frustration. Moreover, I affirm, with Bouie and others, that at least some of this deep story Hochschild locates stems from whites' losing relative (and unjust) privilege as the country diversifies.

It is not inaccurate to identify such reactions to the relative loss of white privilege as *racism*. But such a description should function as a jumping-off point for further scholarly and political investigation; it is not a mic-drop conclusion. Racism—like sexism, classism, ethnocentrism or any other -ism—is not a homogenous phenomenon that explains itself. Nor is it a demon we exorcise from possessed people by uttering its true name in their presence. If Hochschild's subjects cared about my thoughts about the misguided origins and racist effects of their deep stories, then they and I would likely not be in political contention in the first place.

To be clear, empathy and critical generosity are no better at instantly banishing bigotry, no more effective at changing enemies' deep stories, than explicit, demonizing opposition is. Empathy isn't magic. It doesn't open an escape hatch from political agonism. Political contests aim for victory over enemies. In the short term, this may mean winning an election, passing a law, or receiving a favourable Supreme Court ruling. In the long term—a matter of decades or generations—victory might mean realizing a world in which all your adversaries are converted, subdued, or deceased. The political struggle is over, and activism around that particular cause ceases to be necessary.

In activist performance, visions of such victories animate the utopian performatives that Jill Dolan (2005) writes about; they appear in the glimpses of concrete utopias that José Esteban Muñoz (2009) locates. Crucially, however, activist utopian imaginings of victory are ideologically exclusive; they are for the *us*, the friends, alone. Utopia equals the good parts of my present minus the presence and/or influence of my enemies. This formula works for other ideological positions as well. Many of Trump's campaign rallies are readable as utopian performatives, momentary glimpses of (what Trump supporters consider to be) other, better worlds that they strive for, a better world defined by the absence of perceived enemies (like Mexicans, Muslims, or Hillary Clinton). Such victory utopias play vital roles in activist endeavours, providing necessary spaces of recharge and unity among members of a coalition. In such spaces, calls for understanding enemies can be disruptive, counterproductive, and unwelcome, somewhat akin to crying "All lives matter!" at a Black Lives Matter rally or asking "But what about cystic fibrosis?" at an Alzheimer's walk.

But even for Schmitt, the ostensible champion of enmity, political conflicts are finite. No one is always and only an enemy. Indeed, Schmitt cautions against mistaking a political friend/enemy contention as a universal struggle in the name of humanity. Doing so, warns Schmitt, leads to "denying the enemy the quality of being human and declaring him to be an outlaw of humanity," a stance that can justify "the most extreme inhumanity" (54). For many progressives, part of the nausea of this post-election moment involves seeing double. We know various friends, neighbours, co-workers, and family members simultaneously as both good people of faith and hope and also as people who supported (or even chose not to resist) a demonic campaign. The latter image overlays my every encounter with them. I do not see how any amount of empathy or critical generosity could make me feel less angry, betrayed, and disappointed at Trump supporters.

But something like empathy might help me to work through my post-election vertigo, switching gears from *political enemy* to something like *parent at family dinner* or *hiking buddy* or *person whose performances I write about* when necessary. This "something like empathy" isn't utopia. Nor does it quite resemble simple tolerance. I am coming instead to view empathy (in both its scholarly and civil contexts) as participating in what thinkers like John Paul Lederach (2016) call "moral imagination," the practice of finding ways to acknowledge conflict while also thinking past it to new realities (ix).[4]

Unlike utopian performatives, moral imagination assumes the continued (co)existence of those I consider my enemies. It addresses the ontological remainders left by political agonism, the parts of our lives together that persist outside of or in the aftermath of deep disagreements. Moral imagination traffics not in hope but in a form of non-cynical pessimism, a realistic accounting of and pragmatic working with scenarios in which resolution or peace may be decades or generations distant (Lederach 2016, 51–63). Moral imagination is what might allow us to say, in Eboo Patel's words, "I am able to disagree with you on this set of things, and you will see me on the other side of the picket line on those things. And I will try to defeat your candidate at the polls. And we will find other things to do together" (Tippett, Patel, and Trethewy 2016). Empathy as a feature of moral imagination does not neuter political contention, but it can help to guard against the kind of absolutizing enmity that Schmitt warns of.

Such moral imagination also provides practically the only space for the possibility of conversion. In my research, I discovered that the savvier evangelical proselytizing techniques—the ones more advanced than canned scripts or Bible verses shouted at passersby—involve empathic ventures into the hearts and minds of unbelievers. Such techniques imagine a timeline for conversion longer than a single encounter, recognizing that substantive changes in beliefs tend to unfold gradually and result from meaningful interpersonal relationships. To be sure, lasting conversions are not the norm. They are in evangelical thought a kind of miracle, an act of the Holy Spirit to transform hearts and minds. Similarly, ideological conversions—defections on the order of "them" to "us"—are rarities. But, with evangelicals, I affirm that they do occur. I was myself once a sheltered, conservative evangelical growing up in south Louisiana, not far from Lake Charles. I can see a near version of myself all too easily in the complicated, thoughtful stories that Hochschild encounters. Indeed, there but for the grace of God would I be. Thus but for the grace of God would I believe. In my case, the "grace of God" manifested in the form of numerous encounters with people more progressive than I over many years. These evangelists of a better and more expansive view of humanity chose to treat me not as an enemy but as a friend, a coworker, a cast member, a student. The grace I experienced helped to make me the progressive I am today. My experience, in turn, moves me to extend a degree of grace to others—at least sometimes.

I recognize that conservative evangelicals who support Trump—or Trump supporters generally—have by their actions affirmed a leader who espouses nothing like the kind of moral imagination or grace I outline above. Trump inspires polarized reactions from progressives because his utopias—his visions of the ought-to-be—violate the presumption of the legitimacy of ideological opposition necessary for agonistic democracy to work at all. Trump embodies the threat of the nonpolitical, other-annihilating totality. I cannot blame those who focus the entirety of their activist efforts on resisting that threat. No one is required to be a progressive evangelist, critical empathizer, or moral imaginer. Yet, my own work and the work of scholars like Hochschild convinces me that many of those who enabled Trump's victory operate from very different bases than do the most vocal, alt-right avatars of Trump's utopia. Their deep stories, while in many respects factually flawed, also indicate areas of possible intervention and coalitional effort. Some of those people may even be potential converts. But all of those possibilities require risky ventures beyond the oppositional utopia-spaces of us/them activism and into the uncertain realms of the moral imagination.

Notes

1. As I allude to later, the term *evangelical* is essentially contested, meaning different things to different people. I (Fletcher 2013) explain my use in detail in chapter 2. Briefly, I frame US evangelicalism as the legacy movement of a mid-twentieth-century reform effort within US Protestant fundamentalism. Like fundamentalists, evangelicals affirm the inerrant authority of the Christian Bible, the historical reality and theological centrality of Christ's death on the cross, and the necessity of a conscious act of commitment (conversion) to a life of Christian faithfulness. Unlike classical fundamentalists, however, evangelicals also argue for the need to spread the gospel and make converts of unbelievers. Though absolute distinctions do not exist, evangelicals (such as the Southern Baptist Convention or various Pentecostal denominations) generally stand apart from Catholic or Orthodox churches and from "mainline" Protestant churches (such as United Methodists, Presbyterians, Lutherans, and Episcopalians). Depending on how one defines the identity, evangelicals make up anywhere from less than 10 percent to more than 30 percent of the US population (see Kurtzleben 2015).

2. The exit polls' 81 percent figure is contestable due partly to the slippery status of "evangelicalism" as a subcategory of Protestant Christianity (see note 1) and partly to the vagaries of measuring religious demography by survey or poll. The exit polls (operated by Edison Research) rely on interviewees' self-identification as "born-again or evangelical," but these terms have a wide range of meanings. Organizations preferred by many evangelical denominations such as Lifeway Research and the Barna Group rely on belief-based definitions of evangelical identity (generally: the authority of scripture, the atonement of sin through Jesus Christ's crucifixion, the need for personal conversion, and the imperative to spread the gospel). These groups then pose a series of questions about beliefs and the frequency of church attendance to identify and gauge the strength of evangelical identity. For background on this debate, see Kurtzleben 2015 and Fletcher 2013, chapter 2. Nevertheless, the majority of news stories by and about evangelicals and the election cite the exit polls' 81 percent figure. For a representative dissent by evangelicals, see Carter 2016, who in addition to the points made above notes that news organizations tend to conflate "evangelical" and "white evangelical," obscuring the votes of non-white evangelicals.

3. Lest I seem like a stereotypical postmodernist, I aver that matters of fact matter a great deal. It poses a grave threat to our political process that so many Trump supporters seem to have swallowed not merely biased stories but *wholly, explicitly manufactured calumnies* about Clinton, about Islam, about immigration, about global warming, about trans people, and about people of colour. The struggle to establish better public and popular mechanisms of epistemic assessment, making common sense a bit sharper about the differences between "aligns with reality" and "doesn't align with reality," is a vital project. It is, however, not identical to the struggle to acquire an understanding of the affective realities of political opponents.

4. Lederach's full definition reads, "To imagine responses and initiatives that, while rooted in the challenges of the real world, are by their nature capable of rising above descriptive patterns and giving birth to that which does not yet exist" (199). I should note that the phrase "moral imagination" has been used by many people over the years to describe very different ideas, including the project of disciplining imaginations to make them conform to a particular moral standard. I, along with Lederach, reject that definition. For overviews of different uses of the term, see Fesmire 2003, 61–64 and Lederach 2005, 25–29.

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Goodluck the Performer

Ebenezer Obadare

Introduction: The "Lucky" One

When President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan lost the March 2015 Nigerian presidential election to his main challenger, former army general Muhammadu Buhari of the opposition All Progressives Congress (APC), it drew a line under one of the most astonishing political stories in recent Nigerian history. From the relative obscurity of the deputy governorship of the oil-producing southeastern state of Bayelsa, Jonathan, a former environmental protection officer, emerged in 2010 as the occupant of the highest office in the land. Along the way, he had profited, first, from the impeachment of Governor Diepreye Alamieyeseigha in December 2005. Vice President to President Umaru Yar'Adua (2007–2010), he was sworn in as president in May 2010 after the latter's death following a protracted illness.

Because of his unusual path to power, Jonathan's name quickly entered into popular folklore, as seen in the many gags about the danger of having someone named "Goodluck" as your "assist" or second-in-command. One of the most popular, "If your deputy is named Goodluck," goes as follows:

> In your own interest, no matter the position you are offered in any organization, if your deputy is named Goodluck, please decline. Even if it is UN Secretary General or Head of African Union, just decline. Why? Check out these facts:
> Goodluck Jonathan was assistant head boy in his primary school days. The head boy was expelled and Goodluck took over.
> Goodluck was assistant senior prefect in secondary school. After the senior prefect died, Goodluck took over.[1]
> Goodluck was deputy local government chairman. The chairman was implicated in corruption allegations and Goodluck took over.
> Goodluck was deputy governor to Diepreye Alamieyeseigha. He took over after the latter was engulfed in an oil concession corruption scandal.
> Goodluck was vice president to Umoru Yar'Adua—Pericarditis![2]
> A friend just called off a wedding because his best man was named Goodluck![3]

Jokes like this could hardly overwrite what was indeed a genuine quandary: accounting for the ascent into power of someone who seemed like the perfect outsider, someone who, by many accounts, was very reluctant to accept the responsibility of being president, who had in fact done his utmost to disavow the burden—or so it seemed at the time—but who, all the same, had the presidency thrown in his lap.

Across the country, speculations regarding the origins of President Jonathan's "good luck" were rife. The most cogent (if cogent is the right word here) tended to attribute his rapid rise through the political ranks to his name—Goodluck—and, in some accounts, his wife's—Patience. However

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much the conjectures varied, though, they seemed to agree on one crucial point, to wit: President Jonathan's remarkable rise to the Nigerian presidency could not have happened without supernatural assistance.

The following preliminary reflections focus on how President Goodluck Jonathan performed the script of a humble, unassuming, "merely lucky" political outsider who was fortuitously thrust into the ultimate political office in Nigeria via divine intervention.

I advance two related arguments. First, I contend that President Jonathan consciously used his carefully staged performances to distract from his personal insecurities as well as curry and maintain the support of the southern-based power bloc coalesced around the leading Pentecostal pastors and their congregations. Because, for reasons described shortly, President Yar'Adua's unexpected demise represented a net political loss for the northern Nigerian Hausa–Fulani power bloc, the newly sworn-in President Jonathan also desperately needed to reassure the latter while establishing personal and regime legitimacy. His performances, I suggest, were aimed primarily at keeping the powerful Pentecostal elite and their millions of congregants (based for the most part in the southern part of the country) on his side, while not losing the support of the northern power elite and population.

Second, I suggest that, in a classic move, the performances were aimed at engineering and keeping up civic empathy for a leader who, though initially favoured, became increasingly unpopular as time went on. There is no disputing that many Nigerians were thrilled when Jonathan assumed the reins of office in 2010. Many saw his relative youth (he was a youngish fifty-three) as a plus. In addition, and as mentioned above, he seemed eager to flaunt his faith, another plus in an environment in which aspirants to public office are invariably, though informally, subject to a "religious test." Third, as a zoology PhD, Jonathan was a dream come true for many Nigerians who assumed that a "well-educated" leader would bring greater sophistication to the Nigerian presidency and the administration of the country. Perhaps the most important reason why many Nigerians were taken with the new president was that they easily identified with, and indeed were inspired by, the purported "grass-to-grace" arc of his life, illustrated by the frequently repeated story that he grew up without a pair of shoes to his name. Often, then, Jonathan's performances were aimed at *impersonating* this biography, while specifically extracting maximum political capital from a combination of sincere religiosity and down-to-earth humility. Typically, impersonation is understood as a deceptive performance of someone else. Here, on the contrary, it is used to describe the performance of a biography that is semi-factual and semi-mythological, and in which details of the subject's past are continually retrofitted to match the intended persona.

Was Jonathan really a "political outsider"? What role did "pure luck" play in his rapid elevation? While these are interesting questions (and while, as referenced above, the element of "luck" was a big part of many discussions of President Jonathan's unusual trajectory), they are not my immediate focus here. On the contrary, I am interested in how Jonathan, with the help of his immediate advisers and spokespersons, capitalized on the popular narrative of his humble origins and sincere piety to secure real political advantage. At the broadest level, I hope, through the limited example analyzed here, to signal the modes through which power is staged in an African democratizing context, and the kinds of performances deployed towards the objective of achieving regime legitimacy.

On Performance

Given its complex dispersal among a variety of disciplines from sociology through media studies to religious studies and postcolonial studies, this is hardly the place for an elaborate conceptual treatment of performance. Instead, I have elected to explain how I understand and use the term. In so doing, I aggregate, rather than discuss in extenso, the authors and traditions I have drawn on.

Following Jeffrey Alexander, who takes inspiration from, among others, Erving Goffman and Clifford Geertz, performance is regarded as any action undertaken with the intent of communicating meaning to an audience. For Alexander (and for me), "it does not matter what meaning 'really' is, either for actors themselves or in some ontological or normative sense. What matters is how others interpret actors' meaning" (Alexander 2011, 83). The actor in this case is President Goodluck Jonathan, and his audience was, depending on the kind and context of performance, the country's massive Pentecostal constituency, the people of the South South geopolitical zone who rallied around him as their own and took immense psychological pleasure in the symbolism of his presidency, or Nigerians in general. As Alexander notes, and as I clearly demonstrate here, "audiences are placed at different removes from actors, and they can be more homogenous or divided" (83).

Goffman (1967) famously argued that every face-to-face interaction is imbued with the possibility of performance. While this is true, the kind of interaction I analyze here is not face-to-face, being mostly enacted "from a distance" and conveyed to the target audience through media-tion. Though, for reasons of space, I do not go into it in any detail, the role of the Nigerian media in constructing the mythos of Jonathan as an exemplary leader (in regards to his pedigree, that is), and subsequently in projecting his performances to a dispersed audience, is of utmost importance and warrants closer scholarly attention. As part of that accounting, scholars must take seriously the Pentecostalization of the newsroom in several media houses in Nigeria. Pentecostalization here refers to the fact that many leading journalists are either avowed Pentecostals, or/and broadly sympathetic to the mission of Pentecostalism, which is crucially important because of its implications for journalists' normative identity as bipartisan brokers in a democratic society.

I also find useful Achille Mbembe's theorizing of the dramatization of political power in Africa. For Mbembe, what he calls the *commandement*,[4] as the means of producing power in Africa, operates through an economy of signs aimed at its own legitimation and perpetuation. In this economy, in which the *commandement* circulates images and ideas of itself with the objective of producing acquiescence, both the body of the *commandement* and stories about the same are site and instrument for the production and performance of power. In the Jonathan example, the parallels are obvious. With Jonathan, it wasn't just his body, but his entire biography that was the centrepiece of a powerful political dramaturgy, a dramaturgy aimed at boosting his popularity and making him politically secure.

Finally, I am taken with sociologist Jean-Pascal Daloz's idea of conspicuous modesty, whereby for a certain political actor, it is "evidence of one's ordinariness and one's humble devotion to the public, which will carry conviction and strengthen the claim to act as 'representative'" (2007, 210). For Daloz, although conspicuous modesty ostensibly rejects the "self-glorifying quest" of elite political actors, it is in fact of a piece with it to the extent that its ultimate aim is the acquisition of social

legitimacy. In his dramatizations, President Jonathan frequently played this card of ostentatious humility.

Between North and South

One argument advanced in this essay is that President Goodluck Jonathan's self-presentation as a God-fearing "anti-politician" of humble origins was motivated in part by the need to ingratiate himself with the cream of the Nigerian theocratic elite and the millions of congregants for whom their word is, quite literally, law. At the same time, accepting and projecting the image of someone without any political ambition seems to have been calculated at assuaging members of a Northern Nigerian power bloc that felt "cheated" out of their slot following the unexpected passing of Umaru Yar'Adua on May 5, 2010.

When Olusegun Obasanjo (1999–2007) handed over to the late Yar'Adua in May 1999, it was with the tacit understanding that the North was getting back what it had voluntarily ceded to the geopolitical South West in 1999 as a gesture of reconciliation, following the annulment of the June 12, 1993, election and the death in detention of its clear winner, Chief M. K. O. Abiola. With Yar'Adua's death, the North effectively lost its slot, which explains why Jonathan felt it necessary to put its political luminaries at ease. The fear that Jonathan would go ahead and consolidate himself in power—a move that would disrupt the political class's quiet entente regarding "zoning"[5]—was arguably at the core of the constitutional crisis which ensued after Yar'Adua became incapacitated and could no longer discharge the duties of the office of the presidency effectively.

In the event, throughout his tenure, Jonathan struggled to balance his appeal to two sociopolitical constituencies who could not be more different—on the one hand, an influential Pentecostal super-pastorate with deep pockets and a large following, and, on the other hand, a power bloc entrenched in the majority Muslim geopolitical North. For this reason, in most cases, his performance of the pious, politically unambitious man of modest origins was all-encompassing.

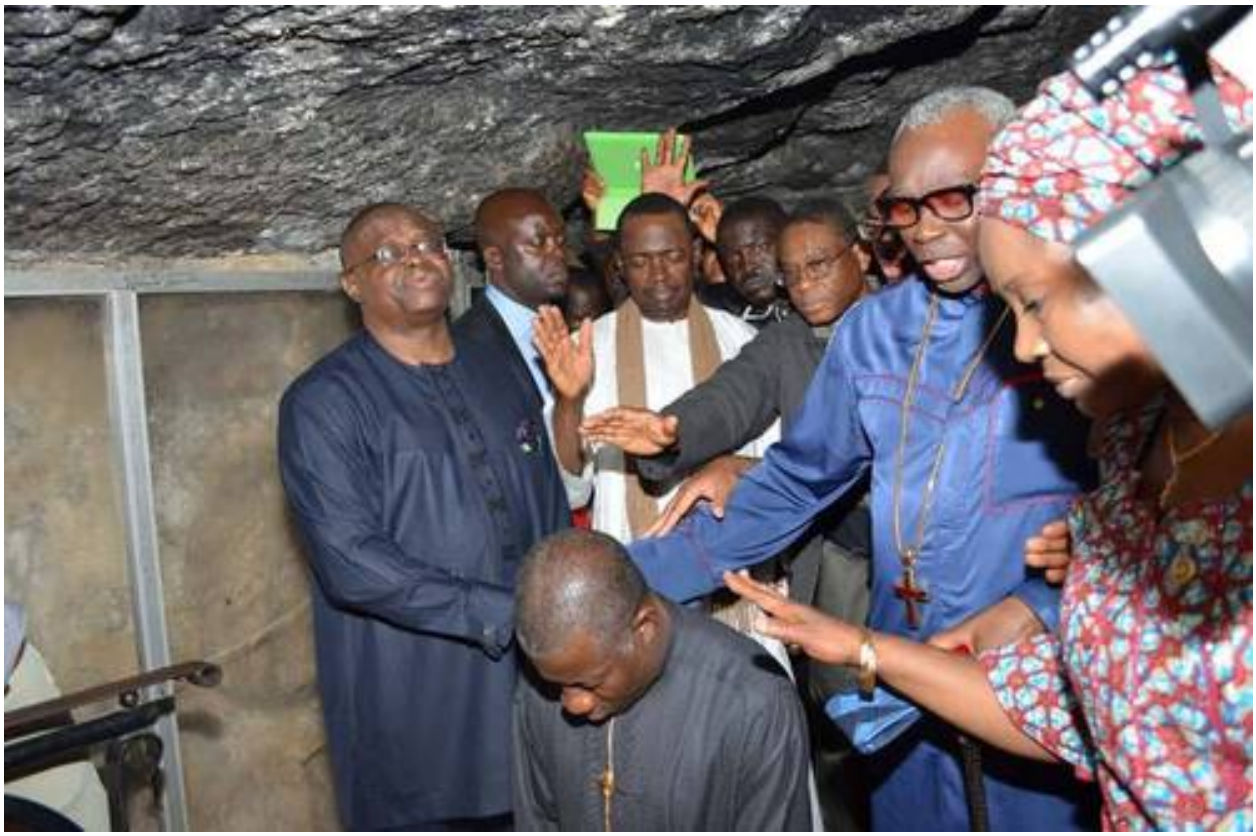
"No Shoes, No School Bags…"

Preparing to take charge of his first Federal Executive Council (FEC) meeting as the country's substantive president after Yar'Adua's passing, Jonathan, no doubt conscious of the symbolism of the moment and the intense gaze of the press cameras, removed his trademark fedora hat, clasped his hands, and closed his eyes in prayer. This was a calculated performance of piety and humility, an overture to the Pentecostal constituency signalling that he, as "one of them," was "in charge" (behind him, strategically positioned, was the crest of the Federal Republic of Nigeria); and, at the same time, a gesture of ostentatious humility choreographed for the consumption of the generality of Nigerians. Jonathan would retread this pose of gratuitous modesty and pornographic piety (specifically calibrated to seduce the watching public) throughout his presidency. I will illustrate with three different moments from his presidency.

Moment One: As president, Jonathan visited several times with the General Overseer of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) and the symbolic Godfather of the theocratic elite, Pastor Enoch Adeboye. On at least two such occasions, in December 2012 and February 2015 respectively (the latter no doubt part of a desperate appeal for votes in the then approaching

presidential election of March 2015), he knelt down before Adeboye, who then went ahead to pray for him, his family, and the country.

Moment Two: In October 2013, Jonathan became the first Nigerian head of state to go on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. In his entourage were Information Minister Labaran Maku; Special Adviser on Media and Publicity Reuben Abati; State Governors Gabriel Suswam (Benue), Theodore Orji (Abia), Peter Obi (Anambra), and Godswill Akpabio (Akwa Ibom); Executive Secretary of the Nigeria Christian Pilgrims Board Kennedy Okpara; and then President of the Christian Association of Nigeria, Pastor Ayo Oritsejafor. At the Wailing Wall, Jonathan knelt down for prayers before Pastor Oritsejafor and other members of the presidential entourage.



President Goodluck Jonathan in Jerusalem, October 2013. Photo: State House Photos/Sahara Reporters.

Moment Three: On March 7, 2015, at the palace of the late Ooni of Ife, Oba Okunade Sijuwade, Jonathan, reportedly at the instance of the Ooni, knelt down in the centre of a circle of Yoruba Obas who pointed their traditional staffs of office at him and prayed for his success in the approaching election.[6]

The sheer political force of these moments cannot be overemphasized; the image of the leader of the world's most populous black country kneeling down in humble surrender symbolizes a self-abjection that, I submit, is in fact a mode of projecting and acquiring power. Nevertheless, the point I am trying to make here transcends the physical symbolism. What I mean is this: integral to these rituals is a kind of voluntary self-degradation whereby a political actor, in this case the president of Nigeria, confesses to his "ignorance" in matters of governance and humbly asks for God's "wisdom." As I have argued elsewhere (Obadare, forthcoming), this wilful repudiation of the very

basis of his authority (an admission of incapacity, in fact) is effectively a project of avoidance, the staging of a ruse that subtly extends the ideology of the state, disguises its impunities, and hence furthers its legitimation.

Bio-Politics

Nor was President Jonathan's performative repertoire limited to physical acts like constantly kneeling down for prayer and affecting piety. As I mentioned earlier, also key to his self-presentation as a "lucky" leader whom God singled out for "favour" was his ostensible "up by my bootstraps" life story, a narrative that Jonathan himself rehashed at every opportunity. Here he is, for example, on September 18, 2010, while declaring his candidacy for the presidential primaries of the People's Democratic Party (PDP):

> I was not born rich, and in my youth, I never imagined that I would be where I am today, but not once did I ever give up. Not once did I imagine that a child from Otuoke, a small village in the Niger Delta, will one day rise to the position of President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. *I was raised by my mother and father with just enough money to meet our daily needs. In my early days in school, I had no shoes, no school bags. I carried my books in my hands but never despaired; no car to take me to school but I never despaired. There were days I had only one meal but I never despaired. I walked miles and crossed rivers to school every day but I never despaired. Didn't have power, didn't have generators, studied with lanterns but I never despaired.* In spite of these, I finished secondary school, attended the University of Port Harcourt, and now hold a doctorate degree. (emphasis added)

Here (as on other occasions), Jonathan was giving credence to, and seeking to extract political capital from, the story of his humble origins.

In this, Jonathan was not alone, as many of his spokespersons frequently bolstered his story. So too did others outside of his immediate "court," especially those who were either invested in the success of his administration for political reasons or indeed genuinely believed that he was a "miraculous" figure with an unprecedented pedigree and a (typically unspecified) historic mission. Father Matthew Hassan Kukah, the current Bishop of the Sokoto Catholic Diocese, provides a compelling instance of both. In a newspaper article, Kukah suggested that, other than sheer luck, or what he called "a monumental act of divine epiphany," there is no rational sociological explanation for President Jonathan's journey to the summit of political ambition in Nigeria. For Kukah, "This man's rise has defied any logic and anyone who attempts to explain it is tempting the gods." He then went on to add, questionably:

> This man has never spent any money to purchase a form of [*sic*] declaring his intention to run for public office in politics. This man does not seem to have been sponsored into politics by any known godfather. Like the rest of us who are considered children of lesser gods, he comes from an insignificant family and a village that hitherto, could not easily be found on the national or state map. He does not seem to have invested heavily to become either Deputy Governor or Governor. ("The Patience of Jonathan" 2010)

In this account, Jonathan's success owed to no calculable agency on his part, but instead to a series of fortunate (for Jonathan, that is) coincidences. By just being there, Fr. Kukah seems to suggest, "all these events have cascaded on his laps [*sic*] within a period of a mere 12 years." "Dr. Jonathan has done absolutely nothing to warrant what has befallen him. I am sure I can safely say he has neither prayed, lobbied nor worked for what has fallen on his lap."

To be sure, the notion that nothing except a combination of luck, coincidence, or providence could "explain" Jonathan's career was, as already mentioned, very popular at the time, and the following statement by Orji Uzor Kalu, governor of the eastern state of Abia (1999–2007) was not atypical:

> Those who followed [*sic*] consistently the metamorphosis of President Jonathan from a university lecturer to a deputy governor, then governor, vice president and now president, will see a definite pattern—a pattern never witnessed in the annals of the country. The enigma of the man Jonathan does not lie in his meteoric rise to the apogee of the nation's political hierarchy. It lies rather in the hand of God upon his life. Anybody may say or write whatever he likes about him, but one thing nobody can dispute is his manifest covenant with God. It is epitomized succinctly in Jonathan in practical, unambiguous terms. Can anybody tell the difference between Goodluck Jonathan and David the son of Jesse?

In retrospect, Charles A. Imokhai's gushing biography of Jonathan (referenced earlier), published and launched with much fanfare one week before the March 28, 2015, presidential election, was the perfect capstone to Jonathan's political glorification.

Conclusion

In the foregoing, I have taken a broad approach to performance as any action undertaken with the intent of communicating meaning to an audience. The primary performer in this example is former Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan, and the audience, as I have shown, varied, depended on the context and type of performance. Jonathan's performances were boosted by the many within and outside his immediate entourage who, for political, ethnoreligious, and other reasons, asserted his uniqueness in Nigerian history. The material mobilized for these performances by President Jonathan was religious piety, political naiveté, and a humble pedigree. The actual performances comprised parading private devotion publicly, bouts of ostentatious humility, and a reconstruction of Jonathan's biography as the stuff of a "grass-to-grace" providential drama. These techniques were aimed at currying sympathy for the president, displacing attention from his maladroitness, and securing political legitimacy for his administration.

If the ultimate goal of these performances was political, how did Jonathan fare? Early on, in his honeymoon period, Jonathan enjoyed a high popularity. However, as time went on, his popularity plummeted. There were many reasons for this. Not only did his administration appear to condone corruption, its official stance notwithstanding, but Jonathan's insincere attempt to distinguish between "stealing" and "corruption" did him no favours. Essentially, it disrupted the biographic impersonation I described earlier and ran against the "character" he created in his public performances. The serial gaucherie of his wife, Patience Jonathan, also cost him a few friends, pointing to the difficulty of controlling other people's performances (his wife's, in this case) in order to maintain a role. In the end, Jonathan's sluggish reaction to the abduction by Boko Haram

terrorists of a reported 276 students from Government Secondary School, Chibok, Borno state, in April 2014 probably sealed his fate.

In this wise, the Jonathan administration was a most eloquent testimony to the potency and limitations of performances as a political strategy. While, initially, many were won over by his public displays of piety and humility, even they would eventually lose patience with him as his luck ran out. In retrospect, it seems that the trope of a "lucky" outsider who somehow wiggled his way to the nation's highest office could only be sustained by remaining "outside." Once inside, the performance proved difficult to maintain.

Protesting the Nigerian government's removal of fuel subsidies, January 2012. Photo: George Osodi, Panos Pictures.

Notes

1. In his 2015 biography (*The People's Choice*), written apparently with the subject's authorization, Charles A. Imokhai makes no mention of Jonathan having been either an assistant head boy in primary school or assistant senior prefect in secondary school. In secondary school, he was secretary of the Food Committee, prefect of Masterson House, and later on chair of prefects.

2. The heart condition that reportedly caused President Yar'Adua's death.

3. Instructively, the tenor of jokes about Jonathan and his wife, Patience Jonathan, changed as soon as the Nigerian public soured on his presidency. In one, a telling commentary on Jonathan's perceived political timidity, Goodluck gets married to Patience but fails to produce a child named Courage.

4. For Mbembe, commandement "embraces the images and structures of power and coercion, the instruments and agents of their enactment, and a degree of rapport between those who give orders and those who are supposed to obey them, without, of course, discussing them." It is "the authoritarian modality par excellence" (Mbembe 1992, 30).

5. A basic understanding that the Nigerian presidency will be rotated between the north and the south as a strategy of conflict avoidance.

6. Understandably, this act of submission to "traditional" rulers did not go down well with his Pentecostal allies, many of whom tend to associate the "traditional" with the "demonic." But the key thing to keep in mind here is Jonathan's eagerness to submit, which is of a piece with his propensity to stage humility, all with the intent of retaining power.

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Recuperating Religion in Art History: Contemporary Art History, Performance, and Christian Jankowski's *The Holy Artwork*

Karen Gonzalez Rice

In my research, I mobilize the methods of art history to analyze performance artworks that engage with American religious practices, communities, and traditions. As an art historian, my work is situated within academic discourses that take religion seriously, from Giorgio Vasari's biographical approach to religious representations to Edwin Panofsky's attention to religious iconography. Despite these roots, art historical discourses around contemporary art generally have insisted on secular interpretations; religion has become a taboo subject in contemporary art history, especially in regard to avant-garde practices like performance art. While many scholars in other disciplines such as religious studies and sociology have rejected the secularization thesis, most historians of contemporary art remain deeply committed to secular modernity. Guided by Enlightenment-based formulations of religion that identify religions with institutions rather than lived experiences, and influenced by post-9/11 rhetoric that has conflated religious devotion with extremism and violence, late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century art historical scholarship remains mistrustful of religious content in artworks and resistant to interpretations that explore artists' and artworks' religious contexts. For many contemporary art historians, the presence of religion in contemporary art challenges assumptions about progressive historical narratives, questions the critical distance espoused by many academics, unsettles disciplinary boundaries, and may even seem embarrassing or naïve from critical theory perspectives based on Marxist ideology or Freudian psychoanalysis. And yet, contemporary artists continue to combine religious forms, content, and contexts with avant-garde performance practices. In particular, in endurance art and other high-stakes performance actions, artists draw their prophetic power and transformative possibilities from their religious commitments, embodied worship practices, and visual traditions of religious dissent. Without attention to the role of religions, these art actions can be misinterpreted and their power overlooked.

In this article, I consider one particular performance—Christian Jankowski's *The Holy Artwork* (2001)—to explore the benefits, challenges, and implications of mobilizing traditional art historical methodologies in the interpretation of religiously inflicted performance art. *The Holy Artwork*—the title itself directly evoking the taboo of religion in contemporary art—staged a seemingly unorthodox encounter between an American evangelical preacher and a German contemporary artist. Subverting expectations, drawing attention to cultural and social stereotypes, and modelling unsettling and potentially meaningful encounter, Jankowski prostrated himself at the feet of a televangelist preacher for the duration of a televised worship service. In collaboration with Reverend Peter Spencer, Jankowski performed *The Holy Artwork* during a crowded, televised Sunday service at Harvest Fellowship Church, Spencer's evangelical mega-church in San Antonio, Texas. At the beginning of the service, Spencer invited Jankowski to the front of the church. The artist walked toward the pastor and suddenly fell at his feet. He collapsed on the floor and remained in this position as Spencer preached a sermon about creativity and Christianity. Spencer's discussion of "God is the ultimate artist," hymn-singing by the Harvest Fellowship Church Praise Team, calls to prayer, and other activities took place around his prone body. At the end of the service, after a final

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prayer, Spencer offered his hand to Jankowski, who took it and got to his feet. The artist thanked God and the congregation and left the stage, ending the performance.[1] Rather than detail a thorough analysis of this piece, my discussion here explores what Jankowski's action suggests about how art history can provide generative perspectives on performances that engage religion, and in turn, how performance can contribute to productive ways of doing contemporary art history.

Dominant art historical approaches to avant-garde performance art tend to de-contextualize it in favour of a timeless cosmopolitanism, underscored in the increasing importance of international festivals in disseminating performance art. However, *The Holy Artwork* visualized the intensely local, historically specific character of religion in performance. Just as when faced with a painting or sculpture, the long art historical tradition of attending to context, from national histories to individual biographies, is crucial to making sense of Jankowski's act of falling down and his sustained immobility. In his multi-layered intervention, the artist's collapsed body made visible a complex set of pre-9/11 regional identities, social relations, and political ideologies. For example, the explicitly religious setting of a Texan, evangelical, mostly white Christian mega-church—sited in the ethnically diverse, international city of San Antonio—highlighted Jankowski's role as an outsider, an invited guest, a wealthy, cosmopolitan, German artist. His submissive stance in the home territory of then newly elected President George W. Bush pointed to Bush-era, pre-9/11 American imperialism, and to the influence of American conservative and evangelical churches on international diplomacy in the turn-of-the-century political moment. Further, in juxtaposing submissive and dominating white male bodies in the figures of a German citizen and a Texan preacher, the piece highlighted regional and national stereotypes of masculinities in the context of the American West. The background and collaboration between these two men also deserves further elaboration, from Jankowski's own religious upbringing, about which he has not been forthcoming, to Spencer's role as the only televangelist in the area willing to work with Jankowski; dozens of others rejected the artist's request (Silva 2002, n.p.). Perhaps Spencer's experience as a graphic design major in college and his former career as a dinner theatre actor influenced his decision; and perhaps his openness to encountering contemporary art in the form of Jankowski contributed to his troubled relationship with his congregation, which ousted him a few years later (Parker 2003, 3B). When scholars take into account the confluence of religious representations, congregational practices, embodied local mythologies, and national histories, art historical methodologies can meaningfully facilitate these and other insights into the embodied politics of performance actions engaging with religion, including Jankowski's gesture.

Art historical methods of formal analysis and comparison can also draw attention to the particulars of the artist's posture in *The Holy Artwork* and its multiple meanings. Jankowksi's fall left him in a very specific pose: on his side, one arm extended, legs one on top of the other, back to the audience. The artist placed himself on the margins, on the floor; in the video of the action, he is visible only in the gutter of the shot, at the very bottom of the screen. Spencer verbally called attention to Jankowski's physical and visual act: the artist, Spencer said, is "emptying himself[,] falling down[, …] no longer becoming the center of attention" (Jankowski 2002: 19). Yet Jankowski did position himself at the centre of the composition, the centre of the action; Spencer's sermon and the action of the church service revolve over and around the still, central point of his own body. Jankowski has said that he based this pose on a stance from religious paintings by Spanish Baroque artist Juan Bautista Maíno, who regularly placed collapsed figures in the foreground of his religious narrative paintings (Corrin 2001, 3).[2] Counter-Reformation Catholic artists often worked to make religious experience accessible to viewers by including a mediating figure to connect to everyday life. Jankowski's choice to inhabit this somewhat obscure, intercessory Baroque stance over more

traditional supplicating postures—for example, face-down, with arms out to the sides, as would be typical in medieval practices—suggests that his body can be read as a mediating figure, a stand-in for the viewer, a character functioning to make the scene, as my students like to say, "relatable." This analysis highlights the transgressive, boundary-crossing nature of *The Holy Artwork*, an interpretation underscored by references to a constellation of other performance actions. In collaborating with a non-artist, siting the piece outside of the art world, and challenging social norms, Jankowski's piece recalled the performances of Gunter Brus, Mierle Laderman Ukeles, Yoko Ono, William Pope.L, and others, aligning this work with the intersectional critical dialogue generated by these artists. In addition, the piece refigures, and perhaps re-performs or re-envisions, an important performance work by another German artist, Joseph Beuys, who shared a New York gallery space with a coyote for several days in *I Like America and America Likes Me* (1974). In both actions, the German stranger staged an ambiguous welcome in the context of post-World War II American imperialism; the tongue-in-cheek title of Beuys's work could serve as a descriptor for Jankowski's. These comparisons clarify the political and ethical commitments interrogated in *The Holy Artwork*.

Given its transgressive nature, it is perhaps not surprising that *The Holy Artwork* was met with consternation and discomfiture. Jankowski's performance took place outside of a traditional museum or art world setting, confronting unsuspecting audiences with an unexpected, seemingly inexplicable action. The artist physically entered into the community of Harvest Fellowship Church, and when he fell to the floor, he not only surprised viewers but violated social and bodily norms. In the video documentation of Jankowski's performance, Spencer remained undisturbed by the artist's motionless body, continuing his sermon and leading the congregation in Sunday activities, but other participants in the service—members of the choir and the band as well as church-goers in the audience—oscillated between studiously ignoring Jankowski and openly staring at him. Their occasional sidelong glances, stifled giggles, and surreptitious gestures revealed their discomfort with Jankowski's position. Observers seemed to be wondering whether this action was a joke, and if so, a joke on whom? Was the artist's attitude reverent or disrespectful? Was he serious about engaging with the community or was this a media stunt? Jankowski put this audience on the spot, demanding that viewers make a decision about how to respond and how to behave. Critics and art historians have responded similarly, with confusion about the artist's motives and uncertainty about their roles as viewers (Smolik 2000, 127; Princenthal 2002, 51; Pollack 2004, 118). The artist has suggested that this unsettlement is central to performance practice: he said, "If you lose control, if you don't know exactly what the artwork wants to tell you, or the meaning of it—that's the moment you have to start thinking yourself and you don't come down to common sense" (Silva 2002, n.p.).

This destabilization extended beyond the action itself to the distribution of the piece. The performance video has appeared in museums and galleries, and it broadcast on Spencer's local cable television show, addressing and conflating multiple, diverse publics: global, cosmopolitan, art-world observers and local, San Antonio television audiences. It is here—amid the discomfort, confusion, and humour that can result from encounter; the difficulty of locating meaning across communities; and the uncertainty at the heart of communicating across difference—that Jankowski's performance models how contemporary art historians might encounter religion in performance. *The Holy Artwork* reminds us that encounter is foundational to religious performance. In order to productively analyze these performances, contemporary art historians must engage with these encounters—encounters with self, with others, with divinity—in all of their messy ambiguity, unsettlement, unresolved multiplicity, and potential for misunderstanding and conflict. With attention to current theorizations of religion and performance in religious studies, partnering with art historians studying other eras and other areas, for whom religion has remained a central concern, and drawing on the discipline's

deep historiography of fruitful dialogue about religion and the visual, contemporary art historians must develop a nuanced language for thinking, writing, and talking about the role of religion in twenty-first-century performance.

Notes

1. For the transcript of this performance, see Jankowski 2002.

2. See, for example, Maino's *The Resurrection* (1612–14) in the collection of the Prado Museum. https://www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/art-work/the-resurrection/528d18b5-73c4-4775-87fd-d9680f95f2bb.

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Jesus Camp Queen

Angela J. Latham

The author as a child, standing in front of a church her father pastored when he was a missionary in the Philippines.[1]

I finally watched *Jesus Camp,* the documentary about fundamentalist church camps for kids.[2] I heard about the movie a long time ago from friends who seemed both dismayed and disdainful even as they recommended it. My son was unambivalent. "Don't watch it, mom. It's disturbing."

I suppose to most people, the movie depicts a strange, unlikely reality—just another alternate universe you can visit through the magic of Amazon Prime. But to me, watching *Jesus Camp* was like watching home movies of my childhood. As the daughter of a fundamentalist minister and missionary, my childhood summers always included such camps.

Our camp days, like those in the film, began and ended with church services in which we were reminded of our sinfulness and asked to commit our lives in service of the gospel of Christ. In

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between services we had several hours of Bible study classes. In the afternoons, we were allowed free time during which we could hang out, play softball, go swimming. I usually preferred swimming. Though dancing, card-playing, going to movies, and reading comic books on Sunday were against the rules, members of my church were not, on principle, opposed to a lap around the pool. They were opposed, however, to "mixed bathing," an activity "unbecoming to a holiness lifestyle." "Mixed bathing" was—is—swimming in the same body of water as a member of the opposite sex to whom you are not married or closely related. You could swim with your parents, your siblings, and even first cousins. Beyond that, you were entering . . . dangerous water.

The proscription against mixed bathing was felt most keenly by and most stringently imposed on the females of our sect. As a girl, I used to be very self-conscious and guarded in my behaviour if a boy came into a swimming area where I was wearing a bathing suit. Sure it happened sometimes if one got careless. But if it did, I was then responsible to keep my distance and not display myself in a way that would create too much temptation. For me and no doubt other girls in my church, this sense of caution extended well beyond poolside or beach. By listening to older women talk, and the accusatory way that sermons characterized "worldly women" and their wiles, I learned that I should protect men from their own instincts in my presence. Their urges were so much harder for them to control than were my own, so I was largely responsible to safeguard their virtue as well as mine. This kind of thinking meant that when something happened, tragically, like, say, a pregnancy without a wedding, the mother-to-be was usually presumed culpable. This mindset also meant that I had a pretty limited range of fashion options, and many years of my youthful beauty were wasted dressing an awful lot like my mother.

The problem of mixed bathing was easily solved at church camp. The sexes were segregated; the girls could swim from 1 to 2:30, the boys from 2:45 to 4:15. Trouble was, the pool was surrounded by a wire mesh fence that you could still easily see through. We rented our church campgrounds from some other more liberal denomination. Maybe that goes without saying. Had we owned our own campgrounds, we would have had a pool that couldn't be seen by passersby. So when our church rented the campgrounds, camp counsellors draped black plastic sheeting all around the fence surrounding the pool thereby preventing not only mixed bathing, but mixed viewing. Somehow, the sight of all that black garbage bag plastic remains one of my most vivid memories of Jesus camp.

Make no mistake. I loved going to camp. The isolation I felt at school didn't exist at camp. Here, I was "in." My status as preacher's daughter was a stigma among the godless with whom I attended public school—this was before homeschooling became so popular. But my status as preacher's daughter was a badge of honour at church camp. Certainly, all the camp staff knew who I was, that I was a sweet little denominationally specific born and bred girl, not some random Sunday school child brought along in hopes that she might be "saved."

Author as a child, standing in front of a church her father pastored in southern Indiana, United States.

Author as a teenager wearing a "Jesus is Lord" promotional t-shirt distributed by the church denomination in which she was raised.

Sunday school children standing in front of a church van.

By the time I was in high school, I was a Jesus camp veteran of many years. I knew most of the other kids from southern Indiana who were raised like me, and we saw each other annually at camp as well as regional church events. I felt close to the staff who ran the camp and hoped one day to be a church leader like they were, or more likely, married to one.

One of the rituals kids at Teen Jesus Camp looked forward to most was at the end of the week, when a camp king and camp queen were announced. I had longingly watched the older teenage girls who, each year, comprised a court of smiling young women from among whom a queen was chosen and crowned. Little did I know but, the summer I turned seventeen, my own coronation was imminent. I went to camp that summer with my usual enthusiasm, happy to see friends and to experience something I knew would bring me closer to Jesus. The time passed quickly, and by about the third day, I was summoned by Pastor Paul, head of the Young People's Society, Southwest Indiana District. He told me the wonderful news: "Angie, you have been nominated to be a member of the camp court!"

I do not know who nominated me or why, but the remaining part of the selection process was fairly straightforward. Pastor Paul would interview each princess, and then a queen would be chosen, presumably by him. I remember the interview clearly:

> Pastor Paul: "Angie, your selection to the camp court is a great honour to you and reflects well on your character and commitment to Christ. I have one question for you: What has been the most meaningful experience of camp for you this summer?"
>
> Angie: "Why, Pastor Paul, it would have to be that, you know, last year, some of the kids who were always down at the altar at the end of services because they had been struggling in their spiritual lives, you know, people like Jim Cardiff and Danny Sims

> *(the former of whom I had a crush on).* This year, they're the ones—having stayed true to their commitment to Christ—they're down at the altar at the end of services praying with others. That is the real joy of this week for me . . . to see that kind of spiritual growth and commitment."
>
> Pastor Paul *(radiant smile, breathless pause):* "Thank you for your answer. That is wonderful, Angie. See you at the ceremony."

As I left the interview, I knew I had nailed it. I couldn't think such a prideful thing then, but I can now. I had learned nothing if not to be demure, humble—in a word, "Christ-like," or at least the female version of such. I ran back to my cabin where my best friend, Jenny, was waiting to hear how it went.

Jenny was such a great best friend. She was one of the kids who always felt more or less an outsider at church events like this, though, because her family wasn't "saved." She was from an "unchurched home." This was almost as bad as being from a "broken home." It meant she wasn't as likely as me to be chosen as camp queen or even as a princess. This was lucky for me in a couple of ways, not the least of which that it meant I could borrow her prom dress to wear to coronation. Being from a godless home meant she could go to prom, whereas I couldn't because of the evils of dancing. Jenny had worn this lovely, long, baby blue, gauzy gown to prom only a couple of months earlier. I had admired it so when she wore it while clinging to the arm of Greg Moore, her less than handsome but still acceptable prom date. Now she arranged to have the dress brought to camp for me to wear. I felt like a queen the minute I put it on.

The ceremony was scheduled for after dinner and before the evening service. Everyone crowded into the small chapel where the preaching services were held. The camp staff dispensed with the coronation of camp king first, for no one cared as much about that part of the competition and it would have been anti-climactic to put it at the end. Gary Dodd, a cute boy, but short, was chosen. He seemed happy enough about it, but I couldn't focus on him as I knew my own glorious moment was close at hand. Sure enough, Pastor Paul turned to the three young women, including me, who were standing on the left side of the platform and solemnly stated that it was time to announce the queen of the Southwest Indiana District Teen Camp . . . Angie Latham!

The applause felt so lovely, and the tiara was nicer than you might think. It was the first time I had ever received a dozen long-stemmed roses.

Author wearing tiara after being crowned camp queen.

The thrill of being crowned camp queen was quite something. Curiously, I felt especially triumphant upon returning home laden with my winnings and discovering that Mark, one of my brother's college friends was visiting. Again. Mark was at least five years older than me, and to my eyes incredibly sophisticated and handsome. I suppose he could be arrested today for his advances toward me. We had often ended up entangled on the sofa or floor late at night during his frequent weekend visits over the past two years. I say this knowing full well that it tarnishes the image of purity I have so far created of myself. The thing was, in a legalistic culture that was also quite prudish, rules were set, but not so explicitly as to be awkward to speak of in public services, the usual venue for such discussions.You could date a boy, and you couldn't have sex with him. Enough said. In between, there was a lot left for you to figure out for yourself what kinds of affection constituted "going too far." I was only fifteen and very naive about boys, let alone men, when Mark started teaching me a thing or two. At some point though, I had started to feel used by him, and I had recently made it clear that I no longer wanted to be part of a no-strings-attached, nice weekend away from dorm life for him. My smug satisfaction arriving home laden with roses and tiara and having him, of all people, there to behold me in all my glory was hardly a fitting response from one so recently crowned as a model of Christ-like femininity.

Mark was a ministerial student at the college I would also attend, where I would later be a professor, and where I would leave in what I like to call my "blaze of glory." My ignominious departure in the wake of a divorce from all that was my religious heritage and by then livelihood as well was still several years away. There were many things that foreshadowed my fall from grace had I been paying close attention. The small, private, church-based college was where my father attended and my

brothers. I never thought about going anywhere else. It was what we did in my family. Even my best friend, Jenny, was persuaded to go there, something that I am sure bewildered her unsaved parents as had so many other things about the sect she had joined.

Though the euphoria of being crowned camp queen was delightful in itself, I was overjoyed to be embarking soon on what turned out to be essentially a much longer version of Jesus camp—church college.

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Living in residence at a fundamentalist church college had many parallels to my experiences in "Jesus camps" throughout my childhood. The rituals of church and chapel services, prayer before classes, and constant talk about salvation and other spiritual topics—these were the most apparent similarities. So too was was my never-ending quest to achieve the ideal of Christ-like femininity. This meant being compliant though strong in character, humble though poised and confident, and beautiful though never aware of such. It meant a lot of other things too, but my head hurts already.

Church college was all that I hoped it would be. I was surrounded by people who believed like me and wanted to prepare themselves for Christ's work.

Author (far right) and other members of a college "drama ministry" team.

Author and friends from a church-sponsored evangelical ministry team for college students.

It seemed to me that everyone here loved Jesus and that this was a place I could thrive. Getting to know people was quick business without all that front-end work of finding out where they stood on spiritual matters. I could achieve intimacy, or what seemed like it, instantly. I could cut to the chase in friendships and romantic relationships; I was enraptured. I took full advantage of the sense of belonging I now felt, to make friends by the score and of course, date lots of boys.


Author and friends.

Early in my first semester of college I realized that I could be popular—a status I had only achieved on a small scale before, and certainly not in secular settings such as high school.

Author (second from right) and friends wearing collaborative costuming for a college party.

But secular didn't apply anymore, and long gone were the days of being an oddball religious freak in the eyes of schoolmates. Soon I realized—with my camp queen victory fresh in recent memory—an even more glorious prize could be mine! I had only to attend the college homecoming queen coronation to imagine that one day I too would stand in that lineup of fresh-faced young women. I too would come to represent all that was pure, gracious, and lovely in a subculture that placed undue emphasis on such traits in the ones who bore and raised its children.

Author (second from left) and other members of the college homecoming court.

Freshman year through senior year, when I was at last eligible to be elected to homecoming court, passed quickly, but not without incident. I had my share of bad boyfriends, ineffective teachers, and dismal days, just like everyone else. There was really only one Heaven, after all, and it wasn't in Kankakee, Illinois. What's more, the difficulties I occasionally faced helped me become even more adept in developing the qualities expected of me as a young woman in a strict religious culture. Nothing allowed one to display her virtue so well as to graciously overcome some hardship, no matter how small. Looking back, though I was oblivious at the time, I see that to the degree I perfected my angelic persona, my actual identity became more brittle. Only after my fragile façade at last shattered did I fully comprehend the price I had paid for my dissembling.

There were several early hints at the dissonance that would lead me later to abandon my attempts to be a model of Christlike femininity—the very traits that brought me so much glory at Jesus camp and its later manifestation, church college. One of the first times I recognized that I was experiencing some kind of identity leakage was when I dated Brett, a boy who played a mean saxophone and who had a number of issues with his father. Brett hung out with the music major crowd. Social segregation at the college was quite stringent, especially at meals. While I was dating Brett, his group adopted me for a time and seemed to like having me around. I was less sure about them. Eating meals with them was like lunching with the lions at the zoo. They constantly vied for superiority over each other, usually with cutthroat banter that was mostly about music minutia that seemed to me couldn't possibly matter to anyone but themselves. Still, I sat through these bloodthirsty conversations smiling pleasantly, offering an occasional unrelated thought, and mostly trying to keep the peace. Maybe that's why "sweet" became the word they invariably used to describe me. At first I felt affirmed by this, but after a few months, their label too forcibly suppressed my increasingly sarcastic self, a sarcasm no doubt emboldened by hanging around with the likes of them. I didn't prize the edge that was developing in my personality, and I had made it a matter of prayer. Still, I resented the shocked way they responded when some barbed comment came unbidden from my mouth. Before long, my relationship with Brett was "on the back burner" as he liked to say. I can't say whether his breakup with me was the result of my actual self being less sweet than the one he signed on to date, or whether his mother didn't approve of girls whose shoes didn't perfectly match their outfits. Either way, I guess I was better off, though I am still inordinately attracted to men who play their instruments well.

Despite my occasional lapses, the "sweet" label Brett and his friends gave me seemed to stick, both in my head and in the way others perceived me. And my popularity with outsider groups like the music majors undoubtedly increased my voting block when the time came for students to nominate the women they felt deserved to represent them as members of the homecoming court. By the fall semester of my senior year, I and presumably most of my female classmates were keenly aware that The Vote was coming right up. We pretended not to be, and never spoke of such things. It would have been immodest.

Being elected to homecoming court was the ultimate reward for years of trying to be the best Christian girl you knew how to be, at least according to the rules of our sect. In other words, it was a reward for living very, very carefully. Future homecoming queens never appeared at breakfast without makeup or with too much makeup. Future homecoming queens attended church regularly, promptly, and sat in a pew well-situated to be seen from all parts of the college church. Future homecoming queens occasionally but not too often, travelled the long aisles of said church to pray publicly at an altar about some spiritual matter. In sum, future homecoming queens took up very little space, were no trouble at all to have around, and were nice to look at.

Even in presidential election years, students at the college were more likely to cast a vote in November for Homecoming Queen than for the President of the United States. On the day when the student government organization set up tables near the cafeteria, plunked down yearbooks to serve as catalogues, and handed out slips of paper on which to write the names of nominees, young women like me anxiously went about our business trying to look nonchalant. Oh, everybody except Caroline Smith. She hung around the polling area quite shamelessly. Caroline was pretty enough, and her dad was filthy rich—the president of JCPenney or something. But she didn't quite have the right balance of traits. Something about her was unseemly. I couldn't put my finger on it then or now, but I knew she didn't stand a chance against the likes of me. I almost felt sorry for her in all her pretty designer clothes.

The homecoming court polling area was open from lunch through dinner, and then the coronation committee sequestered themselves to count ballots. This took a couple of hours. I was a resident assistant, and this happened to be the night when it was my turn to sit at the reception desk of McClain Hall, the dorm where I lived and worked. By about nine o'clock that evening, Susan Gibbons, president of the Women's Residence Association, made her rounds. Susan was a squat, badly complexioned girl. Nice as she was, she had no hope herself of being elected to court. When I saw Susan approach me, I felt as I had that moment years earlier when Pastor Paul announced my name as camp queen, the same impending sense of victory and validation.

"Angie, you have been selected to be one of the five girls on the court for Homecoming Queen," Susan gushed. Clearly she took what pleasure she could from being the bearer of good tidings, bless her heart.

"ME?!"

"Yes! You!"

As though I needed convincing.

I instantly began to imagine the glory, the overwhelming joy of this honour. Perhaps I would even be queen! But just to be on the court came with such a delightful set of perks that I was already in bliss. Court members got sittings with a professional photographer, and their faces graced a multi-page spread in the college yearbook. Each wore a long sash across her flowing gown. Special dinners with high-ranking school officials and a seat on the float in the homecoming parade were givens as were, yes, roses and a tiara.

Author (far right) and other members of the court on a float in the homecoming parade.

My first impulse, on learning of my good fortune, was to run to my dorm room and tell Jenny, my best friend and now roommate. This had been a habit with me since at least as far back as my Jesus Camp Queen nomination.

In all my years of exhausting self-monitoring, you would think I might have at least thought twice before barging into our dorm room with my wonderful news. Couldn't I have imagined that Jenny might not be as happy as I was since she had not also been chosen? As I blurted out what Susan had just told me, I saw her wince slightly, but she quickly covered any misgivings with a smile and warm congratulations. Only later that night, when I heard sobs in the bunk below mine, did I realize her pain. Once again she was the outsider, while I was chosen as the beloved daughter in a world where adoration was reserved for a select few. It would be a long time before I came to know her kind of pain for myself.

The events of homecoming week were as exhilarating as I had imagined. Indeed, the coronation was only one of several festivities, though it was easily the most glamorous. Hundreds of people attended the ceremony and listened intently as the professor who supervised the campus radio station read each of our names in his big, radio voice. He told notable things about us as we each floated across the stage in our long, white gowns. Just like beauty queen contestants, we each got our turn on the runway, built just for the big event.

A photo taken of me at the time shows me looking out over the audience teary-eyed and radiant while a recording of my father's voice saying wonderful things about his little girl played through the speaker system.[3]

Author listening to a recording of her father's voice during coronation ceremony.

Too soon the moments passed, and it was time to announce the queen!

It wasn't me. That's the long and short of it. Some other missionary's daughter got the biggest batch of roses and the red velvet robe. I can't say I was terribly disappointed, but I did wonder about it. Maybe I should have stuck with one boyfriend instead of dating so many different ones. She had had the same boyfriend all through college. Maybe that played as more wholesome somehow. Then again, maybe it was her big brown eyes. Who knows? I was still glad to be one of the chosen, even if not The Chosen.

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A few years after college, graduate degree in hand, I was invited back to my alma mater to teach. Soon I was asked to host the homecoming coronation. I enjoyed my new role, though I had come to question a ceremony that celebrated certain traits in women that I was learning through bitter experience were hindrances to their overall well-being. I was especially interested in this year's ceremony though, because Cindy, one of the majors I advised and a cast member in the play I was directing, was a member of the queen's court. In fact, she had had her visit from the coronation fairy during one of our rehearsals. Cindy was a kind and loving young woman, and it was no surprise that her classmates perceived in her the traits that had come to be expected in members of the homecoming court. I liked Cindy because, in spite of all the rules of our church, she still knew how to have fun. She also had a way of making other people feel as though they really, really mattered.

A few days before homecoming, Cindy and a group of other students travelled in one of the college vans to Indianapolis where they were to join other members of the college choir in singing at a gospel music convention. I too travelled to the convention. After inching along for miles in traffic that was clearly misplaced in the middle of Indiana cornfields, I knew an accident must have happened up ahead. As I approached the crash site, I immediately recognized what was left of the college van that had been transporting our students, all of whom by now had been taken away to local hospitals. I got out of my car in a panic and asked if anyone was seriously hurt. I didn't even know that Cindy had been in the van, but I recognized the name of the young man the police officer said had been killed instantly in the rollover. A few hours later, Cindy also succumbed to her injuries. The memory of her death still brings a lump to my throat. I don't think of her as much as I used to, but I pay quiet tribute to her every time I pass mile marker 163 on Interstate 65 near Lafayette, Indiana. The crash site isn't marked as so many are these days, but I know it on sight and sometimes in my dreams.

A few days later we were supposed to have homecoming. But how could we? The tragedy created a terrible sadness that seemed to cling to the very leaves of trees on campus. This was to be a time of celebration, but as a member of the homecoming court, Cindy would be conspicuously absent, and the other students killed in the accident left behind many grieving friends. Nevertheless, someone decided that the show must go on, and specifically that the coronation would proceed. I reluctantly agreed to fulfil my role as emcee.

As I welcomed everyone to the ceremony, I stood only a few feet away from where, not so long ago, I had looked tearfully out upon a similar crowd. Then as now, the audience gathered to celebrate those they believed to be models of Christ-like femininity. Determinedly I read the names of each member of the court, and my quavering voice broke only when I announced Cindy's name, while roses and a tiara were placed on a table in her memory.

As soon as the ceremony was over, I ran sobbing into the dark behind the auditorium. I cried alone there for a long time, just hiding in the bushes.

Something was so terribly wrong here, but just what I couldn't have told you. I now see that my grief wasn't just for the loss of Cindy, but for my loss of self as well. It would take me years to grasp the dimensions of my grief. I would eventually escape my ill-considered and by then crumbling marriage and this culture that engendered and would have me stay in its wreckage. But as punishment, I would escape alone. My son—who was right after all to advise me not to revisit the places the movie, *Jesus Camp,* would take me—was hostage for many years in these same, sad places.

Author's son around the time of the events that prompt this narrative.

Only when my beautiful boy was taken from me did I fully comprehend the price I had paid, not for my sins, but for my virtue. For now, all I knew was that the carefully kept purity and well-managed personas of people like Cindy and me and so many other young women I had known really came down to this. We were lovely to behold, a comfort to our loved ones, and a source of pride to those who claimed some affiliation with us. But in the end, tragedy of some kind would inevitably strike, for no one goes unscathed. Still, somehow our agony was compounded, if only by an inordinate sense of surprise.

Author and son.

After a while, I wiped my tears away and pasted on a smile that even Pastor Paul wouldn't have believed. I walked over to the cafeteria, where the festivities were already underway and where a

lifetime ago I had played peacemaker among the bickering musicians.

***

I still have my tiaras. Both of them. I don't know why I kept them, all things considered, but I did. I have a scholar's view now of traditions like Jesus Camp, and spectacles like homecoming queen coronations. But no matter how well I can dissect these rituals intellectually, I carry within me a more profound and visceral understanding that people get lost in such pageantry. For there is still a young girl waiting somewhere back in time. She stands beside a swimming pool fence that is strangely draped in black, garbage bag plastic. She carries roses and wears a tiara and sweetly smiles, but her blue eyes are brimming with tears.

Notes

1. The filmed version of this performance contains additional photos not embedded here nor previously presented in live performances. These photos are from the author's personal collection and are uncredited due to uncertainty about the identity of photographers.

2. The film version of the script differs in that it opens with this voiceover content:

> This is a story about a story I can't tell. It's pieced together from memories that resurfaced in the long aftermath of a legal judgment that denied to me custody of my six-year-old son. That story was and still mostly is, too painful to tell outright. So here's a story I can tell you. But only you.

3. The film version of the script includes the following clip of a recording of the author's father speaking at the homecoming coronation ceremony: "Angela Joy, this is your dad speaking. We're proud of you tonight. We picked your name before you were born, and it's fit the description very well. You've been a real joy to us . . ."

Fundamental Femininity in Performance: An Artist's Reflections on *Jesus Camp Queen*

Angela J. Latham

Coming to Terms

In truth, *Jesus Camp Queen* (*JCQ*) is a story about the story I can't tell. It is the kept secret that sounds like confession. My wrenching and incomprehensible loss in the wake of a legal judgment that denied to me the custody of my six-year-old son was, and mostly still is, too painful to translate directly into story. The small-town custody drama into which the truly "righteous" insinuated themselves was one in which themes of femininity and morality were central, and with respect to my own, simultaneously impugned and conflated. In an Illinois courtroom, I learned once and for all that "performing one's gender wrong initiates a set of punishments"; that "gender is a performance with clearly punitive consequences" (Butler 1988, 528, 522). And while *JCQ* is not explicit about my experience of such consequences, in the reflections that follow, I trace the ideological contours that compelled a punitive response to my "erroneous" femininity. I explore as well how the creation of *JCQ* helped me identify performative elements of what I call *fundamental femininity*. I use this term to denote being female in ways that originate from and conform to literal interpretations of sacred texts as promulgated within various religious traditions.[1]

I wrote *JCQ* several years after what I sardonically refer to in its narrative as my "blaze of glory" exit from the religious culture in which I lived out the first thirty years of my life. I did not write expecting to perform *JCQ*. I only wanted to sort through some recurring life themes in a more systematic way than I had as yet managed, and putting them into the form of a story seemed like a good way to do that. Shortly after I had completed an early draft of the narrative, I saw an audition notice for Stockyards Theatre Project's then annual Chicago-based Women's Performance Art Festival. As one who had done a good bit of solo performance work previously, I was intrigued by the prospect of transposing what was clearly emerging as a story about performance into an actual performance. I presented *JCQ* for the first time at the Stockyards Festival in October 2007.

Fundamental Femininity as Performative Accomplishment

In the years since I first performed *JCQ*, I have continued to reflect, read, and write about my own and others' experiences of fundamental femininity. As a result, I now clearly recognize the gendered admixture of veiled dissidence and manifest devotion that marked my early life in a fundamentalist Christian culture. That dichotomous state of mind and being is perhaps best explained by Judith Butler, who asserts:

> Significantly, if gender is instituted through acts which are internally discontinuous, then the *appearance of substance* is precisely that, a constructed identity, a performative

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> accomplishment which . . . the actors themselves, come to believe and to perform in the mode of belief (Butler 1988, 520, emphasis in original).

Although Butler does not use the term "belief" here in an expressly religious sense, her choice of words could not be more apt in framing the complex and often hazardous intersection of gender, religious belief, and performance that is the essence of *JCQ*.

The stories of *JCQ* and the underlying crisis that compelled me to weave them together in the way I did are the product of a specific religious context that merits additional consideration. My church denomination of origin is described by its members as "evangelical." The label "fundamentalist" is not favoured, though I use it here and in my performance as a way to denote the church's literal approach to biblical interpretation (Olsen 2004, 5), a fact which is crucial in understanding its attitudes toward gender (Gallagher 2003, 65, 79, 83)[2] and general world view. I grew up hearing the stories of the Bible so often that I knew them by heart and as historical fact (as did everyone else, as far as I knew). Jonah really did end up in the belly of a giant fish for three days and live to tell about it. Noah really did build an ark into which he put his family and a pair of all the animals in the world. Adam really did have a wife made out of his rib whom he later blamed for getting him to eat fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Everyone thinks it was an apple he ate, but there is no real proof of this if you know your Bible stories well enough, and I did—just not metaphorically.

In my church, female roles—especially those of wife and mother—were scripturally circumscribed and ecclesiastically reiterated, beginning but not ending with the hermeneutics of Eve's foibles. Training in these roles began early and was powerfully reinforced, sometimes through performative rituals like the ones described in *JCQ,* but mostly in explicit teachings. The institution of marriage, and particularly a hierarchically structured form of marriage with clearly prescribed sex and gender roles, was frequently the topic of sermons and ancillary programming. This was, after all, the church brand of James Dobson, founder of the highly influential parachurch organization, *Focus on the Family,* whose Colorado-based talk show played daily on the radio station of the denominationally affiliated college I attended. *Focus on the Family* publications were everywhere on view here too—at the college bookstore, the library, and certainly in church members' homes. But perhaps the primary indicator of how ubiquitous Dobson seemed to me in the 1990s, when I taught at the college, was the *Focus on the Family* flyer I received on Sundays—inserted into the service bulletins handed out by greeters at the campus church.[3] These sheets contained Dobson's advice, especially his conservative views on marriage and childrearing. So certain was the tone of his rhetoric that I became convinced that my full-time employment away from the care of my pre-school-aged son was most unfortunate, as it indeed turned out to be, from a custody standpoint at least. In any case, Dobson's prolific emphasis on stay-at-home mothering was widely accepted in my cloistered world as the ideal family arrangement. It was a mantra among my peers, particularly those women who were able to stay home and care for their children. I worried a lot about my status as "working mother," especially on sleepless nights and—oh the irony—to the clackety-clack sounds of Dobson's son riding a skateboard around in my neighbourhood. He was a student delivered into the care of college faculty, including a working mother like me.

In her exploration of gendered communication within an evangelical college community, Allyson Jule describes socio-culturally specific binary divisions of gender in performative terms, noting that "being male seems to equate with speaking in public as specifically demonstrative of a masculine morality," whereas to be female seems instead to "equate with the avoidance of speaking in public as specifically demonstrative of morality" (2008, 2). Jule focuses primarily on student speech in her

study. Admittedly, my role as a faculty member at my alma mater necessitated my speaking in public, but the highly circumscribed nature of my speech within that position is beyond the scope of this analysis. Nevertheless, Jule's research offers insight into the gendered morality of *dramatis personae* in *JCQ*, including but not limited to depictions of my own student and faculty selves. Certainly, camp queen and homecoming court ceremonies that I experienced venerated a silent feminine piety. But my angst about and attempts to censor an "increasingly sarcastic self" from making "barbed" comments point as well to a culturally inscribed reticence—or at least soft-spokenness—not shared by the mostly male members of the music major clique I accompanied for a time. The sweet-natured, muted self who is revealed in such *JCQ* scenes—fervently sincere as well as silently duplicitous—would of course eventually evolve into someone less opaque, more unpredictable and, I like to think, more fun to be around. But during the time represented within the world of *JCQ*, the cracks in my façade of fundamental femininity are only just beginning to appear.

Creation as Revelation

In the long aftermath of grief and loss, the narrative threads of *JCQ* emerged almost unbidden, as fragmented recollections of a time before the verdict that divested me of my motherhood, and for a while and to a large extent, my sense of self. These earlier memories were of scattered and truncated scenes, quick flashes of insight, and frightening new truths that threatened a way of life. No single narrative could convey how a girl who tried so long and so hard to "imitate Jesus" could be so harshly penalized for failing to portray a feminine "Christlikeness" to perfection.[4] Still, a desire was strong within me to follow these storied breadcrumbs that retrospectively mapped my journey.

Eventually, as noted in the opening and closing lines of *JCQ,* the stories of others suggested a through-line for the disparate strands of my own. The documentary film, *Jesus Camp*, as well as my previous scholarship on spectacular rituals of culturally prescribed femininity, provided a framework within which I might essentially recast myself in my own story.[5] Through *JCQ*, I would reveal the fragility and collapse of the fundamental femininity I so painstakingly enacted throughout my formative years and well into adulthood. To a lesser extent, I would reveal the price I paid for "breaking character."

My wry observations and sometimes arrogant internal monologues attest to an innate candour I did not recognize at the time, but which became increasingly clear to me as I crafted my storied performance. Using methods of autoethnography, my "back and forth" gaze uncovered "multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural . . . first through an ethnographic wide-angle lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of [my] personal experience: then . . . inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations" (Ellis and Bochner 2000, 739). As I fashioned *JCQ* using this multivalent approach, I realized in a more complete way how my disquietude compelled me to abandon a role that was at odds with my experience of reality; a role that if retained might thwart my sense of reality as well. Autoethnography facilitated my honest efforts to expose the strategic ways I navigated my religious culture. Perhaps inevitably then, as the product of those efforts, *JCQ* foreshadows my escape from this culture, as well as from the persona of devout femininity that it inculcated.

In her illuminating study of evangelical Christian women, Julie Ingersoll casts a theoretical and theological net that encompasses the continuum of my sacred performance of gender, from staged compliance to repentance-worthy micro-resistances known only to me. Specifically, she notes the

"myriad" ways in which the gendered body is ritualized: "When nearly all of life is ordered by gendered requirements, life itself becomes the performance of ritual in the space of the human body." Ingersoll further suggests the perceived eternal ramifications of binary divisions within conservative Christian cultures in that the gendered body "enacts myths of masculinity and femininity and marks boundaries between the saved and the lost with idealized gendered behavior" (Ingersoll 2003, 123–24). The salvation-sized significance I attached to my performance of a devoutly gendered self attests to the validity of Ingersoll's claim.

My *JCQ* renderings point as well to yet another binary: elation and shame. I was elated to compete successfully in this highly specialized form of femininity, but I tried to view my competitive edge as an affirmation of my own exceptional female virtue rather than admit to my rather ordinary human vanity. My earliest inklings of shame came from not performing my gendered faith with either sufficient faith or sufficient femininity. But by the period of my life in which *JCQ* is set, I had developed a high level of proficiency in this two-toned role. Shame cast its shadow over my elation as I began to recognize why and how others were ineligible for the accolades bestowed on me. My shame became unbearable when I finally understood how tenuous was the particular faith behind the femininity I performed, and that I had built an equally tenuous life out of both.

Truth to Tell

According to Ellis and Bochner, "life and narrative are inextricably connected. Life both anticipates telling and draws meaning from it. Narrative is both about living and part of it." Narrative has the potential to transform; it is "agency through testimony" (2000, 745–46, 749). Frankly, long before I knew of narrative-based research methodologies or could even begin to articulate the power of performance to shape one's life, I knew about testimony. Testimonies were the tales told by the faithful within the sacred spaces of my religious culture.[6] They were storied ways of knowing and owning lessons of loss and truths discovered in joy and sorrow. So, in the lessons and sorrow of my own great loss, I did what I knew to do—what the church I had escaped taught me best to do.

JCQ is a testimony. By virtue of its indirectness, it is a parable of sorts, a way to explain as well as to contain the incomprehensible. I may have left the faith, but not without a means of redemption.

Acknowledgements and a Note on the Performance

The author wishes to thank Jason Zingsheim and Dustin Goltz for their comments on an earlier version of this essay as well as Joy Palacios for her insightful editorial comments. *JCQ* was originally performed in direct address style to a live audience. These performances were not recorded. In the process of recreating the performance so that it could be digitally shared here, I discovered new interpretive approaches to the work. The primary interpretive shift was a result of my collaboration with filmmaker and director Daniel Nearing. Specifically, and at his suggestion, I discovered that to the degree I treated my story as an intimate disclosure, it read on film and in my own psyche as more authentic and plausibly motivated. Divulging such personal and conflicted memories simply felt more like the kind of thing one would do in private conversation, not as a monologue to an audience of strangers. While retaining most elements of the live performance (including strategically interspersed images), my "pillow talk" manner and the use of voiceover are specific to this filmed performance. And although I will adopt a more confidential tone with a live audience in future

performances, my experience of performing *JCQ* live and now on film as well convinces me that this particular aesthetic text is especially suited to the latter.

Notes

1. Although my experiences were within a Protestant Christian tradition, *fundamental femininity* is a term that may apply to gender role expectations for women within any religious tradition whose behavioural codes are based on literal interpretations of sacred texts. For more on the impact on women of literalist views of religious texts see, for example, Vorster 2008 and AWID et al. 2015.

2. It is important to note that while Gallagher repeatedly acknowledges that most research on evangelical culture causally and primarily associates gender ideals with biblical literalism, she argues instead that literalism is lesser in significance than several other factors (83–84). This may be so, but my comments here are based on my lived experiences within a particular religious culture that heavily promoted a literal interpretation of scripture, including but not limited to scriptures pertaining to gender roles.

3. Dobson was prominent well into the next decade—if being newsworthy enough to be featured in a segment on Comedy Central's *The Daily Show* is a sufficient measure of such. In the June 25, 2008, episode, then host Jon Stewart described Dobson plainly as "just a hate-filled guy that got lucky." See Stewart 2008. Dobson has continued to participate in political and often gendered controversies. He publicly supported Donald Trump in the 2016 presidential campaign, before and after a video of the Republican nominee surfaced that revealed his misogynistic and lewd attitudes toward women and disrespect for the institution of marriage. See Dobson 2016.

4. These phrases are common parlance within the religious culture in which *JCQ* is set and suggest the performative nature of the devoutly Christian identity to which members aspire.

5. Heidi Ewing and Rachel Grady, directors, *Jesus Camp,* film, Loki Films and A&E IndieFilms, 2006. In addition to portions of the book noted in the author bio, scholarship of this sort includes: Latham, Angela J. 1995. "Packaging Women: The Concurrent Rise of Beauty Pageants, Public Bathing, and Other Performances of Female 'Nudity.'" *Journal of Popular Culture* 29 (3): 149–67; and Latham, Angela J. 1997. "The Right to Bare: Containing and Encoding American Women in Popular Entertainments of the 1920s." *Theatre Journal* 49 (4): 455–73.

6. In the religious culture in which *JCQ* is set, to "give a testimony" means to stand up during a public worship service (usually but not always when invited to do so) and give an account of one's spiritual state. Most testimonies include an extended example or two of personal experiences that taught the speaker some spiritual lesson and/or that reaffirm the speaker's commitment to the faith.

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Performing Fugue: Desire, Denial, and Death in *Jesus Camp Queen*[1]

Patrick Santoro

> Sometimes it seemed there were too many shadows, or that they were in the wrong places…little things. Nothing definite. Nothing I could be certain of.
>
> (Munro 1983, 12)

> For while the self may have many selves, while the psyche is saturated and shattered and scattered, each of us nonetheless is rooted in a body, brain, and spirit that we cannot separate from.
>
> (Miller 1998, 321)

Performing one's own life story is a radical act (Langellier 1998, 207–8). For women, especially, performing the self is, as Carver titled her argument about the subject, "Risky Business," insofar "as women begin to speak the unspoken and to embody the selves previously unperformed by audiences" (2003, 15). In *Jesus Camp Queen* (*JCQ*), Angela J. Latham spins[2] rhetoric and aesthetics in an intellectual and visceral assemblage emblematic of a fugue—an account of her rise and fall from religious grace. While my reference to the fugue certainly reflects the pathological state characterized by dissociation, my primary intent is to evoke the musical form. The fugue, simply put, is highly structured, comprised of specific elements and developed through the technique of counterpoint—several interweaving melodies creating harmonic polyphony. According to Harrison:

> If the task of an oration is to persuade an audience of the validity of the speaker's point of view, the task of a fugue is to persuade an audience that the musical material can make a convincing and successful composition, and that the composer has sufficient technique, control, and artistry to create an interesting piece of music despite the several obstacles that the fugal form puts in the way. (1990, 5)

She is fluidity of time, space, longing, and loss in this theatricality of consequence as she recalls her dutiful discipleship, both reveling in and reeling from the glory of Jesus Christ, exemplifying "to narrative, the personal gives body; to lived experience, narrative gives voice" (Langellier 1998, 207).[3] Composed, yet fractured, she sits in the

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middle of an empty stage, a scripted re-presentation "of self, memory, and milieu" (Miller and Taylor 2006, 186), a human ghost light of grief, life in and as performance, "much more self-reflexive, much more aware of [her] own constructedness, and much more willing to make this awareness itself part of the presentation" (Carlson 1996, 604). Confessionally and contemplatively, she speaks to the camera—a "sensual somatically thinking body" (Spry 1998, 256)—at times too vulnerable, perhaps too shameful, to stare directly into the lens of the eavesdropping viewer. Boundless, she traverses here and now, there and then, embodiment and disembodiment, interiority of feeling and exteriority of affect—"one of those planes of 'unique reality' where memory and dreams, past and present, the everyday and the once-in-a-lifetime are reconciled and woven together upon a single loom of time" (Steinman 1995, 72).

While *JCQ* is a solo work, Latham is not alone: the church, alongside the rigid gender roles it upholds, functions as an integral character. Religion, therefore, becomes the primary narrative, or establishing subject, of this fugue. Yet her perspective on, and relationship with, religion evolves, revealing variations, or multiple statements, of the initial subject—specifically, desire, denial, and death—each a contrapuntal strand woven through religion's fabric. Important to the fugue is the equal weight of the melodies as each part contributes to the whole, which Harrison confirms, in a move to expose the oft "facile equation" (8) between a rhetorical subject and a fugal subject:

> Just as the thesis of an oration is usually not baldly announced in the first sentence, the thesis of a fugue, if you will, is hardly confined to the unaccompanied "sentence" that opens the composition. The musical "subject" of a fugue can only be but one component of a larger, musico-rhetorical thesis. Other material in the fugal exposition is as important to the development of the work as the titular subject. (1990, 8)

Although desire, denial, and death in *JCQ* appear to function independently from one another, they are intended to be read as interdependent entities. Latham first desired religion because it was the world in which her life was rooted—the rituals and principles that formed her sense of self, in all of its codedness—a reality ushered in and perpetuated by her biological family as well as the chosen family of her congregation, near and far. Though she was aware of how the church asked her (and other women) to perform "religious" "female" (compounded oppression—a double whammy!), and

of her complacency due to her perceived sense of power in a deceivingly power-hungry Church, she denied that "Truth" in favour of her desire to belong. However, it was the death of her friend and the custody battle (and eventual loss) of her son that led her toward increased dissonance. Not only did the church deny her, turning against one of their "royal" own, but she denied the church, betraying the only world she knew, desiring anything else but *that*.

Is Latham's tale primarily about desire? Does it exist along a continuum of denial? Or perhaps it ends where it begins—in death—as a child unable to choose religion for herself? Herein lies the conundrum of identity (re)formation. Together, desire, denial, and death build a complex whole for Latham, but it is this final movement—metaphorical religious death—that, in fugal terms, reveals the harmonic answer, or, is often the case with loss, the disharmony that leads to questioning. Yet, as Steinman assures: "The presence of death gives life a context and a rhythm" (1995, 133).

For Harrison:

> fugue achieves artistic success not because it displays a pre-existent unity in every structure . . . but because its various thematic treatments, harmonic modulations, contrapuntal devices, and so forth interest, convince, and perhaps even amaze, persuading the listener that it has not only displayed but also earned its unity. The rhetoric of fugue consists in this: that structure is also device, motion is also gesture, and that unity is a result, not a source. (1990, 40–41)

Similarly, the multidimensionality and intricacy of performing personal narrative renders a self not in isolation but both contingent upon and emergent from a backdrop of formative circumstances—a polyphony of forces that inform identity, or, as Latham explains, how "people can get lost in such pageantry." Live performance is about the cultivation of presence—the foregrounding of a performing subject in a performing world, "significantly more pronounced when performing autobiography" (Spry 1998, 254)—but as Park-Fuller reminds us, we must also consider "*absences and emptiness*": "absent tellings, absent tales, absent selves, and absent others, in a concert of dialogue that exists on both harmonic and discordant levels like intricate jazz—rich with open, unfinished, and yet integrated patterns of beauty and strife" (2000, 39, emphasis in original). Ultimately, Latham elucidates the challenge (if not impossibility) of disconnecting completely from the rigours of religion—as from a fugue's establishing melody—what it means to seek, embody, and surrender the title of Jesus Camp Queen. While performance affords Latham an opportunity to clarify her fugue state, working toward unity, she is not the sole beneficiary of this work: *Jesus Camp Queen* is for all of us, both present in and absent from her story, for the titles we aspire to hold, continue to hold, and hold no longer.

She is "a living text through performance" (Spry 1998, 254), rich with generative possibilities: a survivor reframing, verse - by - verse, her evangelical Christian upbringing of the rapture and the R U P T U R E —

"linguistic,
theatrical,
political,
psychological,
p e r f o r m a t i v e (Carlson 1996, 606)—re-membering
"not just her own
personal history but her *cultural* history
as well" (Carver 2003, 23, emphasis in original),
bridging the
g
a
p
within and without,
"dialogue
rather than definitions . . .
subjectivity
rather than Truth . . .
critique
rather than objectivity" (Spry 1998, 256),
witness and witnessing,
p e r f o r m i n g f u g u e.

Notes

1. I was fortunate to witness the development of *Jesus Camp Queen*—twice on stage, followed by video. While my writing reflects both stage and video performances, my primary reference for theorizing about the work stems from the live stage performances. Further, the scholarship I reference throughout this piece is from those writing in the context of live performance.

2. My use of the word "spin" is borrowed from Langellier's "spinstorying"—a concept that emerged during her work with women storytellers, "concerned with a creative, collaborative, conversational practice of personal narratives . . . as a way to negotiate personal identity and effect social change" (1998, 207).

3. While I view Latham's screen performance persona as more confessional (in part, due to the close-up shot), I regard her work on stage as more testimonial in its presentation, a distinction articulated by Park-Fuller: whereas confession "contribute[s] to the recuperation and reinforcement of dominant norms following individual transgressions," testimony refers to "a transgressive political act performed without repentance. It is an artistic declaration of personal experience given by a witness despite constrictive taboos" (2000, 22). It is also worth noting that viewing Latham's work on stage as testimonial alludes to testimony in religious practices, which she addresses in her artist statement.

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Jesus Camp Queen and the Performance of (Fundamentalist Christian) Gender

Julie Ingersoll

Jesus Camp Queen is an autoethnographic performance piece that explores gender in the context of late twentieth-century conservative American Protestantism. The piece makes important contributions to scholarship, both in content and in method. First, as a specific example of the exploration and examination of gender performance from a first-hand perspective, it provides a window into the daily lives of women/girls raised in the highly gendered subculture of evangelicalism and fundamentalism. Second, the approach the author takes to this material, described as autoethnography, pushes the boundaries of methodological innovation in the social sciences (especially the social scientific study of religion) (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 2011).

Overview and Summary

Jesus Camp Queen (*JCQ*) is named for the controversial and highly emotional 2006 documentary *Jesus Camp*, which follows children through their experience at a Christian summer camp (Grady and Ewing 2006). This film has been both praised for the way in which it lays bare the shockingly manipulative quality of the camp's practices and criticized for itself being abusive of the children whose stories it chronicled. The author of *JCQ* explores her own indoctrination into the expected gender norms in this world, gender norms she performed well enough to become summer camp queen, but which ultimately led to her departure from that world in what she described as a "blaze of glory" (Latham, "Jesus Camp Queen," this issue, page TBD).

Autoethnography

The longstanding divide between qualitative and quantitative research in the social scientific study of religion is rooted in postmodernist criticisms of quantitative claims to objectivity. Ethnographers seek to explore meaning-making, the social construction of reality, and the legitimization of certain social orderings in ways thought to be inaccessible to quantitative researchers. Ethnographers recognize that, even with careful, systematized methods for observation, the ethnographer is always presenting his/her perception of the thing, and not the thing in itself. Yet with strategies such as triangulation and reflexivity, they stake out a claim to be doing more than autobiographical work (Spickard, Landres, and McGuire 2002).

Autoethnography pushes these boundaries to include a greater level of autobiographical data collection and reflective analysis than would have been previously thought acceptable. However, the same arguments for the legitimacy of ethnography as scholarship would still seem to apply. Moreover, as, is exemplified in Latham's piece, the detailed personal reflections, situated in the larger context of the relevant historical cultural studies and trends, gives us rich insights into the way in which gender socialization and gender norms function in this subculture.

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JCQ and Its Historical-Cultural Context

I have argued that, by the end of the twentieth century, the strict essentialist gendered binary that characterizes conservative American Protestantism (and gives shape to "culture war" battles) had become the subculture's central marker of identity, the proxy for the other concerns (Ingersoll 2003).

Despite the default presumption that women's equality has expanded in a relatively consistent manner over time (an assumption embedded in the very labelling of opponents of women's equality as "traditionalist"), the twentieth century saw drastic pendulum swings in gender ideology. In the 1920s staunchly fundamentalist institutions such as Moody Bible Institute trained women for the pastorate, and the list of celebrity evangelists included women such as Aimee Semple McPherson and Kathryn Kuhlman. Margaret Bendroth and other historians have argued that limits on roles for women have ebbed and flowed within conservative Protestantism following those in the larger culture (Bendroth 1993). Indeed, in the latter half of the twentieth century, the broader evangelical movement was transformed by its very own feminist movement, moving away from hard interpretations of women's submission in favour of softer forms and even what the biblical feminists (sometimes also called evangelical feminists) labelled mutual submission.

But, at the same time as huge swaths of American evangelicalism embraced the broad principles of women's equality, some threads within this movement doubled down on patriarchy. The 1990s saw the rise of the Quiverfull and Biblical Patriarchy movements, which emphasized women's primary roles as wives and mothers in submission to male authority and advocated the rejection of the use of contraception even within marriage and the "welcoming" of as many children as God chooses to give a couple (Joyce 2009). Quiverfull and Biblical Patriarchal families see homeschooling as the biblical approach to the education of children (keeping education as the sole responsibility of families). And it's within this corner of the evangelical world that Latham's story is situated; what she describes as her "lived experiences within a particular religious culture that heavily promoted a literal interpretation of scripture, including but not limited to scriptures pertaining to gender roles" (Latham, "Fundamental Femininity in Performance," this issue, page TBD, note 2).

Analysis

What was it like growing up in a religious community, so focused on the "correct" performance of an impossible gender identity? Latham explores this, and the implicit paradoxes, as she reflects on her Christian summer camp experiences. Boys and girls segregated for swimming, sexual "purity" prized above all else, perhaps humility being second. Latham writes of the pain inherent in efforts to live up to impossible, even contradictory, standards; her "never ending effort to achieve the ideal of Christ-like femininity . . . compliant though strong . . . humble though poised and confident, beautiful though unaware of such" (Latham, "Jesus Camp Queen," this issue, page TBD).

While Latham thinks of these standards as the result of "literal" interpretation of scripture, I'd contend otherwise. I don't doubt that the community taught that they took the bible literally, but I'd argue that this is a rhetorical move intended to legitimize certain readings of scripture rather than an accurate description of those readings. I'd argue that the standards to which she was subjected are cultural constructions designed to serve the interests of the tradition; that literal readings are actually impossible. Her community may have taken literally the command that wives must submit to

husbands, but they did not (apparently) take literally the similar command that all Christians should submit to one another. They (apparently) did not take literally the commands that women should avoid concern about hairstyles and jewellery, or that singleness is preferable to marriage and family. Nor did they take literally the assertion that in Christ there is no male or female.

The highlight of the camp experience was the crowning of the camp homecoming court and its queen in a beauty pageant of sorts, the culmination of the balancing of the paradoxes. In one particularly illustrative section, Latham writes about her extensive and focused efforts over the years to position herself to be voted queen:

> Future homecoming queens never appeared at breakfast without makeup or with too much makeup. Future homecoming queens attended church regularly, promptly, and sat in a pew well-situated to be seen from all parts of the college church. Future homecoming queens occasionally, but not too often, travelled the long aisles of said church to pray publicly at an altar about some spiritual matter. In sum, future homecoming queens took up very little space, were no trouble at all to have around, and were nice to look at. (Latham, "Jesus Camp Queen," this issue, page TBD)

But as the last line hints, the performance of gender in the context of these conflicting demands takes a personal toll. Like many of the women I write about in my own work, Latham's world crashed, her marriage failed, and terrible tragedy followed.

What I don't think I saw when I first did that ethnographic work years ago was the way in which the inevitable failure to live up the ideals of Christian womanhood (even for one adept enough at it to be made Christian royalty) functions as an essential part of the production and reproduction of evangelicalism itself. Evangelicalism is a conversionist tradition. By that I mean that the very heart of what the tradition teaches is necessary to be an "authentic" Christian is the experience of recognition of oneself as completely lost in sin, destined for eternal damnation, the only solution for which is the experience of true repentance. This works well for first generation converts but has always presented a problem when those converts raise their children within the tradition, usually carefully protected from the very experiences necessary for conversion. The result is the development of cultural practices and interpretive rhetorical mechanisms that set inevitably unattainable standards. Inevitable failure creates the perceived need for the very thing the tradition has to offer: the opportunity for repentance and conversion.

Jesus Camp Queen is a powerful story of one woman's experience of this process, the dissonance it can create, and the costs of shattering the tiara.

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Encountering the Ramlila of Ramnagar: From Fieldnotes in 1978 and 2013

Richard Schechner

Author's Note, 5 May 2017: Because I transcribed these observations verbatim from my handwritten fieldnotes, I have kept the spelling, numeration, and punctuation as I wrote them. Any explanatory additions to the notes are contained within brackets thus, [ ].

1978
9 September

We're set now to go down to Banaras. ["We" are Linda Hess and I.] We are told it is very flooded, 7 feet of water at least over the entrance to the University [Banaras Hindu University], Lanka, Sankat Mochan temple where I lived when I was in Varanasi last, Assighat where Linda and I have our flat, Dasheshwamed, the main ghat. Should we go at all? I am torn in two directions: between a wish to go where the action is, where my work is, and a fear of cholera, typhoid, flood, disaster—not having enough food, etc. Then as we talk, I realize that of course the flood would be along the river and we could always flee inland. So my fear is overcome. Then I begin to wonder whether the Ramlila would go on as scheduled, and if so, how would it go on—and what would the people think of the Ramlila this year, this particular year, because it seems the worst flood in memory, the worst flood on record—coming right as Ramlila is to start. There always is some crisis that an incarnation of Vishnu resolves, the struggle finally resulting in Ramraj. Or something like that. [. . .]

September 1978, arriving in Varanasi. Linda Hess, my partner in the Ramlila research at that time, wades through a Varanasi street on the way to our apartment. Photograph by Richard Schechner.

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Here in Delhi the so soft early morning, still dark, the sky full of stars. I see the Belt of Orion. Even here at the heart of New Delhi a few blocks from Connaught Place there are many trees, the air is sweet-smelling in the morning before the hideous traffic takes over. I hear crickets and early morning birds. Nowhere in India are we far from the countryside. The scavenger crows are up and working, I see one hopping around a tree. I hear chanting over a loudspeaker—maybe a mosque. Near the YWCA guesthouse taxis are parked, their drivers asleep by the side of them: reminds me of Westerns where the cowboys sleep next to their horses.

From the plane: Delhi—Kanpur—Allahabad—Varanasi. [. . .] Over Allahabad the sangam is flooded, water almost up onto the bridge. The flood looks lazy, not surging—there is water in vacant fields and on both sides of the river channels. [. . .] It's impossible to tell where any one river is—it's simply a series of lakes, an inland sea. In the midst I can see trees and houses coming through. I can't tell how deep it is, probably from 4 to 20 feet deep. It's that way everywhere—we're up 15,000 feet and it's that way all over. [. . .]

The river is a snake exploding out of its skin leaving a trace of its former shape on the ground behind. [. . .] The river snake is one to four times its usual width. [. . .]

The flood stretches out many miles. Orchards are flooded. Villages with only rooftops showing. Some with roofs under the water. [. . .] A whole colony underwater. Cattle standing on the dry land but the rest of the place underwater. We're now flying over village after village after village, a mass of land where it's just dots of trees barely above the water, little cloudbursts or explosions of green. We're coming in for a landing—we need a seaplane—there's water as far as I can see to the north. On the south, the flood seems fairly contained.

We're low enough to see that the river is in spate—it's moving twisting flowing turning fast.

Now we're on the dry side. The fields are green green green. Villages normal. Cattle lounging, people walking their bicycles. Everything is dry. Here just a few hundred yards from the flood everything appears normal, beautiful, calm, and peaceful.

10 September

Here I am in Kashi, Banaras, Varanasi—across from Ramnagar. [. . .] When we got here, we made our way to the Cantonment and checked into the Tourist Dak Bungalow. Riding in from the airport we asked how things are. "Hanumanji is taking a bath!" our driver told us, meaning that even Sankat Mochan temple—a couple of kilometers from the Ganga—is underwater.

Soon enough, we knew we had to go to Assighat. After dicking around over the price, we hired an Ambassador, one of those chunky ubiquitous unstoppable cars. Off we went. But we didn't get far. At the Cantonment rail crossing, we got stuck in a great traffic jam. The road across the tracks was flooded. So we paid the driver Rs.20, ditched the Ambassador, and set off toward the river on foot, stopping first at the railroad station for cold drinks and some oranges. After walking a while, we hired Kallu, a bicycle rickshaw walla. He was to become our companion and guide for 2 days. Sleepy now—will resume tomorrow a.m.—or even late tonight if I wake.

11 September

We set off to see the city. Peddling past the half-finished Anand Marg Temple, Linda told me this sect was deadly—Manson-like—its leader ordering the slaughter of followers who had defected. Imprisoned, he lost adherents, and his temple was abandoned. Like so much in

Varanasi, the half-finished building did not seem out of place. Here much is unfinished, on the way up—not yet built; and much is half destroyed, on the way down—not yet abandoned. As the buildings crumble into the soil they grow green at the foundation where moss grows, and green halfway up the walls where shrubs, vines, grass, and even trees sprout. Some shrines next to or under or in trees have achieved the union between peopled and natural. Varanasi is growing from and mulching into the soil she rests on, roots in, and thrives with. It is all deeply and logically connected to the Ganga.

She—this river Ganga who the Puranas say came rushing out of the sky, her great fall to earth softened by coursing through Shiva's hair, his hair's many strands breaking and dispersing her powerful flow. As Shelley says: "Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass, stains the white radiance of eternity" or—as I redact it—the great white dome of eternity is shattered into the many-colored shards of experience; so the symphonic Hindu panoply-continuum of myriad gods converge to express the single force of life. In the process of forcing life to become manifest, the balance, the poise, and the stillness of the uncolored unmanifest absolute is dispersed into the ups and downs, the ins and outs, the hots and colds, the livings and dyings of my experiences, and yours. This is the great clothesline on which is hung all philosophy and art, and all else we do or imagine or think.

The Ganga River during the crossing from Assighat to Ramnagar in September 1978. Photograph by Richard Schechner.

Coming down to the river on the bicycle rickshaw we passed a corpse bundled in white silk—tied from head to toe like some terrific Christmas present; but tied so tightly that the forms of the body from the round head to the upright pointing of the 10 toes plainly show. With flowers under the head. All bound to a palanquin made from big green bamboo shoots and branches—a mattress for the corpse not unlike a charpoy that the living sleep on. Carried by 6 men chanting and sometimes laughing, not grieving—that is for later, at the burning ghat or for the nearest relatives. I remember meeting a weeping old man at Manikarnika Ghat in 1976. He told me he was weeping because his son had died. "He should be cracking my skull, and I will be cracking his." The order of nature was disrupted and inverted—a mistake had been made—or bad karma was working itself out—the tears were not against death but against injustice, this cosmic payback.

Linda now wondered what would happen to the corpses during the flood. There is no way to get through to the burning ghats. The bodies are now just dumped into the Ganga. "Why not burn them someplace else?" she asks Kallu. "And be deprived of paradise?" To be trusted to the Ganga—that is the important thing. It is good to be burned, but if that's not possible without leaving Ganga's shores than the bodies will not be burned. It was at this time—riding down toward the Ganga that we noticed the lack of panic. There were no great crowds fleeing from the direction of the river; there were no trucks rolling in with soldiers and supplies—there was none of the activity associated with disaster—no loudspeakers or hovering helicopters or inquiring reporters. Later we read that more than 35,000 villages are flooded. What a story! How the US press and TV would play it, almost creating the panic and crisis it was describing; hourly bulletins giving the impression that something that needed hourly updating is occurring. But that was not the sense we felt as we bicycled down to Assighat.

Merchants are in their shops, those open boxes so much like the box sets of modern realistic theatre. People moving in all directions in that multiplex surge of pedestrians, bikes, rickshaws, scooters, cows, water buffalos, goats, Ambassadors, and Fiats. The riot of metropolitan India. Amidst all this, chai was being served in small clay mugs dashed to the ground after one use; lunghis were being sold; plastic lunchboxes displayed; and freshly deep-fried samosas and other chatt bubbled in boiling oil. Everything seemed—no was—normal. Kallu told us the flood was high—but he pedaled toward it jauntily, turning his head over his shoulder to inform us of this or that. Sometimes I peered down a side street and saw water: Ganga was moving her fingers through Varanasi's hair. And I realized that this was no flash flood—no breaking of dams releasing a wall of water, no tsunami. Here the river rose centimeter by centimeter, hour by hour, just coming on in her own way. At the center of the channel I knew the water would be swift—but by the shore, it would just be. I recall now the great Brahmaputra in flood at Guahati [Guwahati] in 1976: how at the center of that massive channel a couple of miles wide whole segments of land—islands with trees—rushed by in a brown seething whirling deluge as if a great angry patriarch had ripped Assam up roots and all and flung the land into the water. But the Ganga is no patriarch. She is strong, persistent, and sustaining. Her flood is unstoppable but subtle. She does not need to impress these people who live on and near her; who worship her. They know her force. She just comes on as she needs to, rising to where she will go.

When we got near Assi, we realized the flood was not as bad as we imagined it would be. The entrance alley up to Tulsi Mandir and Tulsighat was open. I was in the full flush of knowing that Ganga, having been assured that Sam [my one-year-old son] would someday see her, was now beginning to go back to bed, to recede. Linda ran up the alley—we dismounted from Kallu's rickshaw—and shouted. She was in ecstasy. I walked forward knowing Tulsi Mandir was on a small hill. When we got there, it was high and dry, barely. The big tree's trunk was out of the water, but its eastern bows were tickling Ganga's waters. As we got near to Tulsi Mandir, we heard kirtans being sung to Hanumanji. The repetitive almost screaming voices, the clash of symbols, the thud of the drum. We entered and saw that the water was within 4 inches of the murti, up to next to the last step—but Ganga hadn't entered. Later [Mahant Professor Veer Badra] Mishra showed us how the high water level was, about 10 inches higher than the high flood mark of 1948, the previous record flood. He pointed out how the water today was within a few inches of his ground floor. "But up till now nothing here has been flooded." He pointed to the stones. "This is all foundation—there is no room under here." Other houses were not so lucky—other architects were not so wise.

We look down the street toward Assighat and saw water. But we decided to wade in and visit Linda's flat. We would put her stuff on higher ground if it was not already flooded. "This morning the water was this close," Mishra said, squeezing an inch or less between his thumb and

forefinger, "but not in your flat." Linda was very excited. "I thought for sure the water would be up to the ceiling." We borrowed a sari for Linda; I had bought a lunghi on the way so my jeans would not get wet. Still wearing my Adidas running shoes, we set off. [. . .]

Everywhere we went in this neighborhood Linda knew people. She greeted them, and they greeted her with love, with surprise, with wonder. At last I understood the signs I had seen around: "Europe and America returned." These were not just a kind of street diploma but a statement of faith in the country. As if someone would return from those lands from whose bourne no travelers return. To be born in India is one thing, to visit it another, to visit, leave, and return, still deeper. To be an expatriate and then return to India still more substantial. To choose India—and especially this special Kashi—probably the oldest of humanity's still dwelled-in cities—is truly "something else." And to return when the flood publicity is scaring everybody away, even me, for I wanted to stay in Delhi until the floods passed. I'd made every argument in that direction: what good could we do, we'd be a burden, we might get trapped, disaster was no fun, there were floods still coming, and diseases, etc. But Linda insisted, and deep inside I was excited and wanted to go. Nissar Allana looked at us sharply; he is a doctor and knows the danger—but he wanted us to go. "There is where your work is, this is why you came to India." So we went.

[. . .]

17 Sep 1978

First 2 days [of Ramlila]. Yesterday I mapped out 11 days of the Lila. Got a sense for the first time of its scope and interconnectedness. Began to see it all in my mind's eye. There is an internal symmetry to it. Exile through the small settlements of low caste people. Processions through the main streets. "World sites" in specially constructed areas outside of where people live.

The first day pre-capitulates the whole 31-day drama. The RL [Ramlila] story does *not* = the *Ramcharitmanas*. The *RCM* tells everything including its own frames of telling. But Ramlila is really the story of two figures/forces: Ram and Ravan.

First scene. Ravan performs tapas in the Himalayas and Brahma agrees to grant him boons. Each of Ravan's brothers picks something. Then Ravan picks not to be killed by any except men and/or monkeys. Second scene: Ravana takes over Lanka. Puja break. After dark, Ravana conquers the three worlds—Kailash, Indra's capital, etc.

Ravan's taking of the gods' wives is staged nicely. Ravan arrives at the 3 worlds in a big open cart. More and more women, male performers, climb in the cart with him. He laughs. He taunts. He forbids the reading of the Vedas. He orders all sacrifices to be destroyed. He proclaims the killing of cows and Brahmins. He upsets the world order. Spectators laugh at Ravan. Why? At his arrogance, they say. But I detect some rebellious laughter too—a touch of Milton's Satan. Enjoyment at violating all the laws.

This scene would have been played on day two, but because 16 September is an eclipse of the moon, an inauspicious time for Ramlila, the scene was played on day one.

A crowd of 5,000–10,000 gathers around two sides of the very large tank at the end of which is ancient Durga temple. Some say it is more than 300 years old. There are a few sadhus, about 25. "More will be coming," I'm assured. But the floods have made travel hard this year.

In one tower at the corner of the large Rambag (garden) are Vishnu and Lakshmi, played by the boys who will play Lakshman and Bharat. Afloat in the middle of the tank, in a boat made out to be Shesha, the 1000-headed cobra—are Ram and Sita. Ram is sleeping, lying prone, in the pose of Vishnu sleeping. Sita sits at his feet. Narad with his veena is there. And at the prow of the boat—Garuda, slowly flapping his wings.

Brahma, played by a very old man, addresses Vishnu in the tower begging him to incarnate himself and save the world. In a very beautiful singing voice, Vishnu replies. It is not the boy playing the swarup who sings but another person. The voice can barely—but still clearly—be heard across the tank—like a light breeze falling on my shoulder. The large crowd is totally silent—a very unusual state for an Indian audience.

Vishnu sings that he will incarnate himself as Ram and save the world. The great drama begins to unfold. Arati is performed by Brahma from the tower—and the red and white flares light up the swarups in the boat.

Then it's over for the night. Suddenly, abruptly, as the final white flare fades, a terrific crush of people getting out of the tank area. From one side all have to press through an opening of less than 4 feet. Now the crowd is typical. Someone shoving and cursing next to someone muttering "Sitaram Sitaram Sitaram."

Totally exhausted when I get home. Heat exhaustion, headache, cold sweat. I gulp salt, drink drink drink. And sleep.

Earlier I broke my prohibition against unbottled water. I drank at the mela. Today I read in the paper that 20 cases of cholera were reported from Varanasi. But the implication is that there are more—not all the hospitals were asked to report. And there is a shortage of vaccine. Legacies of the flood.

During the day of the 16th, we map out some of the lila sites. I'm trying to get a sense of the space. Also to find the total mileage covered in the 31 days. It's hard. Difficult to get Indians to understand that I want to go in order—even if place L is next to place B—I want to go to the sites in the sequence of the story—kind of running a film fast forward—time lapse—so that I can feel in one day the whole tirtha Ramlila. We don't do what I want exactly. But enough for me to get the sense of the enormity of it, its cosmic scope. But also its existence as a neighborhood thing, as the whole world and these specific places at the same time. Maybe one of these days I'll do it totally in sequence. We map up to a half of the 11th day. Will resume today.

2013
13 October

Varanasi's extraordinarily awful roads full of deep holes that are more than potholes; uneven surfaces of cobblestone or mud, no sidewalks. Riding these roads is an experience of extreme bumps, swerves, continuous horn blowing because in many places there is no room for two-way traffic no less the multiple crush of trucks, buses, cars, bicycle rickshaws, auto-rickshaws, cows, buffalos, a few goats, some wild dogs, and pedestrians. All jostling for space and pride of place. Along the side of these horrible roads, many "box shops," corrugated metal-roofed 10x10-foot cubes raised a foot or two off the ground to forestall flooding. Open in front with goods laid out on a table and within. The owner or stall-keeper sits or stands or sometimes squats in front. Added to this, plenty of street carts and wagons. The fruits and vegetables piled on tables look

luscious and local: bananas, mangoes, oranges, tomatoes, eggplants, potatoes, broccoli, cauliflower, some local veggies I don't know the name of. Lots of men with small trident-supported peanut stands where the roasted nuts are doled out by weight on a balance scale. A small fire in the middle of a metal pan provides continuous cooking of the raw nuts. Other shops sell cloth, electrical stuff, shoes, hardware . . . the list is very long: everything that a modern society needs, except that the means of display are not modern, or at least not up-to-date. Mixed in with all this are doctors' offices, dentists, computer repair shops, schools for young children, English language courses, and any number of other services. From time to time there is a modern looking establishment plop in the midst of all this color and chaos, a Batta shoe store with a gleaming glass front, a Fiat automobile dealership.

A main road with shops in Ramnagar, 2013. Photograph by Richard Schechner.

There are some used-to-be magnificent buildings whose facades from the 19th century show Moghul delicacy and beauty, somewhat like New Orleans Garden District and French Quarter. These buildings are mostly derelict. One such between Samneghat and Lanka on our way to Sankat Mochan Temple had a plaque on it, which I read some of as I was pedaled by on a bicycle rickshaw. A former guesthouse of some kind, notable enough to earn public notice. It sported arched doorways and many balconies. But peering through where windows were on the second floor, I could see tumbled bricks, masonry, and daylight. I thought that here was an opportunity for someone with money to fix it up as a hotel. Most of the good hotels are in the Cantonment, far from Varanasi's real life along the ghats. [. . .] It could be a lovely city if its buildings were restored and maintained. But to do this effectively would take well-paved streets and sidewalks, street lights, secure electricity, plumbing, and public transportation.

I don't know what I would do about the cows and buffalos. They are so much a part of life here—actually and ritually—that it is hard to conceive of Varanasi without them. At the same time, there are piles of cow and buffalo shit underfoot everywhere. And of course, these animals slow the traffic. There are a couple of cows, one brown and one black, who sleep regularly in the little nook of driveway at the front of Jnana-Pravaha. I recognize them.

The dogs don't really come out until deep night, when the traffic has gone from the streets. One night after the lila we took the boat back to Assighat. Once we got off, it was scary. No one around. A few people sleeping in doorways. Very few street lights. No police. Cows sleeping scattered on the road. The dogs were awake, barking, howling, snarling. They were on the prowl. I didn't want to get near any of them. The dogs are preternaturally skinny—underfed, starving, desperate. They have no owners. They skittered away from me when I got close—as if they had learned their lesson not to trust people. At the same time, I knew there was a range when a dog would stand its ground and take a Shylock out of my leg. Rishika and I felt scared in those streets even though by day we knew the district well. [. . .]

Knowing all this doesn't stop me from returning here, again and again. Our brief visit to Sankat Mochan Temple [SM] helps explain why. SM is near Lanka, just south of Samneghat. We took an auto-rickshaw from P-P to Lanka and a bicycle rickshaw from there to the temple. Last night it rained hard, so the roads were muddy with lots of pools of water. But the air was washed clean, the sun was bright and hot. We entered the crowded temple. What a contrast to Vishwanath Temple downtown. There the people were squeezed into a tiny galli, pushing, shoving, shouting. Here there were two neat lineups for close-in viewing the murti and blessing of prasad. One line for men, the other for women. There was a counter where one gave money for a ticket and down the line a row of servers who exchanged the tickets for different kinds of prasad. [. . .] I decided to buy prasad and give it away. Next to the prasad stand was a place to buy malas of marigolds. [. . .]

The Hanuman murti at Sankat Mochan is a great work of art, a focus of devotion, and a powerful "thing." It is abstract. A luminous orange oval, more or less, tilted so that the top of Hanumanji's head is angled a little to the viewer's right. A crescent-laying-down marking on the forehead indicates Vishnu. Two large black circles signify the monkey god's eyes. No mouth. This strong figure is/is not a vision of Hanuman. It is the incarnation in stone—if I may be permitted that contradiction—of a force, a power, an energy. Not a "picture" or a "representation." Like the swarups of RL, Hanuman in Sankat Mochan is living immanence. I did not want to wait in line for my prasad to be blessed. I do not care for the services of priests. I stood on an 18" high marble platform with a few others. I closed my eyes. I chanted both my yoga mantra and the Shema: these are my usual prayers at the end of yoga. I thought of Mahant Mishraji. I prayed for him. I prayed for Carol, Sophia, Sam, Mara [my immediate family], Rishika [Mehrishi, my research assistant], the whole world. I stood there face-to-face with Hanumanji for a long time measured by my interior clock but only 5 minutes or so by ordinary time. Then I descended.

We walked the red brick pathway through the small forest of monkeys. Outside atop a wall I saw a giant male monkey with bright orange colored balls. Did someone Hanuman him or was this preposterously his native state? Inside the mini-forest were plenty of monkeys. One mother had two really tiny ones running up to her, then away, then up for security again, then away again up a chain-link fence that separated the path from vegetation. To keep the humans out, not the monkeys who pay no attention to fences. Rishika hid the box of prasad inside her umbrella. She was really afraid that she would be jumped by a monkey. I remember Carol and the big monkey tugging on her kurta when she walked on this very path on her only visit to Varanasi. I looked up and saw the temple guesthouse where Joan and I stayed in 1976. It was the last year of our marriage (not legally, but actually). Sankat Mochan speaks to me, and I listen.

19 October

We arrive at Rambag where a big crowd is assembled. We weave through the mostly seated multitude and take our places right at the raised concrete platform on top of which is the new Rambag gazebo. The new structure is ugly and gross—too "big" with its concrete foundation, its concrete pillars. But it is not as bad as I thought it would be. If the pillars were painted gold and the ceiling blue, it may be acceptable. There is wood filigree paneling as there was with the old gazebo. That one was of marble, delicate and beautiful. Navneet says that it now is in a hotel in the Cantonment. "People are sitting in it having drinks," he says contemptuously. I agree: the old gazebo should never have been moved. The MR [Maharaja Anant Narain Singh] told me he did it because he feared theft. But how to lift a whole big marble structure? He didn't say disfigurement, which was more of a possibility. At the same time, it had not been disfigured all these years. So.

The crowd is merry, not at all restless. The afternoon is warm and the sky clear. This is the way RL ought to end, with a full moon and high spirits. Ram is victorious: Sita and he are queen and king of Ayodhya, Ramraj has begun. After coronation, the first thing Ram does is teach. I will not summarize the teachings. They are available both in the *Manas* and the samvads. The lila begins when the maharaja arrives by car. He is with his young son, the rajkumar. The MR takes his place in a corner of the gazebo, facing Ram at an angle. Right behind the MR is the rajkumar. They both are dressed in white, wearing gold and white Nehru caps. Me and mini-me. The rajkumar is about 8, wears glasses, and does a very good job of staying awake most of the time. It is about 6 p.m., and he has a long night ahead of him. On the concrete platform outside the gazebo, but very close to the MR, are the Ramayanis. They are directly to my left.

The teachings are nested theatrically among the appearances of sages and Narad. He enters twice, both times singing very long songs. The sages—at least I think that's who they are—are four boys wearing only saffron-colored loin clothes. The closest to naked I have ever seen in RL. Each of these sages has something to say, as does Lakshman. But most of the scene is Ram talking. Not knowing Hindi, the teachings are very boring for me. But they do hold the attention of the audience. There is very little fidgeting and almost no talking. The scene lasts about 1.5 hours. At the end of it, in his typical way, the MR simply gets up and leaves. There is ceremony, usually, to his arrival, shouts of "Hara! Hara! Mahadev!" But when he leaves there is only a ripple of shouting, the audience rising before the MR is into his car. The sandhya puja break has begun, although it is long past dark. I'd think the MR did his evening prayers before the teachings started; that this break is simply the long pause before RL's final scenes, the Kot Vidai and final arati in Ayodhya. This is the only night with two aratis. The only night that the MR does not witness an arati. Just as Ravan leaves RL when his role is killed by Ram, so the MR leaves RL after Ram's royal party leaves The Fort and returns to Ayodhya.

The Kot Vidai [Farewell, a scene performed only in the Ramnagar Ramlila] begins and ends in a marvelously visual way, with the swarups arriving from Ayodhya to The Fort on two large elephants. Lakshman drives the elephant carrying Ram and Sita, while a mahout drives the elephant carrying Bharat and Shatrughan. Before they mount these beasts who take up almost all of the west side of Ayodhya past the royal chamber, the swarups sit as many people—in the 1000s—take darshan of them up close, touch their feet, receive tulsi leaves and marigolds. I do not know if people leave dakshina, but I would not be surprised if they did. This is the last night of the swarup's appearance in Ramnagar . . . until next year's RL. The devotees want to get a strong last look; or maybe, for many, their only close-up darshan.

In the mean while, a few sadhus sing bhajans, many fewer than in previous years. Other people socialize, some are eating—the chatt stalls on Ramnagar's main street are busy. Little kids have toys bought for them. The feeling is festive. Knots of people are talking. Jambavan comes over to Rishika and me. We talk, or rather they talk in Hindi. But he smiles at me, touches my shoulder. He is about 50, handsome, and always chewing pan. Some sadhus ask me to photo them—and one who attends Ram wonders why I have not brought him the pictures I snapped yesterday. He does not seem to understand the technology.

Shiv Dutt calls me to the pandal. I come up, look into Ram's eyes, Sita's eyes; I bend my knees and touch their feet. I look into their eyes again. Sita seems surprised; Ram remains beautifully blank. Shiv Dutt gives me a very large mala of tulsi leaves. I put it around my neck and descend to the ground. Then I take off the mala that has been blessed by Ramji and put it on a little girl about 9 years old. She is surprised, even more, shocked; and she is happy. But when I turn around to see her, the mala is gone. A man in a silk kurta has it. I take it from his hands. "This is for her," I say in English gesturing to the girl. The man doesn't respond, but he glares at me. I put the mala on the girl again. She is very hesitant, starts to take it off. "No," I say. "This is for you!" Rishika does not want me to intervene. She thinks the whole exchange is improper. I think it is, too, from an anthropological and ritual point of view. But I am vehement about wanting the girl to have this very special thing. I stand between her and the man. She is glowing. Or at least I think she is. I tell her to go away, to get lost in the crowd, to take herself far from the marauding man. Finally, she melts into the crowd, still wearing the mala. I don't know if I did good or bad. I did. That's all I can say for sure.