

Interdisciplinary Humanities

Publication of the Humanities Education and Research Association

Interdisciplinary Humanities
Volume 34.1 Spring 2017



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Published by the Humanities Education and Research Association (HERA) at The University of Texas at El Paso. Individual Membership in HERA includes a one-year subscription to *Interdisciplinary Humanities* (spring, summer, and fall issues) and costs \$125. Libraries and other institutions may obtain one-year subscriptions to *Interdisciplinary Humanities* for \$155. Membership forms may be found at the back of this journal and at http://www.h-e-r-a.org/hera_join.htm.

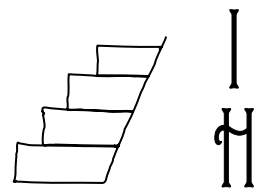
The editorial offices of *Interdisciplinary Humanities* are located at The University of Texas at El Paso. Contributors should consult carefully the Editorial Policy Guidelines (see back pages of this issue). Editorial decisions for publications are normally made within four months of the submission deadline. Send an electronic copy of essays for publication consideration to co-editors Stephen Husarik, shusarik@uafs.edu, and Lee Ann Elliott Westman, leeann.westman@rutgers.edu.

Interdisciplinary Humanities is indexed by ERIC ISSN 1056-6139
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Front Cover Image: *The Ascension of Isaiah* by Wulf E. Barsch, 2001 (Oil on linen)

This issue of *Interdisciplinary Humanities* is partially underwritten by the Humanities Program at The University of Texas at El Paso.

Humanities and Religion



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Editor's Introduction: Humanities and Religion

Ann Branan Horak

University of Texas at El Paso

The study of Religion fully encompasses all of the Humanities: anthropology, art, architecture, classics, history, languages and linguistics, literature, music, philosophy, political science, rhetoric, sociology, theater and dance, women and gender studies, and the list could go on. I came to Religious Studies through literature. My degrees are in English, but I've always been fascinated with the relationships between religion and literature and how religious beliefs inform issues of gender, race, and class. Religious Studies can be a tricky topic, particularly where I teach—a public university in a devout city. I remind my students often that my classes are neither Theology courses nor are they church; however, many of my students are not prepared to critically analyze religious beliefs, their own or others. Students often come to class with their minds made up about the material we are going to cover in ways I do not experience when I teach literature.

We've all heard the bromide never to discuss politics or religion. In my Religious Studies classes, we talk about everything. Early in each semester, I ask for a volunteer to tell the class the story of the *The Emperor's New Clothes* by Hans Christian Andersen. There are always plenty of students who know the folktale of the vain emperor tricked by two sly tailors into believing that they've made him an expensive suit only the most intelligent, refined persons can see. The emperor walks among his subjects wearing this new suit, which doesn't actually exist, and is greeted with admiration by the people in the crowd too embarrassed to admit that they aren't sophisticated enough to see the emperor's new clothes. Finally, a young child blurts out the obvious, "The emperor is naked!" Relieved, the crowd laughs at their foolish leader.

Higher education often feels like a retelling of *The Emperor's New Clothes*. Students arrive at university terrified they don't belong or aren't prepared. At my university, many of our students are the first in their family to attend college; some are English language learners and many are attending school while working demanding jobs and raising families. One skill they develop quickly is how to fake it; how to pretend they see the new suit that doesn't really exist. This is a survival skill that they think they need.

A discussion of religion also often feels like a retelling of *The Emperor's New Clothes*. Anxious to avoid conflict and worried about appearing uninformed, many people chose to change the subject or reiterate clichés about religious groups they've never studied and whose members they've never met. It's easier to go along with the consensus of the crowd than to admit ignorance. In a Religious Studies class, as in our everyday conversations, it's essential to let down our guard, to admit the obvious, to ask questions. I work very hard to create an atmosphere of trust in my classroom where my students know they can safely ask questions without fear of judgment.

Did the Jews kill Jesus? Do Christians hate Science? Are Muslims terrorists? I could become indignant, roll my eyes and answer NO to all of these questions; or, I could lead the class in a thoughtful discussion of where these beliefs come from and how they continue to impact our understanding of our world. I encourage my students to ask just these kinds of questions in the safe space of our Religious Studies classroom. But where else do we ask these questions? Where do we have difficult discussions? Conversations around religion often occur amongst persons of similar beliefs, a comforting and spiritual activity for many but not always an activity through which a broadened perspective is gained. Unlike the emperor's subjects, too nervous to speak up, we must raise our voices in the public space. Moving past the reality that the emperor is naked and into an analysis of why the emperor was tricked in the first place and how his subjects colluded in his folly is where the real learning begins.

The contributors to this issue of *Interdisciplinary Humanities* ask challenging questions and present thoughtful interpretations of everything from 8th-century epics to modern-day movie blockbusters. Kathleen Staudt opens our discussion with an analysis of faith-based organizations and their work on the US-Mexico Border. In "Countering Xenophobia: Faith-Based Activism in the Central US-Mexico Borderlands," Staudt details ways in which activists, inspired by their religious beliefs, organize to meet the demands of border populations and border issues. Often this means working within a faith-based community, sometimes this means working outside the church structure, and many times inspired individuals find themselves at odds with government officials whose actions may not align well with the teachings of their stated religious affiliations. The growing crises on the US-Mexico border, however, demands constant engagement and Staudt provides examples of organizations such as Annunciation House in El Paso, TX which has provided food and temporary shelter to "over 100,000 refugees" over the past forty years. Hope Border Institute, another faith-based organization, has hosted events like "Hugs Not Walls" where family members separated by the border can meet at the Rio Grande for a brief reunion. The inspired activism Staudt describes may well provide a template for future involvement by concerned citizens.

Activists working within a faith-based community while simultaneously defying some of its strictures is the topic of J. Aaron Waggoner's piece "The Spirit, the Cross, and the Mystical Mother: Mexico's Conservative Contribution

to the charismatic Catholic Renewal." Waggoner discusses the charismatic movement within Catholicism, an often-egalitarian challenge to church hierarchy which incorporates Pentecostal-style practices such as speaking in tongues and spiritual healings and resonates strongly with dispossessed populations within the church. He also positions this movement alongside Conchita Cabrera de Armida, an upper class Mexican woman who lived through the anti-religion crusades of the Mexican revolution and whose *Espiritualidad de la Cruz* (Spirituality of the Cross) inspired movements within the church such as the *Misioneros de Espiritu Santo* (Missionaries of the Holy Spirit). Cabrera de Armida has been idealized as a devoted mother and wife, but her writings detail her life as a sufferer of divine ecstasies, a role, Waggoner points out, that does not always align with the figure of the married, upper class woman.

Gerald Barr discusses shifting understandings of religious ideas and language not from within the faith community but from colonial arrogance in his essay "Sir William Jones: A Neoclassical Hinduism." Barr's analysis of Jones' work demonstrates how his literary appropriation of Hindu deities and beliefs lead to misconceptions and ultimate misuse of Hinduism by other poets, such as Percy Bysshe Shelley. As Barr points out, the false conflation of the Hindu pantheon with the neoclassical pantheon, in vogue with Romantic authors of the time, is a pattern that repeats throughout colonial encounters with indigenous belief systems. Barr also describes the ways in which Jones re-imagines Hindu teachings, romanticizing Sanskrit terms and Indian aesthetics in a way that removes them from their original sources to better fit within a Western poetic ideal.

Epic literature is the subject of Elizabeth Bell Canon's piece "Blurred Lines: Does Religious Polarity Create Problematic Heroes in the Poem *Beowulf*?" Canon recognizes the common analysis of *Beowulf*, which focuses on tension between the pagan and the Christian themes in the poem, but goes further in discussing how common it would have been for early Christians to move "from pagan to Christian in a zig-zag pattern" that models the very structure of the narrative. Of interest to Canon, and her readers, are the times when the characters revert to pagan traditions and the times when they embrace Christian ethics.

Madelyn Paquette discusses the epics of the modern world—films—in her essay "The Modern Campfire: The Mythmaking Process in Contemporary Religious Film." Filmmakers, in particular, are the scopos of our times, crafting stories that shape our understanding of the world. Those who make religious films, like Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ," weave the original text with threads formed out of the vast arsenal of modern film technology, often creating a new type of narrative that transcends the source material.

Mythmaking occurs on the personal level as well as the cultural as Kim Abunuwara explains in her work on "Mormon Domestic Art: Comfort and Communion." The domestic art often found in the homes of the faithful provide a devotional, almost ritualistic, function that affirms the story of the

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The emphasis on family values and the well-ordered, pious household, which mirrors church structure, can be found in art pieces in which family members are aligned with saying, scriptures, and church doctrinal texts. Abunuwara references the painter Wulf Barsch in her work, an abstract painter whose art challenges the viewer to read the text in the same way one might read sacred writings.

The editors and I were delighted when Wulf Barsch agreed to feature one of his works on the cover of this issue: *The Ascension of Isaiah*. Lee Ann Westman's interview with him is found in this issue as well.

There are two book reviews for this issue. Janue Johnson reviews *Beauty: A Path to God* and its appeal to beauty and spirituality. My own review "Make America (fill in the blank) Again: Robert P. Jones *The End of White Christian America*" rounds out the journal and provides a look into demographic shifts in the religious landscape of 21st-century America. As persons self-identifying as white Christians decrease in numbers, both through attrition and age, the cultural and political weight they once held will transfer to a younger more racially and religiously diverse population. What this will mean is yet to be determined, but the inexorable changes to our nation's religious landscape will certainly have long term effects on public policy, social attitudes, and the role of faith-based organization in modern society.

Countering Xenophobia: Faith-Based Activism in the Central US-Mexico Borderlands

Kathleen (Kathy) Staudt
University of Texas at El Paso

When lawyer and legal scholar Michelle Alexander, author of *The New Jim Crow*, announced her move from Ohio State University to the Union Theological Seminary in September 2016, some secular and policy activists may have realized the power of social justice narratives in sacred work to counter xenophobia and hate. In her own words,

Solving the crises we face isn't simply a matter of having the right facts, graphs, policy analyses, or funding. And I no longer believe we can "win" justice simply by filing lawsuits, flexing our political muscles or boosting voter turnout. Yes, we absolutely must do that work, but none of it — not even working for some form of political revolution — will ever be enough on its own. Without a moral or spiritual awakening, we will remain forever trapped in political games fueled by fear, greed and the hunger for power.¹

Historically, beyond 19th century and into mid-20th century politics, faith-based activism has deep traditions in the civil rights movement and in Alinsky-style faith-based organizing with the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), born in Chicago,² but its role in immigrant policy and practice remains somewhat unexplored. Is that role greater or weaker, or perhaps less visible? To what extent can it counter xenophobia at a national level or primarily at place-based levels? These are questions that drive my analysis.

In this paper, I will focus on the extent to which faith-based social justice work can counter the official narrative in the Central U.S.-Mexico borderlands

as that work relates to challenging Border Patrol checkpoints, pursuing immigration policy reform, and sheltering asylum-seekers. Methodologically, I draw on participant observation as an academic activist in three cases: first, as co-founder of Border Interfaith (affiliated with the Industrial Areas Foundation [IAF]); second, as active participant in several faith-led efforts, such as Catholic nonprofit organizations (the Hope Border Institute, Annunciation House) and third, in several mainline progressive Protestant denominations, focusing on one in particular.³

My conceptual inspiration draws on political anthropologist James C. Scott, who has challenged analysts who *See like a State* and his predecessor book, on the *Arts of Resistance*.⁴ In the latter reference, Scott offers numerous ways that people challenge “official narratives” and develop “counter-narratives.” Focusing on those faith and ultimately normative traditions that support faith-in-action Biblical principles such as “welcoming the stranger” or “seeing the face of the Deity” in the Other, this paper examines the public work of social-justice border people and ways that work might reach a wider mass of people who are skeptical of mainstream or social media in deeper ways. The review of relevant academic literature below clarifies but does not answer my key questions posed above. Below that, a brief theoretical section provides explanatory tools for interpreting the cases analyzed in this paper.

Few academic analysts have built faith-based institutions and arguments into their analyses as regards to immigrants’ and refugees’ human rights to escape and flee from violence and impoverishment in their home countries.⁵ Of course, it is a challenge to analyze the incredibly wide range of faith traditions and their institutional cultures in the United States, from the hierarchical Catholic Church to more democratically organized mainline Protestant denominations and the varying traditions within Judaism, to list some. Some faith traditions denote “higher laws” beyond secular national “law and order” traditions, including changing civil and criminal laws about undocumented immigrants (called “crimmigration” by some) and procedures regarding those refugees who seek asylum.

Academic analysts tend to refrain from analyzing organized religion and advocating the always-contested “moral” arguments; they usually eschew positions that challenge the secular state. The “separation of church and state” is a mainstay of U.S. constitutional government, however politically manipulated historically and even in recent times with anti-LGBTQ positions in “freedom to practice religion” and/or reproductive policies and proposed laws. Over nine in ten members of the U.S. Congress in 2016 claim affiliation with a Christian church, most of them mainline Protestants and Catholics (down from 95% in the early 1960s),⁶ yet their positions on immigration do not mesh well with the resolutions of their faith traditions.

When U.S. social scientists or pollsters incorporate religious affiliation into analysis, they generally do so in negative terms, imputing a radical-right

position to “Evangelicals” without unpacking all the many denominational and faith traditions within the label.⁷ In their 673-page tome, *American Grace*, Robert Putnam and David Campbell draw random samples of more than 3,000 people collected in 2005-2007 (and validated with Pew and Gallup polls on religion) and differentiate among religious traditions.⁸ The utility of their analysis for this paper might be challenged. Besides the data being dated, that is before an unusually hate-inspired 2016 presidential campaign that demonized Mexicans and immigrants, Putnam, Campbell and even the Pew researchers reduce the relationships between religious affiliation and politics to party affiliation and opinion polls. Beyond volunteerism in their church vignettes, they offer no analysis of organizing for policy change, such as the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) over decades.⁹ How could analysts miss the cross-class, cross-racial/ethnic, cross-denomination traditions of the IAF which use Biblical stories such as from Moses and Paul whom Ernesto (Ernie) Cortes, Jr, founder of the Texas IAF and San Antonio’s COPS (Communities Organized for Public Service) called the “greatest organizers” to inspire constructive anger toward winnable goals?¹⁰

On recent data, the Pew Research Center more regularly has generated large samples (N=35,000) to clarify differences among those divergent groups for their party affiliations (2015, 2016) among the ~70% Christians in the U.S. and others such as Agnostics and Atheists (<10%), the latter of whom seem to be a growing identity among younger people in the United States, along with the “Nones” (no religious affiliation).¹¹ No doubt the reported “lean” toward the Democratic Party that Pew reported before the 2016 presidential election has changed somewhat, given victors’ xenophobic, hateful and demagogic rhetoric in the 2016 political campaign.

Nevertheless, religious affiliation alone is a far cry from either regular, weekly participation in services with congregants and/or confronting immigrants (“the face of the Deity”) in social justice work. Do the few who do social justice work with immigrants affect more or the many in these congregations? In the U.S. central borderlands, over 80% people of Mexican heritage and nominally Catholic, many people know immigrants, have friends and/or relatives who are undocumented, or are immigrants themselves. Putnam and Campbell’s denominational categories differentiate between “Latino Catholics” and “Anglo Catholics.” The former, often 1st or 2nd generation immigrants themselves, show more continuity among youth than the latter. The authors’ maps of ethnicity of Catholic affiliation show high correlations between the border Texas-California southwest border and big cities in the Midwest and east coast, and Latino Catholics report more orthodox beliefs than Anglo Catholics on matters like agreement with the Pope and confidence in the Catholic hierarchy.¹² Thus the Central Borderlands of El Paso, Texas, should be a good place to examine social justice activism related to immigration, including sheltering refugees.

Below I examine the Central U.S.-Mexico Borderlands context and then after, three case vignettes therein: (1) IAF's use of Biblical language and stories in mobilizing new leaders and constituencies toward humane positions on immigration, including the abolition of checkpoints by local law enforcement; (2) hospitality houses for migrants and refugees, which occur mainly in Catholic-affiliated institutions, but in several mainline Protestant institutions as well, along with the sorts of schisms that can emerge in hospitality practices; (3) the potential of the Hope Border Institute, an education and advocacy nonprofit organization support by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB).

Before proceeding, let me summarize human rights theorizing as it connects with non-government organizations (NGOs) that counter narratives, for example narratives of hate. Here, we must (awkwardly) treat faith-based organizations as NGOs representing counter-narratives of hospitality, compassion, empathy, and the universality of dignity for all human beings, regardless of nationality. International relations theorists Thomas Risse, Stephen Rupp and Kathryn Sikkink sought to understand how local activists, confronting a recalcitrant state, forge alliances with international NGOs to bring media attention and pressure to bear on those states (sometimes called "shaming") that can generate third-party pressure from international organizations and other progressive states to undermine recalcitrance and strengthen local goals in a boomerang effect.¹³ While many of the near 200 nation-states worldwide only weakly comply with human rights legal norms established by the United Nations civil standards, the United States is often given a pass based on assumptions that it pursues high standards in norm compliance. In their three-volume book, *Bringing Human Rights Home*, Cynthia Soohoo, Catherine Albisa, and Martha Davis emphasize that the phrase "human rights" operates with little traction in the United States where, instead, "civil rights" provide the legal framework for potential use with marginalized people, including citizens and more weakly, for immigrants—legal and undocumented, with the latter the object of hate and xenophobia.¹⁴ Finally, Kathleen Staudt and Zulma Méndez have used James Scott's perspectives (see above) to analyze how social activists in the central borderlands countered official narratives with their own formerly "hidden narratives" that they made public in the resistance to failed militarist policies pursued in Mexico and supported by the U.S.¹⁵ Together, these theoretical perspectives provide us with conceptual tools to emphasize norms of decent behavior, shaming strategies against hate including anti-immigrant policies emanating from governments, counter narratives, and people's agency.

Immigration from Global to Local Borderlands

The U.S., like Canada and Australia, exhibits a settler colonial history, a land of immigrants from multiple parts of the world with ever-changing immigration laws and policies. In the last half-century, many people moved from countries of the South, including Mexico and Central America, to escape poverty and violence coupled with law enforcement impunity. Civil wars in Central America, beginning in the late 1970s, led to an exodus northward. At that time, one of the best-known sanctuaries was Presbyterian Reverend John Fife and his congregants, in South Tucson, who offered (and continue to offer) “sanctuary” to migrants. In reality, hundreds of groups, churches and synagogues offered the Biblical and medieval practice of safe shelter from the authorities.¹⁶

Catholic affiliated faith-based shelters emerged throughout Mexico and in the U.S., including in El Paso, at Annunciation House. Since its founding in 1978, Annunciation House has offered hospitality to over 100,000 sojourners. Its Director, Ruben García, coordinates the multiple-site reception of Central American and Cuban refugees since 2010, but especially surges from 2014, at no cost to government, for refugees who have (in legal terms) fled persecution and presented “credible fears” to agents in order to apply legally for asylum with documents (granted with extensive “evidence” in extremely low proportions to people from Mexico and Central America, given the 70,000 U.S. flexible ceiling for asylum seekers from all over the world, no doubt likely to diminish in 2017 and thereafter). El Paso Bishop Mark Seitz, an advocate of immigration reform and testifier in Congress, leads over 670,000 Catholics in ten counties of the central U.S. border region.

The central borderlands has long been a gateway for migrants from the South, just as Ellis Island has been from Europe, to its east. Approximately a quarter of El Paso’s population is “foreign born,” a mix of naturalized citizens, Legal Permanent Residents, and undocumented people in unknown numbers but related to residents and citizens, often in “mixed” households. Immigration issues are close and personal in El Paso, in larger proportions than the approximate 13% of the U.S. population in such categories, but reported in aggregate and thus threatening terms to the U.S. mainstream (10-11 million is the common figure, slightly less than half from Mexico). The U.S. routinely processes a million Legal Permanent Residents annually (2014, for example), two thirds on family grounds and the next largest, on work grounds, from professional (H1B) to agricultural, and only after that, refugees.¹⁷

In sum, immigration is an issue in which many have stakes in the United States. These stakes are especially strong and personal in the central borderlands, a large Latino community for whom countering hate and xenophobia would be relevant. From here, we turn to the three case vignettes

of faith-based activism with the potential to counter xenophobia, that is, fanatic nationalism that impels hatred of “others” from outside the country.

Vignette #1: Border Interfaith, affiliated with the IAF

The Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), born in the 1930s with principles culled from Saul Alinsky organizing strategies in working-class neighborhoods in Chicago’s Southside, has a strong presence in the West, Southwest, Texas, and the borderlands. On its umbrella website for the southwest, it calls itself the “nation’s first and largest network of community organizations.” Its organizations consist of “member institutions,” most of them congregations which pay a small percentage (~1%) of their net income. Other money is raised from the local business community and grants. The most generous, long-term grants come from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (which prohibits any work focused on reproductive justice), from Protestant sources and the Jewish Fund for Justice, the latter two, usually small one-year grants. Those involved in the fund-raising world for nonprofits know the constant struggle for resources to pay staff (including the trained IAF lead organizer and dues to the state organization), the coordinator, and rent plus utilities.

El Paso is home to two IAF organizations: the older, EPISO, began in the early 1980s with approximately twenty member institutions, all Catholic; and the younger, Border Interfaith, with a dozen interdenominational (Judeo-Christian) and a teacher association affiliate, began almost twenty years ago.¹⁸ Core IAF leaders include priests, pastors, and rabbis, so for many political representatives or business chamber leaders, their titles and collars carry a special, moral weight compared to ordinary citizens in relational meetings with public officials. Not all Catholic priests are committed to social justice work outside the congregation, but some exhibit deep commitments. Such social-justice priests may be better able to convince their congregations about engaged membership in an IAF group compared to Protestant congregations with the more individualist orientations therein, an assertion I make based on my fifteen-year experience with these groups.

IAF organizations work mainly at the local (city, county, school district) and state levels. They do not organize transnationally or in Mexico. In Texas, eleven IAF organizations are located in multiple cities, represented by state representatives and senators of both major political parties with whom relationships have been developed. Lacking the “power of money,” IAF draws on the “power of numbers” and “relational power” in focusing on priority issues that emerge from “house meetings” in congregations, candidate forums—also called “accountability sessions”—and informed voting. Accountability sessions generally draw several hundred participants from their member institutions (largest in El Paso: 657!). Because immigration and

refugee policies are made and enforced at federal/national levels, one might imagine state and local action to be irrelevant. However, the dominant (Republican) party members in the biennial Texas Legislature routinely introduce anti-immigrant measures, such as eliminating birthright citizenship and requiring local law enforcement to monitor immigrants, with threatened funding cuts, from supposed “sanctuary cities.” In 2014, Texas authorized \$800,000,000 for “border security” for the Texas Department of Public Safety, after hateful rhetoric about Mexican criminals and drug trafficking.

Ironically, El Paso is the safest city in the U.S., according to FBI statistics. Moreover, Texas benefits more than any other state from both the total trade volume with Mexico (over \$100 billion annually) and the jobs created therefrom. In 2006, the Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts produced a cost/benefit analysis that showed a net gain from undocumented immigrants for the Texas economy (factoring in property and sales taxes). The business community understands the utility of large labor and consumer pools (for better or worse reasons). Among various organizations, IAF organizations use relational power at the state level to prevent the most virulently hateful anti-immigration bills from passage. While economic arguments related to immigration are relevant, they are coupled with the moral power of IAF and other groups.

Border Interfaith—like its elder sister organization EPISO, both social justice coalitions—organizes around multiple issues: water and sewer services for outlying areas called *colonias*, the regulation of usurious payday lending, ordinances against wage theft, flood control, and as discussed below, the prohibition of local law enforcement immigration checkpoints. Its mission statement, virtually the only substance on its website coupled with inattention to social media, is as follows:

Border Interfaith is a broad-based community organization located in El Paso, Texas. We develop leadership through education and interfaith relationships to encourage democratic practices and meaningful community action.

Leaders who attend regular steering committee meetings, planning sessions and roles in the complex accountability sessions come from member institutions. Leaders tend to be older than the average population, probably representing no greater numbers than in other enclaves in their congregations (like the choir, the Bible study groups, for examples); they develop relationships of trust across member-institutions with one another across class and ethnic lines. The internal decision-making process is democratic and thus time-consuming, as the paid organizer discusses strategies at monthly steering committee meetings with two leaders from each member affiliate, then implements decisions through various committees. In its highly dramatic and

scripted public actions, media visibility emerges not only in more superficial, short-term television coverage but also in the main print newspaper. When candidates and politicians make promises, they do so in IAF's public setting, permitting follow up and accountability.

Locally, most elected representatives are sensitive to residents and the value of immigrants, again, for better or worse reasons (such as a large, low-income labor pool). Both the city Police Chief (appointed) and county Sheriff (elected) practice community-based policing strategies in which all residents, whatever their citizenship status, can report crimes and/or serve as witnesses in court. However, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) requires that information on those charged with serious crimes be matched with databases in DHS, resulting in detainer orders and probable release to federal authorities for deportation.

Entrepreneurial sheriffs may partner with DHS and the Border Patrol in order to generate revenue from higher levels of government for overtime and additional vehicles. Such was the case in 2008 when the late Sheriff Leo Samaniego authorized sheriff deputies to establish checkpoints making demands on drivers not only for drivers' licenses and proof of insurance, but also for social security numbers and citizenship papers outside the City of El Paso in the county. In a three-month period, deputies turned 800 people over to the Border Patrol for deportation. Border Interfaith learned through "house meetings" about continuous harassment even of citizens and legal residents affiliated with member institutions. Besides meetings and negotiated agreements with the Sheriff, Border Interfaith organized an Accountability Session with eleven sheriff candidates using its usual format: a story from a leader, followed by a pointed question with yes-no responses from each candidate. The poignant story was a grandpa who was stopped seven times in three months (by the same deputies) after picking up his grandchildren from school, all of them traumatized each time. Richard Wiles, former Police Chief and candidate for Sheriff, was elected and the problem disappeared,¹⁹ but the relationship with the Sheriff continues as other problems emerged in "house meetings" related to neighborhood safety.

More recently, with raids and deportation striking fear in parts of El Paso's population, Border Interfaith has focused on making "Know your Rights" presentations. They take place in member congregations and offer a safe place for discussions. The *El Paso Times* covered the story with a huge picture on the front page of the first section of the Sunday March 6, 2017 paper edition.²⁰

While immigration practices form only one of a wide agenda of IAF issues, the vignette analysis supports the importance of faith-based organizing on immigration issues. The IAF groups do not conceptualize people as victims, but rather as people with agency and voice who deserve opportunities to become leaders. Of the hundreds who attend each accountability session, usually reported in the main newspaper and on television news programs, a

message is sent that counters hate and xenophobia. Yet some El Pasoans hold a negative impression of IAF groups because the accountability sessions, though civil, seem radical or confrontational because candidates and politicians—always briefed ahead of time about session format and questions—are not permitted to respond vaguely to yes-no questions. Despite some negative perceptions, the leaders, and their congregants who attend the accountability sessions, represent the largest, grassroots base in the region.

Vignette #2: Welcome to Refugees, a Mainline Protestant Congregation

In a mainline Protestant congregation in El Paso, with a majority Anglo middle-class membership, the congregation supports scores of nonprofit organizations on both sides of the US-Mexico border, including social justice nonprofits like Annunciation House. Leaders from those nonprofits speak at church services, and teams from the church's outreach committee visit organizations to learn more from their partners and to contribute to service opportunities in those efforts. Support for Protestant churches comes from members who make annual financial commitments, thus providing a stable income.

This Protestant church has a strong commitment to social justice and immigration reform, as does its national body, but it is also inclusive and embraces a variety of congregants with different perspectives. The national denomination's assembly discusses, discerns, and votes on what might be called progressive stands about such topics as marriage equality. The church's mission statement follows: [It] "is committed to praising God daily by touching lives through workshop, study, fellow, and service." The church is a member of Border Interfaith.

The border, as noted above, has long been a gateway to people moving northward to flee violence and poverty and seeking a hoped-for better life. In 2016, with the surges in Central American refugees and filled-to-capacity existing sites, such as Annunciation House, Nazareth Hall, and several Catholic churches, Annunciation House approached the pastors to assist groups of families for 2-3 days before they moved on to live with relatives in other parts of the country to await their asylum hearings. Assistance to these guests, once released with documents that authorize presence and travel from cells at the ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement)-run Detention Center, involved preparing food, providing clothing and places to sleep, and driving travelers to the bus station or airport with the tickets their relatives purchased.

Activities like these became much more than a decision to write a check. For the congregation, this was an opportunity to volunteer and interact face-to-face with refugees from Central America. Governance and authorized actions in this Protestant denomination do not rest with the Pastor (as they often do with the Priest in Catholic congregations), but rather require a

recommendation from its outreach committee and then a vote from the church board. In this democratic process, consensus support was provided to house groups of refugee families over several weeks. Volunteers were recruited to assist multiple families. Annunciation House provided training for the volunteers, some of whom had no past direct service opportunities with people from other countries, and gave instructions on paperwork upon guests' arrival and delivery to bus stations and the airport. For example, no one was to ask about stories of the journey or to take pictures, but only to listen if guests volunteered. Congregants learned that other mainline Protestant denominational churches said they would also offer hospitality, given their witness of this model. Note that this temporary hospitality differs from amnesty as practiced in medieval Europe or the South Tucson Presbyterian church.

After those multiple weeks, with intense volunteer commitments including shopping for the bedding, diapers for babies, and right-sized clothing for the little children and their parents, a larger group of congregants came together to discuss the experience. Volunteers and committee members communicated with other non-volunteers who raised questions about immigration policies and asylum-seeking procedures. While no consensus emerged, perhaps three-fourths of participants affirmed that participation was morally and ethically correct, for faith-based reasons. Congregants will continue to volunteer in a quiet way, without unsought-for media coverage, and communicate with others in El Paso. This is a civic-minded group of congregants who serve on other nonprofit boards.

In this vignette, the ripple effects of participation and direct encounters with those "others" who have been marginalized became an opportunity to put faith into action and to make Biblical admonitions come alive. However, the church made no commitment to work on policy change, though its informed membership no doubt votes at higher turnout rates than the El Paso population.

Vignette #3: Hope Border Institute

For many years, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has supported not only the rights of people to migrate, whether refugees or unauthorized, but also of governments to control their borders in a humane way. The USCCB and Conferencia del Episcopado Mexicano issued a joined Pastoral Letter in 2003, *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope*, citing numerous Biblical injunctions from the Old and New Testaments to welcome the stranger, most notable from passages in the Old and New Testaments of the Bible: Exodus, Dt, Lv, and Matthew. In 2004, the USCCB issued a booklet *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship* that included attention to immigrants. When in 2013 the Argentine-born Bishop was elected the first Pope from the

global South, Pope Francis issued many moving statements about migration. On the World Day of Migrants and Refugees in 2015, he said “It is necessary to respond to the globalization of migration with the globalization of charity and cooperation, in such a way as to make the conditions of migrants more human...” In February 2016, Pope Francis visited Mexico, including its Northern Border with the United States, in Ciudad Juárez, just across the border from El Paso in a combined metropolitan area of over two million people.

With support from the Catholic Church, namely the USCCB, the Hope Border Institute (HBI) was established in 2016 to educate and advocate as a binational organization. Specifically, the elaborate website contains its mission statement: HBI “is a grassroots organization working in the El Paso-Ciudad Juárez-Las Cruces region that seeks to bring the perspective of Catholic social teaching to bear on the social realities unique to the region.” HBI’s program involves “research, reflection, leadership development, advocacy and action.” The nonprofit organization is explicitly binational in scope and extends its issues beyond immigration to include an anti-TPP trade stance (relevant in 2016) and near-wage slavery in Mexico’s legal minimum wage (80 pesos daily, at the current rate of US\$1= 21 pesos), unlike the US minimum wage of US\$60+ per day (multiplying the \$7.25 hourly rate times 8), or more than a ten times differential. HBI has spoken loudly in press conferences, policy papers, and Congressional Town Hall meetings about low wages, even bringing maquiladora workers to express their voices at the latter event. When Pope Francis visited Mexico’s northern border, with which the Diocese, HBI and other organizations helped, he spoke about how people should not have exploit themselves just to be able to work.

In several encounters with the staff, I experienced HBI’s multiple program activities. Just prior to HBI’s start-up in 2015, I attended a day-long meeting with approximately one hundred participants co-sponsored by the Center for Migration Studies with panelists from around the U.S. and Congressional Representative Beto O’Rourke discussing currently social justice practices and impending legislation in Washington, D.C. There, immigration reform has been stuck in the border security discourse of the last ten years and the way that discourse impels and justifies more spending for border law enforcement and border fences (called walls by critics), both the physical barriers and virtual fences of technology and surveillance. The Center produces a weekly national journal of articles and updates, *CMS Migration Update*, with a wide dissemination to leaders of faith, academics, NGOs, and no doubt some policy-makers.²¹

During the late summer of 2016, I walked with the first of several “Hugs not Walls” participants to the downtown border of both cities, organized by both the secular Border Network for Human Rights (BNHR) and the Hope Border Institute. There, groups of family members that are divided by the

border, immigration policies, and the long backlog (before families can sponsor relatives for legal permanent residency) waited on either the Mexico or U.S. side to rush downward to embrace relatives for a few minutes in the muddy trickle of the Rio Grande. This historic activity, which brought tears of sadness and joy to many, was repeated several more times in the region. The first event received a great deal of press coverage in print and televised media plus a moving video from AJ+ was widely shared on Facebook. Later that year, HBI organized a demonstration at the Detention Center as part of a nationwide network to protest detaining children, “Diapers in Detention.” HBI posted pictures of the event on Facebook which others shared.

In its education and advocacy work, Hope Border Institute interacts with the Center for Migration Studies in New York. HBI infuses the east-coast corridor advocacy organizations, whether secular or sacred, with border perspectives and voices in periodic meetings and communication. At one lengthy workshop I attended in fall, a New Mexico Protestant Pastor spoke of his work with an undocumented immigrant mother, Rosa, who returned to the US for her sick child who was getting medical attention. Although officials had some discretion to allow the mother to nurse the child back to health while remaining in the U.S., officials took a hard denial line. The story thus reminds people of the contradictions of a supposed pro-family US policy (as enforced in the ways families can sponsor relatives for legal permanent residency) yet anti-family policy in wrenching cases like this. Again, using social media, HBI developed a three-minute highly personal and heart-hurting video of Rosa crying and the pastor, posted on their website and on social media that reaches not only the borderlands but also wider audiences. Like the IAF, this organization uses compelling personal stories that touch people in the hearts and souls.

HBI organizes public and symbolic events that remind large numbers of people about “middle-eastern” immigrants and refugees around the Christmas season, as did a Protestant church marquee in El Paso near a main thoroughfare. The Presbyterian journal *Insights* focused its Fall, 2016 thematic issue on “The Migrant People of God.” In December, an HBI-developed *posada* generated large crowds that marched and reminded marchers of the Biblical story of migrants Mary and Joseph on their journeys to Bethlehem and to Egypt. Faith-based organizers typically evoke Biblical stories, as do civil rights leaders like Martin Luther King on the exodus of Israelites refugees fleeing slavery in Egypt. The difference between refugees and immigrants, so clear in US and United Nations legal pronouncements, is blurred in faith-based anti-hate imagery. National borderlines fade in importance with, instead, more respect for the dignity of all human beings regardless of their spatial location or nationality/citizenship.

While events like these bring out people, HBI events are episodic rather than continuous and relational. HBI has salaried staff, paid through Catholic

institutions. While this allows its professionals to maintain a purer social justice critique, without worry of offending conservative parishioners or businesspeople from whom money might be raised in congregations or IAF organizations, the financial structure does not provide a mass, grassroots base of support and accountability. HBI does, however, have the ability to co-sponsor Catholic services that celebrate immigrants, such as January 15 during Immigration Week, even in those churches in which priests have closed the door to social justice organizing efforts like the IAF. HBI was quickly able to assemble a symbolic resolution, with the presence of Bishop Seitz, passed by El Paso's City Council as a "welcoming city," a vaguer label compared to "sanctuary city." Thus, El Paso joined other cities taking a stand just before the inauguration and the dire possibilities of hate and xenophobia enacted into legislation and policies among the presidential political appointees. HBI clearly has national connections and a periodic local base here, but the base does not yet generate leadership development from a grassroots community.

The national immigration reform advocacy community anticipated prospects for immigration reform in the first 100 days—whether through legislation or executive actions—had the Electoral College vote gone otherwise. Catholic Speaker of the House Paul Ryan obviously pursues other party priorities than faith-based inspirations. Faith-based rationales on immigration policy reform are three-fold: saving families; programming fair, compassionate and practical legalization measures; and addressing root causes (such as poverty and violence) pushing migrants to journey northward. None of these rationales appear to resonate with the politicians who overwhelmingly claim a religious affiliation in the executive and legislative branches of the new 2017 regime.

Comparative Reflections and Conclusions

In these three vignettes, we learn different versions of faith-based activities in the US-Mexican Central Borderlands with the potential to counter xenophobia in their work with and for immigrants and refugees. Each organization, exhibiting the agency of its people and leaders, reflects some of the conceptual tools emphasized in theoretical perspectives. IAF provides opportunity for voice and exercise of power in numeric, moral, and relational terms, but with decidedly older yet cross-class, cross-ethnic leaders. IAF explicitly addresses multiple policy reforms, not only on immigration, at the state and local levels but not national level, coupled with constant fund-raising activities which divert leaders' energies.

The Protestant congregation, also decidedly older but more Anglo, welcomed the opportunity to provide temporary hospitality to refugee guests. In so doing, they confronted and served the survivors of harsh U.S. policies on a face-to-face basis. Yet as a nonprofit organization (i.e. a tax-exempt church),

the church eschews explicit policy advocacy. Besides, not all congregants share like-minded commitment to particular immigration policy reforms. Already in 2017, fewer refugees have presented themselves at the border to seek asylum, whether a result of perceived prospects that they would be denied entry or of harsher federal law enforcement at the borderline, given the new regime's stance at airports and ports of entry in borderlands.

Hope Border Institute explicitly advocates policy reform on multiple issues and effectively uses social media and its wide-reaching networks across the U.S. and Mexico to communicate faith-based advocacy. HBI's binational work is especially noteworthy, activity which is more difficult for secular organizations (Mexico's constitution prohibits foreigners from political involvement). However, while financially secure, HBI lacks a local power base of multiple leaders and relational power, at least in this early stage of operation. At this point, none of the three organizations feature youth leadership development. Nationwide, young people appear to lean away from religiosity, at least at this early stage of their lives.

I cannot judge one to be better than the others. Rather, "all of the above" organizations work in complementary ways. It has been heartening to see the kinds of alliance-building efforts among faith-based organizations and other community organizations.

Let me now address the organizing question for this paper: to what extent can faith-based efforts in the central borderlands counter xenophobia? Drawing from the base of three active organizations, I conclude that their events and achievements spread, deepened or renewed commitment to faith-based principles to welcome the stranger and to see the face of the deity in others, whether situated in different identity and income groups or in countries of the South.

Does that awareness create a base of support in elections for candidates that will foment immigration policy change? Maybe. In the 2016 presidential election, El Pasoans voted as they usually do, as do the majority of Latinxs in US elections, solidly for Democrats, at the rate of two-thirds or more (70%) in 2016 and in larger turnout numbers. In 2012, El Pasoans turned out U.S. Congressional incumbent Silvestre Reyes, former Border Patrol chief, in favor of Beto O'Rourke, both Democrats. On a bipartisan basis, Representative O'Rourke joined with Representative Pearce, a Republican from New Mexico's border district, to introduce accountability bills on border enforcement and an "American Families United Act," both of which died in sessions amid strong Congressional polarization and a Republican majority that claims religious affiliation yet fears the highly organized yet minority Tea Party extreme of their party. One might wonder if "shaming" is even possible with many politicians in Congress.

In a hierarchy of policy priorities, where does immigration reform stand? No doubt high, especially for Latinxs and most border people who have

friends and relatives from Mexico and/or live in mixed-households. However, that intensity may be countered by a commitment to other priorities in the Catholic Church such as hostility to the 1973 Roe v Wade Supreme Court decision.

The United States, which at least until 2017 prided itself as committed to civil rights, less to the international discourse of human rights, though signatory to the 1967 United Nations Protocol on Refugees, is the recalcitrant state of focus here. Can the current regime and its nationalist, even xenophobic discourse be shamed? Is government so uncomfortable with moral arguments that it cannot be awakened with Protestant denominational positions on humane immigration reform, Catholic Bishops who claim human solidarity without regard to borders/nationality, and/or when Pope Francis visited Mexico and the central US-Mexico borderlands in 2016, facing northward from Ciudad Juárez to the Cross and the destination of people from the South fleeing violence and poverty? And has the U.S. public experienced the moral awakening about which Michelle Alexander spoke?

In this less-than-ideal world, the extent to which state shaming can occur during an era of strident nationalisms and security anxieties might be called into question. Other states which once had humane traditions that resonated more fully with U.N. resolutions on migration and refugees, such as member states in the European Union, now face their own backlash from right-wing nationalist parties. Even international moral leadership, such as from Pope Francis, could not counter morally bankrupt leadership in the dominant party of the legislative and executive branches of U.S. government or the scores of millions who voted in a flawed Electoral College system of gerrymandered districts.

Nevertheless, I cannot conclude this paper without some optimism and hope for a future that counters xenophobia. The central U.S.-Mexico borderlands is but one locale amid many others where faith-based activism has been occurring. To tie this sense to Michelle Alexander's quote at the beginning of this paper, the moral and spiritual awakening must be coupled with the traditional tools of research and policy. This moral awakening is what the three organizations analyzed herein have embarked upon. No doubt such activity occurs elsewhere, and it is up to us as writers to document these efforts and their lessons to make a better world.

Notes

¹ Quoted from (<http://justicenotjails.org/michelle-alexander-joins-union-theological-seminary/>).

² See Mary Beth Rogers, *Cold Anger*, (1990: University of North Texas, 1990), Ch 9-10; selections in Marion Orr, ed. *Transforming the City* (University Press of Kansas 2007).

³ For purposes of transparency, I wish to share my own faith-based traditions: born into but left the Lutheran church in my teens, then joined another mainline denomination with the birth of my first child.

⁴ James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State and Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998 and 1990 respectively).

⁵ However, some analysis exists: Los Angeles-based NGOs in Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, *God's Heart has no Borders*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008; Arizona-based activists in Lane Van Ham, "Non-Governmental Organizations, Civil Society, and Undocumented Migrants," in Lois Ann Lorentzen, ed. *Hidden Lives and Human Rights in the United States*. Santa Barbara: Praeger 2014; Ananda Rose, *Showdown in the Sonoran Desert*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2012; Carrie Skogberg Eastman, *Shaping the Immigration Debate*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Press, 2014, Ch 8 on the 21st century Arizona NGO/non-governmental organizations Humane Borders and No More Deaths which emerged from the outrage of the annual hundreds of dead bodies found in the Sonora Desert; and Shannon Gleeson, "Activism and Advocacy," on "key allies" and the "crucial role" of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in Lorentzen 2014: 210, 213—roles that began in 1976 in Bishops' declaration that "People of God [are] required by the Gospel" to promote immigrants' human rights and dignity, Lane Van Ham, "Nongovernmental Organizations, Civil Society, and Undocumented Migrants," (2014) in Lorentzen, pp. 233-56.

⁶ <http://www.pewforum.org/2017/01/03/faith-on-the-hill-115/>

⁷ Consider Charismatics, Born-Agains, Fundamentalists, even within the mainline Protestant faiths. See Van Ham on World Relief's Interfaith Statement of Comprehensive Immigration Reform in 2005 and conservative evangelical Christians, 2014: 246.

⁸ Robert Putnam and David Campbell, *American Grace*. NY: Simon & Schuster, 2010.

⁹ Academic analyses of the IAF include Dennis Shirley, *Community Organizing for Urban School Reform*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997; Mark Warren, *Dry Bones Rattling*. Princeton University Press, 2001; and selections in Marion Orr, ed, *Transforming the City: Community Organizing and the Challenge of Political Change*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007.

¹⁰ Rogers 1990: 13-14.

¹¹ Pew Research Center, "America's Changing Religious Landscape," <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/> May 15, 2015.

Pew Research Center. "U.S. Religious Groups and their Political Leanings" <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/02/23/u-s-religious-groups-and-their-political-leanings/> February 23, 2016.
2015, 2016

¹² Putnam and Campbell, 2010: 269, 271, 301.

¹³ Thomas Risse, et al., *The Power of Human Rights*, Cambridge University Press, 1999.

¹⁴ Cynthia Soohoo, et al. *Bring Human Rights Home*. Westport, CT and London: Praeger, 2008.

¹⁵ Kathleen Staudt and Zulma Méndez, *Courage, Resistance, and Women in Ciudad Juárez: Challenges to Militarization*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015.

¹⁶ Stephen Nathan Haymes and María Vidal de Haymes, “Immigrant Sanctuary,” in Lorentzen, 2014: 262. See also PBS News Hour on the growth in sanctuary churches: http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/social_issues-jan-june07-sanctuary_06-18/

Sanctuary Not Deportation claims that over 800 churches offer protection <http://www.sanctuarynotdeportation.org/>. The new presidential administration may be reluctant to raid churches, and church leaders worry about 501c3 tax-exempt status.

¹⁷ Kelefa Sanneh, “Coming to America: What gets left out of our Immigration arguments,” *The New Yorker*, October 31, 2016, pp. 84-9.

¹⁸ I was a co-founder of Border Interfaith. See its (limited) website: www.borderinterfaith.com and the umbrella website for the US southwest: www.swiaf.org.

¹⁹ Kathleen Staudt, “Bordering the Other in the U.S. Southwest,” in *Keeping Out the Other*, Philipp Kretsedemas and David Brotherton, co-editors. (NY: Columbia University Press 2008), 291-313.

²⁰ <http://www.elpasotimes.com/story/news/immigration/2017/03/02/faith-groups-reach-out-immigrants-civil-rights/98598642/> (the print edition has a smaller version of the picture).

²¹ From its mantel: “*CMS Migration Update* is a weekly digest of news and other information related to national and international migration. It is designed to educate faith leaders regarding vulnerable immigrant populations, developments in the immigration field, pastoral resources and the religious touchstones of diverse faith traditions on migrants and newcomers. It should not be relied upon to provide advice or counsel in immigration cases. The publication is provided by the [Center for Migration Studies of New York \(CMS\)](#), an educational institute/think-tank devoted to the study of international migration, to the promotion of understanding between immigrants and receiving communities, and to public policies that safeguard the dignity and rights of migrants, refugees and newcomers. CMS is a member of the Scalabrini International Migration Network, an international network of shelters, welcoming centers, and other ministries for migrants.”

Poem: *A Certain Bow of the Head*

Robin Wyatt Dunn

A certain bow of the head
A certain length of pause
A lilt in the tongue
accents and gaits
traitors and ghastly hereafters
and breakfast at eight

no forefather knows
(but already does)

the precious cause to be

bequeath me your tongue
so I can speak
easier
after I am gone

The Spirit, the Cross, and the Mystical Mother: Mexico's Conservative Contribution to the Charismatic Catholic Renewal

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Since 1967, approximately 140 million people have participated in an ecstatic, Spirit-filled movement within the Roman Catholic Church. One of the fastest-growing religious phenomena in the late-modern world, the Charismatic Catholic Renewal (CCR) has appealed disproportionately to women and has exploded in the Global South. Despite its significance, only a handful of authors have undertaken comprehensive studies of the Renewal.¹ Generally regarded to have begun on the campus of Duquesne University in 1967, CCR featured self-identified Roman Catholics experiencing “baptism in the Holy Spirit,” including various manifestations native to neo-Pentecostal worship practices. Among these were glossolalia or ‘speaking in tongues,’ being ‘slain’ or “resting in the Spirit,” real-time interpretation of seemingly nonsensical utterances, prophesy, physical and emotional/spiritual healing, visions, and the waging of ‘spiritual warfare’ through prayer. Catholic believers incorporated practices and images from their own traditions as well, including apparitions such as the Virgin Mary and the Sacred Heart of Jesus, mystical monastic spiritualities, and devout opposition to abortion and birth control. Charismatic Catholics also eagerly engaged in and appropriated otherwise mundane Catholic practices, such as the adoration of the consecrated Host or *Santísimo*. This involved impassioned praise and prayer before a transfigured communion wafer in a monstrance, which Catholic doctrine considers the actual body of Christ. Informed by Protestant revivalism in the United States, CCR was nevertheless highly successful in Latin America, where it appealed to local sensibilities and incorporated site-specific tradition and flavor. In Mexico it was termed *La Renovación Cristiana en el Espíritu Santo* (Christian Renewal in the Holy Spirit) and spread rapidly after 1971.

This paper, part of a larger study of CCR in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, explores one under-appreciated theological tradition that has influenced the Charismatic Catholic Renewal, especially in Latin America: the gendered theology of Conchita Cabrera de Armida. The upper-class Mexican mother's *Espiritualidad de la Cruz* (Spirituality of the Cross) informed the foundation of several religious communities in Mexico, most notably the *Misioneros del Espiritu Santo* (Missionaries of the Holy Spirit). Though Cabrera reached her peak productivity during the Mexican Revolution (1910-1924), her influence nevertheless reemerged in 1971, the early days of the Charismatic Catholic Renewal in Mexico. The Archbishop Primate designated the aptly-named *Misioneros* the official gatekeepers of the Renewal, a task several men in the order embraced enthusiastically. Though the community sustained several competing approaches to spirituality in the decades following the second Vatican Council, it gave birth to at least two distinct iterations of the Charismatic Catholic Renewal. One of those, the *Sistema Integral de la Nueva Evangelización* (Integral System of the New Evangelization) or SINE, leveraged the renewal and Cabrera's mystical theology to organize the masses, advocated a deeply gendered and capitalistic worldview, and built a lay fraternity, *Misioneros de la Cruz* (Missionaries of the Cross). SINE and its army of lay devotees—perhaps the most influential and least liberation-oriented product of CCR—contributed to the conservative resurgence in the Catholic Church in the 1980s and continue to inform evangelization efforts in diocese in the Americas.

Founded at a private chapel near Tepeyac Hill in 1914 by French Marist priest Félix de Jesús Rougier under the mystical influence of Concepción “Conchita” Cabrera de Armida, the *Misioneros del Espiritu Santo* was well suited to its cultural and geographical context, sufficiently mystical to participate in the Charismatic Renewal, and aptly nimble to embrace the reforms of Vatican II. The order's foundational story, related by a 1987 publication of the same name, described the journey of Padre Felix, as the *Misioneros* affectionately call him, from France to Revolutionary Mexico by way of Colombia.² Padre Félix, according to hagiographer Ricardo Zimbron Levy, a member of the order, enjoyed the influence and spiritual direction of Concepción “Conchita” Cabrera de Armida, a prolific writer and mystic.³ This foundational work of *Misionero* history, written by a member of the order with *Nihil obstat* and *imprimatur* of the same, emphasized the fledgling order's survival in the face of state persecution, Mexicanized the French Marist, and, primarily by way of Conchita, oriented the order within a tradition of Catholic mysticism.⁴ It should be noted that the order has enjoyed a close relationship with the ecclesiastical leadership and well-to-do families in the Mexican capital. Cabrera and Rougier, as well as their official history, also enjoy official acceptance. The designations of *Nihil obstat* and *imprimatur* indicate that the work has no objection from the diocesan (or, in this case, religious) censor and the bishop's

(in this case, Superior General's) permission to print. Cabrera and Rougier are in the process of beatification, having been declared "venerable" in 1999 and 2000, respectively. The history of these founders has contributed to an institutional memory and culture that facilitated the order's involvement in the renewal.

During and after the Mexican Revolution (1910-1924) the secularist Mexican government challenged the influence of the Catholic Church by prohibiting public displays, confiscating properties, and limiting the ability of religious groups to organize. This persecution, enshrined in the constitution of 1917, fueled the Cristero Revolts of the 1920s and 30s and continued in fits and starts through the 1940s.⁵ Most importantly, it created martyrs, a tension between Catholics and the Mexican State (and its evolving revolutionary party), and a mythic memory of persecution and survival.⁶ It was in this context of revolution and simultaneously dreadful and desirable suffering that the Misioneros were founded. In his many letters and writings, Rougier described the trials and tribulations in grandiose, almost gleeful terms:

I travel all over the place, and the Masonry rabidly chases the servants of the Church. Since the persecution began in 1929, around 150 priests of this nation have received the crown of martyrdom. Blessed a thousand times over are those who share their luck! They've already picked me for the same. I want it with all my soul, even though I don't deserve it.⁷

Padre Félix and his small group of novices experienced harassment, the confiscation of property, and years 'rich in crosses,' and they relished every minute of it, at least in retrospect.⁸ 'Persecution,' Rougier wrote in 1936, 'is an huge grace, a promise of immense favors in the future if only we receive it as we should.'⁹ Furthermore, he bragged, the embryonic Misioneros forgave their persecutors and suffered greatly, 'but with love.'¹⁰ This resigned suffering, paired with the forgiveness of their persecutors, was, in Rougier's view, a form of spiritual resistance. This approach to misery not only echoes the timeworn legends of early Christian mystics and martyrs, but it also connects Rougier and the Misioneros to Conchita's Spirituality of the Cross and to other Catholic Charismatic favorites such as the long-suffering Saint Faustina Kowalska.¹¹ Like his Polish contemporary, Padre Félix endured chronic illness, which contributed to the narrative of his saintly suffering. "In addition to the cross... of persecution," wrote Zimbron Levy, "God wanted [him] to carry, many times, the cross of sickness, which was for him many opportunities for personal purification and greater union with Crucified Christ."¹² While Kowalska ultimately succumbed to her tuberculosis, Rougier lingered through that malady and such others as both childhood and late-in-life arthritis, a gangrened leg, severe anemia, amoebic dysentery, liver pains, 'fevers,' 'strong

headaches,' near blindness, a blocked colon, and repeated bouts of extreme fatigue.¹³ Unsurprisingly, marveled Conchita Cabrera in 1935, 'Every time I see [Padre Félix] he is thinner and more saintly.'¹⁴ Certainly high praise among Catholic mystics, Felix and Conchita understood these qualities as mutually constitutive. That is, they understood that the slow wasting of the body was in direct correlation with the strengthening of the spirit: the skinner, the holier.

While the Mexican revolutionary government persecuted Catholics in the name of anticlericalism, this abuse and the mythic memories thereof have served the construction of a resilient, longsuffering mystical identity. Indeed, suffering and divine ecstasy are fundamental to Cabrera's spirituality of the cross, in which they escaped their physical selves to witness supernatural manifestations. Though these experiences were always deeply gendered, I support Michael Warner's assertion they should not be regarded as simply sexual:

[R]eligion makes available a language of ecstasy, a horizon of significance, within which transgressions against the normal order of the world and the boundaries of self *can be seen as good things*. Pentecostals don't get slain in the spirit just by rubbing themselves, or by redirecting some libido; they require a whole set of beliefs about the limitations of everyday calculations of self-interest, about the impoverishment of the world that does not willingly yield its increase to satisfy your lusts. In this way ecstatic religions can legitimate self-transgression, providing a meaningful framework for the sublime play of self-realization and self-dissolution.¹⁵

A former Pentecostal himself, Warner dissents from Harold Bloom's description of Pentecostalism as flatly sexual or 'an ecstasy scarcely distinguishable from sexual transport.'¹⁶ In addition to clearly recognizing the difference between orgasm and spiritual ecstasy, Warner understands that the experience is rooted in a (real or imagined) marginal positionality and offers a "world-canceling moment."¹⁷ That is, the believer regards herself as an oppressed religious/spiritual minority and, in the moment of ecstasy, is able to attain a "radical downward revaluing of the world that despises Pentecostals."¹⁸ Despite their vesting different perspectives, it should be noted that Warner's assertion is in one way remarkably similar to that of Thorsen, who concludes that the "incipient pentecostalization is an emerging ecclesial self-understanding with a more particularistic and counter-cultural view of the Church and its role in the world."¹⁹ Though important, these evocative spiritual practices were only a piece of the CCR experience. Overemphasizing of these "gifts" flirts with sensationalism, constructing an

outsider gaze that fetishizes and marginalizes, again at the expense of deeper understanding.²⁰

In addition to undergirding his sainthood, Rougier's exquisite suffering from chronic ailments and persecution also helped make him an honorary Mexican. First, as scholars such as Ellen Gunnarsdóttir have shown, similar forms of mysticism-featuring visions, deeply gendered eroticism, and suffering as a path to unity with the divine-have been a part of the Mexican Catholic experience.²¹ Padre Félix himself also emphasized his own participation in and identification with Mexican cultural norms, which the writings of the order happily have echoed. While social tensions between Catholic and revolutionary imageries, epitomized by the Virgin of Guadalupe and the golden eagle, competed and blended to shape a post-revolutionary, modern *mexicanidad*, Padre Félix and his beloved Misioneros constructed their own Mexican identity.²² Though the order's writings about the former Marist have recognized his French nationality, accent, and prior vocation, Zimbron Levy has more often emphasized Padre Félix' more Mexican qualities. Recovering from one of his perennial '*agotamiento[s]*' the founder wrote to a friend: 'I'm better now. I eat everything, even beans and tortillas, just not *chile*.'²³ In another letter, Rougier lamented that his ailments even made it a challenge to drink his morning *atole*.²⁴ Similarly, after receiving a blood transfusion in 1930, he quipped, 'Now congratulate me, because I have lots of Mexican blood. I even dreamed I was in a cockfight!'²⁵ The last foundation of the Misioneros under Padre Félix was the order's assumption of The Sanctuary of Our Lady of Guadalupe, a parish in Saltillo, Coahuila, named after the patron saint of Mexico.²⁶ To underscore this Mexican Marian theme, when Padre Félix finally succumbed to peritonitis, giving his 'New Year's Gift' under the watchful gaze of an image of Mary in January 1938, his remains were interred in the cemetery at Tepayac.²⁷ The mythic location of Juan Diego's encounters with the Guadalupan Mary, the patron saint of Mexico, the site is now home to the Basilica of Guadalupe, a symbol of Mexican Catholicism. Rougier's remains have since been moved to the Church of San Felipe de Jesús.

Despite Rougier's *sangre Mexicana* and his affinity for *atole*, *frijoles*, and *tortillas*, the most Mexican influence on the Misioneros was most certainly Conchita Cabrera. Her unique version of mystical marianism and symbolic embodiment of Mexican Catholic womanhood served to underscore the new order's Mexican credentials. In a manner similar to the living and posthumous efforts of Rougier and his hagiographer's combined effort to Mexicanize the French priest, Cabrera and the writers that extolled her emphasized her identity as an exceptional Mexican mother. The Misioneros published, at least as early as 1972, *Conchita: Spiritual Diary of a Mother*, a collection of Cabrera's documents partly curated by French theologian Marie-Michel Philippon, O.P.²⁸ Distilling more than "sixty-six thick bundles of manuscripts" into less than two-hundred pages, the work sketched Cabrera's life and spiritual reflections

and included a letter of support from Archbishop Primate of Mexico Miguel Darío Miranda.²⁹

Complementing a broader effort to canonize Conchita, the work constructed her, first and foremost, as an ideal self-sacrificing wife and mother. Though the volume and the profundity of her writings compares to those of classic mystics and theologians such as Teresa de Ávila and Thomas Aquinas, Miranda recognized her via “the domestic angle where, we saw her, with great admiration, in her home, with simplicity and fidelity, sanctifying herself by carrying out her mission as wife and mother.”³⁰ Indeed, the very title of the work, coined by Philipon, set the tone. Instead of a logical title such as *Concepción Cabrera and the Way of the Cross*, the author appeared simply as *Conchita: a Mexican Mother and Writer of Diaries*. The first section of the text, “The Life Story of a Wife and Mother,” offered three possible identities for modern Mexican women: “Daughter of Mexico,” “Wife and Mother,” and “Widow,” the titles of chapters one through three, respectively. In these chapters, Philipon sketched Cabrera’s biography, using her experiences to convey practical advice about how *to do woman* in the context of modern Mexico.³¹ The first paragraphs of the first section oriented Cabrera within her national context and praised her for her ‘simplicity’:

Conchita is a daughter of Mexico. She is to be seen vividly in her Mexican environment, in this land of violence and antithesis, a land of volcanoes but also the land of Veracruz, the Nation of the True Cross, and of Our Lady of Guadalupe.... One word was ever on the lips of those who had known her and whom I questioned during my first sojourn in Mexico: “simplicity.” Conchita has an evangelical simplicity. She spent her childhood and adolescence in the “haciendas” and on the “ranches,” sailing in a boat along the streams, jumping into the water or pushing her companions and her father’s employees into the water, laughing heartily, mingling with everyone, passionately fond of music and song, endowed with a fine voice.³²

In language almost evocative of the noble savage, the hagiographer bound Cabrera’s *mexicanidad*, religiosity, and gender into one seamless identity. Under Phillipon’s European, patriarchal gaze, the ideal Mexican woman emerged from the “violence and antithesis” of Mesoamerican jungles to embody modern Catholic womanhood.³³ The Misioneros’ prologue to *Conchita* again linked Cabrera’s gendered identities to her spiritual authority.

Still, Cabrera’s example held yet more potential. Once established as sufficiently Mexican, Philipon employed her in order to instruct and shame

both women and male priests. First, Conchita easily reconciles devotion to Christ and her roles as wife and mother:

My betrothal never troubled me as an obstacle to my belonging to God. It seemed to me so easy to combine them both! When I went to bed and was alone, I thought of Pancho, then of the Eucharist, which was my greatest delight. I went to Communion every day and it was on those days that I saw him go by. Thinking of him did not hinder me from praying. I made myself look as lovely as I could and I dressed myself elegantly to please him. I would go to the theater, and to dances for the sole purpose of seeing him... But in the midst of all this I never forgot God. I dreamed of Him as constantly as I could and He drew me to Him in an indescribable way.³⁴

Indeed, Cabrera found even more creative ways to blend her spiritual and temporal infatuations. ‘Under my silken gowns,’ she added, ‘I wore a belt of haircloth, delighting in this for the sake of my Jesus.’³⁵ Later reflecting on her youth, Cabrera noted that she never really felt a calling to professed religious life, or, at least, she ‘had no idea what [vocation and virginity] meant.’ Though she would live the last thirty-six years of her life as a widow, she was engaged around the age of thirteen and then married at age twenty-one.³⁶ Indeed, Cabrera described experiencing ‘an immense void’ and ‘desires,’ which she hoped marriage to ‘so good a man’ as Francisco “Pancho” Armida would satiate.³⁷ That said, her spiritual preoccupations remained, and at their wedding banquet in 1884, Conchita pushed Pancho to promise she could ‘receive communion every day and [he would] not to be jealous.’³⁸ The experience of motherhood further informed Cabrera’s ever-deepening spirituality. The death of her second child, Carlos, to typhoid at age six increased her ‘desires for perfection.’ More and more her ‘scruples tormented’ her, and she leveraged her motherly positionality in a unique exercise in exquisite suffering. Having become attached a piece of Carlos’ clothing she had kept as a memorial, the emerging mystic made a dramatic sacrifice. She called to ‘a poor child,’ put the garment on him, and sent him on his way, experiencing, as ‘only a mother could... such sorrow as if my child had been taken away from me again.’³⁹ While Carlos’ greatest influence was in death, Conchita and Pancho’s remaining children were a testament to their parents’ spirituality. The first son—unnamed by Phillipon—was healthy, ‘studious,’ but ‘impetuous,’ seemingly ‘destined for marriage.’ Manuel, the couple’s third son, pious and the ‘most affectionate,’ became a Jesuit. ‘A jewel, a pearl, [and] a precious Concha,’ the youngest and only daughter, Maria “Concha” de la Concepción, entered religious life at age seventeen. Renamed Teresa de Maria Inmaculada, a decade

later she died choking on blood and dedicating her own month-long travail ‘for souls, for priests, for the Works of the Cross.’⁴⁰

As Cabrera’s spiritual inquietudes continued, she looked to male religious, but sometimes found them wanting. After the young mother had spent ‘many a day in desolation, anguish, and darkness,’ she approached a priest to share. The clergyman ‘deceived and saddened’ Conchita, telling her about ‘poetry,’ ‘nature,’ and other ‘banalities.’⁴¹ That disappointing experience was instructive for the young mystic. ‘I [had] spent time now and then looking through journals of fashion,’ she wrote, ‘and remorse flooded my soul until the day the Lord told me not to look at them any longer.’⁴² Remembering branded cattle on her family hacienda, Cabrera eventually convinced on confessor to allow her to carve the Christogram “J.H.S.” in her chest in January 1894.⁴³ This, posited Phillipon, opened the door to her “consecration to Christ through the gift of her blood,” her “spiritually Wedding with Christ,” and, eventually, her full embrace of the exquisite suffering.⁴⁴ About the latter, remarked the hagiographer, “Conchita knows it by experience: the divine union is inseparable from suffering.”⁴⁵ In 1901, Conchita’s (temporal) husband died, and, though she wrote about her despair at his passing, the event paved the way for Cabrera’s apparent spiritual ascent. Having begun what Phillipon described as a series of “Works of the Cross” in 1894, Cabrera embarked on a spiritual journey, which intensified after meeting Felix Rougier in 1903. Three years later, after retreats and much preparation, Conchita achieved her “central grace,” the incarnation of Christ in her own heart.

Within this spirituality, the theological function of Mary, according to Rougier, is directly tied to her own suffering while witnessing the death of Christ, “victim and priest.” That is, while Christ simultaneously was the sacrifice and the presider thereover, Mary needed to fulfill her ultimate function of accepting with grace the divine suffering of her son to “consummate the redemption of man.”⁴⁶ The Spirituality of the Cross, therefore, would encourage the imitation of Christ via religious life that was, first contemplative, then active.⁴⁷ Paired with the resigned, long-suffering mother, each Misionero was to “be another Jesus,” through a kind of mystical union and transformation.⁴⁸ From this metaphysical position, the devotee of the Spirituality of the Cross was then to “embody Christ’s love of the Father,” surrendering oneself completely to God’s will.⁴⁹ Zimbron Levy described this love in its many forms. Synthesizing Rougier, Levy describes it as radical, obedient, resigned, delicate, affectionate, united, faithful, willing to sacrifice, and completely self-abandoned.⁵⁰ This mystical path again echoes the classic suffering of the saints:

Our path is Jesus crucified. May you be a consecrated host:
full of Jesus, our Teacher and model. A Misionero del
Espíritu Santo should be a voluntary martyr, accept whatever

cross to love Jesus, be a martyr to his duty until death, a martyr of his apostleship until he receives the crown. This is a copy of Jesus.⁵¹

Though a complete theological examination of the mystical spirituality of the cross is beyond the scope of this study, it is significant for a few reasons. First, like ecstatic experiences at large, Cabrera's mysticism and exquisite suffering is a lonely endeavor. Indeed, even before the death of her husband, Pancho, she wrote about the dread and isolation she felt in seemingly pleasant, quotidian situations. During a certain feast day, for instance, she was obliged to attend a carnival with Pancho instead of spending time in her 'interior cloister.' 'I could not write,' she bemoaned in her diary, 'for four hours in an open carriage in the midst of the uproar of a dreadful crowd, [a]s much as I could, I multiplied acts of love, reparation and penitence.'⁵² Conchita even recorded that God told her that He planned to make her 'a saint known to [Him] alone... a mirror of hidden virtues[,] nothing external.'⁵³ Unsurprisingly, when a spiritual founder regarded a festival day with the family as another form of exquisite suffering and considered hidden virtues a divine prophecy, the subsequent "new type of holiness" reflected that inward focus. Compared to more outward-focused, communitarian spiritualities, such as the Theology of Liberation (which also includes a structural critique), inward orientation may come at the expense of social activism.

Cabrera's Five Works of the Cross promote certain expectations linked to gender. For example, The Religiosas de la Cruz del Sagrado Corazon de Jesus, founded in 1897, remained semi-cloistered and contemplative decades after the reforms of the Second Vatican Council.⁵⁴ The order of women religious, which runs houses in Mexico, Italy, Honduras, Costa Rica, and Guatemala, has focused on perpetual Eucharistic adoration and dedicated prayer for specific priests. As recently as 2009, the order has used the motto, "For them I consecrate myself"/"Por Ellos Me Consagro."⁵⁵ They did so by taking the spiritual positionality of Mary, accompanying the crucified Christ "Priest and Victim," who is embodied, in turn, by male priests, most commonly those following one of the other Works of the Cross. Simply put, the Sisters of the Cross of the Sacred Heart of Jesus dedicate their entire lives praying for men, each of whom they regard spiritually to be their son/incarnate God. The Apostleship of the Cross, a lay fraternity composed primarily of women and some married couples, has articulated a similar "Chain of Love" that emphasizes humility, purity, and prayer, along with "spiritual modesty" and imitation of Mary. "They must have a very great love to my Mother," explained the fraternity's eighth rule, "imitating her in her perfect obedience towards God and men."⁵⁶ The Misioneros preface to *Conchita* summarized Cabrera's spirituality and her useful example:

She fulfilled all the vocations of a woman: fiancée, wife, mother, widow, grandmother, and even, by a special indulgence of Pius X, without being deprived of her family status, died canonically as a religious in the arms of her children.⁵⁷

Through exquisite, mystical suffering and papal intervention, Cabrera took on the positionality of Mary, the perfect woman—divinely fecund, yet perpetually virginal—and the inimitable example of patriarchal womanhood. Though Cabrera transcended womanhood to achieve saintliness, she functioned as the exception that proved the rule, an example that helped perpetuate male privilege. In a similar way, her example underscored ideas of class and race. Despite being a light-skinned and upper-class woman, Cabrera took on the positionality, not only of the Virgin Mary, but the Virgin of Guadalupe. This apparition, *la virgin morena*, has been associated with the Mexican popular classes and indigenous peoples, appearing in Mexican-American *barrios*, Chicana literature, and United Farm Workers marches. By deploying the *Guadalupeana*, Conchita and her hagiographers not only underscored her Mexican identity, they also repurposed her in the service of an upper-class Catholic powerbrokers.

Unsurprisingly, this gendered spirituality reified the traditional patriarchal structure in Mexico. Most famously articulated by Octavio Paz in *El laberinto de la soledad*, gender in Mexico has been constructed in the shadow of a modified virgin/whore dichotomy, represented by the powerful images of the *Guadalupeana* and La Malinche/Doña Marina/La Chingada.⁵⁸ These contrasting imaginaries have contributed to a kind of *hembrismo*, which simultaneously vilifies female sexuality and idealizes virginity and, paradoxically, a self-sacrificing, long-suffering motherhood.⁵⁹ On the other hand, some Chicana scholars, including Sandra Cisneros, Aída Hurtado, and Ana Castillo, have suggested more complex interpretations of the Virgin of Guadalupe, sometimes seeing a powerfully maternal and transgressively indigenous spirituality.⁶⁰

Still, while the Misioneros have frequently imagined the Mexican Virgin as a motherly caretaker, her role is anything but transgressive in their context of male celibate spirituality. A Freudian scholar of religion, Michael Carroll, posited a provocative “sublimation” theory to explain male celibate affinity to Marian devotion.⁶¹ Assumed-celibate religious men, he argued, disdain most women (whom they regard as sinful and inspirations for male lust) and simultaneously idealize the Virgin, replacing their own Oedipal sexual desires and placing themselves in the position of Christ. Carroll went on to suggest that, if his Freudian interpretation were correct, the Marian devotees would demonstrate real or symbolic masochism.⁶² While he noted self-flagellatory practices of some orders, he concluded “a masochistic emphasis upon Christ’s

Passion will be most evident in those regions where support for the Mary cult is strongest.”⁶³ Clearly, the Mary/Christ-Victim-Priest positionality of Cabrera’s spirituality is a perfect example; Mexican women could mourn the Passion as mothers, while their male counterparts accompanied Christ in his agony.

Though some may dismiss Carroll’s thesis due to its Freudian influence, the study has some merit. For one, it was not simply an Oedipal interpretation of a generalization. In fact, it was a multifaceted, interdisciplinary study that drew upon “historical, anthropological, ethnographic, and social-historical facts into a single, coherent theoretical framework.”⁶⁴ The work even included empirical data from documented visions of Mary, showing that: 1) almost all male “seers” were assumed celibates; 2) that male seers were far less likely to report seeing males in apparitions that included the Virgin; and 3) female seers were equally likely and unlikely to see males in Marian apparitions. These data points support Carroll’s thesis; even if we were to discard his Freudian language, it is clear that gender influences the individual’s experience of the divine.

Spirituality of the Cross is also notable due to its relationship with the documents of Vatican II. In *Conchita*, Phillipon and the Misioneros wholeheartedly embrace the council and provide three reasons why their spirituality was compliant. First, wrote Phillipon, “The spirituality of the Cross has thus rediscovered and set in great relief the ‘royal priesthood’ of the People of God, fifty years before Vatican II.”⁶⁵ Conchita’s fixation on the crucified Christ, therefore, was a foreshadowing of *Gaudium et Spes*: “Whoever follows after Christ the perfect man, becomes himself more of a man.”⁶⁶ The spirituality’s emphasis on Christ as Victim–Priest, he implied, was equivalent to the council’s attempt to invert the spiritual hierarchy of the Church with the laity at the top. Rectifying “two centuries of pure deism,” he continued, Vatican II shared Cabrera’s understanding of “Holy Spirit in the life of the Church.”⁶⁷ “The agreement of the wording [between Cabrera’s writings and the documents of Vatican II]” wrote Phillipon, “[was] remarkable.”⁶⁸ Reflecting on *Dei Verbum*, he went on to argue, “The mystical experience of spiritual persons is a pathway for the explanation of the faith.”⁶⁹ That is, Cabrera’s spirituality not only agreed with (and foretold) Vatican II, it offered a path to the full understanding of the Word of God. Finally, Phillipon added one more aspect of Cabrera’s Way of the Cross to the litany council connections: Marianism. After noting the reforms’ elevation of Mary “from the devotional level to the dogmatic level of the history of salvation,” he concluded that Mexico was ahead of the curve, having deeply embraced the Virgin long before:

Mexico, in particular, after the celebrated and miraculous apparitions of the Mother of God to the poor Indian Juan

Diego, venerates her with an exceptional fervor as Mother of the Nation. One must have visited the Basilica of Our Lady to understand the filial, extraordinary devotion to the Virgin of the hill of Tepeyac: Our Lady of Guadalupe. How many pilgrims arrive there exhausted! They come from all over America. In the hardest trials of their lives every Mexican loves to hear addressed to him Mary's words to the poor Indian, her child: "Am I not here, I who am your Mother?"⁷⁰

Cabrera's Marian spirituality, he suggested, represented the future of the Church, including "the horizons of Vatican II" and "the unrolling of the divine plan."⁷¹

Though Cabrera's and Rougier's spiritual cocktail was in line with many of the mid-century reforms Second Vatican Council, the Spirituality of the Cross contributed conservative interpretation of the council. The Misioneros tolerated a wide variety of pastoral and theological methodologies in the 1970s, including the theology of liberation, but the order did not escape the reactionary shift of the institutional Church in the 1980s. After hosting the first sanctioned Charismatic prayer meeting in the area in December of 1970, members of the order channeled CCR's momentum into a few competing iterations. Most notably, Salvador Carrillo Alday opposed excessive control of the Renewal and used Vatican II rationales to defend CCR in Mexico and advocate for biblical instruction of the laity. Carrillo's warm personality made him a popular preacher, and his prolific, theologically grounded writings made his ministry the more liberation-oriented iteration of the Mexican Renewal. Contrasting with Carrillo's bottom-up, spiritually uninhibited approach, Alfonso Navarro created a "system" which used the Renewal to organize and mobilize the faithful. His *Sistema Integral de la Nueva Evangelización* (SINE) created lines of authority and training programs in residential communities, using the emotive experience of the Renewal to motivate believers and build community around parishes. Navarro published detailed, step-by-step manuals for implementing SINE and traveled extensively singing its praises and teaching others how to implement it. SINE, in turn, birthed the *Misioneros de la Cruz*, the lay fraternity tasked with spreading the Navarro's system. In other words, while Carrillo's work focused on the empowerment of the laity through spiritual charisma and biblical instruction, Navarro's SINE used the Renewal to mobilize and direct believers. Over time, SINE and the *Misioneros de la Cruz* even de-emphasized the Charismatic Renewal and its ecstatic practices, refocusing instead on the Spirituality of the Cross and the dissemination of SINE.

Though this difference in approach may appear inconsequential, in fact it is representative of a larger theological debate in the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council, embodied by the journals *Concilium*, which aimed to extend

the Council's influence, and *Communio*, which advocated a return to authoritarian basics. One important point of contention, for example, was the concept of the "People of God," articulated in the Council document *Lumen Gentium*. This idea re-centered the faithful masses at the center of the Church, flipping the top-down hierarchy on its head and foregrounding the immediate concerns of the laity. It aligned with Vatican II reforms such as the restoration of the lay diaconate, the mass in vernacular languages, and the celebrant's facing the audience during the mass. The concept displeased those who, unlike Phillipon, were more interested in the "royal priesthood" than the People of God. Unsurprisingly, this and other conflicts were not confined to the pages of theological journals. In Rome, the conservatives' power, embodied by Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI) and Karol Wojtyla (Pope John Paul II), successfully applied the ideas published in *Communio* to pastoral ministry, ecclesiology, economics, politics, and society. In *Charismatic Practice and Catholic Parish Life*, one of the few monograph-length studies of CCR, Jakob Thorsen describes Ratzinger's distaste for the People of God and the Theology of Liberation:

While acknowledging that "People of God" in an important way underlines the historic and eschatological character of the pilgrim Church and God's unity with her on the way towards salvation, it seems to Ratzinger in the reception of the concept, the horizontal and democratic sense of the word won the upper hand.

This has often resulted in a "Marxist" understanding of "the people" in opposition to the ruling classes and in justice, whereby the concept lost anchoring in God. In that way, the very expression has become a reflection of the supposed crisis of the Church after the council, where "the expression "People of God" is a "crisis of God,"" that "derives from abandoning the essential."⁷²

In Latin America, CCR made an important contribution to the *communio* side of that conversation, exemplified in Thorsen's study by SINE's role in the Guatemalan renewal.⁷³ Overall, he argues that CCR was partly a reaction to "the ecclesiology and pastoral priorities of the Medellín conference and liberation theology [as well as] a reaction against and remodeling of traditional popular Catholicism."⁷⁴ That is, the 1968 meeting of the *Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano* (CELAM) in Medellín, Colombia saw significant influence liberation theology. Coined by Peruvian Dominican theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez, *La Teología de la Liberación* is a uniquely Latin-American, justice-oriented Catholic social teaching that combines a material-historical understanding to describe oppression and poverty as structural sin. Building on

that critique, Liberation Theology advocates a pragmatic system of praxis organized around *comunidades eclesiales de base* (CEBs) or Christian base communities.⁷⁵ Even though this radical theology drew upon the Second Vatican Council's notion of the people of God to influence the pastoral direction of CELAM in Medellín (1968) and Puebla (1979), it quickly resulted in a conservative pushback, supported by John Paul II's Vatican and Benedict XVI's (then Cardinal Ratzinger) theology. Though the 1979 CELAM meeting ratified the *Opción preferencial por los pobres*, there was overt heated division in Puebla.

Under direction of John Paul II, conservatives began re-taking control of the Latin American Council in the mid-1970s, and they consolidated their power in the 1980s. This resulted in a marked rollback of the council's pastoral approach to Catholic social justice at the 1992 meeting in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. While this author cannot yet speak to the role of CCR in the Medellín or Puebla meetings, it is clear the Renewal played a role in Santo Domingo. Specifically, Alfonso Navarro's SINE and affiliated lay *Misioneros de la Cruz*—the most conservative and prolific iteration of CCR in this study—enjoyed a considerable presence on the island and made a concerted effort to spread the *sistema* among the assembled Church leaders.

While we are only beginning to understand the Charismatic Catholic Renewal, the crisis of the Catholic Church in the late twentieth century, and the reactionary influence of John Paul II and Benedict XVI, this paper has suggested that a closer theological examination can begin to make those connections. Conchita Cabrera de Armida's deeply gendered, intentionally Mexican Spirituality of the Cross, provided a theological vision, positionality, and vocabulary which informed the foundation of religious communities and the *Renovación Cristiana en el Espíritu Santo*, first in Mexico, then throughout the Americas. Though these communities briefly tolerated varied approaches, including some which fore-grounded the People of God and their liberation, the ones most in line with the authoritarian theologies of *Communio* enjoyed the most success. Though their mystical approach may have contributed to the forestalling of potential liberation within the Church, at least Cabrera and Rougier's acceptance of suffering remains relevant. In the face of oppression, tragedy, and despair, wrote Cabrera: "Enjoy the suffering!"⁷⁶

Notes

¹ Jakob Egeris Thorsen, *Charismatic Practice and Catholic Parish Life*. Boston: Brill, 2015; Edward L. Cleary, *The Rise of Charismatic Catholicism in Latin America*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011; Thomas J. Csordas, *The Sacred Self: A Cultural Phenomenology of Charismatic Healing*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.

² Ricardo Zimbron Levy, *Misioneros Del Espíritu Santo*. Mérida, Yucatan, México: Ediciones Monjas, 1987.

³ Concepción Cabrera de Armida is not to be confused with Concepción Acevedo de la Llata, a Capuchin nun implicated in the 1928 assassination of Álvaro Obregón.

⁴ “Decrees,” *EWTN Decrees*, accessed April 26, 2016, <https://www.ewtn.com/library/CURIA/ccsdecre.htm#20dec99>.

⁵ “1917 Mexican Constitution,” accessed April 27, 2016, <http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/mexico/1917-Constitution.htm>.

⁶ Fidel González Fernández, *Sangre y corazón de un pueblo: historia de la persecución anticatólica en México y sus mártires*. Guadalajara: Arzobispado de Guadalajara, 2008; Rev Fr Wilfrid Parsons, *Mexican Martyrdom: Firsthand Accounts of the Religious Persecution in Mexico 1926-1935*. (New edition) TAN Books, 1936.

⁷ Zimbron Levy, *Misioneros Del Espíritu Santo*. “Ando por todas partes, pues la Masonaría persigue con rabia a los servidores de la Iglesia. Desde que empezó la persecución en 1929, cerca de 150 sacerdotes de esta nación han recibido la corona del martirio. ¡Dichosos mil veces los que comparten su suerte! Esto ya me lo han anunciado para mí. Con toda mi alma deseo esa dicha, aunque no la merezco.”

⁸ *Ibid.*, 108. Note: Single quotation marks indicate where Zimbron Levy quotes Cabrera or Rougier.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 107. “La persecución es una gracia muy grande, es prenda de inmensos favores para el futuro si la recibimos como debemos.”

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 109. “Hemos resistido la persecución, perdonando de todo corazón a estos señores, y encomendándolos a Dios. Hemos sufrido mucho, pero con amor.”

¹¹ Benedicta Ward, *The Lives of the Desert Fathers: Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*, trans. Norman Russell. London: Kalamazoo, Mich: Cistercian Publications, 1981; William Byron Forbush, *Fox's Book of Martyrs - A History of the Lives, Sufferings and Triumphant Deaths of the Early Christian and Protestant Martyrs*. Bowen Press, 2013; Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska, *Divine Mercy In My Soul-Diary of Sister M. Faustina Kowalska*, 3 edition. Stockbridge, Mass: Marian Press, 2003.

¹² Zimbron Levy, *Misioneros Del Espíritu Santo*. “Además de la cruz de las incomprendiones y de la persecución, Dios quiso que el padre Félix cargara también, y muchas veces, la cruz de las enfermedades, que fueron para él oportunidades de purificación personal y de mayor union con Cristo Crucificado.”

¹³ *Ibid.*; Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska, *Diary of Saint Maria Faustina Kowalska: Divine Mercy in My Soul*. Marian Press, 2014; Ricardo Zimbron Levy, “Risking the Future: Life and Spirituality of Fr. Félix de Jesús Rougier, M.Sp.S.” *Apostleship of the Cross*, 1991. <http://apcross.org/felixdejesus/RiskingTheFuture-LifeandSpiritualityFelix-de-Jesus.pdf>, 75-6.

¹⁴ Zimbron Levy, *Misioneros Del Espíritu Santo*.

¹⁵ Gary David Comstock and Susan E Henking, *Que(e)rying Religion: A Critical Anthology*. New York: Continuum, 1997. Original emphasis.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*; Harold Bloom, *The American Religion: The Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992.

¹⁷ Comstock and Henking, *Que(e)rying Religion*, 230.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Thorsen, *Charismatic Practice and Catholic Parish Life*, 175.

²⁰ Comstock and Henking, *Que(e)rying Religion*.

- ²¹ Ellen Gunnarsdottir, *Mexican Karismata: The Baroque Vocation of Francisca de Los Angeles, 1674-1744*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2004.
- ²² Mary K Vaughan and Lewis, Stephen, *The Eagle and the Virgin: National Identity, Memory and Utopia in Mexico, 1920-1940*. Durham, N.C.; Chesham: Duke University Press, 2006.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, 112-3, “periods of fatigue.” “Ya estoy bien, gracias a Dios. Como de todo, hasta frijoles y tortillas, solo chile no. Ya puedo seguir mi vida religiosa normal.”
- ²⁴ Zimbron Levy, “Risking the Future: Life and Spirituality of Fr. Félix de Jesús Rougier, M.Sp.S.” *Atole* is a traditional Mesoamerican hot beverage made with corn and sometimes flavored with fruit or chocolate.
- ²⁵ Zimbron Levy, *Misioneros Del Espíritu Santo.*, 114-5. “Ahora sí felicítame, porque ya tengo mucha sangre Mexicana. ¡Hasta soñé que me peleaba con un gallo!”
- ²⁶ Zimbron Levy, “Risking the Future: Life and Spirituality of Fr. Félix de Jesús Rougier, M.Sp.S.” 76.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, 79-80.
- ²⁸ Marie-Michel Philipon, O.P., *Conchita: Diario Espiritual de Una Madre de Familia*. Mexico City: Misioneros del Espíritu Santo, n.p., <http://www.apcross.org/conchita/diario.htm>. Note: This analysis made use of both versions of this text in English and Spanish. Page numbers and direct quotes generally refer to the English addition. Multiple versions exist of this work in English, Spanish, and Italian (including six editions in Spanish before 1987), but it is difficult to determine the first date of publication. Miranda’s preface letter is dated 1972, but it is possible a large-scale print did not take place until as late as 1978.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, 6, 8, 94.
- ³¹ Candace West and Don H. Zimmerman, “Doing Gender,” *Gender & Society* 1, no. 2 (June 1, 1987): 125–51. Emphasis added to underscore my understanding of gender. Despite decades of discussion, including Judith Butler’s insights into performativity, West and Zimmerman’s classic article remains a clear, useful tool.
- ³² Philipon, O.P., *Conchita “Diario Espiritual de Una Madre de Familia,”* 13.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, 13.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, 18-19.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, 17, 184.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, 21.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, 23.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 77.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 28-9.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, 29.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, 30.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 30-2.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 32.
- ⁴⁶ Zimbron Levy, *Misioneros Del Espíritu Santo*, 166.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 177.

- ⁴⁸ Ibid, 142-3.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid, 144.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid, 145.
- ⁵¹ Ibid, 147. “Nuestro camino es Jesús crucificado. Sea usted como una hostia consagrada: llena de Jesús, nuestro Maestro y modelo. Un Misioneros del Espíritu Santo debe ser mártir voluntario, aceptar cualquier cruz por amar a Jesús, mártir de su deber hasta la muerte, mártir de su apostolado hasta recibir la corona (death). Eso es una copia de Jesús.”
- ⁵² Ibid, 36, 38, .
- ⁵³ Ibid, 38.
- ⁵⁴ “Religiosas de La Cruz Del Sagrado Corazón de Jesús Museos,” accessed July 3, 2016, <http://www.religiosasdelacruz.org.mx/museos>; Philipon, O.P., *Conchita “Diario Espiritual de Una Madre de Familia”*; *Experiencia Espiritualidad de La Cruz - Primera Parte*, accessed July 3, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BiOvG2ZNYaI>; Rome Reports in English, *Religious Order Prays for the Pope Day and Night*, accessed July 2, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NRpLdQfH61A>; Catholic News Agency, “Mexican Religious Celebrate 100 Years of Uninterrupted Eucharistic Adoration in Rome,” *LockerDome*, February 2008, http://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/mexican_religious_celebrate_100_years_of_uninterrupted_eucharistic_adoration_in_rome/.
- ⁵⁵ “Religiosas de La Cruz Del Sagrado Corazón de Jesús Museos.”
- ⁵⁶ “Chain of Love,” accessed July 3, 2016, http://apcross.org/chain_of_love.htm.
- ⁵⁷ “Concepción Cabrera de Armida “Conchita,”” accessed May 10, 2016, <http://www.apcross.org/conchita.htm>.
- ⁵⁸ Octavio Paz, *El laberinto de la soledad* (New York, N.Y.: Penguin Books, 1997).
- ⁵⁹ Saba Safdar and Natasza Kosakowska-Berezecka, *Psychology of Gender Through the Lens of Culture: Theories and Applications* (Springer, 2015); Ignacio Martín-Baró, *Psicología social desde Centroamérica*. San Salvador, El Salvador: UCA Editores, 1983. <http://catalog.hathitrust.org/api/volumes/oclc/21304267.html>.
- ⁶⁰ Diane L Maldonado, *Searching for Mother: Chicana Writers Revise and Renew Malinche and Guadalupe*, 2004, <http://etd1.library.duq.edu/theses/available/etd-03092004-103619/>.
- ⁶¹ Michael P. Carroll, *The Cult of the Virgin Mary: Psychological Origins*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1986.
- ⁶² Ibid, 61-72.
- ⁶³ Ibid, 67.
- ⁶⁴ Ralph W. Wood Jr., Peter C. Hill, and Bernard Spilka, *The Psychology of Religion, Fourth Edition: An Empirical Approach* (Guilford Press, 2009), 317-8.
- ⁶⁵ Philipon, O.P., *Conchita “Diario Espiritual de Una Madre de Familia.”* 58, 98.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid., 111; See: Pope Paul VI, “Gaudium Et Spes.” Vatican Archive, December 7, 1965, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html.
- ⁶⁷ Philipon, O.P., *Conchita “Diario Espiritual de Una Madre de Familia.”* 101.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid, 123.
- ⁶⁹ Ibid. 129; see: “Dei Verbum.”

⁷⁰ Philipon, O.P., *Conchita "Diario Espiritual de Una Madre de Familia,"* 124.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 126.

⁷² Thorsen, *Charismatic Practice and Catholic Parish Life.*, 73.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 175.

⁷⁵ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Hacia una teología de la liberación.* Bogota: Indo American Press, 1971. Note: Though the book was not widely published until 1972, Gutiérrez gave public talks about the concept at least as early as 1968.

⁷⁶ Philipon, O.P., *Conchita: Diario Espiritual de Una Madre de Familia,* 32. "¡Gozar en el sufrimiento!"

Sir William Jones: A Neoclassical Hinduism

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Sir William Jones was a prominent and influential British orientalist, politician, linguist, and poet of the eighteenth century. He founded the Asiatic Society of Bengal, India in 1784, and was a judge on Bengal's Supreme Court. Jones translated Hindu texts from Sanskrit to English, and his Hindu-themed poetry inspired the British Romantics, especially Percy Bysshe Shelley.¹ Jones wrote a set of poems dedicated to the Hindu pantheon of deities, "Hindu Hymns," that were published in *The Works of Sir William Jones* in 1799 in London. Sir William Jones created a hybrid poetry, portraying traditional Hindu theology with western poetic forms and devices. Pairing "Hindu" with the liturgical term "Hymns" is immediate evidence of this hybridity.

Poetry in eighteenth-century England was steeped in neoclassicism, a continuation of the Renaissance nostalgia for a classical Golden Age. Jones propagates Platonic ideals because for Plato, "only poets writing hymns to the gods...can be tolerated...poets must convey truth-value."² Jones reconstructs Hinduism with neoclassical and Christian ideals, traditional British poetic forms and aesthetics, and Biblical allusions. Thus, Jones appropriates Hindu theology into his poetry. Bill Ashcroft describes the implications of such appropriation: "the dominant imperial power incorporates as its own the territory or culture that it surveys or invades."³ What is at stake is by this imperial appropriation is a distilled, altered, and fictionalized version of Hinduism that is removed from its indigenous source.

A stark consequence of hegemonic appropriation is the subjugation of the indigenous culture into subalternity. The subaltern refers "to those groups in society who are subject to the hegemony of the ruling classes."⁴ This especially applies to India, subjected to British imperialism since the seventeenth century. Jones's neoclassical modification of Hindu deities undermines the theology's

indigenous source. During colonization, hegemonic powers permit themselves access to the native culture, and appropriate elements that fit their imperial project. Over time, the appropriated elements become increasingly morphed and alien to the source culture. Percy Bysshe Shelley read Jones's works. The Romantic poet reimagined Hindu spirituality with sublime supernaturalism in his poetry such as "Alastor, or The Spirit of Solitude" and "Prometheus Unbound." A contemporary case is the many manifestations of yoga in the western New Age movement, but that is for another essay

Since Jones named the poems "Hymns," some background of the genre is provided here. Hymns developed in the Christian church as simple poems used for group singing.⁵ Generally, a hymn is

a short poem in simple language, usually intended to be sung by a group, frequently in quatrains, and ordinarily taking for its subject some kind of praise of God...For the great majority of the hymns of the period are simple, beautiful, unaffected, and remarkably unencumbered by overuses of the favorite diction of the day...generally the hymn is associated with the humbling of oneself before one's maker.⁶

The forms of Jones's "Hindu Hymns" are structurally too complex to fit this definition, adhering more to the ode's format. Yet, they conform to the common theme of hymns: reverence of and humility towards the divine. However, this is a divinity portrayed through Jones's neoclassical poetic filter.

In Jones's "Argument" which precedes "A Hymn to Camdeo," Jones claims that Camdeo is the Hindu version of the *Grecian* Eros or the *Roman* Cupido.⁷ In this way, Jones's Hindu poetry adheres to neoclassicism. Yet, this comparison is ultimately detrimental because it falsely portrays Hinduism as an archaic religion with gods as obsolete as the Greek and Roman deities. Classical Greek and Roman theology served the neoclassical poetic imagination as allegories. Jones's "Hindu Hymns" follow suit.

The theological world-view of Hinduism emphasizes what Lois Parkinson Zamora terms "image as presence."⁸ Zamora's reference is Mesoamerican mythology, yet this concept can be applied broadly to non-western indigenous cultures. She says, "The visual image was not a question of mimetic resemblance, and certainly not of individual artistic expression in any modern sense. Rather, it contained the spirit world in material form."⁹ Hindu temples house images of the divine, called murtis, in their central sanctums. Zamora's analysis aptly applies: "Whether sculpted in stone, painted, or molded from clay, images...were believed to bring into presence the represented god."¹⁰ The Pluralism Project of Harvard University describes a murti as divine presence: "The transformation of an image of stone to the embodiment of the Divine is a critically important ritual project...the image will become imbued with the

permanent presence of God.”¹¹ This theological perception is in opposition to Western views of the divine as absence, eternally separate from the physical world.

Thus, the physical and spiritual worlds coexist in Hinduism. This is evident in the worship of the Ganga River (or Ganges). The British Empire did not subscribe to such a belief. Much of the British Empire’s power relied on control of major waterways. Dominance of the Atlantic meant global economic supremacy.¹² The major rivers of the British Empire, such as the Ganga, served as crucial trade routes. Alexander Pope references the river in “Windsor-Forest”: “Let barb’rous Ganges arm of servile Train / Be mine the blessings of a peaceful reign.”¹³ In this case the Ganges is the servant of the British Empire. Sir William Jones’s “A Hymn to Ganga” is ambivalent in its portrait of this sacred river. Jones shows reverence, but does not stray too far from an imperial agenda.

In “A Hymn to Ganga,” Jones employs an inventive ode form to complement the description of the river. In his “Argument” preceding the poem, Jones elucidates, “the [Pindaric] form of the stanza, which is partly borrowed from Gray...is enlarged in the following Hymn by a line of *fourteen* syllables, expressing the long and solemn march of the great *Asiatick* rivers.”¹⁴ Yet, Jones also uses familiar meter of British hymns. James Mulholland explains:

Alloying Gray’s Pindaric with a long line of ‘fourteener’ verse creates an English form reshaped to India’s geography. Even as Jones was objecting to the staleness of English literature, his modifications of it in the ‘Hymn to Ganga’ led him back to an English common meter often found in the popular lyrics of religious hymns. [Thus], detailing Indian geography supplied him with unusual content for his hymn.¹⁵

So, Jones presents Hinduism in an English format, staying within the literary tradition of the established ode and hymn.

The structure of the poem varies. Some lines are indeed fourteen syllables, others shorter and longer. They meander as would a river. The rhyme scheme follows abba/ccdd/eedff. In these inventive thirteen-line stanzas, the simple rhyme scheme musically orients the reader in a world of theological landmarks: “on her banks divine / Sees temples, groves, and glitt’ring tow’rs, that in her crystal shine.”¹⁶

One can see aesthetic and tonal contrast between this hymn and Pope’s imperial reference to the Ganges in his poem. In the hymn, Ganga has divine origins, “To *Brahma*’s grateful race endear’d.”¹⁷ Jones depicts the origin of the Ganga, which is rooted in Hindu myth. The poem traces Ganga’s source to the God Mahesh, also known as Siva, who resides on Mount Kailash. “On bless’d

Cailasa's top, where ev'ry stem / Glow'd with a vegetable gem, / Mahe'sa stood, the dread and joy of men."¹⁸ The Goddess Parvati places a "beamy moon"¹⁹ on Mahesh's forehead, which "hid his frontal eye."²⁰ This throws nature into a "dim eclipse,"²¹ and the "*Brahmans* pure, with hallow'd lips / And warbled pray'rs restor'd the day."²² The power of their verses causes Ganga to spring from Mahesh's brow. The lines are extended here in a river-like gushing: "When Ganga from his brow by heav'nly fingers press'd / Sprang radiant, and descending grac'd the caverns of the west."²³ The poet attributes divine volition to the sacred river.

The poem proceeds to describe the birth of Ganga's companion river, also deified. "A river-god, so *Brahma* will'd, was born, / And roll'd mature his vivid stream / Impetuous with celestial gleam."²⁴ The marriage between the two rivers is "delay'd," and so this river, named Sanpo, flows west towards Tibet.²⁵ The poem's form and structure complement the complex Hindu topography. As Ganga flows through the mountainous landscape, Jones employs the sublime aesthetic, which Edmund Burke defines:

The passion caused by the great and sublime in nature, when those causes operate most powerfully, is astonishment; and astonishment is that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror. In this case the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it.²⁶

Jones's poem uses this aesthetic principle to depict India's geography: "The madding rifts and should'ring crags her foamy flood repell."²⁷ Ganga herself describes, "Confusion wild and anxious wo / Haunt your waste brow, she said, unholy rocks, / Far from these nectar-dropping locks!"²⁸ This "confusion wild" is Burkean at its essence. Ganga then addresses Siva, as "thou, lov'd Father, teach my waves to flow."²⁹ The use of the Christian salutation to God as Father illustrates the ambiguity and ambivalence of the Hymns' portrait of Hinduism. Jones reimagines the theology using a blend of western devices. Jones attempts to ground this disorienting sublime world by using Christian tropes.

Moving forward, the poem becomes increasingly filled with Sanskrit terms. They add a musicality to the Hymn. The assonance and consonance enhance the fluidity of this stanza:

Smoothly by *Sambal's* flaunting bow'rs,
Smoothly she flows, where *Calinadi* brings
To *Canyacuja*, feat of kings,
On prostrate waves her tributary flow'rs;

Whilst *Yamuna*, whose waters clear
 Fam'd *Indraprestha's* vallies cheer,
 With *Sereswati* knit in mystick chain,
 Gurgles o'er the vocal plain
 Of *Mathura*, by sweet *Brindavan's* grove,
 Where *Gopa's* love-lorn daughters rove,
 And hurls her azure stream amain,
 Till blest *Prayaga's* point beholds three mingling tides,
 Where pilgrims on the far-fought bank drink nectar, as it
 glides.³⁰

The italicized terms are mostly geographical locations that hold spiritual significance. The *Yamuna* and *Sereswati* are also holy rivers. *Mathura* and *Brindavan* are very popular pilgrimage sites attributed to Krishna. *Prayaga* is another important spiritual center for Hindus, where the “three mingling tides” or the three holy rivers converge.

However, Jones reminds us who is in charge here. In the concluding stanza of this Hymn, the Ganga becomes a witness to the British Empire. This is a panegyric jaunt in the river's theological journey: “Nor frown, dread Goddess, on a peerless race / With lib'ral heart and martial grace, / Wafted from colder isles remote.”³¹ The “isles remote” is Britain, and the poet asks the Ganga to welcome this “peerless race” who has brought with them “darling laws preserv'd in wealth, in joy, in peace!”³² Mulholland's theory on this shift attempts to illuminate Jones's colonial tendencies. He says, “The perplexities of Jones's identity as a colonizer and an appreciative orientalist are exemplified by instances like these, which orientalize English traditions as much as they anglicize Indian ones.”³³ Although a sympathetic and often beautiful portrait of Hinduism, Jones's poetry has imperialistic tendencies. This is the poetry's ambivalence.

The opening stanza of “A Hymn to Camdeo” is lush with vernal imagery associated with love and eroticism. “What potent God from *Agra's* orient bow'rs/Floats thro' the lucid air, whilst living flow'rs/With sunny twine the vocal arbours wreath/And gales enamour'd heavenly fragrance breathe?”³⁴ This is an instance of what Edward Said explains as the fetishization of the East. Said says that Western discourse characterizes its version of the Orient by “its eccentricity, its backwardness, its silent indifference, its feminine penetrability, its supine malleability.”³⁵ Jones reimagines Hinduism into subversive eroticism.

Another scene depicts the love story of Krishna and the nine Gopis who pine for him. “Can men resist thy pow'r, when *Krishen* yields,/ *Krishen*, who still in *Matra's* holy fields/Tunes harps immortal, and to the strains divine/Dances by moonlight with the *Gopia* nine?”³⁶ This is exemplary of Jones's hybridization of Indian and British poetic cultures. Here, the theological scene

echoes classical pastoral poetry's golden world where nymphs dance to harps by moonlight. This fictionalizes Hindu theology by removing it from its scriptural source. Further, in the western classical tradition, "the poet accompanied himself on a lyre, like Orpheus. Homer singing was the prototypical poet/musician."³⁷ Also, Jones may be referring to the Indian tampura, a traditional stringed drone instrument. Jones was familiar with the musical systems of India. He published *Music of India*, an extensive account of Indian classical music and its connection to Hindu divinity. As a double signifier, the harp serves both British neoclassicism and Indian cultural aesthetics.

The "Hymn to Bhavani" narrates the incarnation of the Goddess Bhavani. The poem is rife with ephemeral imagery and synesthesia:

Whilst on the placid waters blooming,
The sky perfuming,
An op'ning Lotos rose, and smiling spread
His azure skirts and vase of gold,
While o'er his foliage roll'd
Drops, that impearl Bhava'ni's orient bed.³⁸

The opulent imagery is erotically charged with intoxicating aroma. The western poetic imagination loves an orient that emits floral perfume. It is a common reductive trope. Bhava'ni's "orient bed" and Camdeo's "orient bowers" are loaded with feminine submissive eroticism, an instance Said's "feminine penetrability" by the western poet's pen. Such mystical sexuality assigned to the adjective "orient" can be widely found in other literature of Jones's predecessors, contemporaries and followers. *A Thousand and One Nights* is an influential example. (The orient and Arabia are commonly conflated in European literature.) Also, the spell-binding Eastern Enchantress makes an appearance in Shelley's "Alastor." These only one two examples, since the topic is too massive for the scope of this essay. The implications follow that the oriental cultures become so distilled by the Western imagination to the extent that they become supernatural fictions.

"A Hymn to Narayena" is a complex portrait of the Hindu deity, and critics argue that this poetic ambition shows Jones's regard for Hinduism as a legitimate faith. Garland Cannon states, "'A Hymn to Narayana' was applauded in Europe as probably the best of his nine hymns...These hymns...demonstrate Jones's admiration and appreciation of Hinduism, which was still stereotyped in Europe as a degraded philosophy."³⁹ Yet, Jones is loyal to his neoclassical literary climate, as shown in Jones's "Argument" that precedes the poem. Jones acknowledges Narayana as the "Supreme Being" in the Hindu pantheon.⁴⁰ Again, the portrait is ambivalent. Adhering to the neoclassical British tradition, Jones compares the philosophy of the Hymn to

Plato's *Republic*; "the second [stanza] comprises the Indian doctrine of the Divine Essence and Archetypal *Ideas*; for which a distinct account of which the reader must be referred to a noble description in the sixth book of Plato's *Republic*."⁴¹ Jones validates Hindu theology with classical philosophy. This challenges Zamora's argument of image as presence in indigenous worldviews because for Jones, Hindu deities point to archetypes, and do not physically embody divinity. Further elucidating this point are Jones's own words from his "Argument" preceding "Hymn to Lacshmi":

We may be inclined perhaps to think, that the wild fables of idolaters are not worth knowing, and that we may be satisfied with mispending [sic] our time in learning the Pagan Theology of old *Greece* and *Rome*; but we must consider, that the allegories contained in the Hymn to Lacshmi constitute at this moment the prevailing religion of a most extensive and celebrated Empire, and are devoutly believed by many millions, whose industry adds to the revenue of *Britain*, and whose manners, which are interwoven with their religious opinions, nearly affect all *Europeans* who reside among them.⁴²

The deities allude to allegorical lessons and are not in themselves embodiments of divinity. Zamora states, "allegory's signification exceeds its signifiers because it necessarily includes that which is *not* present...allegory makes present that which would otherwise be inaccessible; divinity, infinity, eternity."⁴³ Above, Jones's imposes western ideological allegories onto the Hindu faith, removing embodied spirituality from the deities. This is a misrepresentation of a core indigenous Hindu theological belief.

"The Hymn to Narayana" is a Vedic creation story. The inventive form consists of iambic pentameter in the first four lines of the stanza, with the fifth line in dactylic trimeter. For example, the poem opens thus:

SPIRIT of Spirits, who, through ev'ry part
Of space expanded and of endless time,
Beyond the stretch of lab'ring thought sublime,
Badst uproar into beauteous order start
Before Heav'n was, Thou art.⁴⁴

The rhyme scheme Jones employs here is abbaa, musically simple enough to be sung as a hymn.

As the stanza continues, the rhyme scheme changes to cdodd, though the meter remains constant. The stanza builds to a climax, this time using eight lines, and a rhyme scheme of eeffgg. The result is musically climatic when depicting the origin of Narayana. The first four lines are iambic pentameter,

yet the next two lines are dactylic trimeter, with a strong conclusion of the stanza again in iambic pentameter:

What first impell'd thee to exert thy might?
Goodness unlimited. What glorious light
Thy pow'r directed? Wisdom without bound.
What prov'd it first? Oh! Guide my fancy right;
Oh! Raise from cumbrous ground
My soul in rapture drown'd,
That fearless it may soar on wings of fire;
For Thou, who only knowst, Thou only canst inspire.⁴⁵

The stanza is an illuminated representation of hymnal humility towards the divine. The Christian glare is kept glowing by the terms “soul” and “rapture.” The themes common in eighteenth-century British poetry such as fancy, “Guide my fancy right,” and the Burkean sublime, “Wisdom without bound,” are also found in this Hymn. Yet the creation story of the poem is specifically Hindu. This is an instance of poetic hybridity.

The second stanza contains Sanskrit theological language. The deity Narayana is named Brehm. Brehm is “Wrapt in eternal solitary shade,/Th'impenetrable gloom of light intense.”⁴⁶ Along with “impenetrable” and “intense,” the next line has three more adjectives which begin with short i. “Impervious, inaccessible, immense.”⁴⁷ This assonance makes the language of the poetry accessible, though the subject is “impenetrable.”

Then, Brehm, by merely looking, creates the Goddess Maya, who gave Brehm a casket “with rich *Ideas* fill'd,/From which this gorgeous Universe he fram'd.”⁴⁸ Again, the poem blends Biblical and Western language with a description of this uniquely Hindu creation myth. Brehm is “th' Almighty” and His Universe is “gay Creation,” for instance.⁴⁹

In the next stanza, again the meters and rhyme schemes vary. The language makes the inaccessible deity linguistically accessible. For example, a line in iambic pentameter is immediately followed by a simpler trimeter. “Diffusive, multitudinous, profound,/Above, beneath, around.”⁵⁰ The more complex adjectives are placated by simpler ones in the line that follows.

The Hymn then tells of the deity Brehma, who arose from a lotus blossom. Brehm gives him the duty to create all the worlds in “Th' unknowing all-knowing Word,/Brehma! No more in vain research persist:/My veil thou canst not move—Go; bid all worlds exist.”⁵¹ The use of “all-knowing Word” has strong Christian connotations. The Word here, as in Psalms 33:6, performs the function of creation.

The poem becomes rich in natural and Burkean sublime imagery, reminiscent of James Thomson's and other pre-romantic poetry. Here, God

“Glows in the rainbow, sparkles in the stream,/Smiles in the bud, and glistens in the flow’r.”⁵² Further:

Blue crystal vault, and elemental fires,
That in th’ eternal fluid blaze and breathe;
Thou, tossing main, whose snaky branches wreath
This pensile orb with intertwisted gyres;
Mountains, whose radiant spires
Presumptuous rear their summits to the skies
And blend their em’rald hue with sapphire light.⁵³

This is a sublime land of supernatural disorientation, conforming to Burke’s theory. The narrator exclaims, as if he cannot bear the confusion, “Delusive Pictures! Unsubstantial shows!/My soul absorb’d One only Being knows...But suns and fading worlds I view no more:/God only I perceive; God only I adore.”⁵⁴ This concluding line is ambiguous. “God” may refer to Narayena, but it may also be read as Jones’s dismissal of the Hindu name. In the latter reading, Jones affirms that his God is the Christian God, and none other.

Jones’s “Hindu Hymns” are aesthetically sophisticated portrayals of Hindu theology. Yet, the portraits are ambivalent. The consistent tone throughout is reverence for the Hindu deities. However, this reverence is ambiguously linked to Jones’s neoclassical poetic tradition, his Christian faith, and ultimately to the British Empire. Post-colonial theory examines how this kind of appropriation leads to distillation and even distortion of the indigenous culture. Jones’s poetry is a case in point. The harmony of the Hymns is disrupted by the dissonance of hegemony.

Notes

¹ Tilar Mazzeo, “The Strains of Empire: Shelley and the Music of India,” in *Romantic Representations of British India*, Ed. Michael J. Franklin, (London: Routledge, 2006), 183.

² S.K. Heninger, “Spenser, Sidney, and Poetic Form,” in *Studies in Philology* 88, No. 2 (1991): 143.

³ Bill Ashcroft, *Postcolonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (London: Routledge, 2013), 19.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 244.

⁵ Paula R. Backscheider, Catherine E. Ingrassia, *British Women Poets of the Long Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2009), 162.

⁶ Peter Thorpe, *Eighteenth Century English Poetry* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1975), 82-3.

⁷ Sir William Jones, *The Works of Sir William Jones, vol. VI* (London: G.G. and J. Robinson, et al., 1799), 311.

⁸ Lois Parkinson Zamora, *The Inordinate Eye: New World Baroque and Latin American Fiction* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), 10.

⁹ *Ibid.*, lines 10-11.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

- ¹¹ Diana Eck, "Murti: The Image of God" *The Pluralism Project of Harvard University*, www.pluralism.org.
- ¹² Suvir Kaul, *Poems of Nation, Anthems of Empire: English Verse in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 2000), 196.
- ¹³ Alexander Pope, "Windsor-Forest." In *Eighteenth-Century Poetry: An Annotated Anthology*, Ed. David Fairer and Christine Gerrard, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 365-6.
- ¹⁴ Jones, 386.
- ¹⁵ James Mulholland, *Sounding Imperial: Poetic Voice and the Politics of Empire*. (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2013), 131-2.
- ¹⁶ Jones, "A Hymn to Ganga," *The Works*, 329, lines 12-13.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 329, line 11.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, lines 15-17.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, line 19.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, line 20.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, line 22.
- ²² *Ibid.*, lines 23-24.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, lines 25-26.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, lines 30-32.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, 330, line 35.
- ²⁶ Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (Hoboken, N.J.: Generic NL Freebook Publisher, n.d. *ebook collection*), 16.
- ²⁷ Jones, 330, line 52.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, line 53-55.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, line 56.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, line 66-78.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, 331, lines 165-167.
- ³² *Ibid.*, line 196.
- ³³ Mulholland, 133.
- ³⁴ Jones, "Hymn to Camdeo," *The Works*. 234, lines 1-4.
- ³⁵ Edward Said, *Orientalism*. (London: Penguin, 2003), 207.
- ³⁶ Jones, 234, lines 61-65.
- ³⁷ Heninger, 144.
- ³⁸ Jones, "Hymn to Bhavani," *The Works*. 261, lines 11-16.
- ³⁹ Garland Cannon, "Sir William Jones and Literary Orientalism," Ed. C.C. Barfoot and Theo D'haen. (Atlanta: Rodopi, 1998), 35.
- ⁴⁰ Jones, "Hymn to Narayana," *The Works*. 293.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 368.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, 356.
- ⁴³ Zamora, 372.
- ⁴⁴ Jones, 293, lines 1-5.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, lines 6-13.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, lines 19-20.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, line 21.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, lines 31-32.

⁴⁹ Ibid., lines 33 and 36.

⁵⁰ Ibid., lines 40-41.

⁵¹ Ibid., lines 71-72.

⁵² Ibid., lines 93-94.

⁵³ Ibid., lines 109-115.

⁵⁴ Ibid., lines 119-126.

Poem: *Instead of Seeking the Virgin Mary in a Slick of Spilt Oil*

Kaz Sussman

I take a walk along the lake, anticipating
a gale that never burst. The storm's mass
split apart by a cartwheeling wind, the black
clouds becoming buffalo charging
over the horizon. Robed in a silhouette
of dusk, the swell of the ridgeline's curve
suggests a sleeping muse. The sunset,
a jewel in her navel flashing
brilliant hues yet to be named.

Blurred Lines: Does Religious Polarity Create Problematic Heroes in the Poem, *Beowulf*?

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The theme of religious polarity in *Beowulf* is a well-studied one. The contrast between Germanic pagan and Christian belief and practice in the poem provides a platform upon which the Humanities might address the issue of imperfect religious practice in literature. It might appear that this seemingly stark contrast is inexplicable, especially when so many modern scholars of medieval literature cannot agree on which faith represents the primary point of view and which represents the secondary. Bosse and Wyatt explain:

Those who feel that the poem is essentially pagan aver that the gnomic moralizing which immediately follows the narration is an obvious example of Christian coloration added [...] to an alien ethos. Those who are convinced the poem is essentially Christian view the episode as furnishing a convenient opportunity for emphasizing the religious message of the poem.¹

In *The Hero in the Earthly City*, Bernard Huppé writes, “From the Christian point of view, the pagan events of the poem reveal the limits of heathen society, the limits of the righteous pagan, and the limits of the heroic ideal.”² The paradox between the Christian and pagan natures of the characters Hroðgar and Beowulf is more easily understood within the historical context of the poem. The Anglo-Saxon culture of the *Beowulf* poet was steeped in the heroic Germanic tradition, moving toward but not entirely embracing Christianity. The appearance of religious polarity is a by-product of that spiritual movement. Within the text itself, the poet zig-zags back and forth between pagan and Christian images. In many cases, the two overlap and the

line between pagan and Christian *seems* to become blurred. But that is not necessarily how an Anglo-Saxon audience would interpret it.

How would a pagan epic read to an audience of Anglo-Saxon Christians? Although the story is of a pre-Christian Germanic society, there are Christian images throughout the poem. Some of these images are New Testament, others Old Testament. Christopher Cain, author of “Beowulf, the Old Testament, and the Regula Fidei,” points out the Old Testament was probably more easily understood by the early English audience since, like the newly-converted Anglo-Saxons, there were no Old Testament heroes born into Christianity. He writes that,

The poet deliberately parallels the pagan Germanic past with the pre-Christian world of the Old Testament with the aim of demonstrating the prefiguration of the Christian world in his native heritage just as it was demonstrated in the world of the old dispensation of the Hebrews.³

Even though the heroes of the Old Testament were virtuous and favored by God, they could not have been saved in the Christian sense, having predated Christ the Savior. To the Anglo-Saxon Christians, there must have seemed a great gulf between the righteous acts of Jewish heroes of the Old Testament and the denial of salvation to all who were not Christian as it is written in the New Testament—even though they might be worthy in deed. Among the Christian images with both Old and New Testament shadings in the poem are the multiple references to Grendel and his mother as a descendent of the biblical villain, Cain:

wæs se grimma gæst Grendel hāten,
mære mearcstapa, sē þe mōras hēold,
fen ond fæsten; fifelcynnes eard
wonsæli wer weardode hwile,
siþðan him Scyppend forscifen hæfde
in Cāines cynne
(lns. 102-107a) ⁴

That grim ghost was named Grendel, notorious wandered in the wasteland, who held the moors and fen as stronghold. An unhappy man of the race of monsters guarded the land a long time. The Shaper condemned him of Cain's kin.

Grendles mōdor,
ides āglæcwif yrmþe gemunde,
sē þe wæteregesā wunian scolde,
cealde strēamas, siþðan Cāin wearð

tō ecgbanan āngan brēþer,
fæderenmæge;
(Ins. 1258b-1263a)

*Grendel's mother, a monster woman, woes remembered, she who in
dread-waters should dwell, cold streams, since Cain became a slayer with
sword of his only brother, father seed.*

Additionally, Hroðgar speaks of a sword handle that refers back to a flood of
Old Testament biblical proportions:

Hroðgar maðelode -- hylt scēawode,
ealde lāfe, on ðǣm wæs ȝr writen
fyrngewinnes, syðþan flōd ofslōh,
gifen gēotende gīganta cyn,
frēcne gefērdon; þæt wæs fremde þēod
ēcean Dryhtne; him þæs endelēan
þurh wāteres wylm Waldend sealed.
(Ins. 1687-1693)

*Hroðgar spoke – The hilt he beheld, an ancient heirloom, whereon was
the origin of the great strife written, when the flood, the gushing ocean,
destroyed the giants' kin. They fared terribly; That folk was foreign to
the Eternal Lord; To them the Lord sent that ending payment by welling
waters.*

Early in the poem, and embedded in a passage in which the Danes revert to
paganism (see below), the poet mentions three times that the Danish warriors
in the hall knew not the Christian Lord—just as Peter did of Jesus in the New
Testament:

Metod hīe ne cūþon,
dǣda Dēmend ne wiston hīe Drihten God,
nē hīe hūru heofena Helm herian ne cūþon,
wuldres Waldend.
(Ins. 180a-183a)

*They knew not God, the judge of deeds, they knew not the Lord God,
not indeed heaven's helm, they knew not praise of the Glory Ruler.*

Clearly, the poet was aware of both Christian and pagan practice—and the
audience would have been also. Klaeber agrees when he writes, “The author is
clearly familiar with the traditional Christian terminology ... and evinces some
knowledge of the Bible, liturgy and ecclesiastical literature.”²⁵ Of course, the

Beowulf poet was not unique in blending Christian and pagan elements. In fact, Augustine of Canterbury was instructed to “coopt” not only literature, but also spaces sacred to the pagans by the pope, Gregory the Great. The church at Canterbury itself was built on a site of pagan sacrifice that was cleansed and reappropriated.⁶ This reassignment of text and space was done to create and maintain some sense of religious continuity for the converts—what was sacred remains sacred, even if the entity worshipped has now changed. It was not uncommon in the time of the Beowulf poet to use pagan stories to illustrate Christian morality. These texts were, in fact, often used as devotional literature—reinforcing the ideals of the Christian message in a form that would draw forth an entire religious semantic complex in the minds of the formerly pagan. Cain writes that, “The idea that pagan literature could be mined for Christian truths was, apparently, deemed a more tenable method of dealing with [paganism] than futile efforts to suppress it totally.”⁷

The Anglo-Saxon Christians who predated the writing of the poem were particularly vulnerable to what appears to be backsliding during times of great trouble. Wentersdorf writes that, “in a time of national crisis in 664, under the devastating impact of the plague, many Anglo-Saxons reverted for a time to the religion of their ancestors, practicing incantations, wearing amulets, even meeting in the ancient sanctuaries and sacrificing there to idols.”⁸ Following nearly one hundred years of political unrest, war, drought, and devastating fires, “there was a decline in ecclesiastical discipline, the personal lives of clergy and laity alike left much to be desired, and heathenism was on the upswing.” If the *Beowulf* manuscript was written down before the early 11th c., there might be a collective memory of such heathen backsliding. In fact, if the manuscript was written in the late 600’s as some scholars believe, pagan Germanic religious practice would be contemporary with the manuscript. This would strengthen the argument that there was a period of religious “blending,” a period in which the lines between belief systems were blurred. Wentersdorf writes that, despite the best efforts of the early English clergy, the overlap of faiths continued into the early Middle English period—long after the writing of *Beowulf*.⁹

The pagan behavior of the Danes and the clearly Christian voice of the narrator clash early on in *Beowulf*. In the following passage, the narrator suggests that the Danes have resorted to paganism out of desperation, as the Anglo-Saxons were known to have done during times of plague, war, drought, and disaster. What is unclear in the passage is whether they have *reverted* to paganism, or if they were pagan to begin with. The narrator says they did not know God, and yet many times throughout the poem, God is thanked. It may be that the narrator alone is the Christian—or that the Danes were working their way from pagan to Christian—a process that is in itself neither Christian nor pagan, but human. The first evidence of this religious polarity in the text can be found in the following:

Dæt wæs wræc micelwine Scyldinga,

Mōdes brecða. Monig oft gesæt
 rīce tō rūne; rǣd eahtedon,
 hwæt swiðferhðum sēlest wære
 wið færgryrum tō gefremmanne.
 Hwīlum hīe gehēton æt hargtrafum
 wīgweorþunga, wordum bædon,
 þæt him gāstbona gēoce gefremede
 wið þēodþrēaum. Swylc wæs þēaw hyra,
 hǣþenra hyht; helle gemundon
 in mōdsefan, Metod hīe ne cūþon,
 dæda Dēmend, ne wiston hīe Drihten God,
 nē hīe hūru heofena Helm herian ne cūþon,
 wuldres Waldend. Wā bið þām ðe sceal
 þurh slīðne nīð sāwle bescūfan
 in fýre fæþm, frōfre ne wēnan,
 wihte gewendan! Wēl bið þām þe mōt
 æfter dēaðdæge Drihten sēcean
 ond tō Fæder fæþmum freoðo wilnian!
 (lms. 170-188)

That was much wretchedness for the Friend of Shieldings, Mood breaking. Often sat down many powerful ones to council; They considered advice, what might be best to do for the brave ones against sudden attack. While they promised to honor idols at heathen temples, words they bade, that to them the soul slayer would send help against the distress of the people. Such was their custom, hope of heathens; hell they remembered in mind, God they knew not, judge of deeds, they knew not the Lord God, nor they indeed heaven's helm, they knew not praise of the Glory Ruler. Woe be to him that should in dire distress shove his soul in the arms of fire, expecting no consolation, change at all! Well be him who might seek the Lord after judgment day and find the refreshment of the Father's arms!

In contrast to the Christian elements in the poem, there are pagan elements scattered about as well, reinforcing the feeling of polar faith. The Danes are idol worshipers as we see above. Additionally, the hero, Beowulf, is cremated after his death—a funerary rite not permitted by the Roman Church at that time. Lastly, there are wanderings into the area of the Seven Deadly Sins: excessive pride, desire for wealth, avenging a death. These are Christian sins, but pagan Germanic virtues. Regardless, each of these dalliances ends badly.

If we accept that the poem is in essence Christian, it presents a problem in King Hroðgar. It is obvious that he seeks the council of men who advise him that the people must pray to heathen gods for relief from the scourge of Grendel. In the early part of the poem, the people of Heorot resort to pagan

idol worship—and Hroðgar is aware of it. The narrator tells us that the Danes “did not know God.” But the narrator does not tell us what the king’s role in the devil worship is—or if he has a role in it at all. We are left to infer that Hroðgar is like his people—pagan. Why, then, would Hroðgar on so many occasions thank God?

The first offering of thanks is at the sight of Grendel’s severed hand:

Hroðgar mæþelode - hē tō healle gēong,
stōd on stapole, geseah stēapne hrōf
gold fāhne ond Grendles hond - :
“Ðisse ansȳne Alwealdan þanc
lungre gelimpe! Fela ic lāþes gebād,
grynna æt Grendle; ā mæg God wyrcean
wunder æfter wundre, wuldres Hyrde.
(lns. 925-31)

Hroðgar spoke: --He, going to the hall, stood on steps, saw the steep, gold-crusted roof and Grendel’s hand --; “For this sight, thanks to the Almighty must quickly come to pass! I have lived through many evils, grief by Grendel; May God always work wonder after wonder, Guardian of Glory.”

Of Hroðgar, Bosse and Wyatt write:

Even if [he] were a Christian, there is at least one sense in which he too does not “know” God. For if he truly understood the nature of the Guardian of heaven, he would not, even passively, lend his sanction to pagan rituals; rather, he would invoke and place his trust in the Lord God.¹⁰

This assumes, of course, that the king is only, purely Christian. But if he were, it does not necessarily follow that his people were Christian, or that he would feel the need to intervene in their pagan worship. Green writes:

The conversion of a ruler generally meant the adhesion to Christianity of many of his followers, however superficial the process may have been, so that the real task of religious education remained to be accomplished afterwards. This is a feature recurrent in the Christianization of the Germanic tribes *and is especially well attested for Anglo-Saxon England*.¹¹ (Emphasis added.)

Hroðgar, like many Christians of his time, was in a state of religious limbo—moving imperfectly from pagan to Christian in a zig-zag pattern that is echoed in the structure of the poem.

Another of Hroðgar's characteristics that certainly seems in opposition to any understanding of the Christian faith is his arrogance. Hroðgar was a mighty king. He was successful in battle and was generous with his people. Clearly, that success and popularity were not lost on Hroðgar himself. It is his pride that enables him to build Heorot in the first place. There is no account of trouble from Grendel until after the hall was built. Bosse and Wyatt, believing that the contradiction with Christian values cannot be overcome, point out that,

Hroðgar is arrogant in his success; he insists that his hall be the most magnificent one ever built. He is eager for the fame, the immortal reputation, which was the goal of his pagan ancestors. If he realizes God's generosity, he does not acknowledge it, and he disregards the transitory nature of earthly glory—a fact well known to pagan and Christian alike. He has no premonition of the fate of his magnificent hall and the loathsome flames which it awaits even from the moment of its completion, even though all he knows of life reinforces the lesson of earthly evanescence.¹²

In his thank offering to God (see above), the king does not seem to be in any way aware that Grendel's first appearance closely followed the building of the great hall. But why should he? After all, he was born into a tradition in which seeking immortal fame was not a sin, but a virtue. The line between right and wrong would not have been entirely clear to him. The king behaves in a way that seems appropriate to him and must seem appropriate to the Christian poet as well, because he writes of Hroðgar, "þæt wæs gōd cyning" *That was a good king*. Hroðgar rejoices at the restoration of his pride which was taken from him by the monstrous Grendel. He is unable to make the connection between his pride and the scourge brought forth on his people by the monster, Grendel. The poet, however, does:

Ðā cōm of more under misthleoþum
Grendel gongan, Godes yrre bær;
(lms. 710-11)

"Then, coming from the moor under misty hills, Grendel goes, bearing God's anger."

Grendel is delivering divine retribution to Hroðgar and his people for the sin of pride and the overreach in the taking of his land for the great hall. Clearly, as a Christian, Hroðgar has sinned. But what of the pagan side of him? Green writes that linguistic challenges faced those attempting the conversion of the pagan Germani. The missionaries' task was two-fold:

First, to show that [Christianity's] terms for moral qualities expressed obligations towards the new God, and secondly, to devise vernacular equivalents for qualities often unknown to Germani as moral imperatives (e.g. *humility*, forgiveness).¹³
Emphasis added.

Pride simply could not have been a sin to a man for whom it was a virtue. Hroðgar's Danes may have been exposed to Christian principles, but they might not have mastered them for some time to come. As Green writes, there would not have even been a word in their vocabulary for the opposite of *pride*.

Beowulf, the great hero of the poem, also has a problem with pride. He boasts to Hroðgar that he has killed giants and sea monsters upon their first meeting:

Dā mē þæt gelærdon lēode mine,
þā sēlestan, snotere ceorlas,
þēoden Hroðgar, þæt ic þē sōhte,
forþan hīe mægenes cræft mīn[n]e cūþon;
selfe ofersāwon, ðā ic of searwum cwōm,
fāh from fēondum, þær ic fife geband,
yðde eotena cyn, ond on yðum slog
niceras nihtes, nearoþearfe drēah,
wræc Wedera nīð - wean āhsodon - ,
forgrand gramum; ond nū wið Grendel sceal,
wið þām āglæcan āna gehēgan
ðing wið þyrse.
(lms. 415-426a)

Then, I was instructed by the best of my people, wise people, that I should seek thee, Lord Hroðgar, because they knew of my great strength; They themselves looked on when I from battle came, bloodstained from foes, There I bound five of the giant's kin, and in the ocean slew water monsters by night, endured severe distress, avenged the Weder's trouble – They asked for woe – I ground to pieces the hostile ones; And now I alone shall against that wretch, that giant, encounter.

Not unlike Hroðgar, Beowulf seeks glory and reward in a way that no Christian should. Of his situation, Huppé writes, “Beowulf's flaw is tragic precisely because there are no means available to him by which the flaw may be redeemed.”¹⁴ He is a pagan hero with Christian morality but lacking salvation. Although he does not complicate his religious image with the same link to pagan devil worship that Hroðgar does, he is buried in the pagan tradition—adding to the problematic nature of Beowulf as Christian-like hero.

Beowulf's pride, unlike that of Hroðgar, does not cost the lives of others. Beowulf alone must pay for his pride.

In an interesting contrast to the reference to Grendel bearing God's anger, Cain writes, "Beowulf is the instrument of God in cleansing Heorot of the devilish Grendel, and like the topos of the Old Testament worthy pagan, he is not entitled to enjoy Christian salvation."¹⁵ If Cain is correct, then God sent Grendel to bear His anger, and Beowulf to clean up the mess. In other words, God has created a situation in which He sends a message which will likely be received badly (death and destruction), but then sends an instrument in the form of a righteous pagan to restore balance. God, unlike many modern readers, does not see a problem with a clear dichotomy—both Grendel and Beowulf are pagan instruments, but only Beowulf is the "worthy" pagan.

When Beowulf is an old king, a dragon is robbed of its treasure. He decides that he alone will kill the dragon and that he will keep the treasure that the dragon had been hoarding. This will ultimately be the battle that kills the hero, which begins with a simple, sinful act of theft:

draca rīsian,
sē ðe on hēaum hǣþe hord beweotode,
stānbeorh stēþne; stīg under læg
eldum uncūþ. Ðær on innan gīong
niðða nāthwylc, sē þe nēh gefealg
hǣðnum horde, hond wǣge nam,
sīd, since fāh; nē hē þæt syððan bemāð,
þēah ðe hē slǣpende besyred wurde
þēofes cræfte; þæt sīe ðīod onfand,
bigfolc beorna, þæt hē gebolgen wæs.
(Ins. 2211b-2220)

A dragon which ruled on a high heath watched over a hoard. The path lay under a steep stone barrow which was unknown to men. There went within some man who passed near the heathenish hoard; His hand took a cup, encrusted treasure. He did not conceal it afterward, but he ensnared the sleeping warden by thievish craft. The people discovered, neighboring people, that he was enraged.

To the Anglo-Saxon audience, the notion of a hoarder of treasure would itself be a situation in need of a remedy. Treasure was meant to be shared, not hoarded—a maxim in all the descendent Indo-European cultures which were decidedly pagan. Was the dragon an agent of God in the same way that Grendel was? It is certainly possible that, as Grendel was the remedy to Hroðgar's sinful act of pride, the dragon was a remedy to Beowulf's sinful act of greed—he wanted that treasure even if it meant it would bring him to his last battle.

In the Indo-European tradition, of which the entire Germanic world was and is a part, the act of revenge was really just a smoothing of an unnaturally-imbalanced situation. Reciprocation was an important part of the culture in Anglo-Saxon England. This was true if the gift was positive like a ring, or negative like a death blow.¹⁶ The urge to reclaim balance in a situation brought on by a sinful act would have been overwhelming—and it happens again and again in the *Beowulf* story.

Grendel's rage is brought on by King Hroðgar's sinful pride. The land he has been guarding has been built upon – in essence, taken from him. But even before that, Grendel's unhappy situation was brought on by an act of revenge from God himself:

wonsǣli wer weardode hwīle,
 siþðan him Scyppend forscifen hæfde
 in Cāines cynne -- þone cwealm gewræc
 ēce Drihten, þæs þe hē Ābel slog;
 (Ins.105-108)

*Unhappy man, he guarded [the land] a long time after the Shaper
 condemned him of Cain's kin –The Eternal Lord avenged the death by
 murder on this one who slew Abel.*

When Heorot was built, Grendel was sent “bearing God's anger.” Since Hroðgar's pride is responsible for the building of the hall, and the hall is responsible for the coming of the monster, Grendel, it must follow that righting the imbalance made the brutal attacks on Heorot necessary. These attacks, that seem to be sanctioned by God himself since the attacker is a vehicle for God's anger, have struck not only the men in the hall, but in a way, the otherwise uninjured Hroðgar himself. Hroðgar does not lose his life in the attacks on his great hall, but loses something that may mean more to him, namely his pride. Ultimately, in order to save his people, the powerless king must accept the help of a foreigner to protect what he has built.

And yet, Hroðgar is not without goodness. During his sermon (Ins. 1700-1784), the great king imparts upon Beowulf advice on loyalty to the code of ethics under which they lived – pagan in nature, but not unchristian in essence. He begins speaking generally and positively about Beowulf:

Dæt, lā, mæg secgan sē þe sōð ond riht
 fremed on folce, feor eal gemon,
 eald ēþelweard, þæt ðes eorl wære
 geboren betera! Blǣd is ārǣred
 geond wīdwegas, wine mīn Bēowulf,
 ðīn ofer þēoda gehwylce. Eal þū hit gepyldum healdest,
 mægen mid mōdes snyttrum. Ic þē sceal mine gelǣstan

frēode, swā wit furðum spræcon. Dū scealt tō frōfre
weorþan
eal langtwīdig lēodum þīnum,
hæledum tō helpe.
(Ins. 1700-1708)

Lo! He who truly and rightly performs for his people, all remember far back, an old king says that this earl must have been born well. Glory is upraised beyond the wide ways, my welcomed friend, Beowulf, over every nation. You hold all of it steadily, might with wisdom of mind. I shall grant you my love as when first we spoke. You will furnish protection through all time to your people, become a helper to heroes.

After congratulating Beowulf on his victory over Grendel's mother, Hroðgar offers a warning in the form of what seems like a Christian parable against the perils of pride and greed—an odd lesson from a king whose pride cost his own people so dearly. Earlier in the poem, it seems that Hroðgar was incapable of understanding the connection between his own pride and the destruction in Heorot. Perhaps now he does. He illustrates his message in the story of Heremod, a bad king who breaks the code of the moral pagan:

Deah þe hine mihtig God mægenes wynnum,
eafeþum stepte ofer ealle men,
forð gefremede, hwæþere him on ferhþe greow
breost-hord blod-reow, nallas beagas geaf
Denum æfter dome; dreamleas gebad
þæt he þæs gewinnes weorc þrowade,
leod-bealo longsum. Ðu þe lær be þon,
gum-cyste ongit; ic þis gid be þe
awræc wintrum frod.
(Ins.1716-1724a)

Though him, the mighty God, exalted over all men in the joys of mastery, in strength, helped and held him, however, in his spirit there grew a bloodthirsty breast-board [heart], no bracelets gave he to the Danes as was due; Unhappily he so lived that he from that turmoil trouble suffered, a lasting sorrow of the people. You must learn by that; you must get manly virtue; I, old in winters, this tale for you have told.

And then, Hroðgar once again *seems* to know God:

Wundor is tō secganne,
Hū mihtig God manna cynne
Ðurh sīdne sefan snyttru bryttað,
Eard on eorlscipe; hē āh ealra geweald.

(lns. 1724b-1727)

A wonder it is to say how mighty God dispenses wisdom to mankind by his wide spirit, earth and earlship; He wields all things.

The sermon warns Beowulf against becoming greedy—hoarding treasure instead of giving it to his people. Beowulf is warned not to rely on himself only—a sin of pride to the Christian, but not to the pagan. And then, Hroðgar, a king we believe to be pagan, thanks God for being free of Grendel.

Hwæt, mē þæs on ēþle edwenden cwōm,
gyrn æfter gomene, seoþðan Grendel wearð,
ealdgewinna, ingenga mīn;
ic þære sōcne singāles wæg
mōdceare micle. Þæs sig Metode þanc,
ēcean Dryhtne, þæs ðe ic on aldre gebād,
þæt ic on þone hafelan heorodrēorigne
ofer eald gewin ēagum starige!
Gā nū tō setle, symbelwynne drēoh
wiggeweorþad; unc sceal worn fela
māþma gemænra, siþðan morgen bið.
(lns. 1774-1784)

Lo! To me in my space came a change, gloom after gladness, when Grendel, old adversary, invaded me; I by his questing constantly bore much sorrow. To the Maker be thanks, to the Eternal Lord, that I in life have experienced staring on his head, hacked by the sword after the struggle with my eyes. Go now to the seat, share the feast, worshipful in war; for us shall a wealth of treasure be measured, when morning comes.

The reciprocity (revenge) cycle repeats again and again—first, God banishes Grendel and the race of Cain for the death of Abel, Grendel attacks Heorot, Beowulf kills Grendel, Grendel’s mother attacks Heorot, Beowulf kills Grendel’s mother. Separately, the dragon hoards his treasure which, perhaps, provokes a theft, Beowulf attacks and kills the dragon who also kills Beowulf. In the end, Beowulf is a dead pagan. And so is Hroðgar.

The polarity of religion is not the only stark contrast in the poem—there is also the contrast between God and the Devil or possibly fate. These are secondary polarities, supporting the primary. Perhaps the greatest conflict in the poem is not man versus monster, but good versus evil—one that Green feels is the essence of the polarity between paganism and Christianity in the entire early Germanic world:

For this [Christian] religion the cosmic struggle between God and the Devil was one between the principles of good and

evil. An ethical code of behavior was therefore an integral part of the Christian religion, unlike pagan Germania, whose ethical values were derived from secular social institutions such as the kinship or the war band. When a Germanic tribe suffered a setback the cause was sought in a failure in sacrificing to the gods, thus blocking the channel through which *heil* [good fortune] could flow to the tribe, but when Christian people faced a similar situation, [...] an explanation from the Old Testament was applied: God was punishing His sinful people or testing them in readiness for higher things.¹⁷

As modern readers, we see the narrator and the characters in the poem try to come to grips with what they perceive as evil (Grendel and his mother) through idol worship and hero worship, but then thanking God when it is all over. We see the narrator explain (or possibly excuse) the Danes for pagan behavior because they did not know God—but the narrator never explains why they thanked a God whom they did not know for their victories.

The religious polarity in the poem that seems so problematic for modern readers was actually probably not so for its contemporary audience. In the tradition of fables used to teach morals, the medieval Christian Church encouraged the use of pagan literature for the teaching of Christian morality. Although the poem's heroes fall short of the ideal Christian hero, they do act in the noblest way known to them. The audience can plainly see that Hroðgar and Beowulf were betrayed and failed by the pagan notions of revenge, pride in self, and glory, and if *Beowulf* was used as a Christian teaching tool for an audience in religious transition, then that is exactly what should have happened. Lesson learned.

Notes

¹ Roberta Bux Bosse and Jennifer Lee Wyatt. "Hroðgar and Nebuchadnezzar: Conversion in Old English Verse" *PLL* 23 (1987): 257.

² Bernard F. Huppé, *The Hero in the Earthly City, A Reading of Beowulf*. (Binghamton: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1984), 36.

³ Christopher M. Cain, "Beowulf, the Old Testament, and the Regula Fidei" *Renascence* 49 (1997): 228.

⁴ All quotes from the *Beowulf* text are taken from Frederick Klaeber, *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*. Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, 1950. All translation (and any errors therein) are my own.

⁵ Frederick Klaeber, *Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*. (Lexington: D.C. Heath and Company, 1950): xlix.

⁶ Karl P. Wentersdorf, "Beowulf: The Paganism of Hroðgar's Danes" *Studies in Philology* 78 (1981): 99.

⁷ Cain, *Beowulf*, 229.

⁸ Wentersdorf, *Beowulf*, 115.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 99.

¹⁰ Bosse and Wyatt, *Hroðgar*, 264.

¹¹ Dennis Howard Green, *Language and History in the Early Germanic World*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 277.

¹² Bosse and Wyatt, *Hroðgar*, 265.

¹³ Green, *Language and History*, 375.

¹⁴ Huppé, *The Hero*, 37.

¹⁵ Cain, *Beowulf*, 232.

¹⁶ See Calvert Watkins, *How to Kill a Dragon: Aspects of Indo-European Poetics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995; Benjamin Fortson, *Indo-European Language and Culture: An Introduction*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004; and Elizabeth B. Canon, “Digging Up Bones in Extant Texts to Bridge the Gap between Proto-Indo-European and Old English in the History of the English Language Course” in *Approaches to Teaching the History of the English Language Course*, eds. Collette Moore and Chris Palmer. New York: MLA, Forthcoming.

¹⁷ Green, *Language and History*, 374.

The Modern Campfire: The Mythmaking Process in Contemporary Religious Film

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Introduction

The Passion of the Christ was a game-changer for what the industry calls “faith-based film.” Mel Gibson’s 2004 film demonstrated exactly how much influence a successful film of this genre can attain when a filmmaker actively strives not just to create entertainment, but to craft a myth. Although faith-based imprints have emerged in major studios¹ and well-known stars have begun to appear in productions from these imprints for the first time since the mid-twentieth century heyday of *Ben Hur*,² no other movie of this genre has achieved the level of profit or sheer notoriety of Mel Gibson’s work in 2004.³ Contemporary media culture has become the new medium for perpetuating myths, but many filmmakers remain ignorant of the value of mythmaking in their work.

The traditional definition of myth is a specific genre that typically explains some phenomenon in the world through stories about heroes, fantastical creatures, and gods. Russell T. McCutcheon describes the colloquial use of myth in this way a “used to tag apparently fictional stories that originated in early human communities as attempts to explain commonplace but mysterious events in the natural world.”⁴ However, this demarcation is overly restrictive. Rather than treating myth as a category defined by particular plot or historical components, I will consider it in terms of authorial technique.⁵ Some readers may object to this analytic perspective on the basis of Roland Barthes’s concept of “The Death of the Author,” namely that authorial intent does not matter in the interpretation of a work. Although Barthes’s conclusion has been more or less disavowed by recent scholarship, my decision to depart from his

theory merits explanation. While I acknowledge that audiences can theoretically interpret a film any way they want with no regard for the author, Western media culture has a fascination with its creators, particularly film directors. To undertake a scholarly analysis of a film without considering the director's intent would be to ignore the manner in which most actual audiences view the work.

Thus, mythic status is not conferred purely based upon a story's content, but rather through appealing presentation and relevance to its audience. A myth is a story through which a subjective claim achieves seemingly objective status via collective consensus.⁶ Under this definition, myth is no longer consigned to the realm of ancient pantheons, but remains a vital process of social cohesion.⁷ This opens up the possibility of the study of modern myths as a means to analyze contemporary values and beliefs.

Like ancient storytellers, filmmakers utilize established conventions in their work. Their audience accepts and recognizes these tropes as believable, at least in terms of their expectations for an on-screen world.⁸ This shared vocabulary is the root of the audience's suspension of disbelief. To use an example from Christian media, I may not believe that my produce can talk, but if there existed a world where they could, I can accept that it might look something like the world of *VeggieTales*. The lack of talking vegetables in my world does not prevent me from enjoying the stories or drawing moral parallels to my own life. Furthermore, films are not merely sources of entertainment, but can have influence over broad perceptions of ideology and institutions, even religious ones.⁹ More Americans go to the movies at least once a year than attend church at least occasionally, sixty-eight¹⁰ and fifty-six percent respectively.¹¹ Film occupies a preeminent place in the pop culture zeitgeist. With religious participation in the United States on the decline,¹² movies could become the new sacred text.

Although this paper will specifically examine religious film, defined as any movie at least loosely based on a story from a religious tradition,¹³ mythmaking is not confined exclusively to this genre. All filmmakers operate as mythmakers on some level. However, religious film has a number of attributes which make it an ideal subject for filmmakers. First, these movies are based on pre-existing narratives, which can be considered pre-existing myths. Adapting a story that already exists is more straightforward than attempting the creation of a brand-new myth. In this case, the director need focus only on making strategic changes to this narrative to convey his intended message. The stakes are also far higher in the creation of religious film than other genres. Because these works are based on source material that is sacred to millions of people in the true sense of the word, they have the potential to reshape existing beliefs by reinterpreting religious mythology.¹⁴ In this regard, they start with an advantage over original works: audiences only need to be convinced to accept departures from the established tradition, rather than an entirely new myth.¹⁵

These changes are then sanctified by virtue of their association and assimilation with the existing myth.

The framework for onscreen mythmaking I will construct in this paper applies to films of all types. However, because *The Passion of the Christ* is an excellent model for the mythmaking process, I will direct my analysis solely toward religious film. This will allow me to fairly contrast its success with other entries in the same genre. It was Gibson's capacity for mythmaking which made *The Passion of the Christ* such a cultural force. The film is a tremendous example of cinematic mythmaking and the ability of a deliberately crafted message to attain real-world influence. This process extends beyond the on-screen story to the myth crafted *around* the movie for marketing purposes. I propose that there are two distinct components of a truly influential religious film. The first is the on-screen story, which I call the "internal myth." The second consists of paratextual elements including the movie-making process, press coverage, marketing, and commercial success, which create a context for the audience's experience of the work. I call this the "external myth."

The Passion of the Christ fulfills both of these criteria, while most other religious films in recent history fall short in one or the other. By exploring each of these facets in detail, I will not only demystify the phenomenon of *The Passion of the Christ*, but also create a framework with which any existing religious film can be analyzed and the success of any future film predicted.

Internal Myth

I define "internal myth" as the elements of storytelling, technology, and artistry within a movie which combine to form an embedded meaning. For religious movies, creating the internal myth generally involves reinterpreting this preexisting story to fit the director's own vision. I propose that any established myth has a hierarchical structure of traditional elements. The position of any aspect of the myth in this hierarchy determines how receptive an audience will be to changes in this element; the higher its position, the more essential that it be included. At the top is the title or label of the specific myth, which theoretically refers to nothing definite.¹⁶ The myth-maker can make any changes to existing myth that they wish, but the audience must accept this reinterpretation as "authentic"¹⁷ in order for it to retain mythic status. To once again use *VeggieTales* as an example, the series has released dozens of videos based on Biblical stories. These versions star fruits and vegetables and often change settings, names, and plot details for their younger audience. Still, they are thematically similar enough to their source material that they are recognizable as reinterpretations of a given myth, despite changing many traditional elements. Looking at the Passion myth,¹⁸ editing Jesus's words from the Cross (which already vary in scripture) would be much easier to justify than removing the crucifixion entirely. The latter is theoretically possible, but it is

such an established expectation that it would be nearly impossible to convince an audience of this departure from tradition.¹⁹

Because Western audiences are typically fairly familiar with Biblical stories, successfully reinterpreting this source material is a herculean task. The filmmaker must adhere to a myth's hierarchical structure, yet artistry in film is heavily based on creativity and innovation. A movie that breaks no new ground rarely achieves classic status or has much ability to make an innovative mythic statement.²⁰ The solution lies in a combination of disguise and ingenuity, which Mel Gibson displayed in creating *The Passion of the Christ*.

The success of *The Passion of the Christ*

Gibson's commitment to the appearance of historical accuracy strengthened the "internal myth" of *The Passion of the Christ*. By utilizing subtitles for the Aramaic and Latin dialogue and including scenes of graphic violence, he created the appearance of authenticity and earned credibility with much of his audience. This illusion of historicity conferred legitimacy on the movie as a whole, despite Gibson's many deliberate departures from the canonical Gospels to convey his personal beliefs. He incorporated the non-canonical writings of Anne Catherine Emmerich, a stigmatic nun of the Holy Roman Empire who had ecstatic visions, in his screenplay alongside elements drawn from the Bible.²¹ On a more thematic level, *The Passion of the Christ* promotes a version of Christianity in which suffering is the path to atonement. This is Gibson's interpretation of the crucifixion; a divine transaction of Jesus's suffering exchanged for the forgiveness of sins. It also has a controversial anti-Semitic bent which places more blame for Jesus's death on Jews than any of the Gospels.²² Yet for many audience members, swept up in the authentic atmosphere, these reinterpretations became sacred by association. Because the film so strongly emphasizes its supposed faithfulness to its source material, Gibson's changes blend in with the established mythic tradition.

External Myth

If the "internal myth" is all the elements of the story onscreen, the "external myth" is the story about that story. It is created almost entirely through marketing, creating context for the on-screen events and dictating the lens through which the audience *should* view the film. This can take any number of forms; "the funniest comedy in America," "an inspirational true story," or "Oscar-bait." The most successful external myths support and augment a film's internal myth; their content should be congruent. Marketing *The Passion of the Christ* as "the funniest comedy in America," for example, would provide little benefit to promoting Gibson's apparent agenda in making

the film and would more likely actively hurt his internal mythmaking efforts. The external myth created for *The Passion of the Christ* is “this film is a religious event.” The marketing team manipulated press around the movie to prime audience members for a film-going experience akin to attending a worship service.

From the beginning, Gibson crafted the story around *The Passion of the Christ*'s production to suit his external myth. Claiming that no Hollywood studio wanted to touch *The Passion of the Christ* because of its subtitles, lack of big-name stars, and religious content, Gibson self-financed the film through his company Icon Productions.²³ Between production and marketing costs, he spent roughly \$45 million dollars of his own money on the film.²⁴ This personal investment bolstered his religious credentials among certain Christian groups; presumably only a deeply devout and faithful Christian would spend so much cash on this sort of endeavor. This monetary sacrifice for his faith also paralleled Jesus's suffering in exchange for God's forgiveness depicted onscreen, creating a mutually reinforcing link between internal and external myth.²⁵ His status as a high-profile filmmaker known for producing quality work further strengthened the perceived authenticity of the film.

Gibson also made an unprecedented effort to target church groups, particularly Evangelicals, in marketing *The Passion of the Christ*. Beginning in the summer of 2002, Gibson reached out to Evangelical leaders for consultations on the project, screenplay edits, and marketing advice.²⁶ Then, Gibson embarked upon a press pilgrimage, screening clips from *The Passion of the Christ* for faith leaders and testifying about his own spiritual journey. He even professed that “the Holy Ghost was working through [him] on this film, and [he] was just directing traffic.”²⁷ Icon Productions sponsored more than eighty of these events for megachurches, Christian music executives, and faith-based conferences nationwide.²⁸

As a result, Gibson garnered a slew of endorsements from prominent Evangelical figures,²⁹ who praised not only *The Passion of the Christ* but also Gibson's devout Christianity. Even Pope John Paul II himself reportedly commented after viewing a screener “it is as it was.” Although the veracity of this testimony was later called into question, it is a testament to the power of the film that such a remark could even be entertained as true, let alone reported by major news outlets.³⁰ From these endorsements came grass-roots campaigns by individual churches, supported by the production team, to build excitement and ticket sales for the film. These pre-release efforts included community mailers, sermon series (complete with instructional DVDs), and theatre buyouts.³¹ Even traditional merchandise was reimagined as a tool to proselytize, including “Passion cross or nail jewelry (also available in Aramaic), coffee mugs, framed photos, and lapel pins” on the official website, under the category “Spread the Word.”³² There was even a special edition of the Bible published by the International Bible Society for the release of the film.³³ The

publication blended scripture with Gibson's movie, using production stills alongside the Gospels to illustrate the Passion narrative, and thus integrating Gibson's message with his sacred source material.

Gibson even found a way to put a positive spin on press reports that *The Passion of the Christ* was anti-Semitic. Because he had already managed to convince a large proportion of Evangelicals of his authentic Christianity and rigorous scriptural research, concerns about possibly offensive themes in the film often fell on deaf ears. Instead, Gibson's protests against these accusations of bias were met with empathy from this audience, who viewed the arguments as unfair persecution of his Christian faith, rather than legitimate critique.³⁴ For other, less sympathetic viewers, Gibson fell back on claims of supposed historical accuracy to deflect these claims. When asked during an interview with Bill O'Reilly whether *The Passion of the Christ* would offend Jews, he replied: "It may. It's not meant to. I think it's meant to just tell the truth."³⁵

Thus, *The Passion of the Christ* transcended the status of mere movie, particularly among American Evangelicals. Instead, it was akin to a worship service or cleansing ritual; the extreme discomfort of sitting through the gruesome violence facilitated the washing away of sin. Gibson successfully crafted the external myth that coming to see *The Passion of the Christ* was a religious experience for a large and vocal portion of his audience.

Another aspect of external myth which has not yet been addressed is commercial success. A substantial factor in determining whether a movie should be produced is its potential for profit. While critical reviews can drive the production of a certain number of awards-bait movies each year, what truly determines the types of movies that get made is what is currently making money at the box office. Religious films may be a niche market, but they are not exempt from all commercial standards.³⁶ The most apparent benefit of success at the box office is increased audience size. For a filmmaker looking to have the greatest social impact, reaching as many people as possible is critical. Commercial success also affords the filmmaker a larger platform from which to promote his or her myth. Topping the box office leads to television interviews, news stories, and vast amounts of free publicity from the media, all avenues for spreading the "external myth" of the movie. With a world-wide gross of \$611 billion, *The Passion of the Christ* became a commercial phenomenon, with all the benefits this entails.

Other Films

When a movie is a commercial smash hit, it leads to the production of other, similar movies trying to capitalize on a proven formula. Over the course of the last decade, overtly religious films have become a trendy genre. Mel Gibson had to fund *The Passion of the Christ* with his own money because no major studio would produce what they believed was a doomed property.

Compare that to today's market, where almost every studio has a faith-based label, and movies such as *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, *Exodus: Gods and Kings*, and *Risen* have been marketed to mainstream audiences.³⁷

Yet despite the increased presence of religious film in Hollywood, no movie in the past decade has come close to attaining the financial success or mythmaking prowess of *The Passion of the Christ*. Using the framework of internal and external myth, I will examine three of these movies and the reasons they fell short of Gibson's high-water mark.

The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe (hereafter referred to by its subtitle), released in 2005, looked to be the natural successor to *The Passion of the Christ*. The movie was marketed, according to USA Today, "as a sort of cross between *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Passion of the Christ*."³⁸ Disney relied on the same company that Gibson employed, Motive Marketing, to promote the film to churches and craft Sunday school lessons based on its themes, in a similar strategy to *The Passion of the Christ*'s campaign.³⁹ *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* grossed \$745 million worldwide, more than *The Passion of the Christ*'s \$611 million (although *The Passion of the Christ* still outperformed *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* at the domestic box office, and was produced on one fifth of the latter's budget).⁴⁰

Yet the public's love for the *Narnia* movies faded. The 2008 sequel *Prince Caspian* underperformed at the box office relative to expectations,⁴¹ and the follow-up in 2010, *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, continued the slide in domestic earnings.⁴² This can be attributed to failures in the saga's internal and external myths.

The internal myth of the *Narnia* series features little innovation on existing Christian myths, leaving the movies with little new to add to the established tradition.⁴³ *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe* makes almost no changes to mythic hierarchy of the Passion myth. The only exception is its fantasy setting, which creates problems of its own. The allegorical nature of the film is the second factor which weakens the internal myth. In stark contrast to *The Passion of the Christ*, the religious elements are inessential to *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe* as a movie. For a film ostensibly attempting to capitalize on the relatively untapped faith-based market, these are major mythmaking missteps.

However, strong external mythmaking could have made up for these failings. Yet this vital aspect also came up short. The director of *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*, Andrew Adamson, acknowledged that his central message was not about the Passion, saying "[he] read the books before [he] even knew what allegory meant, and [he] enjoyed them purely as an adventure. That's how the film should be enjoyed, too."⁴⁴ Attempting to bridge the gap between secular and sacred to create a film with broad appeal has become common in religious film. While it may be a savvy strategy to maximize profits,

such marketing undercuts an external myth of “a religious experience” that Gibson utilized to tremendous success.

One of the most recent entries into the religious film canon, *Risen*, also struggled to craft a coherent myth. It was touted in the press as an unofficial successor to *The Passion of the Christ*.⁴⁵ Even the press release suggested this comparison, saying “twelve years after the blockbuster film about Jesus’ crucifixion and many others like it, *Risen* picks up where that film dropped off in the biblical story of Jesus’ death, resurrection and ascension.”⁴⁶ However, *Risen* was promoted, like *Narnia*, as a more secular take on a Biblically-inspired narrative. The same press release espoused that “producers believe the film’s unique approach of seeing Jesus’ resurrection from the viewpoint of a nonbeliever in addition to the faithful scriptural treatment of the story will attract wide audiences.”⁴⁷ By marketing *Risen* as simultaneously highly religious and universally appealing to people of all faiths, the producers hoped to maximize their potential audience and profits.

This balancing act set *Risen* on precarious ground in terms of both internal and external myth. The protagonist, the Roman tribune Clavius, and his right-hand man Lucius are both entirely fictional creations. Indeed, most of the plot of the movie is original material by screenwriters Kevin Reynolds and Paul Aiello. A heavily-fictionalized quasi-Biblical story is at a disadvantage compared to an established myth like the Passion. As discussed above, filmmakers must work that much harder to convince audiences to accept a new myth than to accept reinterpretations an established tradition. A movie predominantly based on religious source material begins with an assumption of sanctity among a large portion of its audience, which it can maintain or lose based on the filmmaker’s choices. A mostly new creation, unless it has a very strong external myth, does not have the benefit of this “head-start.”

In its efforts to have its cake and eat it too, *Risen* turned out half-baked on both fronts. Although Clavius begins the film as a utilitarian skeptic, after he discovers the risen Christ, he quickly changes his tune. At this point, *Risen* loses any guise of the secular and reveals the true message at its heart: Jesus as the apparent and unimpeachable messiah. *Risen* depicts a resurrected Christ whose divinity is unquestionable. He appears and disappears at will, magically knows Clavius’ innermost desires, and performs multiple miracles. There is no room for doubt about his Messianic status. A movie which makes such a clear statement about the divinity of Christ cannot be considered secular by any measure. *Risen* crippled itself by not taking a firm mythic stand, either internally or externally. It was too secular to become a religious phenomenon, but too religious to have much appeal to mainstream viewers. Its underwhelming performance at the box office, \$44 million worldwide, reflects this failure.⁴⁸

In 2014, *Exodus: Gods and Kings* also fell short of the high-water mark set by *The Passion of the Christ*. Intended as a big budget blockbuster, it underperformed, earning only \$65 million domestically.⁴⁹ However, although

Exodus: Gods and Kings is based on the myth of the Israelites' escape from slavery in Egypt, it does not belong in the same category of religious film as the movies above. It is much more accurate to label *Exodus: Gods and Kings* as an anti-religious film.

Ridley Scott's film may deal with Biblical subject matter, but it interprets the material in such a way as to make God either irrelevant or nonexistent. Scott found scientific explanations for the story's miracles.⁵⁰ He even drew a direct contrast between his film and the Cecil B. DeMille's 1956 classic *The Ten Commandments*:

You can't just do a giant parting, with walls of water trembling while people ride between them...I didn't believe it then, when I was just a kid sitting in the third row. I...thought that I'd better come up with a more scientific or natural explanation.⁵¹

This radical change of the internal myth to excise the divine was too dramatic for many Christian viewers to accept as authentic. Scott's transparency about his revisionist intentions only compounded the problem by extending it to the external myth.

Perhaps even more devastating for a "religious experience" external myth were the comments that Christian Bale made to the press about his role as Moses. Bale was quoted as saying that he thought that Moses "was likely schizophrenic and was one of the most barbaric individuals that I ever read about in my life".⁵² This generated backlash among Christian groups, including some calls for boycotts of the film.⁵³

It is possible that Scott's mythic intent was not to convince Christians to renounce their faith, but to confirm the beliefs of his fellow skeptics. Perhaps Scott's goal was to create a film so historically accurate and scientifically unimpeachable that it could be considered a parallel, equal interpretation. If so, the other major controversy generated by the movie destroyed this possibility: widespread accusations of white-washed casting. The major characters were almost universally played by Caucasian actors, leading to public outcry and protests.⁵⁴ With both religious and secular criticism, as well as underwhelming reviews, the film was doomed to fall short with both potential audiences.

Conclusion

The Passion of the Christ demonstrated the capacity of mythmaking to create a successful movie. But as its successors in the genre have shown, this is not easy. Any creativity in religious film is bound by incredibly rigid conventions and expectations, without any guarantee of financial success. However, the reward for success is as lofty as the consequences of failure can be dire. Film's

tremendous re-interpretive capacity could allow it to out-compete traditional worship by adapting more quickly to changing audience needs. Institutional religious authority has the benefit of thousands of years of history and tradition on its side, but in a world that increasingly values innovation over the status quo, film is perfectly positioned to capitalize and build a new tradition for a new age.

While this paper has limited its focus to the genre of religious film, as mentioned above, this mythmaking framework can be applied to other artistic works as well. The same process is evident in other film genres,⁵⁵ but can also be observed in other media. Television, literature, theatre, music, visual art, and even politics have the potential to create myth. Analysis of how mythmaking can be implemented in these disparate fields is worthy of further study. Further exploration of the role that myth plays in the twenty-first century world offers both scholars and artists a deeper understanding of these disciplines and their context.

Notes

¹ Joanna Ostrow, "Hollywood Is Finding Christianity Sells." *Orlando Sentinel*, January 2, 2007. Accessed July 21, 2016. http://articles.orlandosentinel.com/2007-01-02/news/CHRISTSELLS_1_shalt-laugh-christian-audience.

² Erica Orden, "Hollywood's New Bible Stories." *Wall Street Journal*, September 27, 2012. Accessed April 29, 2016.

<http://www.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10000872396390444180004578016711320291332>

³ Brent Lang, "'Miracles From Heaven' and the Changing Face of Religious Films," *Variety*, 17 Mar. 2016, <http://variety.com/2016/film/box-office/miracles-from-heaven-box-office-1201732758/> (accessed May 23, 2016). David Walters, "Why Audiences Flock to Faith-Based Films," *Bloomberg Businessweek*, 30 Mar. 2016, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-03-30/why-audiences-flock-to-faith-based-films> (accessed May 23, 2016).

⁴ He later cites the work of German philologist Christian Gottlob Heyne, who believed that "myths were an explanation of natural phenomena as well as a memorialization of dramatic past events or heroic deeds." Russell T. McCutcheon, "Myth" in *Guide to the Study of Religion*, (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2000), 190, 194.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 200.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 204.

⁷ Roland Barthes explores this in detail in his *Mythologies*, including treatments of professional wrestling, literary criticism, and the striptease, to name just a few.

⁸ Adele Reinhartz, *Bible and Cinema: An Introduction*, (New York: Routledge, 2013), 15.

⁹ Adele Reinhartz, *Bible and Cinema: An Introduction*, (New York: Routledge, 2013), 19.

¹⁰ "Theatrical Market Statistics 2014" Motion Picture Association of America, January 8, 2015, Accessed July 21, 2016, 11 <http://www.mpa.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/MPAA-Theatrical-Market-Statistics-2014.pdf>

¹⁴Daniel Cox, Robert P. Jones, and Juhem Navarro-Rivera. *I Know What You Did Last Sunday*. Public Religion Research Institute. May 17, 2014, Accessed July 21, 2016, 2 <http://prri.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/AAPOR-2014-Final.pdf>.

Notably, the PRRI found that this number is inflated when respondents are asked over the phone rather than the internet, indicating social pressure to appear more religious than one actually is. Depending on where the question was asked, either thirty or forty-three percent of Americans seldom or never attend a religious service during the year.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ There are other films that could plausibly fall under a broader definition of this category, but they are beyond the scope of this paper.

¹⁴ It may be somewhat controversial to refer to such entities as the Biblical canon as “mythology,” but they can be categorized under either definition of myth discussed above.

¹⁵ Biopics and other historical genres have a similar re-interpretive advantage because of their apparent basis on historical facts.

¹⁶ For example, the myth of “The Passion,” “David and Goliath,” “Joseph and the Coat of Many Colors,” etc.

¹⁷ That is to say, they must accept the reinterpreted myth as consistent with tradition, whether it truly is or not. This requires the mythmaker to either justify or disguise their changes. As I will discuss in the following paragraphs, Mel Gibson utilized both strategies in *The Passion of the Christ*.

¹⁸ For those unfamiliar: the story of Jesus’s betrayal, crucifixion, and resurrection which is told in all four of the Gospels.

¹⁹ Roy Rappaport’s work on sanctity and ritual offers a useful model for understanding this hierarchical structure. Rappaport categorizes a religion’s beliefs into four hierarchical categories, ranked in order of durability and sanctity. The most durable are what he terms “Ultimate Sacred Postulates,” select broad statements which remain constant and serve as a source of sanctification for all other beliefs. Because “Ultimate Sacred Postulates” are intentionally vague, the only way they can be invalidated is if they are forgotten or actively rejected. Beneath the Ultimate Sacred Postulates are levels of increasing specificity and decreasing longevity and sanctity. Cultural pressures can more easily alter these lower tiers without compromising the essential tenets. Historically, this has allowed institutions to spring up, defined by the same Ultimate Sacred Postulates but otherwise almost entirely dissimilar because they were constructed for radically different communities.

²⁰ Adele Reinhartz, *Bible and Cinema: An Introduction*, (New York: Routledge, 2013), 16.

²¹ Tom Heneghan, "Nun Who Inspired Gibson Approved for Beatification," *The Washington Post*, June 5, 2004, accessed July 15, 2016, http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P2-183357.html?refid=easy_hf.

²² Anti-Semitism certainly exists in the Gospels, but not to the vicious degree of Gibson’s movie.

²³ Jerry Cobb, "Marketing 'The Passion of the Christ,'" *CNBC*, February 25, 2004. Accessed April 29, 2016. <http://www.nbcnews.com/id/4374411#.VwZisvkrLIU>.

²⁴ Penelope Patsuris, "What Mel's Passion Will Earn Him." *Forbes*, March 3, 2004. Accessed April 29, 2016. http://www.forbes.com/2004/03/03/cx_pp_0303mel.html

- ²⁵ Ironically, Gibson likely made roughly \$300 million from the movie.
- ²⁶ John L. Pauley and Amy King, "Evangelical's Passion for The Passion of the Christ." In *Evangelical Christians and Popular Culture: Pop Goes the Gospel Vol. 1.*, by Robert Woods. (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2013) 38-39.
- ²⁷ John L. Pauley and Amy King, "Evangelical's Passion for The Passion of the Christ." In *Evangelical Christians and Popular Culture: Pop Goes the Gospel Vol. 1.*, by Robert Woods. (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2013) 40.
- ²⁸ Ibid., 41.
- ²⁹ Ibid., 41.
- ³⁰ Peggy Noonan, "It Is as It Was," *Wall Street Journal*, December 17, 2003. Accessed April 29, 2016. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB122451994054350485>.
- ³¹ John L. Pauley and Amy King, "Evangelical's Passion for The Passion of the Christ." In *Evangelical Christians and Popular Culture: Pop Goes the Gospel Vol. 1.*, by Robert Woods. (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2013) 41-42.
- ³² Frances Flannery-Dailey, "Biblical Scholarship and the Passion Surrounding 'The Passion of the Christ.'" *SBL Forum Online*. <http://sbl-site.org/Article.aspx?ArticleID=240>
- ³³ Ibid.
- ³⁴ John L. Pauley and Amy King, "Evangelical's Passion for The Passion of the Christ." In *Evangelical Christians and Popular Culture: Pop Goes the Gospel Vol. 1.*, by Robert Woods. (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2013) 43.
- ³⁵ Richard Corliss and Jeff Israely, "The Passion of Mel Gibson," *Time*, January 19, 2003, accessed November 14, 2016, <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1101030127-409570,00.html>.
- ³⁶ It is beyond the scope of this paper to specify how to make a financially successful movie; in any case, audience tastes are ever-changing, and so the path to profit is not a fixed one. Suffice it to say that clever utilization (or subversion) of genre conventions, pop culture and industry trends, spectacle, and emotional catharsis are all elements which come into play, although this is by no means a comprehensive list of factors.
- ³⁷ David Walters, "Why Audiences Flock to Faith-Based Films," *Bloomberg Businessweek*, 30 Mar. 2016, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-03-30/why-audiences-flock-to-faith-based-films> (accessed May 23, 2016).
- ³⁸ Erik Brady, "Is That Lion the King of Kings?" *USA Today*, December 2, 2005. Accessed April 29, 2016. http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/life/movies/news/2005-12-02-narnia-main_x.htm.
- ³⁹ Ibid.
- ⁴⁰ "The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (2005) - Box Office Mojo." Accessed April 29, 2016. <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=narnia.htm>.
- ⁴¹ Patrick Goldstein and James Rainey, "The Secret History of Why Disney Dumped 'Narnia'" *Los Angeles Times*, January 19, 2009. Accessed July 21, 2016. http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/the_big_picture/2009/01/the-secret-hist.html
- ⁴² "The Chronicles of Narnia: The Voyage of the Dawn Treader." Box Office Mojo. Accessed July 21, 2016. <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=narnia3.htm>.

⁴³ This is true for movies produced up to this point; Lewis's final volume *The Last Battle* may be an exception to the rule, but has never seen a movie adaptation on the big screen.

⁴⁴ Erik Brady, "Is That Lion the King of Kings?" *USA Today*, December 2, 2005. Accessed April 29, 2016. http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/life/movies/news/2005-12-02-narnia-main_x.htm.

⁴⁵ Katherine Cusumano, "Is 'Risen' A Sequel To 'The Passion Of The Christ'? They Share Some Important Details." *Bustle*. February 17, 2016. Accessed July 21, 2016. <http://www.bustle.com/articles/142504-is-risen-a-sequel-to-the-passion-of-the-christ-they-share-some-important-details>.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ "'Risen'--Epic Re-Telling of Jesus' Resurrection in Theaters Jan. 22 - Christian Newswire." *Christian NewsWire*. May 18, 2015. Accessed July 21, 2016. <http://www.christiannewswire.com/news/7277176067.html>.

⁴⁸ "Risen." *Box Office Mojo*. Accessed April 30, 2016. <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=exodus.htm>

⁴⁹ "Exodus: Gods and Kings." *Box Office Mojo*. Accessed April 30, 2016. <http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=exodus.htm>

⁵⁰ Sara Vilkomerson, "How Ridley Scott Looked to Science—Not Miracles—to Part the Red Sea in 'Exodus: Gods and Kings'" *Entertainment Weekly*, October 23, 2014. Accessed April 30, 2016. <http://www.ew.com/article/2014/10/23/ridley-scott-red-sea-exodus>

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Barbara Herman, "'Exodus' Controversies: Christian Bale's 'Barbaric' Moses And All-White Cast Stir Up Critics." *International Business Times*, October 28, 2014. Accessed April 30, 2016. <http://www.ibtimes.com/exodus-controversies-christian-bales-barbaric-moses-all-white-cast-stir-critics-1714839>.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Horror films such as *The Blair Witch Project* in particular have demonstrated a mastery of crafting successful external myths.

Poem: *The Heretic*

C.R. Resetarits

The Heretic in lieu of Easter Mass sips blood-orange mimosas on the weathered deck of a rented house on Folly Beach. She floats a while in the briny arms of rolling waves, a child again.

The Heretic ponders Marys, Christs, and Popes but only dolphins past the breakers make her smile, only the sun bleaches bone-snow white her inclinations. Sun/salt basted, she ponders knots of seaweed crisscrossing her feet.

The Heretic chases grace alone. Her own heart plumbs the disquisitive depths of the ocean's salt-sanctioned breeze or opposing muck-riddled marsh. The Heretic stays derelict

but not in jest nor in a state gone slave or posed but in a state less safe than circum-pomp or circumstance. Her blessing/blame a sun-kissed soul, her penance dancing in between the diadem of priest or king, that hat of thorns, the head of pins.

Mormon Domestic Art: Comfort and Communion

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Introduction

The function of religious art depends upon the viewer's gaze. It is common for the believer to seek an affirmation of their faith from religious art. Believing Mormons (also known as Latter-day Saints or LDS) are no different. Throughout the 20th century, Mormon art was commissioned by church leadership to illustrate specific aspects of the faith: Arnold Friberg painted characters and events from the Book of Mormon; Harry Anderson painted Bible characters and stories; and Tom Lovell and Ken Riley painted scenes from Mormon history.¹ The work of these four artists has been and continues to be so prevalent in Mormon churches, homes, and classroom materials that they have shaped the Mormon spiritual psyche. Together with the work of Heinrich Hoffman, Carl Bloch, Del Parsons, Minerva Tichert, Ted Henninger, Walter Rane, and Robert Barrett, these images make up the collective visualization of Mormon cosmology. Much of the work of the aforementioned artists has been purchased by the LDS church, printed in large quantities and made available to members of the church at a low cost. This has contributed to a burgeoning of the display of religious art in Mormon homes in recent decades. Additionally, the practice of displaying homemade and personalized religious art objects such as plaques, paintings, and photography has become very popular. Mormon domestic religious art and its expression of the beliefs of a family will be the focus of this paper.

The question of domestic art's artistic value will not be pursued here. Instead, this paper examines the value of domestic art as material culture. The primary function of such art objects, besides decoration, is to affirm the household's commitment to specific Mormon teachings. Consequently, the presence or absence of certain popular art objects may signal a household's

orthodoxy or heterodoxy. I will examine two Mormon wall hangings in particular: a plaque bearing the family name and the phrase “Families are Forever,”² and a family portrait covered with a transparency on which is printed “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.”³ The display of these art objects is a sign of allegiance to certain values. Their absence, on the other hand, may indicate a homeowner’s discomfort with professed principles, and serve to identify them with unofficial subgroups developing within Mormonism. Homosexuality and transgenderism are some new issues that cause the formation of such subgroups, but other issues are as old as religion itself, such as the struggle for belief.

All of the Mormon artists mentioned previously produced relatively realistic, representational art. Representational realism is a straightforward accessible artistic style. Some of these artists thrived in an era when illustration was in high demand with the popularity of commercial magazines. This type of art does not usually intend to challenge the viewer or raise serious questions; it is very often simply illustrating a story. This artistic style resonates well with Mormon confidence in their ability to know truth. According to Mormon scripture, in 1820, founding prophet Joseph Smith was on a quest to discover the truth amidst various protestant sects in New England. He searched the Bible, attended several meetings, and then, prompted by a scripture in the book of James, he went into the woods to ask God which of the denominations was true. He reports that on that occasion, God the Father and Jesus Christ appeared to him and instructed him regarding the formation of a new church. This simple narrative is the foundation of the Mormon view that theological truth is knowable and accessible to humans. From that point of view, it is not surprising that angels are made visible in Tom Lovell’s paintings.

In his article “Making the Absent Visible: The Real, Ideal and the Abstract in Mormon Art,” Barry Laga explains Mormon consumption of realistic and representational art, “Much of the art we see in church publications exemplifies [the] desire to ground spiritual experiences in a knowable and palpable reality.”⁴ The heavenly visitors who appeared to Joseph were corporeal, and they existed with Joseph in space and time. Stories from the Book of Mormon of ancient prophets like the brother of Jared, who sees Christ as an embodied personage, reinforce this doctrine of the materiality of spiritual beings. And the promise in the final pages of the Book of Mormon which states that “if ye will ask with real intent ye may know the truth of all things” suggests that believers can trust their senses to learn truth.⁵

This demystifying of the spiritual realm results in less mysterious religious art. David Morgan, professor of religion and art at Duke University, explains that the pleasure of the gaze of the believer is in *recognizing* the entity behind the image. Morgan’s research subjects report that they know Warner Sallman’s *Head of Christ* is not the actual Jesus, and that it may not even look like the historical Jesus, but the iconography is historically consistent with the absent object of their devotion: the savior they expect and wait upon.⁶ The function of visual piety is to affirm the viewer’s expectations, not to raise questions:

Yes, it is kitsch, but so what? They are not about artistic expression, but about community, about prayer, about devotional feeling. These images are the intimate symbols of the community of feeling to which [Mormons] belong ... [This] is the mental furniture of the Mormon faith.⁷

The pleasure derived from recognition follows from the epistemological certainty discussed above. It is normal in Mormon church services for members to testify that they “know God lives,” but not all Mormons would choose to express their faith in these terms. Just as these Mormons may choose different words, they would probably also choose different art. These Mormons might, like Laga, feel that art which only depicts the known and the comprehensible misses an essential aspect of human life, which can include a relationship with an unknowable infinite. This paper will use the terms orthodox and heterodox to refer to these different types of believers/viewers.

What might a heterodox Mormon desire in art? Perhaps art which is not immediately recognizable. She may be skeptical of the ability of representational art to deliver the infinite given its limitations. She may be reticent to trust her senses given her knowledge of her own limitations. Maybe she would find comfort in the fact that her experience of the spiritual is inexpressible, otherwise it would be captured and cease to be infinite. This paper will call her an *agnostic believer*. The gaze of the agnostic believer might be suspicious of figural religious art and troubled by the easy representation of the divine. If the divine is infinite, it is unknowable and cannot be affirmed. Russian historian of religion and philosopher Mircea Eliade had agnostic believers in mind when he argued that traditional religious iconography had lost its potency. In order to create works that are sacred, modern artists need to find their own language.⁸

A visual language designed for the agnostic believer will not provide the pleasure of recognition that Morgan talks about. It is more likely to jolt than to affirm. An example of such a jolt is described by Hugh Nibley: “In Wulf Barsch’s paintings there is a sense of deep concern, an ominous and brooding feeling of admonition and warning. This I find disquieting until I remember that is exactly the effect the reading of the Scriptures has on me.”⁹ By comparing the unease created by Barsch’s somewhat abstract work to that which he feels when reading the scriptures, Nibley suggests that artwork which challenges comfort may more accurately reflect the human relation with the divine. However, art which challenges is not usually as popular as art which affirms. Though Barsch’s work was included in a Mormon art exhibition at the Church History Museum in Salt Lake, it is not the sort of work that would be found in most Mormon households.

The orthodox Mormon gaze and its appetite for affirmation supports an abundance of material culture in Mormon homes. Colleen McDannell’s *Material Christianity* suggests we examine such art objects for their cultural

significance rather than limiting our view by applying a purely aesthetic judgment to them. She writes:

American Christians ... want to see, hear, and touch God. It is not enough for Christians to go to church, lead a righteous life, and hope for an eventual place in heaven. People build religion into the landscape, they make and buy pious images for their homes, and they wear special reminders of their faith next to their bodies.¹⁰

Many domestic art objects serve a ritual function that supersedes the artistic. Mormon belief about the importance of home and family makes conditions optimal for the creation of devotional art in the home. Mormons are taught to make their homes holy places conducive to the Spirit of God by holding daily family prayer, scripture study, and weekly family home evenings. Parents teach their children to have personal prayer night and morning, and to personally study scripture daily. The Book of Mormon encourages members to “cry over all your flocks ... over all your household ... over the crops of your fields.”¹¹ The idea is to bring the divine into daily life. Art objects in Mormon homes may be the “flotsam of consumer culture” from one point of view, but they are also “[a] significant piece of a meaningful whole.”¹² Consider the following passage of Mormon scripture:

Organize yourselves: prepare every needful thing, and establish a house, even a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God; That your incomings may be in the name of the Lord, that your outgoings may be in the name of the Lord, that all your salutations may be in the name of the Lord, with uplifted hands unto the Most High.¹³

Though this passage is the dedicatory prayer for the LDS Temple in Kirtland, Ohio, it is often held up as an example of the ideal home. As a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy, Elder Gary Stevenson said:

The admonition to “establish ... a house of prayer, a house of fasting, a house of faith, a house of learning, a house of glory, a house of order, a house of God” provides divine insight into the type of home the Lord would have us build. And the LDS Bible dictionary includes in the definition of “temple” the thought that “only the home can compare with the temple in sacredness.”¹⁴

Elder Stevenson elaborates:

For me this suggests a sacred relationship between the temple and the home. ... We can make our homes a house of the Lord. ... As you walk through the rooms of your home, do you see uplifting images which include appropriate pictures of the temple and the Savior?¹⁵

Mormon domestic art builds a bridge between the sacred and the every-day.

One popular domestic art object is a wooden plaque, usually hand-made, on which is painted the family surname. The surname is then painted over, in another font, with the phrase “Families are Forever.” (Figure 1)



Figure 1: Children's portraits hung beneath plaque bearing the family name and the phrase "Families Are Forever." (Courtesy of Cynthia Finch)

Note how the phrase “Families are Forever” pierces through the family name, suggesting a knitting or binding action. The representation of these words symbolizes the powerful Mormon doctrine of eternal families. The most important temple ordinance is eternal marriage, performed with authority to seal spouses to each other beyond death. Likewise, any children born to a couple so married will be sealed to them forever, hence the photos of individual children underneath the plaque. Furthermore, through genealogical investigation, ancestors who died without the opportunity to marry in the temple can have these ordinances performed for them by proxy through living family members. Mormon scripture recounts that the prophet Elijah returned this essential sealing authority to Joseph Smith so that generations of families could be linked together.¹⁶ Only those thus sealed can live together with family members in the eternities.

In 1979, Ruth Gardner, a member of the Mormon church’s Primary General Board, wrote the children’s hymn “Families Can Be Together

Forever” codifying the popular phrase. Primary is the Mormon church’s children’s organization in which children ages 3-12 gather for lessons and song each Sunday. The lyrics teach young children the importance of their eternal family unit:

I have a fam'ly here on earth, They are so good to me.
I want to share my life with them through all eternity.

While I am in my early years, I'll prepare most carefully
So I can marry in God's temple for eternity.

Fam'lies can be together forever Through Heav'nly Father's
plan. I always want to be with my own family,
And the Lord has shown me how I can.
The Lord has shown me how I can.¹⁷

This song became very popular in Mormon church services because of its simple expression of the doctrine of eternal families. Contemporary Mormon mothers likely grew up singing this song, and sing it with their children today. The display of the phrase “Families are Forever” and the singing of the song reinforce the message to children that their family’s eternal sealing depends upon their obedience to gospel principles. The wooden plaque bearing the family name and this significant doctrinal phrase is a powerful presence in a Mormon child’s life. It reminds them daily of their family’s important relationship to God. In the face of tragedy, such as death, they would be comforted to know that their family bonds exist after death. Other religious art objects found in their homes reinforce this same message.

“The Family: A Proclamation to the World” with family portrait (Figure 2) is another common religious art object found in Mormon homes. However, this object involves more specific doctrine than the “Families are Forever” board. It is a matted and framed family portrait covered with a transparency on which is printed the text of “The Family: A Proclamation to the World.”¹⁸ Though such a sign could certainly be displayed in a non-Mormon home or in the home of a Mormon who is not temple attending, it is usually an outward designation, like a badge, of a temple marriage.



Figure 2: 11x14 Framed family portrait with transparent Proclamation overlay

In September 1995, LDS President Gordon B. Hinckley read the proclamation for the first time in the church's General Conference. Shortly after this conference, it was published in a single-page format signed by all the living apostles and prophets, giving it the status of scripture. The proclamation details the nature of the eternal family by explaining that, before this life, human beings lived with God, that they are His spiritual offspring, and that Adam and Eve were commanded to create a family and be parents. It also declares that the family is central to God's plan and that all humans are created in God's image and have a divine nature and purpose. It elaborates that children are entitled to a mother and father, both of whom are responsible to love, teach and provide a good home for them. It denounces all types of abuse towards family members and calls on government bodies to support this definition of the family. It identifies particular roles for men and women: men are to protect and provide for the family, while women are to mother and nurture children. It endorses only heterosexual marriage as ordained of God and proclaims that gender is eternal. In 1997, the proclamation was included in an amicus brief to petition the supreme court of Hawaii to reject same-sex marriage. Historically, politics and religion frequently intertwine, and the creation and display of a personalized object, such as the proclamation/portrait, expresses powerful allegiance to the doctrine therein. It rejects homosexuality, same-sex marriage, and transgenderism. Heterodox Mormons may feel differently.

The reality is that some Mormons are gay or transgender, or they have gay or transgender children or grandchildren, and so feel at odds with the views

expressed in the proclamation. The proclamation makes them choose between allegiance to religious belief and allegiance to a family member. Many church members are tormented by the conflict of sexuality as a human construct on the one hand, and as an eternal creation of an infinite God on the other. This is no abstract principle as they know and love many gay people. In any case, with the introduction of church policy that requires children to denounce the homosexual practice of their gay parents, some believers find themselves increasingly at odds with these teachings. Some lose faith and break from the church, while others choose to remain, creating a new subgroup within Mormonism. It is a relatively easy fix for these members to simply not hang the proclamation.

After the proclamation was read in General Conference in 1995, copies were distributed to church members around the world. At no cost, church members could easily acquire a copy on parchment paper, which many framed and hung in their homes. These proclamation plaques are sometimes created in monthly meetings for the Mormon women's organization known as the Relief Society. Occasionally, these meetings involve arts and crafts activities to help women in the church produce art objects at a low cost. Today, a 4x5" copy of the text is available from the church-owned Deseret Book Store for \$1, as well as several low-cost framed versions.¹⁹ Online DIY instructions provide a link to the proclamation which can be printed onto a transparency. The transparency and the portrait, not including framing, cost less than \$4.²⁰ Additionally, reproductions of the work of Anderson, Lowell, Parsons, Bloch, Tichert and others are readily available and inexpensive. A collection of 137 pictures called "The Gospel Art Book" can be purchased at the church-owned Deseret Book for \$3.50.²¹ This type of art is easy to get and easy to read. This ease has been a part of the orthodox Mormon gaze throughout the 20th century, but should religious art be easy?

Like Magritte's playful painting of the "pipe," the heterodox viewer senses that there is a dishonesty in images; they appear to be something they are not. Is it possible for the infinite to appear in a work of art? This was what Mark Rothko worked for all of his life. The challenge, which he referred to as tragic, is that the infinite must express itself through a finite medium.²² The viewer must participate in the creative act; must be engaged. If it is a genuinely creative act, the outcome is unknown. This is what Christian existential philosopher Paul Tillich meant when he argued that realism can express the divine (what he called ultimate reality) but only if it renders reality unrecognizable; this is the key.²³ The experience is creative if it presents the viewer with something they *thought* they knew but which now appears in what we might call "another form."²⁴

A passage from Marilynne Robinson's *Gilead* will illustrate. In this passage, the character John Ames observes a young couple. He thinks he sees something familiar and common, a boy teasing and flirting with a girl, but something uncommon is revealed:

The sun had come up brilliantly after a heavy rain, and the trees were glistening and very wet. On some impulse, plain exuberance, I suppose, the fellow jumped up and caught hold of a branch, and a storm of luminous water came pouring down on the two of them, and they laughed and took off running, the girl sweeping water off her hair and her dress as if she were a little bit disgusted, but she wasn't. It was a beautiful thing to see, like something from a myth. I don't know why I thought of that now, except perhaps because it is easy to believe in such moments that water was made primarily for blessing, and only secondarily for growing vegetables or doing the wash. I wish I had paid more attention to it.²⁵

When the otherwise trivial scene before Ames takes on the quality of a myth, it becomes something he *does not recognize* in the sense to which Tillich refers. The reader sees Ames' stream of consciousness skips a beat and he glimpses something beyond himself. Ultimate reality is revealed to Ames, and so vicariously to the reader, through something they thought they knew but didn't.

Caravaggio's *Supper at Emmaus* provides another powerful example of a realistic work of art that doesn't affirm but disorients. Charles Scribner argues that Caravaggio's beardless, unrecognizable Christ initially destabilizes the viewer only to then reward her with the same revelatory experience the disciples are having: first the viewer doesn't recognize the risen Lord, then she does.²⁶ Caravaggio creates a viewing experience that is initially uncomfortable, but ultimately revelatory. The revelation of ultimate reality can be uncomfortable because we are moved beyond ourselves.

Historically, the Mormon church has, understandably, favored representational realism. The vast majority of art produced for temples, church buildings, publications, and teaching materials is realistic. The preference for this style reflects a general Mormon confidence in a person's ability to know truth. Most contemporary Mormon domestic art, as well as art in churches, temples, and lesson materials is designed to strengthen that view, and be accessible both financially and aesthetically. The danger of only producing this sort of religious art is two-fold: it alienates those whose experience of the metaphysical realm is different, and it diminishes the infinite. Consider that the pleasure of the orthodox believer is in recognizing figures and truths they already know. Those who encounter the divine in scripture do not react this way typically. They often need to be told "Fear not," suggesting that communion with the divine is, as Hugh Nibley observed, a jolt not a comfort.²⁷ Believers will surround themselves with art that tells their story, or resonates their way of understanding the world. Certain domestic Mormon art objects are highly charged because of the doctrine they express. Agnostic believers, as a subgroup of Mormons, should do more than turn away from

popular objects with which they don't identify. They should invest in religious art that expresses their way of experiencing the infinite. As a result, with time, more complex religious art will be generated to enrich us all.

Notes

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- ⁵ The Book of Mormon (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints: Salt Lake City, 1981), *Moroni* 10:5.
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- ⁷ Winston, Kimberly. "Mormon Gospel Art: Kitsch or Classic?," Mar. 17, 2016. <http://religionnews.com/2016/03/17/mormons-kitsch-art-classic/>.
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- ⁹ Stephanie K. Northrup, Mormon Abstract. *Glimpses*, January 2010. http://mormonartistsgroup.com/Mormon_Artists_Group/Abstract.html
- ¹⁰ Colleen McDannell, *Material Mormonism* (Yale University Press: New Haven, 1995), 1.
- ¹¹ The Book of Mormon, Alma 34:25.
- ¹² McDannell, *Material Mormonism* 34
- ¹³ *Doctrine and Covenants* (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints: Salt Lake City, 198), 109:8-9, as recorded by Joseph Smith in 1836.
- ¹⁴ Stevenson, Gary. "Sacred Homes, Sacred Temples," *Ensign*, May, 2009. <https://www.lds.org/ensign/2009/05/sacred-homes-sacred-temples?lang=eng>.
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ *Doctrine and Covenants* 110:13-16.
- ¹⁷ Gardner, *Children's Songbook*.
- ¹⁸ See note 3.
- ¹⁹ "DeseretBook.com." The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, accessed May 4, 2017. <https://deseretbook.com/products?utf8=%E2%9C%93&keywords=gospel+art+book>
- ²⁰ Chelsey Johnson, "Easy DIY Family Proclamation Picture," *Life with my Littles* (blog), May 4, 2017, <http://www.lifewithmylittles.com/2014/03/easy-diy-family-proclamation-picture.html>.
- ²¹ See note 17

<https://deseretbook.com/products?utf8=%E2%9C%93&keywords=gospel+art+book>

²² Mark Rothko, Letter to the Art Editor of the New York Times, 1943. <http://homepages.neiu.edu/~wbsieger/Art201/201Read/201-Rothko.pdf>

²³ Paul Tillich, "Art and Ultimate Reality" (1959). *Art, Creativity, and the Sacred*, edited by Diane Apostolos-Cappadona (London: Continuum Publishing Company, 1984), 220.

²⁴ Mark 16:12. Christ appears to disciples on the road to Emmaus in "another form." The Latin version of the phrase, "in alia effigie," is how Caravaggio titled his painting of Christ revealing himself to his disciples in Emmaus.

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²⁷ See note 9.

Art and Religion: An Interview with cover artist Wulf Barsch

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Wulf Barsch was born in Reudnitz, Bohemia (now Czech Republic) in 1943. He spent his youth in Germany and Austria, and studied drawing with Bauhaus masters at Studienatelier Kaschak in Hamburg, Germany, and painting and printmaking with Bauhaus masters at Staatliche Hochschule fuer Bildende Kuenste in Hamburg, Germany. His first exhibition in 1962 was at Galerie Des Volksheim in Hamburg, Germany. He was drafted into the German army from 1965-1968, and then continued his studies in painting and printmaking in Hannover, Germany. In 1968, he earned a Masters of Fine Art from Werkkunstschule. He earned two Masters of Art degrees at Brigham Young University in 1971 (printmaking) and 1972 (painting and drawing), and then joined the full-time faculty. His work has received numerous awards, including the Prix de Rome in 1975-1976, and his work has been exhibited nationally and internationally in one-person shows.

LW: We are delighted that you agreed to feature your work on the cover of this issue of *Interdisciplinary Humanities*, and our first question is about that work, *The Ascension of Isaiah*. Will you discuss specifically the symbols and constellations found in this work?

WB: The pyramid in this work is foremost. The pyramid is basically a temple: the pyramid becomes the mountain of the Lord's house. There is a reflection of the pyramid in the water below, and it represents the lower half of the star of David where man reaches out to God, and where man has solid ground on which to stand and reach up to God. At the bottom of the painting, you will

see Alpha Draconis which represents pulling us toward the earth. The comet refers to the coming of Christ. In all of my paintings, the male is the cedar tree—haughty, unbending brittle—while the female is always the palm—bending, protecting. The spiral represents one undeviating course to one great whole.

As for the colors, I use only pure pigments in my work. There are no artificial pigments. The blue in this painting is called Tourareg Blue and comes out of Africa; it gives feelings of eternity and depth. Red usually stands for the earth.

LW: This issue of *IH* is focused on religion and the arts. What are your thoughts on representational versus non-representational devotional art? For example, Jews and Muslims do not use representational art but Christians and Hindus do. Some Buddhists do and some do not. Your thoughts?

WB: Art often supports the narrative of the scripture, just as music supports the lyrics. For example, most religious Mormon art is illustration. It is more emotional, not a transfer of knowledge. We can fall for the illustration instead of the real thing. But art can make a point.

LW: Brigham Young University professor Hugh Nibley has said your paintings provided the same sort of healthy discomfort that he experienced reading the scriptures. It seems he was suggesting believers should not be at ease in their belief but should feel prompted to serve, repent, strive along a path of discipleship. How do you respond to this kind of reaction to your paintings?

WB: [The scriptures] make me uncomfortable. Scriptures are there because most of the time, we need reminding. Art should remind us as well—a thorn in our side to get us back on track. [The scriptures teach that] all of our time and all of our talents should be dedicated to establishing Zion. That should make us all uncomfortable.

LW: In his famous treatise *The Sacred and the Modern Artist*, Mircea Eliade, historian and philosopher said, “There is a certain symmetry between the perspective of the philosopher and theologian and that of the modern artist: for the one as for the other the ‘death of God’ signifies above all the impossibility of expressing a religious experience in traditional religious language. . . From a certain point of view, the ‘death of God’ would rather seem to be the destruction of an idol.” As a modern artist, does Eliade’s observation

resonate with you? If so, how did you find a language in which to express your faith that was not idolatrous?

WB: If religious language is to be productive, it cannot be wallowing in feelings. Durer's religious art is very uncomfortable. Michelangelo understood that. In the beginning, Michelangelo was an extremely good illustrator of a point. In Florence we can see Michelangelo's art that he did at the end of his life, and it makes people uncomfortable.

It's not the language—every time religion is given to man, a new alphabet is given to man—including Mormonism, which received the Deseret alphabet. Religion is always telling the same old story, but with a new twist to it. Mormons resisted the Deseret alphabet and threw it out. My work is not a new language but trying to find a new way of telling the same old story. Why are writings called “sacred?” Usually the alphabet is the most beautiful part.

LW: How would you characterize the relationship between your art and your faith? Have the two grown and changed together over your life? Has there ever been tension between the two?

WB: My craftsmanship and my religion are all the same for me. The Latin word “religion” is to tie yourself to something, to make contracts. When I think that everything I have, the Lord has given to me, I always feel inadequate. That can be a problem.

LW: So much religious art is designed to teach a doctrine or promote faith in a religious narrative. Have you ever felt the weight of this function of art? Are you comfortable with or troubled by any sense of responsibility to strengthen the faith of your viewers?

WB: I'm not illustrating a doctrine—I try to have that visual alphabet that is parallel to the scriptures. My main objective is to promote thought and questions—just as Jesus taught in parables. Teaching is a very risky subject. It's very difficult to give up your ego. I put myself aside and let the inspiration through. Mystery is initiated knowledge—not meant to stay mysteries—we should know God, not just have an illustration of Him. But we must get past the illustration. Art is craftsmanship plus inspiration.

Book Review: Make America (fill in the blank) Again

Jones, Robert P. *The End of White Christian America*. Simon and Schuster, 2016. 320 pp.

Halfway through Robert P. Jones' exhaustively researched *The End of White Christian America*, two charts appear which perfectly illustrate his central thesis: white Christian Americans are no longer running the country. The first chart shows the steady decline of white Christian Americans as a proportion of the overall electorate—from 73% in 1992 to 57% in 2012; the second chart displays the percentage that voted for each party in those same years.¹ In the 1992 Presidential election, 86% of the people who voted Republican were white Christians while only 60% who voted Democratic were. In the 2012 showdown between Romney and Obama, white Christians still made up 80% of Republican voters but now comprised only 37% of the Democratic vote.² This decline in white Christian voters as part of the overall electorate, coupled with the Republican party's continued reliance on their support, "will likely set the GOP back when it turns to the task of reclaiming the White House in 2016."³ That's as close as Jones gets to predicting the outcome of the 2016 Presidential election and though his assumption turned out to be wrong, one can hardly blame him for reaching it when confronted with the overwhelming data presented in his book.

Jones has the perfect background to write a data driven analysis of religion in twenty-first century America; he has a Ph.D. in religion from Emory University, an M.Div. from Southwest Baptist Theological Seminary, and a B.S. in Mathematics and Computing Science from Mississippi College.⁴ As CEO of Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI), Jones and his organization have provided evidence-based research on religious membership, demographic and cultural changes, and attitudes on a wide range of hot button issues. *The End of White Christian America* was published in July 2016; the paperback edition came out a year later and includes a response to election of Donald Trump to the White House. The charts, graphs, and statistics sprinkled through the book

are startling. Many are drawn from surveys conducted by PRRI, but data also comes from sources such as the Pew Research Center and the national census. As the title suggests, this onslaught of information convincingly shows that white Christians, seen by many as the cultural backbone of this country, are rapidly losing their dominance.

The End of White Christian America might have been a more convincing title, however, had that very demographic not succeeded in electing our current president. Seventy-five percent of white Protestant evangelicals voted for Trump and 64% strongly approved of the job he was doing in the early months of his administration.⁵ Yet, Jones points out in a New Times Op-Ed written immediately after Trump's election, "Today, only 43% of Americans identify as white and Christians, and only 30% as white and Protestant. In 1976, roughly eight in ten (81%) Americans identified as white and were affiliated with a Christian denomination, and a majority (55%) were white Protestants."⁶ Not only are white Christians on the decline, white Americans will no longer be in the majority by 2042, according to Census Bureau predictions, while Hispanic, Asian and population groups who identify as bi-racial will have doubled.⁷ White Christians are also aging out of their former position of cultural dominance. The majority of white evangelical Protestants (62%), white Catholics (62%) and white mainline Protestants (59%) are over 50 years old. Conversely, approximately a third of American Muslims (42%), Hindus (36%), Buddhists (35%), and the religiously unaffiliated (34%) are under the age of 30.⁸ Both time and demographics are against them. Perhaps the *nearing* end of white Christian America would be a more apt claim?

Reading Jones' book in the summer before the presidential election, with its clear conclusions that white Christians Americans had lost their grip on the wheel of political power, it's hard to imagine just how Trump came to victory. Jones wonders in the afterward of his paperback edition of the book "How did a group that once proudly identified itself as 'values voters' come to support a candidate who had been married three times, cursed from the campaign stump, owned casinos, appeared on the cover of *Playboy Magazine*, and most remarkably, was caught on tape bragging in the most graphic terms about habitually grabbing women's genitals without their permission?"⁹ The answers to why a demographic that once termed itself the Moral Majority would support a candidate who did not seem to share their convictions, and how our nation became so deeply divided, can also be found in the data.

Amid the many fascinating charts and graphs sprinkled throughout Jones' book, one of the most telling is the breakdown of data from a 2015 American Values Survey conducted by PRRI. The survey asked, "Since the 1950s, do you think American culture and way of life has mostly changed for the better, or has it mostly changed for the worse?"¹⁰ The line in the middle of the graph shows that 46% of all Americans combined believe that American culture has mostly changed for the better. Above this line, the majority of Hispanics

(54%), Hispanic Catholics (59%), Black Protestants (55%), and Blacks (60%) answer that America has changed for the better.¹¹ Persons without a religious affiliation have the greatest majority, 63%, who claim that life in America has gotten better rather than worse. The groups whose majority claim that American culture has mostly changed for the worst are all white. White Catholics (58%), white mainline Protestants (58%), and white evangelicals (72%) believe our way of life has declined since the 1950s.¹² Trump's "Make America Great Again" slogan clearly resonated with them.

What accounts for this disparity? Several factors, as Jones illustrates. Attitudes surrounding issues of race, culture, and sexuality play a large role. Same sex marriage, for example, once seen as a topic of interest only to a small demographic has become a political and cultural touchstone. A person's political persuasion and religious affiliation can often be approximated by his or her approval or disapproval of legalized same sex marriage. As recently as 1988, however, "only 11 percent of Americans approved of legalizing same sex marriage."¹³ In a relatively short amount of time, a majority of Americans, 54% by 2014, had come to approve.¹⁴ This change in the cultural landscape affected religious and non-religious Americans. For many years, most religious Americans, no matter what their affiliation, disapproved of marriage between same sex partners. By 2014, according to PRRI's American Values Atlas survey, those attitudes had changed. A majority of Buddhists (84%), Jews (77%), white mainline Protestants (62%), white Catholics (61%), Hispanic Catholics (60%), Orthodox Christians (56%), and Hindus (55%) now expressed support.¹⁵ Forty-three percent of American Muslims were in favor of legalized same sex marriage.¹⁶ In contrast to these numbers, only 28% of white evangelical Protestants and 27% of Mormons were in favor of allowing same sex marriage. The drastic difference in these numbers seem to suggest a cultural divide on issues of sexual orientation and sexual identity that is also reflected in attitudes around race and perceptions of racism.

Jones reminds his readers of the racial tensions which flared in Ferguson, Missouri in the spring of 2015 in response to a grand jury decision not to indict white police officer Darren Wilson who had shot and killed Michael Brown, an unarmed black teenager, months before. The Reverend Franklin Graham, son of Billy Graham, entered the fray by posting on his Facebook page a message which read in part, "Listen up - Blacks, Whites, Latinos, and everybody else. most police shootings can be avoided. it comes down to respect for authority and obedience...even if you think the police officer is wrong - YOU OBEY."¹⁷ Graham's authoritarian message was praised by many of his followers, but sparked an angry rebuttal from several fellow non-white evangelical ministers of Hispanic, African-American, and Asian-American

identity. In their letter to Graham, they castigated him for his "cavalier disregard for the enduring impacts and outcomes of the legal regimes that enslaved and oppressed people of color, made in the image of God - from Native American genocide and containment, to colonial and antebellum slavery, through Jim Crow and peonage, to our current system of mass incarceration and criminalization."¹⁸ Graham's tone-deaf attitude to issues of central importance to non-white people of faith was echoed by other white Christian leaders such as Rick Warren who started #AllLivesMattertoGod as a response to #BlackLivesMatter.¹⁹

As Jones points out, the evidence is clear that non-white Americans are more likely to be harassed and killed by police officers than white Americans; however, the issue of race in policing is another site of deep divides along religious and racial lines.²⁰ Among Black Americans, 74% responding to a PRRI survey said that they felt "recent killings of African-American men by police are part of a broader pattern of how police treat African-Americans."²¹ Sixty-six percent of unaffiliated white Americans agreed as did 43% of white mainline Protestants. As for white evangelicals, only 29% felt this statement was true.²² How do different groups within our country view the world so differently? Because they live in different worlds. The data provided in Jones' book often packs an emotional wallop. One gut-wrenching example is when Jones details the findings of a 2013 PRRI survey that found "the core social networks of white Americans are a remarkable 91% white and only one percent black," Hispanic, or other race.²³ Core networks are small groups of people with whom a person has shared or discussed important issues in the last six months. Most white Americans, it appears, talk primarily with fellow white Americans. Even more discouraging, 85% of white evangelical and mainline Protestants have "entirely white core networks;" in other words, they don't just have mostly white friends, they only have white friends.²⁴ Jones quotes the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. who famously said, "We must face the fact that in America, the church is still the most segregated major institution in America."²⁵

Jones' eulogy for white Christian Americans ends on an optimistic note; "in the soil fertilized by White Christians America's remains, new life is taking root."²⁶ Of course Jones penned those words before the 2016 Presidential election, after which many were convinced that hope for a new era of diversity, tolerance, and progress had come to an end. Almost a year into the new administration, however, signs are clear that political involvement, often motivated by religious beliefs, is increasing. Coalitions between religious and non-religious groups, as well as the rise of the "Christian left," have organized against common-ground issues such as building a wall between the United States and Mexico and deporting the Dreamers, students currently protected under Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA).²⁷ These groups may represent a new era for faith-based action and interaction. Jones will remain on

top of all new developments. His fascinating book collects only a portion of the information that PRRI generates daily and that is easily accessible on their website or through their blogs. The racial, religious, and cultural landscape of America is clearly changing, but what that may mean for future generations remains a work in process.

~Ann Branan Horak
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Notes

- ¹ Jones, Robert P. *The End of White Christian America*. (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2016), 107.
- ² Ibid, 107.
- ³ Ibid, 107.
- ⁴ Staff Bios "Robert P. Jones, PhD, CEO," *PRRI*.
- ⁵ Smith, Gregory A., "Among white evangelicals, regular churchgoers are the most supportive of Trump." *FactTank: News in the Numbers*, April 26, 2017.
- ⁶ Jones, Robert P. "The Rage of White, Christian America." *New York Times*. November 10, 2016.
- ⁷ Jones, Robert P. *The End of White Christian America*. (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2016), 41.
- ⁸ Jones, Robert P. "The Rage of White, Christian America." *New York Times*. November 10, 2016.
- ⁹ Jones, Robert P. "Trump Can't Reverse the Decline of White Christian America." *The Atlantic*. July 4, 2017. This article includes the bulk of the afterward to the paperback edition.
- ¹⁰ Jones, Robert P. *The End of White Christian America*. (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2016), 86.
- ¹¹ Ibid, 86.
- ¹² Ibid, 86.
- ¹³ Ibid, 123.
- ¹⁴ Ibid, 124.
- ¹⁵ Ibid, 127.
- ¹⁶ Ibid, 127.
- ¹⁷ Ibid, 148.
- ¹⁸ Ibid, 149.
- ¹⁹ Ibid, 151.
- ²⁰ Ibid, 151.
- ²¹ Ibid, 154.
- ²² Ibid, 154.
- ²³ Ibid, 159.
- ²⁴ Ibid, 159.

²⁵ Ibid, 164.

²⁶ Ibid, 239.

²⁷ Malone, Scott. "'Religious Left' Emerges as U.S. Political Force in Trump Era." *Reuters*, March 27, 2017.

Book Review

Ciorra, Anthony J. *Beauty: A Path to God*. New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2013. 136 pp.

The 21st century has introduced a paradigm shift in spirituality. The Christian church, in its multiple denominations, is affected by this new spiritual climate that introduces alternative spiritual principles in order to achieve understanding and knowledge. Moreover, this spiritual climate is disrupted by digital platforms and media access to information that has increased exponentially and that offers multiple spiritual perspectives that shape the views of its audience. Ciorra asserts that a progressive view of spiritual consciousness is not a threat to the fundamental truths and principles of the Christian faith because these principles provide an opportunity to connect religion/spirituality through various forms of art that ultimately reveal the beauty of God in multiple dimensions. He further examines these different branches of beauty that spring from a spiritual consciousness that is fostered by active spiritual exercises.

Every chapter builds on the premise that the current external forces are perspectives or lenses to open up new interpretations about beauty in art and spirituality, beauty in the present moment, beauty and forgiveness, beauty and gratitude, and darkness as a path to cultivating beauty. Ciorra does not provide a definition about beauty, instead the term remains ambiguous. However, he does provide examples so that the reader is able to develop a personal interpretation of “beauty” that is rooted in spiritual principles. He concludes each chapter with a list of activities with external resources for further reflection on the subject matter.

In chapter one, Ciorra describes art as a powerful tool that incorporates symbols to represent universal truths that bypass the logical mind in order to appeal to the emotions. Ciorra states that there are two types of artists: one is gifted and the other is an intuitive individual who can generate art from spiritual inspiration.¹ Beauty is not easily identified, but requires a deep

understanding that converts the intangible to tangible. Ciorra notes that spiritual artists embody the characteristics of the contemporary world, but through the lens of Christianity the reader is able to see beauty through multiple interpretations.² The premise of the chapter is to recognize the significance of art in the context of spirituality in the Bible, represented in art forms, and described by prominent Catholic clergy.

Ciorra introduces beauty and spirituality as two parallels that do not intersect. He implies that this intersection is misguided because of a 21st century context:

The “I want spirituality but not religion” mantra of today’s culture points to the fact that there is an emptiness in the human soul that is crying out for the mystical presence of God and is not being met by the ancient ways of the spiritual tradition.³

However, many of the examples he provides do not intersect Christian views with various non-Christian examples of spirituality, which reflect truths consistent with the Christian point of view. The inclusion of non-Christian spiritual examples would reinforce his point and solidify that alternative views do not challenge the ideals of the Christian faith but address the traditional views of God from a different perspective.

In the introduction to Chapter 2, Ciorra expresses unease about the current state of the world that is heavily influenced by material success and narcissism that have distracted individuals from the subtle beauty in simple day-to-day activities. Ciorra states: “In the specific context of a spirituality of beauty, evil is to allow oneself to become distracted from the beauty of the present moment.”⁴ He further elaborates on how one can notice beauty in the form of poetry, prose, dance, music, and paintings that reveal a fusion between the human experience and spiritual enlightenment. However, people are subjected to a myriad of complex emotions and experiences that interrupt this reflective process. Therefore, Ciorra delineates practical exercises for an increased consciousness that foster the ability to extract beauty from the present moment. Ciorra’s interpretations of art and beauty in the present moment range between art appreciation and practical examples to develop spiritual awareness through reflection. Ciorra’s abundance of examples reflects an extensive knowledge about various works of art. Yet, the theme of seeing beauty in the moment of this chapter was possibly understated because the reader was overwhelmed by the surplus of information.

Beauty and forgiveness are the foci of the next chapter. Ciorra examines the consequences of not forgiving someone, the phases in order to forgive, and the benefits of forgiveness. Ciorra does not offer the reader unrealistic advice in order to resolve irreparable emotional damage brought on by pain

and grief induced by another person. Instead, he explains that forgiveness “does not absolve the offender. Forgiveness does not absolve the administration of justice.”⁵ Ciorra’s practical path toward forgiveness is tempered by the promise that the process of healing will generate inner freedom, foster relationships, build community, and restore beauty through practical steps. Ciorra advocates for prayer and reconciliation because the “lack of forgiveness in our lives prevents us from seeing the beauty of the God that fills every tiny space in this universe.”⁶ Ciorra references works of art by Rev. Julie Nicholson and St. Francis of Assisi that portray the relationship between tragedy and forgiveness. Forgiveness is a sensitive topic for discussion, yet Ciorra clarifies that forgiveness does not dismiss the hurt or “the ugly graffiti that is scribbled on the walls of their psyche.”⁷ Additionally, Ciorra explains that one of the misconceptions on the Christian perspective of forgiveness is “that its followers turn the other cheek (Matt. 5:39) and forgive their brothers and sisters...”⁸ He goes on to illustrate the process that requires an individual commitment to resolve past hurt. Ciorra considers the sensitivity of the subject matter and addresses misunderstandings about forgiveness in order to set the tone for the reader to be receptive to the other salient points presented in the chapter.

In Chapter 4 Ciorra’s discussion shifts to the spirituality of gratitude, this is described as the origin of hope and a source of joy expressed through artistic outlets. Ciorra juxtaposes several forms of art that include Biblical figures, St. Anselm teachings, and Dun Scotus and the Franciscan school⁹ that depicts the divergent beliefs between the two groups about the same God. Ciorra’s brief commentary about Psalms asserts that the woes of life are countered by an attitude of gratitude. Ciorra politely urges: “We need to develop creative spiritual practices to live out a vow of gratitude”;¹⁰ he concludes the chapter by discussing spiritual practices that foster gratitude.

In chapter 5 the goal is to delve into darkness, sadness, and rough times that can spawn other unwanted emotional turmoil. A beautiful dimension of darkness is that people are capable of taking the worst of circumstances and failures as fuel to stimulate change. Melancholy is the word principally used to portray the dynamic between rising up into light or spiraling further into a depressed state. Ciorra elucidates this phenomenon through the symbolism of Easter as a succession of darkness to hopelessness and then victory. St. Theresa of Avila and St. John of the Cross are two examples that exhibit how creative “energies emerge in the midst of darkness when you are forced to rely on a power beyond yourself.”¹¹

Ciorra’s ability to interpret beauty in a plethora of art forms that correspond to the chapters’ themes is excellent. He provides parallels between

the various themes addressed throughout the text and includes exercises and external resources. In addition, he provides practical steps on how to discern and develop one's ability to perceive beauty in personal circumstances. Redefining the beauty and spirituality in a contemporary context requires art examples and spiritual examples that are outside the parameters of Christian tradition. A culmination of non-traditional works juxtaposed with the traditional Christian works has the potential to pinpoint shared themes that exist between two seemingly different or opposing spiritual views. Adding this approach would strengthen the text and appeal to a larger audience of readers from diverse spiritual backgrounds.

~Janue Johnson
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Notes

- ¹ Anthony J. Ciorra, *Beauty: A Path to God*. (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2013),8.
- ² Ibid., 15.
- ³ Ibid., 3.
- ⁴ Ibid., 33.
- ⁵ Ibid., 57.
- ⁶ Ibid., 68.
- ⁷ Ibid., 55.
- ⁸ Ibid., 57.
- ⁹ Ibid., 82.
- ¹⁰ Ibid., 92.
- ¹¹ Ibid., 105.

Notes on Contributors

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Gerald Barr is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in English Literature at the University of Houston, with a focus on poetics and postcolonial theory. He is also a graduate teaching fellow. He holds a Master's degree in English Literature from San Francisco State University. In the summer of 2017, he completed the curriculum for Harvard's Institute for World Literature at the University of Copenhagen. His research focus is India's influence on British Neoclassical and Romantic poets.

Elizabeth Bell Canon has specialized in English historical linguistics for most of her academic career. She was awarded a B.A. in Philosophy from the University of Florida, and a Ph.D. in Linguistics from the University of Georgia. Her academic publications include journal articles, encyclopedia entries, and a monograph based on her dissertation. She has taught courses in English grammar and linguistics, and historical English language and literature at colleges and universities in Georgia, North Carolina, and Wisconsin. Currently, she serves as Assistant Professor of English at Missouri Western State University.

Robin Wyatt Dunn writes and teaches in Los Angeles, though he is trying to escape. His most recent book is *Wine Country*, now available from Weasel Press. In 2017, he was a finalist for poet laureate of his city.

Ann Branan Horak received her B.A. in English Literature from University of Texas at Austin and her M.A. and Ph.D. from Rutgers University. Until recently, Dr. Horak was the Director of the Religious Studies program at The University of Texas at El Paso. She teaches for English and Women's Studies.

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Janue Johnson-Seaton has a diverse teaching background as she has worked in K-12 and higher education. She served as both the Director of Online Programs and Assistant Dean at Hampton University where her responsibilities included leadership of the online program and continuing education. Dr. Seaton's educational background includes a Ph.D. in Urban Higher Education from Jackson State University and a Master's Degree in Education with an emphasis in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Phoenix. Her Bachelor's Degree is in Media Communications from California State University, Long Beach. Dr. Seaton currently serves as an Assistant Professor and Professional Learning Coordinator at San Diego Mesa College in the LOFT (Learning Opportunities for Transformation). She supports the creation and coordination of professional learning and development for faculty and staff. She hopes to promote professional learning initiatives in K-12 settings that integrate the use of technology for students to access resources and information that support their learning experiences. She is married with three children and resides in California.

Madelyn Paquette is a recent graduate of the University of Miami where she received a B.F.A. in Acting with minors in Classics and Religious Studies. She currently resides in New York City, where she continues to do both scholarly and applied research into the manifestations of modern mythology.

C. R. Resetarits has had work recently in *Litro #159*, *Crannóg* (Pushcart nominated story), and *Stand; out now in Reed Review and Jelly Bucket*; out soon in *Westview and Backlash #3*. Her poetry collection, *BROOD*, was published by Mongrel Empire Press in 2015. She lives in Faulkner-riddled Oxford, Mississippi.

Kathleen (Kathy) Staudt, Ph.D. (University of Wisconsin 1976) retired as Professor of Political Science and Endowed Professor of Western Hemispheric Trade Policy Studies from the University of Texas at El Paso. Besides founding the Center for Civic Engagement and leading it for ten years (1998-2008), she taught classes on Border Politics, Public Policy, Democracy, Political Geography, Nonprofit Management, Developing Countries, and Women, Power and Politics. Her latest, 20th book, is titled *Border Politics in a Global Era: Comparative Perspectives* (2017). Kathy is active in community organizations and serves on the El Paso Social Justice Education Forum and blogs there (www.epsocialjustice.org) and on www.chucopedia.org. She has two grown children, a son and daughter.

Originally an adjunct professor at CCNY and an East Coast Deconstructionist, **Kaz Sussman** managed to escape before becoming ensnared in benighted

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