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The Centre for Studies in Religion and Society (CSRS) was established at the University of Victoria in 1991 to foster the scholarly study of religion in relation to any and all aspects of society, both contemporary and historical. The CSRS Graduate Students Association, led by graduate students who hold fellowships at the CSRS, draws together UVic graduate students from a variety of disciplines and academic programs who share an interest in studies related to the interrelation of religion and society.

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INTRODUCTION

Illumine is a peer-reviewed, interdisciplinary journal produced by the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society (CSRS) Graduate Students Association at the University of Victoria. This seventh issue of the journal features four articles that highlight religion's social role, accenting the Centre's mandate to study religion and society. Indeed, each article in its different way confirms the myriad ways that societies—across time and space—affect and utilize religions, and the parallel ways that religions are embedded in and inseparable from societies.

Connie Braun, in “Aemilia Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*: Protofeminism, Piety, or Transcendence?,” explores how religious writing might be a conduit for women’s emerging voices in the seventeenth century and how women’s voices—particularly Lanyer’s—might be the conduit for an authentic Christianity freed from the bonds of gender expectations. She writes of Lanyer: “Her work is more than a religious poem written to conform to the appropriate genre for a woman writer of the seventeenth century, or a feminist’s vision of a utopian society without men; it is a hermeneutic of authentic Christianity wherein women are no longer subjugated by religious or social hierarchy.” Christianity, thus, becomes a vehicle for a kind of protofeminism, making possible fresh expressions of female power.

Ami Watanabe, in her article “Hildegard of Bingen as a Holy Healer: Healing the Patient, Restoring the World,” studies five letters exchanged between monks and the twelfth-century saint and healer

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Hildegard of Bingen regarding a woman considered possessed by a demon. Watanabe finds that the spiritual and mental health of the microcosm is reflected in the macrocosm: when the woman is healed, so is her community. Watanabe writes, “Hildegard helped strengthen these monks’ sense of well-being by proving the power of saints, the meaningfulness of the cult of saints, and the importance of Christian faith. Her saintly ability emanates here as she mends the ontological crisis of the churchmen faced with demonic possession.” Watanabe’s research provides a glimpse into medieval practices of spiritual healing and illustrates the pragmatic role of saints as restorers of order to societies troubled by spiritual chaos.

Adam Stewart, in “Praying with the Hand You Are Dealt: Revisiting Social Class in the Study of Religion,” jumps into the twentieth century to read the importance of social class back into religion while maintaining the equally significant role that human agency plays in choosing and practising religions. He writes, “by combining concepts from [Max] Weber, [Pierre] Bourdieu, and [Sean] McCloud, it is possible to recognize the important influence that objective social and economic agents, as well as the subjective ideas and intentionality of individual human agents, exercise in the complex process of determining religious belief, practice, and affiliation.” His work importantly reasserts the twinned salience of economic position *and* human intention in studies of religion in contemporary North America.

Sébastien Després’ fascination with pilgrimages lead to primary research on the Roman Catholic pilgrimage to the Marian Apparition shrine of Medjugorje in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In “Making it Real: The Narrative (Re)Construction of a Pilgrimage Centre in Bosnia-Herzegovina,” Després examines how Franciscan-influenced Medjugorje, the region’s primary symbol of Croatian identity, has been “recontextualized” by the Croats who present the territory to outsiders through narratives told about the apparitions. “These cultural texts,” writes Després, “help to create political subjects and political commitments and are appropriated and more fully narrativized by various groups in order to support specific, differing political agendas.” This article demonstrates, again, the deeply embedded nature of religion and society by investigating how religious stories concretize ethnic and political identities.

We, the *Illumine* editorial board for this issue, would like to

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express our gratitude to our contributors for their efforts, to Mona Goode for her help, and to the CSRS administrative staff, particularly Leslie Kenny and Derece Powell, for their assistance in completing this project.

Madeline Walker

For the Editorial Board, December 2008

AEMILIA LANYER'S *SALVE DEUS REX JUDAEORUM*:
PROTOFEMINISM, PIETY, OR TRANSCENDENCE?

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Abstract

*The first known English woman to publish an original volume of poetry, Aemilia Lanyer continues to be a controversial figure in the early modern tradition. Lanyer was not an aristocrat; her connections to the court included a sexual liaison with Queen Elizabeth's cousin and her dedication in *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* (1611) was to women of nobility. Written in the conventions of religious poetry, her work is a defense of Eve in the voice of Pilate's wife. At times the voices of the speaker and the poet appear to be intertwined in a subversion of the misogynist view of Eve's actions, contesting contemporary patriarchal hegemony. However, it is also arguable that despite her less than "virtuous" background and in the face of her possible financial or feminist ambitions, the Christian influences evident in her poetry suggest that Lanyer was a spiritually motivated woman whose work offers a hermeneutic for authentic Christian spirituality.*

Was Aemilia Lanyer a protofeminist challenging the misogynist attitudes of her culture; was she a marginalized and ambitious self-promoting woman in financial crisis seeking fame and fortune, merely finding a voice through religious discourse—the only language deemed suitable for women; or was she a deeply spiritual, albeit flawed, individual claiming divine authority through the feminine voice to challenge and subvert the social and religious hierarchy of her day? Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex*

Judaeorum (1611), the first original volume of poetry published by a woman in England, has provided critics with more questions than answers. Written early in the reign of James I, *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, and, more specifically, the central poem from which the volume takes its title, must be read in the context of patronage and patriarchy; nevertheless, second wave feminists continue to read her poem as an early example of protofeminism. Lanyer's intentions are clouded further by her dynamic and unpredictable authorial subjectivity, which, I argue, invites the reader to consider the poem as a transcendent hermeneutic of authentic Christianity.

Aemilia Lanyer was knowledgeable in Latin models of verse and familiar with the English literary tradition, particularly the work of Sir Philip Sidney and his sister, the Countess of Pembroke.¹ Lanyer opens her three-part volume with various dedications to patronesses that are written in a combination of prose and pentameter verse and concludes with a country house poem in iambic pentameter couplets.² The central poem, consisting of 1,840 lines in ottava rima stanzas,³ presents the story of Christ's crucifixion from the point of view of women such as the Countess of Cumberland (her principal patron),⁴ the daughters of Jerusalem, the Virgin Mary, and Pilate's wife, whose viewpoint is the focus of this paper.

As a female writer, Lanyer pressed against the gendered boundaries of her sex, vocation, and religion. *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* has been described as "the most astonishing assertion of female independence on record" from the early modern period.⁵ In a time when writing was a masculine vocation, a woman writing for publication provoked misogynist attacks. Ambition was not a feminine virtue. Publication by a woman was associated with being unchaste.⁶ Within this context

1 Susan Woods, "Aemilia Lanyer, *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*," in *A Companion to Early Modern Women's Writing*, ed. Anita Pacheco (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 127.

2 Ibid., 132. Lanyer's poem *The Description of Cooke-ham* is the first country house poem published in English.

3 Ibid., 131.

4 Ibid., 127.

5 Ibid., 132.

6 Debra K. Rienstra, "Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke, *Psalmes*," in *A Companion to Early Modern Women's Writing*, ed. Anita Pacheco (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 122.

Aemilia Lanyer established herself as the first woman in England to publish a volume of poetry as a means to support herself. Four decades later Margaret Cavendish, who published in 1653, would still be considered a “whore” for doing so.

In response to such attitudes, and like many women of her time, Lanyer found her feminine voice through the religious discourse of her day. The only appropriate lexicon available to women writers was the Scriptures. Lanyer’s imagination was governed by its terms.⁷ She probably drew her inspiration from the Countess of Pembroke’s earlier work *Psalmes*, which remained in manuscript form until the nineteenth century. One might argue that both Pembroke and Lanyer engaged in exegesis of Scriptural text; however, Pembroke did not push the boundaries of Scriptural meditation prescribed for women by offering an alternate reading of the text, or by publishing her work.⁸ Pembroke completed the work her brother had begun and employed poetic paraphrase in transposing the Psalms into Elizabethan idiom,⁹ whereas Lanyer released her feminine imagination in an interpretive account of the Passion of Christ.

Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* draws closely on the Gospel accounts of Christ’s Passion, but makes a notable and radical exception in *Eve’s Apologie*, which Lanyer extrapolates from one verse in the Gospel of Matthew. The power of Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* fixes the defense of Eve, and thus the *querelle de femmes*, upon the Passion of Christ. Central to the entire *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* is the speech by Pilate’s wife, taken from Matthew 27:19, which states, “While Pilate was sitting on the judge’s seat, his wife sent him this message: ‘Don’t have anything to do with this innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him.’”¹⁰ Achsah Guibbory points out that the Gospel of Matthew is the only one of the four synoptic gospels to mention Pilate’s wife; but her words went

7 Barbara K. Lewalski, “Of God and Good Women: The Poems of Aemilia Lanyer,” in *Silent but for the Word: Tudor Women as Patrons, Translators and Writers of Religious Works*, ed. Margaret P. Hannay (Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1985), 207.

8 Rienstra, 122.

9 Ibid., 115.

10 *The Study Bible*, New International Version, ed. Kenneth Barker (Grand Rapids: Zondervon, 1985).

unrecorded.¹¹ In Lanyer's interpretation of Matthew's account, Pilate's wife does not remain silent—it is she “[w]ho did but dream, and yet a message sent.”¹²

From one Scripture verse mentioning a dream, Lanyer imaginatively extrapolates a twelve-stanza defense of Christ's innocence, and at the same time an *apologia* of Eve/womankind. The words of Pilate's wife boldly accuse Pilate of a greater sin than Eve's. “Her weakness did the serpent's word's obey;/ But you in malice God's dear son betray./ Whom if unjustly you condemn to die,/ Her sin was small, to what you do commit;/ All mortal sins that do for vengeance cry,/ Are not to be compared unto it:/ . . . This sin of yours, surmounts them all.../”¹³ Furthermore, Lanyer presses the case for gender equality: “Your fault being greater, why should you disdain/ Our being equals, free from tyranny?/ If one weak woman did offend,/ This sin of yours, hath not excuse nor end.”¹⁴

Speaking through the persona of Pilate's wife, the feminine voice protests the authority of the husband/male as well as the crucifixion of Christ. Subsequent authors, notably Rachel Speght, in her tract *A Mouzell for Malastomus* (1617), may have drawn inspiration from Lanyer. In her response to Swetnam's *Arraignment of Lewd, Idle Froward and Unconstant Women*, Speght would argue to exonerate Eve in terms closely resembling Lanyer's.¹⁵ Furthermore, years later, the Royalist Cavalier poet Katherine Philips would redefine sin as the “silence” of not speaking out against the execution of a king in *Upon the Double Murder of King Charles*.¹⁶ Perhaps she, too, drew her

11 Guibbory, “The Gospel According to Aemilia: Women and the Sacred,” *Aemilia Lanyer: Gender, Genre and the Canon*, ed. Marshall Grossman (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1998), 199.

12 Aemilia Lanyer, “Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum” in *The Broadview Anthology of Seventeenth Century Verse and Prose*, ed. Alan Rudrum, Joseph Black, and Holly Faith Nelson (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1985), 91 (line 834).

13 Ibid., lines 815-820; 823.

14 Ibid., lines 829-832.

15 Janelle Mueller, “Feminist Poetics of Aemilia Lanyer's ‘Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum,’” in *Feminist Measures: Soundings in Poetry and Theory*, ed. Lynn Keller and Cristanne Miller (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 232.

16 Holly Faith Nelson, “Katherine Philips,” from *Seventeenth-Century Women Writers Lecture Notes*, English 416/607 (Trinity Western University, 2007), 5.

inspiration from the feminine voice of Pilate's wife who spoke out against the execution of a king.

In addition to straining gendered categories, Lanyer penetrated the boundaries of class, further distinguishing herself, a commoner, from the mostly high-born women writers of the Jacobean period. The dedications comprising the first part of the book list aristocratic and literary women as patrons and virtuous readers. While some critics view this as Lanyer's attempt to envision an all-female society, such as the setting of her country house poem *The Description of Cooke-ham*, Su Fang Ng posits that Lanyer's search for patrons was difficult and that these names represented her attempt to aspire to the gentry class.¹⁷ According to Ng, Lanyer ambitiously proffered multiple dedications in an attempt to "carve a poetic space for herself" in "economic terms."¹⁸

Clearly, Lanyer was not one of "them" by birth. Aemilia (born Bassano) was the daughter of a Venetian Jewish family of musicians who had been Christianized. The Bassanos relocated to the court of England "as members of the King's Musick, on the invitation of Henry VIII."¹⁹ Barbara K. Lewalski describes Lanyer as "an insider to court circles, but an outsider in rank and ethnic descent."²⁰ Adding to Lanyer's profile, Susan Woods notes the family's connections to the reformed Protestant movement and that Aemilia was educated in the household of the Dowager Duchess of Kent, daughter of the Protestant heroine the Dowager Duchess of Suffolk. She also lived for a time in the household of the Countess of Cumberland, whom she would later credit with inspiring and fostering her poetic talent.²¹ At age eighteen Aemilia Bassano was orphaned and became mistress to Queen Elizabeth's cousin, the Lord Chamberlain Henry Cary, Lord Hunsdon. Impregnated by the elderly Hunsdon, Aemilia was married off to Alfonso Lanyer, a court musician who misspent the small fortune she had acquired from Hunsdon.

This emerging portrait of Aemilia Lanyer paints her as an "attractive, strong-willed and ambitious woman who tried many

17 Su Fan Ng, "Aemilia Lanyer and the Politics of Praise," *ELH*; 67.2 (2000), 434-5.

18 *Ibid.*, 448.

19 Mueller, "Feminist Poetics of Aemilia Lanyer's 'Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum,'" 209.

20 Lewalski, "Of God and Good Women: the Poems of Aemilia Lanyer," 212.

21 Woods, "Aemilia Lanyer, *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*," 125.

things to reconnect with the world of power she felt she lost with her marriage to Alfonso.”²² Knowledge about Lanyer’s circumstances has been gleaned mostly from the diary of Simon Forman, an astrologer she visited in 1597 to find out if she might “become a lady.”²³ Damning Lanyer’s feminine virtue, Simon Forman’s diary entries imply sexual encounters with her. He writes that she was a “whore.” With the diary as a source, A.L. Rowse speculated that Lanyer was Shakespeare’s “dark lady.”²⁴ However, David Bevington questions whether Forman’s entries have a solid basis, suggesting that they might be accusations produced by a spurned Forman, who possessed the knowledge that Lanyer had been Hunsdon’s mistress.²⁵

Whether manipulative in her quest for patronage or sexually motivated, Aemilia Lanyer’s own relation to the sacred seems admittedly questionable. Can the perceived contrariety between spirituality and economic and sexual empowerment be explained by casting Lanyer as a protofeminist? Taking up the controversy over women’s authorship, the *querrelle de femmes*, Lanyer frames a defense of the female sex in the genre of religious poetry. *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* is a woman-centered work that explicitly confronts misogyny and the injustices of male domination of women.

Janelle Mueller describes Lanyer as a revisionist. In her view, the dedications to females preceding the *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* are in response to “dedications made to high born personages.” Not only the dedications, but “the sacred genre of devotional meditation on biblical subjects in verse” are, each, literary vogues made current by male writers.²⁶ Mueller suggests that one reason for Lanyer’s patronage-courting strategies and specifically scriptural subject matter is the development in poetry of female moral agency, as portrayed by the character of Cleopatra, or in theatrical representations of feminine evil such as Shakespeare’s Lady Macbeth.²⁷ Kari Boyd McBride argues for a feminist interpretation of Lanyer’s use of female biblical heroines, and

22 Ibid., 125.

23 Lewalski, “Of God and God Women,” 207.

24 David Bevington, “A.L. Rowse’s Dark Lady,” *Aemilia Lanyer: Gender, Genre and The Canon*, ed. Marshall Grossman (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1998), 20.

25 Ibid., 20.

26 Mueller, “Feminist Poetics,” 212-3.

27 Ibid., 215.

states, “rather than being defined by their subservient relationships to men or patriarchal concerns of the Bible, these women are defined by their superiority to or even violent dispatching of men.”²⁸

Lewalski notes that in *To the Virtuous Reader*, Lanyer passionately denounces those men who, “forgetting they were borne of women, nourished of women, and that if it were not by the means of women, they would be quite extinguished out of the world...”²⁹ Ng agrees that it is in this dedication, the only part of the work addressed to male readers, that Lanyer is most thoroughly feminist, cautioning the male reader not to imitate men who forget their origins.³⁰ However, while Lanyer, in her dedications, creates a female lineage of mothers and daughters that seems to imply an all female society (not unlike the edenic atmosphere of Cooke-ham), her quest for patronage and financial support contests these second wave feminist assumptions that identify Lanyer as a protofeminist.

However, Christian influences evident in her poetry and the possibility that Lanyer was herself a spiritual individual suggest that Lanyer was more than a self-serving writer; in fact, she was a female religious poet. Nevertheless, Lewalski is cautious about categorizing Lanyer’s poem as “religious,” arguing that “Lanyer emphasizes Christ’s Passion as the focus for all the forms of female goodness—and masculine evil—her poems treat.”³¹ Lewalski claims that Lanyer has fused religious devotion with feminism, thereby asserting the “essential harmony of these two impulses.”³² As Guibbory notes, Lewalski concedes that “Lanyer appears to be sincerely, if not very profoundly religious.”³³ Of Lanyer, Elaine Beilin claims, “[her] devoted praise of women, from her apology for Eve, does not derive solely from anger or even as a desire for justice. Rather, it evolves from her own

28 Kari Boyd McBride, “Sacred Celebration: The Patronage Poems, in *Amelia Lanyer: Gender, Genre and the Canon*, ed. Marshall Grossman (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1998), 67.

29 Lewalski, “Of God and Good Women,” 212; Aemilia Lanyer, “To the Virtuous Reader” and “Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum,” *The Broadview Anthology of Seventeenth Century Verse and Prose*, ed. Alan Rudrum, Joseph Black and Holly Faith Nelson (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1985), 83.

30 Ng, “The Politics of Praise,” 438; Lanyer, “To the Virtuous Reader” in *Broadview*, 83.

31 Lewalski, “Of God and Good Women,” 207.

32 Ibid.

33 Guibbory, 192.

piety and her poetic calling as a Christian visionary who yearns for a world greatly different from the one she knows.”³⁴ Mueller identifies Lanyer’s spirituality as the “spiritual power of femininity” that “holds extreme revisionary implications for “men’s control of society, art and the worldly destiny of women.”³⁵

The revisionary implications of Lanyer’s hermeneutic of the Passion are many. First, Lanyer’s defense goes much further than Speght’s would, or that of any other early modern women writers, stating that, while Eve desired knowledge, it was not Eve’s weakness but her inherent innocence that caused her to believe the deception. Although, as Lewalski notes, the poet follows traditional interpretation by admitting Eve’s deception, Lanyer claims Eve sinned for “knowledge sake,” while Adam’s motivation for sinning was far more sinister. Furthermore, Lanyer deliberately omits a rationale for Adam, such as St. Augustine’s admission of Adam’s social love for Eve and, through Pilate’s wife, exonerates Eve, “whose fault was only too much love.”³⁶

Lewalski further points out that Lanyer locates knowledge in woman’s act; the narrator of the poem explains, “Yet men will boast of knowledge, when he tooke/Frome Eve’s faire hand, as if from a learned book.”³⁷ Lanyer thereby undermines the male stake in learning.³⁸ The result, as Guibbory argues, is that Lanyer’s defense emphasizing Eve’s simplicity could be considered a plausible interpretation of the biblical account in Genesis. Lanyer has overturned a misogynist view of Eve’s actions, recasting Eve as virtuous for her trusting nature. More importantly, Lanyer overturns centuries of male exegesis of the Fall.³⁹

Critics acknowledge the profound implications of reading Lanyer’s inventions within the context of biblical hermeneutics.⁴⁰ Guibbory views Pilate’s wife’s speech in *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* as central

34 Elaine Beilin, “The Feminization of Praise: Aemilia Lanyer,” in *Redeeming Eve: Women Writers of the Renaissance*, ed. Elaine Beilin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 180-1.

35 Mueller, “Feminist Poetics,” 227.

36 Lewalski, 195; Lanyer in *Broadview*, 91 (line 801).

37 Lanyer, in *Broadview*, 91 (line 808).

38 Lewalski, 195.

39 Guibbory, 199.

40 Karen Robertson, “Review of *Aemilia Lanyer: Gender, Genre and the Canon*,” *Shakespeare Studies* 28 (2000), 317.

to Lanyer's interpretation of the significance of Christ's crucifixion. Pilate's wife, with whom Lanyer identifies, possesses the *interpretive power*, the *right*, and the *responsibility* to speak publicly. As previously noted, the Gospel of Matthew is the only Gospel to mention Pilate's wife or her words to Pilate about a dream. On this point Guibbory suggests that women were silenced by the men who wrote the Gospels.⁴¹ Whether or not the individual Gospel writers held to the dominant view of their day that women were to keep silent, the accepted view put forward by feminist scholarship points out that the Gospels were written within the structures and confines of the patriarchal society in which the early Church was founded, and in which the tradition of Biblical interpretation followed. Thus, for Pilate's wife, and for Lanyer, "[T]he words of both women violate the codes of their respective societies that encourage the silence of woman and their subordination to the authority of husbands."⁴²

Perhaps the most radical aspect of Lanyer's poem is that Eve's actions are examined and weighed against the actions of Pilate; consequently, Eve's sin is portrayed as relative to the greater malice that Pilate exhibited by betraying Christ.⁴³ Nevertheless, it is difficult to discern whether the narrative voice is Lanyer's or that of Pilate's wife. In the beginning of the eleven-stanza defense of Eve, Pilate's wife exhorts her husband to "hear the words of thy most worthy wife/ Who sends to thee to beg her Saviour's life,"⁴⁴ yet the defense ends with the words, "Witness thy wife (O Pilate) speaks for all."⁴⁵ The narrator speaks for Pilate's wife and for all women, and perhaps for all humanity.

The powerful effects of Pilate's wife's speech and Eve's defense simultaneously transcend gender, cultural, and religious barriers. God's judgement of the Fall in Judaic and Christian traditions is overturned. For Lanyer, patriarchy was rooted in the Fall of Adam and Eve. However, if men, through the act of Pilate, commit a worse sin by crucifying Christ, "their doing so sets women free from men's

41 Guibbory, 199.

42 Ibid.

43 Mueller, "Feminist Poetics," 233; Lewalski, "Of God and Good Women," 196.

44 Lanyer, in *Broadview*, 90 (lines 751, 752).

45 Ibid., 91 (line 834).

rule.”⁴⁶ Just as the patriarchal Church placed the culpability for the Fall squarely on Eve, leading to doctrines that subjugated women, Lanyer locates the crucifixion of Christ on male culpability. Secondly, Mueller notes that “Lanyer’s Jewish background may have enabled her to conceive the agency at issue in gendered terms, rather than ethnic ones that were commonplace throughout Christian Europe.”⁴⁷ The culpability for Christ’s crucifixion does not lie with the Jews but with men (Judas, Caiaphas, Herod, and Pilate). Thirdly, Christ is not understood by men, not even those male friends within his private sphere. Peter, James, and John—Christ’s favourite disciple—fall asleep while he prays in Gethsemane: “Their eyes were heavy and their hearts asleep.”⁴⁸ Sleep may be viewed as a metaphor for the condition of male spirituality. It is the women, in the Gospel accounts, who are vigilant.⁴⁹

Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum may be viewed as Lanyer’s early modern feminist revision of Protestant religious doctrine, but it may also be received as a transcendent hermeneutic of Christianity, and, arguably, as Lanyer’s own model of authentic spiritual devotion. Critics agree that Lanyer successfully locates women at the heart of Christianity; she grants them a “special place in the gospel message”;⁵⁰ she views them “as the genesis of salvation”;⁵¹ she presents them “as Christ’s true apostles”;⁵² and she promotes them as the site of humanity’s redemption.⁵³ Moreover, Lanyer, as a female poet, recognizes Jesus for who He is.⁵⁴ Thus, Lanyer not only presents women as redeemed through Christ, but she also identifies them as central figures in the

46 Mueller, 233.

47 Ibid., 236.

48 Mueller, “Feminist Poetics,” 219; Lanyer, in *Broadview*, 88 (line 465).

49 Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus are noted in all the Gospel accounts. See Mathew 27:55-56, 61 and 28:1-8; Mark 15:47 and 16:1, 9-10; Luke 23:55 and 24:1-10; and John 19:25 and 20:1,10-18.

50 Beilin, 179.

51 Guibbory, 192.

52 Ng, 439.

53 Lewalski, 215; Mueller, 215. Lewalski points out that Lanyer emphasized the apostles as failures, and that women announced the resurrection; Mueller writes that, according to Lanyer, women alone are capable of receiving the incarnate divine word.

54 Mueller, 222.

spiritual lineage of redemption, recognizing—seeing—who Christ is. The female narrative voices in *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* not only see/recognize, but also speak out to acknowledge that the man before Pilate is “God’s dear son,”⁵⁵ “faultless Jesus,”⁵⁶ “innocent blood,”⁵⁷ and her “Saviour.”⁵⁸ Although patriarchal society did not view all women as virtuous, and constructed the idea of the “virtuous woman” in the first place, Lanyer, who speaks for women, recognizes that true virtue comes from Christ, “...whose own profession/ Was virtue, patience, grace, love, piety.”⁵⁹ As a result, one could conclude that Lanyer would have understood the message of the Gospel as the transcendent power of the risen Christ to overturn the dominant structures of this world and to dissolve the binaries of nature/culture, passion/reason that determined virtue in the early modern period.⁶⁰ Lanyer understood virtue to be Christ-likeness. Along with patience, grace, love, and piety, such virtue is, like Jesus, “faultless.”⁶¹ For the Christian this would mean a renewed innocence through Christ’s grace and forgiveness.

Aemilia Bassano Lanyer was a socially marginalized woman, a woman considered by men as “sinful.” Through *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, Lanyer attempts to redeem her gender’s station socially and spiritually through a powerfully alternate hermeneutic of the Gospel message. Critics describe Lanyer as a woman of her time but, given her imaginative interpretation, one might view her as a woman *before* her time. Women’s virtue, therefore, is not defined by the patriarchal attitudes that have interpreted the biblical account of the Fall. Rather, virtue is Christ-modelled, and seemingly more readily recognized by women than men. From one account in the Gospel of Matthew, Lanyer refocuses our attention on Pilate’s wife who, in

55 Lanyer in *Broadview*, 91 (line 816).

56 Ibid., 90 (line 746).

57 Ibid., (line 750).

58 Ibid., (line 752).

59 Guibbory, 183; Lanyer, in *Broadview*, 92 (lines 957, 958).

60 Risa S. and Micah Bear, “Pamphilia to Amphilanthus: Lady Mary Wroth.” Renaissance Editions. University of Oregon, 1992. 6 of 61. <http://darkwing.uoregon.edu> accessed May 29, 2007. Mary Wroth, writing a decade after Lanyer’s *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* was published, conceptualized female virtue as normative to both genders in *Urania*.

61 Lanyer, in *Broadview*, 90 (line 746).

a patriarchal religious culture, spoke out in Christ's defense. Lanyer reclaims Pilate's wife from obscurity and interprets the feminine narrative voice eviscerated from the male-authored account. She notes that throughout the Gospel accounts, women recognized the crucified Christ as the Son of God. It is a devoted woman who, deemed sinful by her culture and in particular by the male disciples, poured oil on Jesus' feet.⁶² Lanyer also breaks with convention by presenting a hermeneutic for an authentic spirituality, which invites the reader to consider that Lanyer understood the nature of Christ's transcendence in the midst of the restrictive categories of religion, culture, class, and sex.

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62 Luke 7:36-49. Note verse 48: "Then Jesus said to her your sins are forgiven." See also Matthew 26: 6-13 and Mark 14:1-9. Further note that John 12:1-7 offers an account of Mary, the sister of Lazarus and friend of Jesus, who poured oil on Jesus' feet at the objection of Judas Iscariot.

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HILDEGARD OF BINGEN AS A HOLY HEALER: HEALING THE PATIENT, RESTORING THE WORLD

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Abstract

By examining the five letters exchanged between Hildegard of Bingen and two monks concerning a demon-possessed woman, this article explores the ways in which twelfth-century ecclesiastics understood and treated demonic possession. A close examination of the letters reveals that demonic possession was considered as a communal illness that threatened not only an individual's well-being but also the spiritual integrity of the community. The identification of demonic possession as a communal disease explains why an ecclesiastic had to write to implore the help of Hildegard, who was known to her contemporaries as both a saint and a healer. Medieval understanding of demonic possession required a specific kind of cure: miraculous healing performed by a saint. This healing was culturally constructed in a way to restore the spiritual well-being of the community that medieval subjects imagined demonic possession disrupted.

Among contemporary churchmen and churchwomen, a twelfth-century German abbess Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) was renowned for being both a healer and a saint. Of the 390 surviving letters exchanged between Hildegard and her correspondents,¹ there are at least twenty-three in which ecclesiastics implore her help in dealing with their own or other's physical and

1 All 390 letters are translated in *Letters of Hildegard of Bingen*, trans. Joseph L. Baird and Radd K. Ehrman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994-2004) Vol. 1-3, hereafter referred to as *Letters*.

psychological ailments. In her letters, Hildegard rarely reveals the practical side of her healing practices, although she sets these out in the two medical works attributed to her, namely *Cause et cure* and *Physica*.² As if purposely, she prescribes only religious rites as treatment to her respondents.³ Such valorization of religious knowledge over medical is particularly noteworthy in the five letters exchanged between Hildegard and two monks concerning a demon-possessed parishioner. These letters are significant as they demonstrate a critical aspect of holy healing as a cultural construct. The epistemic hierarchy between religious and medical, I hypothesize, was likely something Hildegard and her respondents considered a cultural necessity in order to effectuate holy healing. Such cultural construction was particularly meaningful in these letters where Hildegard is asked to cure a possessed woman. The letters reveal that demonic possession was considered a complex supernatural illness that disrupted not only the well-being of the possessed person, but also the spiritual order of his or her communities. The close examination of these letters reveals why an ecclesiastic had to write to implore the help of “the saintly lady” Hildegard; demonic possession required a saint not just to cure the possessed person, but also to perform miraculous healing to restore

2 In contrast to the miraculous nature of her healing acts, Hildegard’s extensive medical knowledge is revealed in two encyclopedic medical texts attributed to her. Scholars speculate that she must have been familiar with Galenic medicine and even some of the most advanced contemporary medical texts such as those translated by Constantine the African (ca. 1020-87). See “Introduction,” Laurence Moulinier’s *Beate Hildegardis Cause et cure* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2003), 67, and also Suehiro Tanemura, *Bingen no Hirudegarudo no Sekai* [The World of Hildegard of Bingen] (Tokyo: Seidosha, 2002), 310. Some scholars such as Laurence Moulinier and Charles Singer doubt whether Hildegard really wrote *Cause et cure*, although scholars agree that *Physica* was written by her. Victoria Sweet, however, claims that *Cause* is written by Hildegard. The fact that somebody attributed the work to Hildegard seems to indicate that she was at least known to her contemporaries for having a significant amount of medical knowledge.

3 Neither does Theoderic of Echternach, who composed her *Vita*, refer to Hildegard’s medical knowledge or to any practical medical care she may have provided. The hagiographer’s exclusion of this kind of knowledge is intriguing especially since his Abbey of Echternach formerly owned a ninth-century MS collection of medical literature, which included works by Hippocrates, Galen, and Soranus. See Florence Eliza Glaze, “Medical Writer: ‘Behold the Human Creature,’” *Voice of the Living Light*, ed. Barbara Newman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 130.

the spiritual order of the society at large that medieval ecclesiastics imagined demonic possession disrupted.

The five letters in question were exchanged between Hildegard and two ecclesiastics, Abbot Gedolphus of Brauweiler and a dean of the Church of the Holy Apostles of Cologne;⁴ they concern the exorcism of a noble woman by the name of Sigewize (otherwise unknown), who has been possessed by “an evil spirit” for a full seven years.⁵ These letters adhere to the epistemic hierarchy of religion and medicine as if it were an unspoken rule. When asked how to exorcize the woman, Hildegard provided only the manual of religious ritual, and when the woman was cured, the saint attributed the recovery to the spiritual merit of the people who prayed for her recovery. In contrast to these strictly religious accounts, the passage on demonic possession in one of the medical texts attributed to Hildegard, *Cause et cure*, reveals that she had (or was considered to have) at the very least a more theoretical knowledge of diabolical possession, and that she did not consider possession a completely spiritual disease:

If the dry or the moist humours, that in this case constitute the approaching slime of the above-mentioned phlegm—that is, of the foamy and the lukewarm which ought to comport themselves peacefully—exceed their proper amount, the spiritual consciousness of that person shrinks and perishes, and also his sense of taste and his senses. Then the spirits of the air threaten him, incite him to heresy, and surround him with a wall since his spiritual consciousness has fallen asleep. Such a person finds himself in great danger if God does not drive away these spirits. For this reason, such a person withers within and cannot live a long time in this condition.⁶

4 These letters are numbered as 68, 68r, 69, 158, and 158r, and were written around 1169. The original Latin texts of the letters 68, 68r, and 69 with additional hagiographical accounts are in Godefridus and Theoderic, *Vita sanctae Hildegardis*, ed. Monica Klaes (Turnholt: Brepols, 1993), and letters 158 and 158r in *Hildegardis Bingensis Epistolarium*, ed. L. van Acker (Turnholt: Brepols, 1991). There are an additional two letters (27, 27r) exchanged between Hildegard and her nephew Arnold Archbishop of Trier concerning the exorcism of Sigewize, yet the focus of this paper will be only on the five letters 68, 68r, 69, 158, and 158r.

5 Letter 68, *Letters*, Vol. 1, 147.

6 Hildegard of Bingen, *Holistic Healing*, trans. Manfred Pawlik and Patrick Madigan (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1994), 51.

To note, this theory of demonic possession as a psychosomatic disease appears also in Hildegard's letter to her nephew Arnold Archbishop of Trier. The letter is a response to Arnold's inquiry about how Hildegard cured Sigewize. Unlike the above-mentioned five letters she wrote to the two monks, this letter relates that Sigewize was suffering from an infirmity, which the patient herself was unaware of, and that the woman became sound in both body and soul after the exorcism.⁷ Furthermore, studies by Peter Dronke and Barbara Newman show that the specific kind of demonic possession Sigewize had is a sort of psychosomatic disorder. According to Dronke, Sigewize was "obsessed" (*obsessio*) rather than "possessed" (*possessio*); while *obsessio* is a type of possession where "a demon attacks, lays siege, from without," *possessio* is where a demon "takes possession of a soul and lodges in it."⁸ Based on Hildegard's auto-hagiographical account of the exorcism, the scholar concludes that the particular demon that "obsessed" Sigewize "was thought to have afflicted [the patient's] private parts."⁹ Newman also asserts that *obsessio* afflicts not only the body but also the mind. She writes that the term *obsessio* is "used to describe and explain feelings of despair, unshakable guilt, temptations to blasphemy, suicidal thought, and terrifying vision—all symptoms of what we would now call depressive illness."¹⁰ From these studies, we can conclude that Hildegard and at least some of her contemporaries understood that the kind of demonic possession Sigewize had affects both body and mind (or "spiritual consciousness" in Hildegard's own words).

Curiously enough, in the five letters in question, Hildegard never provides Abbot Gedolphus or the dean of the Church of the Holy Apostles of Cologne with information regarding the physical ailments Sigewize previously suffered or the psychosomatic nature of the particular demonic possession she had. In these letters, Hildegard mentions only the spiritual aspect of possession, and prescribes only exorcist rites when asked how to cure Sigewize. This epistemic hierarchy invites much speculation. Why does Hildegard not mention

7 Letter 27, *Letters*, Vol.1, 89-90.

8 Peter Dronke, "Problemata Hildegardiana," in *Mittelateinisches Jahrbuch*, 16 (1981), 118, n. 64.

9 Ibid.

10 Barbara Newman, "Possessed by the Spirit: Devout Women, Demoniacs, and the Apostolic Life in the Thirteenth Century," *Speculum* 73 (1998), 740-41.

her medical understanding of the causes and cures of possession? Why does she not refer to the infirmity of Sigewize or the physical side of *obsessio* in her letters to the two monks? As far as I know, no scholar has dealt with or even raised these questions. Even though Dronke's study indicates that Hildegard knew the specific kind of physical illness Sigewize was suffering from, the scholar does not question Hildegard's "candour and modesty" when the saint writes that Sigewize was freed due solely to "[God's] grace that was sought and found through shared ascetic effort."¹¹ In my view, Hildegard's response is not only a modesty topos but also a way of fulfilling her role as a saint and a holy healer. By focusing specifically on the letters concerning the saint's successful healing of Sigewize, this paper aims to contribute to the study of the nature and mechanism of holy healing for which Hildegard was renowned.

Brief Summary of the Five Letters in Question

The exchange of letters begins with Abbot Gedolphus consulting Hildegard about how to cure the possessed woman Sigewize. Hildegard responds by sending him a detailed manual of the rite of exorcism. In the second letter to the saint, the abbot writes that the rite worked initially, but that the demon soon repossessed the woman; the abbot therefore sends the possessed woman to Hildegard's abbey. Having heard the rumour about Hildegard's successful exorcism of Sigewize, another ecclesiastic, the dean of the Church of the Holy Apostles of Cologne, writes to Hildegard. Acknowledging that Sigewize, who is from the noble family of Cologne, is "a very good friend" of his church, the dean expresses his joy and curiosity regarding the exorcism. He specifically asks Hildegard to "inform [him] in a return letter the manner and rite of [the demon's] expulsion."¹² In response, Hildegard writes that the exorcism was completed through the spiritual merit of the community, reinforced by communal prayer, alms-giving, fasting, and scourging.

Cultural Construction of Demonic Possession

According to these letters, demonic possession was considered not

¹¹ "Problemata Hildegardiana," 118.

¹² Letter 158, *Letters*, Vol.2, 105.

just an illness that afflicts an individual; it was a special kind of disease that was interpreted as a sign of spiritual disorder. In the first letter to Hildegard, Abbot Gedolphus explains the problem he and his abbey are facing: he has been unable to exorcize the evil spirit that has possessed Sigewize for the past three months. The letter begins in a sorrowful and dejected tone: "Gedolphus, abbot, although unworthy, of the monastery at Brauweiler, and his brothers in this vale of tears, offer their prayers and devoted service as best they can to the lady and mother Hildegard."¹³ The letter implies that he and his community have been possessed by sorrow, shame, and guilt:

all of us [i.e., the ecclesiastical community of Brauweiler], along with the host of the people, have striven for three months in every conceivable way to free that woman, but it grieves us to report that, because of our own sins, we have made no progress whatsoever.¹⁴

Such a sense of shame and guilt is expressed again in the abbot's second letter to Hildegard after he had sent Sigewize to her abbey. He writes how the demon repossessed Sigewize after performing the exorcism as prescribed by Hildegard:

We are informing you of this for her sake, saintly lady [sanctitatem vestram], so that the Lord may accomplish what we, because of our sins, have not merited, and so that He Who rules over all may be glorified in you when the ancient enemy has been cast out.¹⁵

These two passages reveal that the abbot believes that the failure of exorcism is the result of the sinfulness of his community.

It is notable that in this passage, while confessing his own community's sin, Gedolphus addresses Hildegard specifically as "sanctitatem vestram" or "saintly lady." In the beginning of his first letter to Hildegard, the abbot praises Hildegard's sanctity:

¹³ Letter 68, *Letters*, Vol. 1, 147.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Letter 69, *Letters*, Vol.1, 152.

Hildegard of Bingen as a Holy Healer

In our country indeed it is on everyone's lips what the Lord has done for you, because 'he that is mighty, hath done great things' for you, and 'holy is his name' [Luke 1.49]. Both the clergy and the laity know how great are the miracles that the Fountain of Living Light manifests in you, and the outcome of events testifies to their truth. For not human but divine accomplishments shine forth in you, and grace goes before you, that mighty gift which comes not from human reason but proceeds from the bright Fountain.¹⁶

He also refers to her elsewhere as a "pious lady" of "sweet sanctity."¹⁷ These references to Hildegard's sainthood hint that he is asking Hildegard to perform a task only a saint is capable of. This task includes mediating between his community and God: Gedolphus is writing to her so that the "Lord may accomplish" what they cannot accomplish because of their sins and lack of spiritual merit. The logic behind this is that God will help Hildegard accomplish exorcism due to her spiritual merit and sanctity. Such interpretation of demonic possession as an illness cured through spiritual merit indicates the challenge an unsuccessful exorcism posed to an ecclesiastical community. Thus demonic possession, culturally constructed in such a manner, was an ontologically problematic communal illness; it was a malady that challenged the authority and the very existence of professional churchmen.

Another passage from Gedolphus's first letter to Hildegard implies the close relationship between the medieval ecclesiastics' concept of demonic possession and that of holiness:

Now all our hope, next to God, rests on you. For that demon, when he was conjured one day, finally revealed to us that this possessed woman could be freed only through the strength of your contemplation and the magnitude of divine revelation. Does not God intend great things in her liberation? Surely, He does. Thus, through you, the abundant benevolence of our Redeemer will deign to consummate the labour of our efforts and grief, but also of our joy and exultation, when He

¹⁶ Ibid., 147.

¹⁷ Ibid.

wipes away every error and infidelity of mankind and frees
the possessed handmaiden of God.¹⁸

This is an important passage because it communicates the abbot's specific request to "the saintly lady."¹⁹ He is asking her to free Sigewize and at the same time, let God "wip[e] away every error and infidelity of mankind." In this narrative construction, the body of the possessed woman is transformed into the microcosmic battlefield between the church and the devil, for which God's assistance—mediated through a saint—is an absolute necessity. The correlative relationship between the possessed woman and the world at large is analogous to the correlative relationship between microcosm and macrocosm, which was a fundamental part of the worldview in this drama of the participants and of their contemporaries. In this cosmology, each human being is a microcosm and the universe a macrocosm. Microcosm and macrocosm are interrelated in such a way that the human condition (such as order and disorder) was considered to reflect that of the universe.²⁰ This worldview logically leads to the conclusion that through Hildegard's healing of this possessed woman, the Brauweiler community, and even humanity at large, will be healed.

Theoretical Approach to Demonic Possession

Abbot Gedolphus's dramatization of the exorcism of Sigewize in his letters reveals another crucial aspect of the medieval concept of demonic possession: demonic possession was perceived as a real threat to the world. Such a sense of threat is identified clearly in the abbot's first letter.²¹ Referring to "the menacing enemy" that keeps possessing Sigewize, Gedolphus writes that "the insidious evil of this most shrewd and wicked enemy has brought so many thousands into error and doubt that we greatly fear harm to [the] Holy Church."²² From

18 Letter 68, *Letters*, Vol.1, 147-8.

19 Ibid., 148. Hildegard is also referred to as "beloved lady" and "pious lady" (147). In Letter 69, the abbot refers to her as "saintly lady" twice (151, 152).

20 See Charles Singer, "The Scientific Views and Visions of Saint Hildegard (1098-1180)," *Studies in the History and Method of Science*, ed. Charles Singer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1917-1955), esp. "VII. Macrocosm and Microcosm," 30-43.

21 Letter 68, *Letters*, Vol.1, 147-8.

22 Ibid., 147.

the modern perspective, he seems to be exaggerating the situation by locating the sick woman in the centre of the epical religious-historical drama of the battle between the church and Satan. Yet to dismiss this passage as an exaggeration does not help us understand the minds of our subjects.²³ To return to the problem of the epistemic hierarchy of religion and medicine, we know that at least Hildegard and the author of the *Vita* who compiled the saint's letters had access to the more practical medical knowledge of demonic possession.²⁴ Nevertheless, they actively participated in this religious-historical drama of exorcism, indicating that they, as professional churchmen, considered such dramatization necessary and meaningful. From this point of view, Gedolphus's narrative construction likely reflects the medieval ecclesiastics' view of demonic possession as a world-destroying phenomenon.

The abbot's view of demonic possession as a world-destroying phenomenon becomes more understandable in the light of the legal theory of the jurist Robert Cover. According to Cover, "we inhabit *nomos*—a normative universe."²⁵ Cover uses the term *nomos* to denote social, cultural, ethical, and religious laws, orders, precepts, customs, or habits that regulate human mind and behaviour. *Nomos* is our imaginative and cultural construction of the normative world projected upon the physical reality. He writes, "[t]o live in a legal world requires that one know not only the precepts, but also their connections to possible and plausible states of affairs. It requires that one integrate not only the 'is' and 'ought,' but the 'is,' the 'ought,' and the 'what might be.'"²⁶ One imagines what is, ought to be, and might be normative behaviour, and one commits to this imaginary normativity in the hope of realizing the alternative reality—the ideal.

23 See Peter Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 103-52.

24 See footnote 3.

25 Robert Cover, "Foreword: *Nomos* and Narrative" in *Narrative, Violence, and the Law: the Essays of Robert Cover* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 95. *Nomos* means "the law; the principles governing human conduct, esp. as defined by culture or custom" (OED). By "*nomos*—a normative universe," Cover refers to the "world of right and wrong, of lawful and unlawful, of valid and void [that we constantly create and maintain]" (95).

26 *Ibid.*, 102.

This alternative reality, according to Cover, is as real as the physical reality as long as the members of a given group commit to it. An extreme example of the commitment to a vision is martyrdom. Cover writes elsewhere that martyrs build and protect their group's normative world by "[placing] their bodies on the line."²⁷ Such commitment to an imagined normativity is a way of bridging the chasm between reality and vision. This theory helps us to understand Abbot Gedolphus's fear of the potential harm to his normative world; the abbot is properly interpreting demonic possession as a real world-destroying phenomenon, for his inability to expel the demon indicates not only his community's, but also the church's, defeat by Satan. The failure could also be evidence that God has abandoned the Brauweiler monastery due to its moral failure, which greatly undermines its authority as an ecclesiastical community.

The abbot's repetitive use of "error," "doubt," and "infidelity" in the first letter hints at what he fears in particular.²⁸ He fears that "error and doubt" will "harm [the] Holy Church," and hence he requests Hildegard to let God purge "error and infidelity of mankind."²⁹ The terms error, doubt, and infidelity have strong religious connotations; they imply the swerving from the path that *fidelis*—a Christian and a believer—should follow, and the disbelief that destroys the foundation of their carefully constructed spiritual world. The repetition of such words implies the gravity of the case of Sigewize, indicating that the spiritual as well as the ontological well-being of the abbot's community is tightly bound with the fate of Sigewize.

Healing the Patient, Restoring the World

After Hildegard successfully expelled the demon from Sigewize, two letters were exchanged between Hildegard and the dean of the Church of Holy Apostles of Cologne. This exchange of letters is noteworthy since it provides Hildegard's own account and interpretation of how the exorcism was completed. Hearing the rumour that "the ancient enemy has been cast out by [Hildegard's] prayers," the dean first

²⁷ Robert Cover, "Violence and the Word," *Narrative, Violence, and the Law: The Essays of Robert Cover*, 208.

²⁸ Letter 68, *Letters*, Vol.1, 147-8.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

expresses his joy: “we, and indeed the entire city of Cologne, have been enkindled to the love of spirituality by the will of God.”³⁰ Then he asks her “the manner and rite of [the demon’s] expulsion so that [he and his community of Cologne] may rejoice with [Hildegard] and join [her] in praising the Lord with ceaseless devotion.”³¹

In a return letter, comparing the process of the exorcism of Sigewize with the cyclical motion of the day, Hildegard explains how and why Sigewize was cured; the woman was freed because

[o]n her behalf, the exalted, and the even more exalted, the lowly, and even more lowly, have spoken as one with their labors and prayers, and have clamored as individuals, in accordance with the instructions of the Holy Spirit. For some individuals have labored on her behalf through signs of compassion; others, by prayers and vigils; and others, by fasts and scourgings. Moreover, many have given alms for her sake, and a large number of others have taken her part by helping her with all the good in their power. Others have brought this duty to completion with their great and persistent zeal. Thus, just as the day completes its cycle, all were looking to God at the same time for her sake.³²

In short, Hildegard explains to the dean that Sigewize was cured through the communal effort of prayer, alms giving, fasting, and scourging. This response coheres with Abbot Gedolphus’s understanding that spiritual merit is necessary to expel the demon. Just as the abbot sees the connection between his monastery’s failure to exorcize the demon and its lack of spiritual merit, here Hildegard attributes the patient’s recovery to the spiritual merit of the community.³³ By emphasizing the importance of spiritual merit in effecting the exorcism, Hildegard confirms the necessity of holy healing. This confirmation implies the importance of her role as a mediator between the afflicted community and God.

Here we can observe several practical aspects of Hildegard’s

30 Letter 158, *Letters*, Vol.2, 105.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid., 106.

33 Ibid.

narrative construction. Her letter to the dean is practical since by testifying to the spiritual merit of all who prayed for Sigewize, it helps restore the authority of Abbot Gedolphus and his monastery. Her explanation also testifies to the power and authority of the church; after all, she has defeated the demon in Sigewize. Lastly, by confirming the spiritual merit as a requirement for curing demonic possession, Hildegard proves indirectly that her healing performance was of a miraculous nature, which both Gedolphus and the dean regard as an essential means of strengthening faith and also protecting the integrity of their spiritual world. To repeat Gedolphus's words, holy healing meant that "through [Hildegard] the abundant benevolence of [the] Redeemer will deign to consummate the labour of [the communal] efforts and grief" and heal the woman.³⁴ In other words, holy healing is a testimony to the benevolence of God.

Similarly, the abbot writes to Hildegard that if she could successfully exorcize the woman, his community will be able to "say with the prophet: 'This is the Lord's doing; and it is wonderful in our eyes [Ps 117.23]; and the snare is broken, and we are delivered' [Ps 123.7]."³⁵ Here the abbot quotes from Psalms 117 and 123. Psalm 117 refers to God's love towards humans and the importance of faith. Psalm 123 includes the following lines, lines that reflect the abbot's concern for the reputation and authority of his abbey:

Have mercy on us, O LORD, have mercy on us,
for we have endured much contempt.
We have endured much ridicule from the proud,
much contempt from the arrogant. (Psalm 127:3-4)

Gedolphus thus sets out the expected result of Hildegard's holy healing: a confirmation of God's love, revitalization of faith, and restoration of authority and reputation of his abbey. As if to prove the abbot's foresight, the dean of the Church of Holy Apostles writes how Hildegard's success has spiritually invigorated the city of Cologne. Both accounts reveal the twelfth-century churchmen's understanding of the practical role holy healing plays in revitalizing faith and spirituality.

³⁴ Letter 68, *Letters*, Vol.1, 147.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 148.

In her narrative construction, we can witness Hildegard's practical and truly saintly role as a synthesizer of two worlds: the real physical world manifested by Sigewize's illness and the spiritual world. Through her care for Sigewize and narrative construction, Hildegard makes the two worlds one comprehensible whole. Hence the Dean of Cologne says that Hildegard's healing has inspired in them the love of spirituality. We do not really know how Hildegard cured the woman except for the miraculous account recorded in the *Vita*. Yet what we can observe in these letters is that both her treatment of the sick and her narrative construction contributed to the ontological well-being of the ecclesiastical community; in other words, Hildegard helped strengthen these monks' sense of well-being by proving the power of saints, the meaningfulness of the cult of saints, and the importance of Christian faith. Her saintly ability emanates here as she mends the ontological crisis of the churchmen faced with demonic possession.

It is difficult to truly comprehend the significance and role of what Hildegard did and how she served her community in the eyes of medieval ecclesiastics, for it is a kind of religious phenomenon where one plus one seemingly produces more than two. The letters reveal three things: 1) Hildegard restored Sigewize's health; 2) Hildegard explained that Sigewize was cured because God finally favoured the afflicted communities for their spiritual merit; and 3) the ecclesiastical communities rejoiced at the miraculous healing Hildegard performed and their faith was revitalized. It is remarkable that the healing of just one sick individual could bring such a sense of revitalization of faith. Perhaps here we can see why Hildegard and her respondents carefully kept the epistemic hierarchy between religion and medicine.

Conclusion

By focusing specifically on the treatment of demonic possession in the letters exchanged between Hildegard and the two ecclesiastics, I have examined why holy healing was necessary and why Hildegard's help was necessary. The perilous nature of demonic possession means that if the exorcism fails, the ecclesiastical community in charge as well as the church could face a serious spiritual and ontological crisis. This is the case of our subject Gedolphus who sees a spiritual battle between the church and Satan taking place on Sigewize's body. And this is precisely why Hildegard was called in. Her job was to restore

the *nomos*—the normative world—by healing a sick woman. Here holiness and healing intersect, for holiness is the necessary power that mediates between the human and the divine in order to effect healing. As Roy Porter writes, “[r]eligion and medicine share a single aim, that of making whole. It is no accident that ‘holiness’ and ‘healing’ have a common etymology, rooted in the idea of wholeness.”³⁶ Thus the concept of holiness is intricately bound with the medieval ecclesiastics’ understanding of the goal of healing, i.e., wholeness. In this respect, my paper has reasserted Peter Brown’s claim that a given society’s value is reflected in the kind of healing it seeks.³⁷ In both the Neo-Platonic worldview³⁸ and the Hippocratic medical philosophical view, wholeness or *eukrasia* is considered the harmony and balance that ideally penetrates both microcosm and macrocosm, thus making the entire universe as one congruent and whole cosmos. In the same coherent manner, medicine and religion intersect in Hildegard’s practice of holy healing as they work toward wholeness and order in both individuals and society. Such intersection testifies to the holistic nature of the medieval ecclesiastics’ worldview and the healings such ecclesiastics aimed to accomplish. It also testifies to the practical nature of the works of saints. And in this world, the cult of saints thrived.

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36 Roy Porter, “Religion and Medicine,” *Companion Encyclopedia of the History of Medicine* (London: Routledge, 1993), Vol.2, 1449.

37 “The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity,” 142.

38 For the popularity of Neo-Platonism in the twelfth century, see Barbara Newman, *Sister of Wisdom: St. Hildegard’s Theology of the Feminine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 259.

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PRAYING WITH THE HAND YOU ARE DEALT:
REVISITING SOCIAL CLASS IN THE STUDY OF RELIGION

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Abstract

Almost since the very inception of sociology as a discipline, it was widely assumed that social class determined an individual's religious beliefs, practices, and affiliation. In the later twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, this assumption has been criticized as being overly reductionist by those advocating the role of human agency in the determination of religious subjectivity. This resulted in class being largely ignored within the academic study of religion. In this paper I argue that social class should be revisited as an important category of inquiry within the study of religion. I argue that by applying Sean McCloud's recent theory of "socially habituated subjectivity" to the relationship between religion and class, it is possible to admit the important connection that exists between certain religious groups and social classes, while not falling prey to the reductionistic theories of the past.

For much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it was a widely held assumption among many historians, sociologists, and theologians that objective structures had a profound influence on determining subjective behaviour. For instance, in the work of Karl Marx, Max Weber, Ernst Troeltsch, and H. Richard Niebuhr, one finds the often-explicit conviction that the social and economic conditions concomitant with social class have a direct

correlation with religious belief, practice, and affiliation.¹ The preponderance of this assumption among a variety of North American scholars during the twentieth century led to the proliferation of overly simplistic and highly reductionistic explanations of the relationship between religion and class, which tended to emphasize the influence of structure over that of human agency in deciding religious affiliation. Deprivation and cultural crisis theories are among the best examples of this kind of oversimplification. Following the Second World War, many scholars, and especially sociologists, argued that affiliation with certain religious groups was a result of the particular social needs of its members.² They explained that individuals who were socially, economically, or culturally deprived sought affiliation with religious groups that provided either real or imagined compensation for the social, economic, or cultural status that they were otherwise lacking. In the later twentieth and early twenty first centuries, this understanding of the relationship between religion and class came under heavy criticism as both historically inaccurate and ideologically suspect in that it denied the role that human agency plays in determining religious

1 Karl Marx, "The German Ideology," in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, ed. David McLellan (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (New York: Meridian Books, 1957); Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper Touchbooks, 1960); Max Weber, "The Social Psychology of the World Religions," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946).

2 Robert Mapes Anderson, *Vision of the Disinherited: The Making of American Pentecostalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); Elmer T. Clark, *The Small Sects of America*, Revised Edition (Nashville: Abingdon, 1965); St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, [1945] 1993); Charles Y. Glock, "The Role of Deprivation in the Origin and Evolution of Religious Groups," In *Religion and Social Conflict*, ed., Robert Lee and Martin Marty (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964); C. Eric Lincoln, *Black Muslims in America*, 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, [1951] 1994); Gary Schwartz, *Sect Ideologies and Social Status* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

affiliation.³ The hesitance of scholars to re-enter this controversial area of research resulted in class being largely neglected as an important category of inquiry within the academic study of religion.

Despite the cautions offered by scholars over the last few decades and the consequent lack of critical attention, recent scholarship has confirmed that an important relationship does exist between religion and class in North America.⁴ These findings initially appear as problematic for religious studies scholars who have largely ignored the relationship between religion and class. Those studies that demonstrate that class is still an important factor in influencing religious affiliation lead us to ask if there is a way to account for the obvious connection that exists between religion and class that avoids the reductionism espoused by previous theorists and reserves a role for the influence that human agency might play in the determination of religious subjectivity. I will attempt to answer this question first by briefly delineating the various ways that the relationship between religion and class were expressed by the classical social theorists Karl Marx and Max Weber and the theologians Ernst Troeltsch and H. Richard Niebuhr. These thinkers provided the general theoretical impetus for later reductionistic theories of the association between religion and class. Second, I will explain how religious studies scholar Sean McCloud's concept of socially habituated subjectivity provides a useful alternative to understanding the role that social class plays

3 Wallace D. Best, *Passionately Human, No Less Divine: Religion and Culture in Black Chicago, 1915-1952* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005); Luther P. Gerlach, "Pentecostalism: Revolution or Counter-Revolution?" In *Religious Movements in Contemporary America*, ed. Irving I. Zaretsky and Mark P. Leone (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 669-99; Virginia Hine, "The Deprivation and Disorganization Theories of Social Movements," In *Religious Movements in Contemporary America*, ed. Irving I. Zaretsky and Mark P. Leone (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 646-61; Joel W. Martin, *Sacred Revolt: The Muskogees' Struggle for a New World* (Boston: Beacon, 1991); Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

4 Ralph E. Pyle, "Trends in Religious Stratification: Have Religious Group Socioeconomic Distinctions Declined in Recent Decades?" *Sociology of Religion* 67, no. 1 (2006): 61-79; Sam Reimer, "Class and Congregations: Class and Religious Affiliation at the Congregational Level of Analysis," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 46, no. 4 (2007): 583-94; Christian Smith and Robert Faris, "Socioeconomic Inequality in the American Religious System: An Update and Assessment," *Journal for the Social Scientific Study of Religion* 44 (2005): 95-104.

in the determination of religious subjectivity and acknowledges the influence of both objective social and economic structures as well as subjective human behaviour in deciding religious belief, practice, and affiliation.

Religion and Class in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

Of all the nineteenth and early twentieth century social thinkers, none was more thoroughly convinced that objective structures determined subjective behaviour than Karl Marx:

The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premisses. Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with this their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking. Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life.⁵

Marx was convinced that material conditions, and more specifically, underlying economic structures, directly determined human subjectivity, including of course, religion. He thought that religion was nothing more than humanity's misguided attempt to ameliorate the emotional needs that arise from alienation as a result of capitalism. In another now widely known statement from Marx, he explains this concept more clearly:

Religious suffering is at the same time an expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the feeling of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless circumstances. It is the opium of the people. The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness. The demand to give up the illusions about their condition is a demand to

⁵ Marx, "The German Ideology," 180-1.

give up a condition that requires illusion.⁶

For Marx, religious suffering, or alienation from God, is simply an emulation of real economic suffering, and so religion is ultimately an illusion that serves to distract the proletariat from focusing their attention on ameliorating the true source of humanity's discontent, which is capitalism. Marx's belief that individuals had very little control over their religious subjectivities, as they were the direct product of the pressures exerted on them by immanent economic conditions, would become one of the most important influences on the later reductionistic understanding of the relationship between religion and class in the twentieth century.

Marx was certainly not alone in his assessment of the influence that social and economic structures had on determining human behaviour. Similarly, the German sociologist Max Weber wrote, "not ideas, but material and ideal interests, directly govern men's conduct."⁷ Like Marx, Weber clearly saw an important connection between material conditions and religious beliefs, practices, and affiliation. In various essays found in *The Sociology of Religion*, Weber goes to great lengths in order to explain that a relationship exists between particular social classes and types of religion, suggesting that irrational, emotive, and salvific forms of religion are predominant among the members of the lower class:

The lowest and the most unstable strata of the proletariat, for whom rational conceptions are the least congenial, and also the proletariod⁸ or permanently impoverished lower middle-class groups who are in constant danger of sinking into the proletarian class, are nevertheless readily susceptible to being

6 Karl Marx, "Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction," in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, ed. David McLellan (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 72.

7 Weber, "The Social Psychology of the World Religions," 280.

8 Proletariod is not to be confused with proletariat. Weber uses the former term to refer to the lower-middle class who are narrowly clinging onto their slightly elevated social and economic position in society, and the latter, of course, to refer to the truly impecunious lower-class.

influenced by religious missionary enterprise.⁹

Weber believed that soteriological or theodicicthean theologies “of the Methodist type,” for instance, attract members of the lower social classes, while members of the higher social classes seek theologies that serve “the primary function of legitimizing their own life pattern and situation in the world.”¹⁰

Although it is true that many of Weber’s writings would become a major influence on the later reductionistic understanding of the relationship between religion and class, it would not be fair to place Weber in the same camp as those who have appropriated his work. For instance, he also observed that, “only in a limited sense is there a distinctive class religion of disprivileged social groups,” and “since every need for salvation is an expression of some distress, social or economic oppression is an effective source of salvation beliefs, though by no means the exclusive source.”¹¹ Weber was careful not to propose a simple deterministic or causal understanding of the relationship between religion and class and reserved a place for the important role that other social influences, such as place, power, and prestige, played in the determination of religious subjectivity. Moreover, Weber fundamentally disagreed with Marx’s strict historical materialism, and instead argued that other influences beyond the economic had to be taken into consideration when discussing the development of society. Weber provided further nuance to the understanding of the relationship between religion and class than did Marx by arguing that “very frequently the ‘world images’ that have been created by ‘ideas’ have, like switchmen, determined the tracks along which action has been pushed by the dynamic of interest.”¹² While he very strongly believed that objective social and economic structures did exercise an important influence on the determination of religious subjectivity, he also thought that religion was just as capable of influencing those same objective social and economic structures. This was, of course, one of the central arguments that Weber made in *The Protestant Ethic*

9 Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, trans. Ephraim Fischhoff, Introduction by Talcott Parsons (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), 101.

10 Ibid., 101, 107.

11 Ibid., 101, 107.

12 Weber, “The Social Psychology of the World Religions,” 280.

and the Spirit of Capitalism.¹³ While he was careful to avoid any kind of causal relationship between Protestantism and capitalism, he did, however, propose that certain ideas rather than certain structures were at least partly responsible for the development and proliferation of capitalism throughout Europe. He noted that capitalism was marked by the accumulation of wealth and abstemiousness or what he called “inner-worldly asceticism.” Weber believed that if it was indeed true that the asceticism derived from Calvinistic forms of Protestantism influenced the development of capitalism in Europe, then religious ideas are capable of affecting social and economic structures.

A contemporary and colleague of Weber’s, the German theologian Ernst Troeltsch, also wrote about the relationship between religion and class, primarily within Christianity. In *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*, Troeltsch attempted to explicate the relationship between Christianity and the social order from its beginnings through to the post-Reformation period. He proposed a typology of three different types of religious life—church, sect, and mysticism—which could be understood as forming a kind of continuum of differing levels of accommodation with the social order. Troeltsch extended Weber’s corrective of Marx’s strict historical materialism into the realm of theology by arguing that religious beliefs were indeed capable of impacting the social world. Like Marx and Weber, Troeltsch also insisted that social and economic structures have a powerful influence over subjective behaviour, and he drew strong associations between specific social classes and certain religious groups, particularly between sectarian forms of Christianity and members of the lower class.

The observations that Troeltsch made concerning the relationship between certain divisions of Christianity and the social classes were expanded and popularized for a North American audience by the American theologian H. Richard Niebuhr. Similar to arguments made by Marx, Weber, and Troeltsch, Niebuhr argued in *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* that the divisions that exist within Christianity are primarily the result of material influences, for instance:

In middle class symbolism conceptions of heaven in which

13 Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989).

individual felicity is guaranteed are much more important than the millennial hope of the poor man's faith—a difference, which, of course, is also partly due to the greater satisfaction of the middle class with the temporal order in which it enjoys a considerable number of pleasant advantages.¹⁴

According to Niebuhr, the middle class adopted a theology that served to inculcate it with a sense of assuredness in a pleasant afterlife and ultimately functioned to reinforce the existing social and economic order in which it profited. Concerning the lower class whom Niebuhr referred to as “the disinherited,” Niebuhr wrote:

The religion of the untutored and economically disenfranchised classes has distinct ethical and psychological characteristics, corresponding to the needs of the groups. Emotional fervor is one common mark. Where the power of abstract thought has not been highly developed and where inhibitions on emotional expression have not been set up by a system of polite conventions, religion must and will express itself in emotional terms.¹⁵

Niebuhr goes on to write that “intellectual naïveté and practical need combine to create a marked propensity toward millenarianism, with its promise of tangible goods and of the reversal of all present social systems of rank.”¹⁶ These passages reveal Niebuhr's belief that members of the lower class prefer a millennial or “pie in the sky” theology that is inherently irrational, emotive, and salvific, and which serves to offer members of the lower class an escape from the displeasures of their current material existence.

It is conceptions such as these that later theorists used as the foundation for their assertion that class determined religious affiliation, and, moreover, that members of the lower class tended to join sectarian, irrational, emotive, and salvific forms of religiosity because it compensated for their social, economic, or cultural deprivation. Following the Second World War, deprivation theory

¹⁴ Niebuhr, 82.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 30-31.

quickly became the most common explanation for affiliation with certain forms of religion, and no religion received more attention from the deprivation theorists than did Pentecostalism. As the historian Grant Wacker has observed, “the presumption that Pentecostalism arose as a more or less functional adaptation to social and cultural disequilibrium has acquired the status of an orthodoxy.”¹⁷ Scholars such as Liston Pope, Elmer Clark, Gary Schwartz, and Robert Mapes Anderson all used deprivation theory in order to explain Pentecostal affiliation.¹⁸ In *Vision of the Disinherited: The Making of American Pentecostalism*, the most important and influential of these works, Robert Mapes Anderson writes that “rejecting all secular solutions to their problems,” the working poor “found in Pentecostalism a religious resolution that was almost wholly other-worldly, symbolic, and psychotherapeutic.”¹⁹ Anderson’s sentiments are characteristic of the way that affiliation with Pentecostalism, along with a variety of other religions, was understood for most of the twentieth century.

Sean McCloud’s Concept of Socially Habituated Subjectivity

Even though the idea that objective structures directly determine religious subjectivity was widely assumed in the late twentieth century, there were other scholars who were attempting to reconcile the interplay between objectivity and subjectivity or structure and human agency. One of the most important of these thinkers was the French philosopher Pierre Bourdieu who, in his *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, did much to revitalize the concept of “habitus,” which he defined as “a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a *matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions*.”²⁰ Contrary to the historical materialism of Marx, Bourdieu argued that “it is necessary to abandon all theories which explicitly or implicitly treat practice as a mechanical reaction, directly determined by the antecedent conditions and

17 Grant Wacker, “Taking Another Look at the *Vision of the Disinherited*,” *Religious Studies Review* 8, no. 1 (1982): 19.

18 Liston Pope, *Millhands and Preachers: A Study of Gastonia* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1942); Clark; Schwartz; Anderson.

19 Anderson, 229.

20 Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 82-83. Emphasis author’s.

entirely reducible to the mechanical functioning of pre-established assemblies, 'models' or 'rôles.'"²¹ At the same time, he also insisted that the rejection of mechanistic theories in no way implies that, in accordance with another obligatory option, we should bestow on some creative free will the free and willful power to constitute, on the instant, the meaning of the situation by projecting the ends aiming at its transformation, and that we should reduce the objective intentions and constituted significations of actions and works to the conscious and deliberate intentions of their authors.²²

In other words, Bourdieu pointed out that behaviour should not be seen as primarily the result of either objective structures as the structuralists in the line of Émile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons advocated, nor should it be understood as simply the result of the subjective intentionality of the individual as was purported by interactionists following George Herbert Mead and Herbert Blumer. Rather, Bourdieu suggested that behaviour should be viewed as the result of a dialectical relationship between these two influences.

Bourdieu's concept of the dialectic between objectivity and subjectivity closely resembles Weber's idea of the interplay between social and economic structures and human ideas as well as Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's theory of the relationship between externalization, objectification, and internalization in the social construction of knowledge.²³ Similarly, Bourdieu argues that objective structures such as material conditions result in the development of a habitus, or a set of dispositions, which are then unconsciously internalized by individuals and groups giving them a particular subjective understanding of their world, making certain actions either more or less likely depending on their particular social location. As Bourdieu explains,

[P]ractical evaluation of the likelihood of the success of a given action in a given situation brings into play a whole body of wisdom, sayings, commonplaces, ethical precepts ('that's not for the likes of us') and, at a deeper level, the unconscious

²¹ Ibid., 73.

²² Ibid., 73.

²³ Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 61.

principles of the *ethos* which, being the product of a learning process dominated by a determinate type of objective regularities, determines 'reasonable' and 'unreasonable' conduct for every agent subjected to those regularities.²⁴

Bourdieu proposed that the dispositions instilled within the individual by their objective social and economic structures make certain life choices either more or less cohesive with the objective structures that previously created these very same set of dispositions, and, by extension, make these life choices either more or less likely for a particular individual. He explained that as a result, "the most improbable practices are excluded, either totally without examination, as *unthinkable*, or at the cost of *double negation* which inclines agents to make a virtue of necessity, that is, to refuse what is anyway refused and to love the inevitable."²⁵ It is Bourdieu's conceptualization of the habitus, which mediates the influence of both objective structure and subjective human agency in the production of human behaviour, that religious studies scholar Sean McCloud redescribes as "socially habituated subjectivity."²⁶

Following a line of argumentation very similar to Bourdieu's, McCloud argues that class does not directly determine an individual's religious affiliation so much as it determines his or her socially habituated subjectivity, or rather, "the repertoire of beliefs, practices, attitudes, assumptions, and gestures that have been inculcated by our social locations."²⁷ According to McCloud, an individual's socially habituated subjectivity, or the way that a particular individual thinks and acts in relation to the variables of a social location, imposes certain availabilities and constraints on the types of religious options that are open to that individual. As McCloud explains, "the material conditions produced by social class and status differentiation make individuals and groups more or less available and constrained when exploring

24 Bourdieu, 77. Emphasis author's.

25 Ibid., 77. Emphasis author's.

26 Sean McCloud, *Divine Hierarchies: Class in American Religion and Religious Studies* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 28. See also Sean McCloud, "Putting Some Class into Religious Studies: Resurrecting an Important Concept," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 75:4 (Dec. 2007): 840-862.

27 McCloud, *Divine Hierarchies*, 168.

certain religious groups.”²⁸ In other words, McCloud argues that while social class does not determine religious affiliation, it does, however, make certain religious options either more or less likely for particular individuals or groups. Building on the theoretical contributions of Bonnie Erickson and Ann Swidler, as well as Richard Machalek and David Snow, McCloud argues that through the determination of the socially habituated subjectivity, class imposes availability and constraint in two primary ways. First, he argues that “class works to increase or decrease one’s social network diversity, which in turn helps determine the size and contents of one’s cultural repertoire.”²⁹ Put simply, McCloud proposes that the material conditions associated with social class play an important role in determining the diversity of an individual’s social network, such as family, friends, professional networks, and voluntary associations, and that one is naturally more likely to experiment with or adopt a religious belief or practice or to become affiliated with a religion with which the people within one’s own social network are already involved. He writes that “a large and diverse social network is likely to provide potential contact with a more diverse collection of religious movements, styles, and beliefs than a restricted, narrow network. In this respect, a larger cultural repertoire garnered from diverse social networks may also encourage a larger religious repertoire.”³⁰

McCloud takes the fairly innocuous assertion much further that class simply makes exposure to certain religions either more or less likely. Borrowing a phrase from Erickson, he proposes that the middle and upper classes have much “larger, richer networks” than the lower class.³¹ He explains that the material advantages that members of the middle and upper class have do not simply provide them with access to a broader array of people and information, but that their exposure to a wider assortment of cultural knowledge better enables them to improve the ability to integrate this knowledge into their cultural repertoire throughout their lives.³² In doing this, McCloud

28 Ibid., 15-16.

29 Ibid., 25-6.

30 Ibid., 26.

31 Bonnie Erickson, “Culture, Class, and Connections,” *American Journal of Sociology* 102:1 (1996): 237.

32 McCloud, *Divine Hierarchies*, 24-7.

disregards the idea of culture as a coherent system of belief and practice, utilizing Swidler's concept of culture as "a set of skills, one which one can learn more or less thoroughly, enact with more or less grace and conviction."³³ Thus, according to McCloud, members of the middle and upper class not only have more diverse social networks, which make exposure to other cultures and religions more likely, but because of this advantage, they actually develop the necessary skills in order to integrate those cultural and religious sensibilities more readily than members of the lower class who have more restricted social networks and cultural and religious repertoires.

It is important not to misunderstand McCloud as saying that only members of the middle and upper class are *capable* of developing diverse social networks and thus of expanding their cultural and religious repertoires. This, of course, would assume that members of the middle and upper class have some kind of innate ability to develop combinative religiosity. However, what McCloud is arguing is that the material conditions of the middle and upper class tend to allow them to develop *more* diverse social networks, which then serve to expand the size and content of their cultural and religious repertoires, and to further develop the skills that are necessary in order to incorporate cultural and religious knowledge into their repertoires to a point that is not commonly achieved by members of the lower class whose material conditions place restrictions on these processes.

McCloud agrees with scholars Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton as well as Bradford Verter, whose findings reveal that those who are most likely to experiment with and finally adopt the religions of others are predominantly from the middle and upper class.³⁴ Borrowing the term "spiritual omnivorosity" from Verter and "cultural omnivorosity" from Erickson,³⁵ McCloud argues that within the middle and upper class there are simply more religious omnivores, those who demonstrate a propensity to "pick, mix, and combine a variety of religious beliefs and practices from various

33 Ann Swidler, *Talk of Love: How Culture Matters* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 52.

34 Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 85; Bradford Verter, "Spiritual Capital: Theorizing Religion with Bourdieu against Bourdieu," *Sociological Theory* 21 (June 2003): 168.

35 Erickson, 249; Verter, 167-8.

traditions.”³⁶ McCloud is careful to point out that the ability to pick, mix, and combine elements from a variety of religious traditions is not limited to the middle and upper class. Rather, he asserts that “those of the lower classes similarly picked, mixed, and combined, but they did it using a more restricted field of materials.”³⁷ In other words, predominantly lower class African Americans in the Caribbean and the Southeastern United States have experimented with and adopted a variety of religious forms; however, “they picked and mixed from a smaller set of mostly European and African (versus worldwide) traditions.”³⁸ What this means is that members of the lower class may also develop diverse social networks, extensive cultural and religious repertoires, and combinative religiosity, but the material conditions of the lower class often precludes them from gaining access to a truly global set of cultural and religious traditions, such as Tibetan Buddhism and Zen Buddhism, which, according to James William Coleman, are predominantly white, middle class enterprises in the modern Western world.³⁹

Second, McCloud argues that class imposes availability and constraint by determining one’s level of socioeconomic stability.⁴⁰ Central to McCloud’s argument here is Machalek and Snow’s concept of structural availability and Swidler’s concept of strategies of action. To begin with, Machalek and Snow explain that the idea of structural availability “means that either possessing certain social characteristics (e.g., power, wealth, prestige) or not being constrained by role obligations (e.g., duties and responsibilities accompanying occupational, family, civic statuses) increases one’s availability for potential affiliation with and conversion to a new religious movement.”⁴¹ McCloud points out that converts to communal religions during the 1970s and 1980s tended to be predominantly middle class college students, which might be explained by the fact

36 McCloud, *Divine Hierarchies*, 26.

37 Ibid., 27.

38 Ibid., 27.

39 James William Coleman, *The New Buddhism: The Western Transformation of an Ancient Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 191-4.

40 McCloud, *Divine Hierarchies*, 27.

41 Richard Machalek and David Snow, “Conversion to New Religious Movements,” In *The Handbook of Sects and Cults in America*, ed. David Bromley and Jeffrey Hadden (Greenwich, CT: Jai, 1993), 61.

that many of them were unencumbered by the role obligations, such as raising families, rearing children, and earning a living, that would normally prevent middle-aged men, many women of all ages, and members of the lower class, from joining such religious groups. For McCloud then, the concept of structural availability helps to explain why certain religious options are made either more or less available for certain individuals according to their class location as opposed to class determining their affiliation with certain religions.

Finally, Swidler asserts that during periods of either personal or societal socioeconomic instability, “ideologies—explicit, articulated, highly organized meaning systems (both political and religious)—establish new languages and styles for new strategies of action.”⁴² McCloud uses Swidler’s concept of strategies of action to argue that because members of the lower class often encounter personal socioeconomic instability more often and more intensely than the elite classes, they are more likely to attempt a new strategy of action in the form of religion.⁴³ McCloud writes that “in the case of the poor and dislocated, in a time of social transformation or social crisis they may become more ‘available’—if not compelled—to seek out new religious options because their relationships and role obligations change or disintegrate.”⁴⁴ According to McCloud, the idea that socioeconomic instability creates circumstances in which individuals may be more likely to seek out new religious beliefs, practices, and affiliation avoids the reductionism of the deprivation theorists because in this case, class is simply one variable among many that encourages or discourages but does not determine certain religious options. Whether it is members of the elite classes who join religions such as Buddhism and some New Religious Movements because they are more structurally available to do so as a result of their material conditions, or members of the lower classes who join religions such as Pentecostalism or the Nation of Islam because they are more often in a position to seek out new strategies of action due to the disadvantages of their material conditions, it is not class that determines these affiliations; in both instances, rather, material conditions only make these religious options either more or less available.

42 Swidler, 99.

43 McCloud, *Divine Hierarchies*, 27.

44 *Ibid.*, 27.

Conclusion

By applying the concept of socially habituated subjectivity to the relationship between religion and class, it is possible to admit the obvious connection that exists between certain religious groups and social classes, while not falling prey to the reductionistic theories of the past which deny the possibility of a subjective influence on religious subjectivity. Rather, by combining concepts from Weber, Bourdieu, and McCloud, it is possible to recognize the important influence that objective social and economic agents, as well as the subjective ideas and intentionality of individual human agents, exercise in the complex process of determining religious belief, practice, and affiliation.

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MAKING IT REAL: THE NARRATIVE (Re)CONSTRUCTION OF A PILGRIMAGE CENTRE IN BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

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Abstract

In the Balkans, language, culture, ethnicity, nationalism, and religion are inextricably interconnected, and religious factionalism plays a central role in the continuing tensions between Croats and Serbs. So intense is this fusion of the secular and the sacred in the former Yugoslavia that little more than a decade ago, it contributed to the construction of ideologies of “ethnic cleansing” which led to a civil war. An arena of competition and struggle between different groups attempting to win control of a crucial cultural resource, Franciscan-influenced Medjugorje is unquestionably the region’s most potent and important symbol of Croatian identity. Presently the most visited Roman Catholic pilgrimage site in the world because of the daily Marian apparitions that have been reported since 1981, the landscape of this small parish is not a neutral geography; it has been recontextualized by the individuals who present the territory and its peoples to outsiders. A key method for claiming possession of territory and for buttressing collective identity, this sharing of “identity-stories” takes on an almost unlimited number of forms: grand narratives, histories, memoirs, songs, the visual arts, language, architecture, and geographies. These cultural texts help to create political subjects and political commitments and are appropriated and more fully narrativized by various groups in order to support specific, differing political agendas. This paper is an exploration of the narratives presently told to Canadian pilgrims in the context of this pilgrimage and their intended impact, with a special focus on the narratives surrounding the first days of the apparitions.

Pilgrimage sites serve as loci where pilgrims feel better able to body forth the subjects of their meditations in their imaginations.¹ Significantly, it is from the meaning of these sites, not the places themselves, that one draws inspiration. Medjugorje is a Roman Catholic pilgrimage site in Herzegovina made immensely popular by the daily Marian apparitions that are said to have occurred there since 1981. The meaning of Medjugorje is carefully constructed through story, history, icon, and symbol, which together form overarching narratives. These narratives are delivered to the pilgrims through a host of sources, and they are appropriated by the various groups involved. These are fully narrativized in order to enhance specific agendas² and finally become “cults enacted”—demonstrative processes whereby pilgrims learn to act out cultural texts.³ Pilgrimage organizers, shrine administrators, and pilgrimage participants themselves often feel responsible for encouraging “correct” interpretations of the site. This is done by choreographing pilgrims’ steps in a variety of ways and by “channeling” their experiences. These parties’ attempts are never entirely successful, since the site’s symbolic resonance appeals on multiple, even contradictory, levels,⁴ and since its meaning is indeed in what Bakhtin referred to as a perpetual carnivalesque state of unfinalized transition.⁵ Though much scholarship has inappropriately attributed the success of the pilgrimage to the social strength and political clout of the religious elites connected to the devotion,⁶ they

1 Glenn Bowman, “Christian Ideology and the Image of a Holy Land: The Place of Jerusalem Pilgrimage in the Various Christianities,” in *Contesting the Sacred: the Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage*, ed. John Eade and Michael J. Sallnow (New York: Routledge, 1991), 114.

2 cf. James J. Preston, “Spiritual Magnetism: An Organizing Principle for the Study of Pilgrimage,” in *Sacred Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage*, ed. Alan Morinis (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1995), 43.

3 Jack Ellis, *The Documentary Idea: A Critical History of English-Language Documentary Film and Video* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1989), 43.

4 Simon Coleman and John Elsner, “Epilogue: Landscapes Reviewed,” in *Pilgrimage: Past and Present in the World Religions*, ed. Simon Coleman and John Elsner (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995), 207.

5 Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 164.

6 Mart Bax, “Patronage in a Holy Place: Preliminary Research Notes on a ‘Parallel Structure’ in a Yugoslav Pilgrimage Centre,” *Ethnos* 21 (1990): 41-56.

do have an important impact on how pilgrimages are lived⁷ and subsequently understood and narrated.

Although the narratives which detail the “first days” of the apparitions ostensibly exist to help contextualize the socio-historical period that spurred their occurrence, their interest for the tellers and the listeners lies not in dates or timeframes, but in the *meanings* that have been attributed to the events of those first days. These narratives “find, capture, and hold” the pilgrim, and form the reality of the pilgrimage⁸ by constructing, contesting, and transforming its identity,⁹ thus becoming a way that pilgrims may construe the land and events of Medjugorje and, as Keith Basso writes, “render them intelligible.”¹⁰ An important point is that these cycles of narratives are not what in the academy are referred to as “belief legends.” The narratives shared in the context of Medjugorje pilgrimages are told in a matter-of-fact manner, as *histories*. My contention here is that the collection of narrative cycles which give context to the pilgrimage centre is the site’s “sacred trace”¹¹; the story here is the belief.¹²

The narratives which are used to give meaning to the Marian apparition site of Medjugorje, its space, its practice, and its history are, to a far greater extent than most might expect, concerned with struggle, pain, and suffering. These narratives recount a number of what are framed as “key moments” in the early history of Croats and of Medjugorje, including the Orthodox Christian repression of

7 Paul Younger, “Velankanni Calling: Hindu Patterns of Pilgrimage at a Christian Shrine,” in *Sacred Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage*, ed. Alan Morinis (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1992), 97.

8 cf. Carolyn Merchant, *Reinventing Eden: The Fate of Nature in Western Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 3.

9 Timothy Lloyd and Patrick Mullen, *Lake Erie Fisherman: Work, Tradition, and Identity* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 1990).

10 Keith Basso, “Stalking with Stories: Names, Places, and Moral Narratives among the Western Apache,” in *Text, Play and Story: The Construction and Reconstruction of Self and Society*, ed. Stuart Plattner (Washington: American Ethnological Society, 1984), 22.

11 James J. Preston, “The Rediscovery of America: Pilgrimage in the Promised Land,” in *Geographica Religionum 5: Pilgrimage in the United States*, ed. Gisbert Rinschede and Surinder Bhardwaj (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1990), 22.

12 Lauri Honko, “Memorates and the Study of Folk Belief,” in *Nordic Folklore*, ed. Reimund Kvideland and Henning K. Sehmsdorf (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 100-9.

Roman Catholicism, the Turkish [Muslim] oppression of Christian minorities [then Orthodox], the Austro-Hungarian callous disregard for the Croats in the present-day region of Medjugorje, the deceitful annexation of Serbia, Croatia, and Slovenia to form the state of Yugoslavia, the Allies' failure to protect Croats from civil communists following the Second World War, and Communists' massacre of religious persons. The narratives that relate events which occurred after the first apparitions, likewise concerned with suffering, are much more specific in detail. These include the Communists' abuse of the visionaries and Medjugorje's parish priest, the emotional anguish occasioned by the oppression of the authorities in the first years of the pilgrimage, Croatia's attack on Slovenia on the day of the tenth anniversary of the first Apparitions, God's role in the sparing of Medjugorje from bombardment by the Serbs, the presentation of the Shrine of Memory erected for the thirty Franciscan priests martyred by the Communists, and details of the war crimes committed by the Serbs, along with their psychological and social repercussions.

Because of the necessarily limited scope of this paper, the following is an exploration of a single series of narratives that are presented to international pilgrims during their stay in the village, those describing the context and "first days" of the Medjugorje apparitions. These are by far the most important narratives in terms of the frequency of their application, their narrative efficacy, and their impact on how the pilgrimage is subsequently framed by pilgrims. In order to better showcase how seamlessly and comprehensively this narrative cycle is presented to the pilgrim during her or his pilgrimage, this paper excludes the materials I collected during my first three pilgrimages to Medjugorje, only admitting those elements collected during my most recent time in the field as a participating observer.¹³ Significantly, my research at the time, as my fellow pilgrims were very well aware, was focused on the corporeal practices of the pilgrims while in the village; the material they were presenting me with was incidental to my research and primarily intended for my own edification. Throughout

13 These include the pilgrimage journals pilgrims photocopied for me, audio recordings, photographs, and videos they took during the pilgrimage and gave me, the books, prayer cards, postcards, pamphlets, and websites they shared, sent, purchased and/or recommended to me and to each other, and the mass e-mails they sent to the group in the month immediately following our pilgrimage together.

this paper, only pilgrims are identified with pseudonyms, which they selected themselves.

In June 1981, six teenagers from the group of hamlets now referred to as Medjugorje in Bosnia-Herzegovina, began reportedly witnessing apparitions of the Virgin Mary. To this day, the visionaries are said to have daily visits from the Gospa, whom they describe as a beautiful young woman resplendent with holiness. From the very first days of the apparitions, thousands flocked from the surrounding towns and villages to be in the presence of the children, to perhaps witness the apparition themselves, and to hear “first-hand” the message which the apparition had for the children. The alluring power of the Medjugorje apparitions is difficult to overemphasize. The combination of new employment opportunities in the pilgrimage industry along with a not-unrelated significant increase in birthrates has had an important impact on the number of inhabitants, all of whom are of Croatian nationality, are Roman Catholic, and speak Croat. The percentage of residents who take part in the religious life of the parish is very high; around 90 percent of the population takes part in the Mass at least weekly. One can hardly fail to notice that this generally spurs on the pilgrims, encouraging them in their faith and pilgrimage. The pilgrims who travel to Medjugorje hail from all over the world, and expect to find there a very different life than that which they live at home. There, pilgrims are faced not only with the orthodoxy of their particular faith, but also with the Other as well—Croat Bosnia’s landscapes, worldviews, and languages are typically very foreign to them. These travellers, finding themselves in an interstitial space between cultures where they have the potential to reformulate meanings and negotiate identities,¹⁴ become destructured by the extreme experiences they undergo,¹⁵ and they appreciate the pilgrimage site as a Foucauldian

14 Ellen Badone, “Crossing Boundaries: Exploring the Borderlands of Ethnography, Tourism and Pilgrimage,” in *Intersecting Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage and Tourism*, ed. Ellen Badone and Sharon R. Roseman (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004).

15 N. Ross Crumrine and Alan Morinis, “La Peregrinacion: The Latin American Pilgrimage,” in *Pilgrimage in Latin America*, ed. N. Ross Crumrine and Alan Morinis (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), 16.

“heterotopia,” a place of Otherness¹⁶ in a “time out of time.”¹⁷ The purpose of this site is understood to convert the consenting visitors and enhance their lives through faith.

Upon their arrival in the Balkans, groups of North American pilgrims are typically met by their local guide. The first words of one guide after meeting a group at an airport in Croatia serve to position the country in terms of its faith and the politics of religion: “Croatia was baptized in the sixth and seventh centuries, and has fourteen centuries of Christendom.” Most “Medjugorje” websites tell a variant of the same story, which highlights the first century of Christendom in Herzegovina as the first “Golden Age” of Roman Catholicism in the area (the second Golden Age being the present, since 1995). The narratives told in the context of Medjugorje pilgrimages represent the country as rightly Roman Catholic, whose history of injustice enabled foreign minorities to slowly coerce the faithful into becoming something other than nature (or God) intended them to be (Islamic, Bosnian, Serb, Communist). One pilgrim guide states that the current population of the country consists of a majority of Muslims, one-fifth Orthodox Christians, and a scant 17 percent Roman Catholic. “It’s not easy for Catholics to live in this country,” she states. She explains that from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century, the area was invaded by the Ottoman Empire. The version offered by Medjugorje’s “official Website” is even more hyperbolic. Most contextualizing stories, however, contend not with Muslim oppression, but rather with the difficulty of life under the Communist government. One of the Franciscan priests presently posted in Medjugorje judges that “it is the blood of the martyrs of the Church and their years of imprisonment that brought [the Virgin] to Medjugorje.”¹⁸ The pilgrims also often conclude that the Virgin chose Medjugorje because of its history and its Communist government: “maybe because it’s Communist? Maybe it’s because she wanted to bring faith here?” shares one pilgrim (Diane).

When the apparitions first began, the parish priest, Father Jozo

16 Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” trans. Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics* 16:1 (Spring 1986), 22-7.

17 Alessandro Falassi, ed., *Time out of Time: Essays on the Festival* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987).

18 Elleta Nolte, “Our Medjugorje,” www.ourmedjugorje.com.

Zovko, was in Zagreb. Narrative accounts have it that upon his return, when he witnessed the effervescence in the parish, he assumed that it was a coup from the Communists to destroy the Church. All the while, the story goes, the Communists were saying, “that’s a coup from the Church to destroy Communism” (Sister Bénédicté). Skeptical about the authenticity of the apparitions, the parish priest and his colleagues are said to have summoned another Franciscan priest at this point—a psychologist—and to have asked him to listen to the seers, set them right, and thus avoid scandal in the parish. When Father Slavko arrived with his orders and interviewed the youths, however, he is said to have been “completely renewed,” and to have immediately become a defender of the messages, and their propagator.

The fourth day of the apparitions, the local government authorities in Citluk became interested in what was occurring in Medjugorje. They are said to have interrogated the six children and had them examined by a doctor,¹⁹ who found nothing the matter with the youths. On the fifth day, a crowd of thousands had gathered on the hill. The Communist authorities brought the children to a series of psychologists, thinking that they would attest to the children being psychologically unstable, and thus would appease the curiosity of the multitudes. “But no doctor wanted to sign such a paper,” a guide told the pilgrims. Finally, in order to put a stop to the gatherings, the authorities blocked access to the hill.

On June 29, the children were taken to Mostar for further medical examination. Legend has it that the head neuro-psychiatrist said “the children aren’t crazy, but the persons who brought them here must be.” It is said that the authorities were frustrated and ordered Father Jozo Zovko to stop the gatherings, promising that they would hold him accountable for the repercussions. The authorities sent for a state psychiatrist, who observed the children during an apparition. According to a number of stories, the psychologist descended the hill visibly shaken and refused to file a report.²⁰

On the seventh day, two government social workers asked the children to go for a ride with the intention of getting them away from the place of apparitions. The narratives of pilgrimage workers state that the children became agitated, so the vehicle was stopped.

19 Mate Tunin Vasilj, “The First Days,” www.medjugorje.net.

20 Elleta Nolte, “Our Medjugorje,” www.ourmedjugorje.com.

The children knelt to pray, and everyone present, *including the two workers*, saw a ball of light coming towards them. It is alleged that the social workers resigned their positions the very next day and moved away. From this day onwards, the seers and their retinue hid from the authorities in order to have the apparitions. One of the sites where the visionaries are said to have hidden is at the foot of the hill where they had first witnessed the Virgin, recounts one guide. Because of the poor cover offered by the site (the few trees and bushes present would not suffice to conceal a group of children), a folk legend said the Virgin protected the children by preventing the soldiers from seeing them (Diane). Guards are said to have been placed “in front of the house of each seer to watch their comings and goings” (pilgrim guide), and that the Virgin organized midnight meetings with them “because the Communists were sleeping at that hour of the night” (Sister Bénédicté).

After one month of apparitions, the authorities reacted to the increasingly popular movement and dispatched a special police force from Sarajevo, which surrounded the village. Hoping to avoid the spectacle offered by the six visionaries, the police searched the village for the children. Men were posted at the foot of Apparition Hill and the Cross Mountains, with orders to prevent anyone from acceding to the mountains. Sermons of the priests were recorded and scrutinized for anti-Communist content, and the parish priest, Father Jozo, was ordered to close the church. Shortly thereafter, Father Jozo was arrested and put in prison to await trial by Communist soldiers for having proselytized against the government in his homilies. A multitude of folk legends concerned with the pastor’s stay in prison developed. On top of these are the stories told regarding the village while the priest was in prison. On a bright day with a clear sky, the guard who was placed at the summit of the Krizevac is said to have been struck by lightning. The officer was found in a coma and remained in that state for three months, after which he awoke, asked for a priest, and “became a devout Christian.”²¹ The youngest of the seers, Jacov, who was only ten years old at the time of the first apparitions, is said to have been very proud when the Virgin asked him for a favour: to offer one prayer with all his heart to the Lord. “So proud, in fact,” explains a nun, “that in front of the Communist militia, he defiantly said, lifting

21 Elleta Nolte, “Our Medjugorje.” www.ourmedjugorje.com.

his head, 'you don't scare me. The Gospa is counting on me.'" The nun comments that the authorities "were completely abashed, since if they cannot scare a child, what is their power?"

These narratives together establish that the many miracles and incredible feats occurring in Medjugorje showed the authorities that they were powerless to prevent these events from occurring. Many of the Virgin's messages are said to have been (very thinly) veiled in anti-Communist terminology, their symbolism having the potential to be read in divisive sectarian terms, the stories and narratives surrounding the apparitions completely transparent in their opposition and defiance. The victory of six little children of humble backgrounds over the Communist government (and, by extension, Communism itself) is framed in the narratives of organizers, accompanying priests, and pilgrims as the victory of David over Goliath.

The narratives presented to the pilgrims are not neutral texts; they are recontextualized by the individuals who present the culture to outsiders, and their content, intent, and effect are often politically motivated and intensely partisan. Indeed, this use of "religious" or "spiritual" narratives surrounding the first days of events to comprehend the more than quarter-century of daily apparitions demonstrates why Medjugorje offers a rich opportunity "for the investigation of emergent state-centred and ethnic nationalisms."²² Preachers', locals', and tourism-industry workers' narratives are characteristically couched in binary antagonisms aimed at accounting for and vindicating the Franciscans' forestalling of diocesan control, the Croat reclaiming of the Serb landscape, and the Roman Catholic repossession of a Muslim, then Communist, then Serb territory. If a pilgrimage's foundation "is typically marked by visions, miracles, or martyrdoms,"²³ a pilgrimage's attractiveness and popularity is dependent on the manner in which religious concepts of the sacred are employed to draw attention to the alluring power of the sites.²⁴

22 John Eade and Michael J. Sallnow, eds., *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 26.

23 Victor and Edith Turner, *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 26.

24 cf. Sharon R. Roseman, "Santiago de Compostella in the Year 2000: From Religious Center to European City of Culture," in *Intersecting Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage and Tourism*, ed. Ellen Badone and Sharon R. Roseman (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 69.

The narratives surrounding the Medjugorje apparitions, “ideal [forms] into which particular bits of content are poured,”²⁵ not only supply a “grammar of experience,”²⁶ but also the frameworks that both tie narrated events to narrative ones and facilitate untyings.²⁷ I posit, following Lauri Honko, that the story here *is* the belief²⁸; the “sacred trace”²⁹ of the Medjugorje pilgrimage is the collection of narrative cycles which surround the apparitions.

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