

CULT/URE

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Alyson Dame, Robert Davis, Kip Richardson, and Aaron S. White

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

C*ult/ure's* mission is to promote scholarship that brings cult and culture—religious worlds and the social and political contexts in which they inhere—into creative and constructive dialogue. The title expresses the conviction that religious life and cultural life are co-constitutive, and that the scholarly investigation of religion and religious claims must be part of a broader cultural conversation. The title also expresses our intent to cultivate emerging voices in the discipline of religious studies. Our hope is that the journal will provide a fertile ground for the growth of new critical insights in the dialogue on religious and cultural life.

This second issue of *Cult/ure* presents six examples of recent graduate work emerging from the matrix of questions and concerns that animates the study of religion at Harvard. Speaking from diverse contexts, and employing different approaches, these essays offer a glimpse—far from comprehensive—of the range of work that falls under the aegis of religious studies. While no explicit theme has been pursued in the selection of these essays, there nevertheless may emerge from their juxtaposition certain patterns, or perhaps common questions and conversations. It should not surprise that these textual conversations reflect the kinds of classroom and casual conversations in which students of religion at Harvard participate. It is our hope that the presence of a journal like *Cult/ure* can also contribute to them—that engagement with different traditions and methodologies may provoke us to ask new questions in our own fields of research, and that those questions may yield greater insight into the cultural and religious worlds that we study and in which we live.

In different ways, each of these articles touches on questions of the nature of representation and the role of language in human communities. Working in a contemporary context, Molly Baer Farneth draws on James Madison's *Federalist Papers* and the work of postcolonial theorist Dipesh Chakrabarty to analyze religious rhetoric in political discourse in her article, "Religious Partic-

ularities and Universal Rights.” She argues that the question of the proper place of particular religious commitments in a liberal democracy cannot be decided in advance, and insists instead upon ongoing, critical reflection on the place of particular religious communities and commitments in American political life.

In “Justin Martyr, the Montanists, and the Construction of the Other,” David W. Jorgensen takes up the tools of rhetorical analysis and historiography to make an intervention into a debate in contemporary Christian theology. Calling attention to the workings of power in theological language, Jorgensen demonstrates that part of what was at stake in early Christian formulations of the Trinity was the polemical construction of an orthodox Christian identity.

Sohrob Nabatian’s essay, “On the Inclusive Interpretation of Sura 33:40, the ‘Seal of the Prophets,’” traces the history of an ambiguous phrase from the Qu’ran and offers a precedent for a more expansive reading of the phrase—and of Islamic prophecy. Nabatian’s work explores the productive tension that exists between sacred texts and their communities of interpretation.

In “The Role of Asceticism, Meditation, and Gnosis on the Jain Path,” Elon Goldstein closely analyzes a twelfth century treatise on Jain yoga and finds within it novel ideas about the soul in meditation. Goldstein’s study employs a dialectical method to highlight the relationship between the text and the tradition of which is a part and which it constitutes in distinctive ways.

Julia M. Reed, in her essay “Bodies and Boundaries,” is concerned with language as an embodied phenomenon. She expands upon the work of feminist theorist Judith Butler, whose conception of gender as an iterative process rather than a singular essence provides the theoretical basis for thinking about new possibilities for human relationships. Reed argues that such relationships are not only *thought*, but, more significantly, *felt*. That is, she attends to the affective dimension of language as a means by which particularized bodies may be resignified, opening up as-yet unrealized modes of relationality among embodied subjects.

Emily Ronald’s piece, “The Allegorical Object,” reflects on several works from the Boston-based Faith Quilts Project, which was exhibited at Harvard Divinity School in the fall of 2006. Ronald explores the semantic relationships that the quilts create between artist and viewer, artist and object, object and viewer. She suggests that these visual representations of faith can be understood as allegorical objects, whose availability to multiple recontextualizations disrupts attempts to secure their meaning in a literal exegesis.

Ronald calls the viewer of the quilts, and the reader of her work, to greater *attention* to the multiplicity of meanings and relationships at play in these representations of religious faith and human experience. We hope that her call

may be heard in all of the essays presented here, each of which in its own way exemplifies attention to particularity and acceptance of ambiguity, disciplines which lie at the heart of our work as students of religion.

RELIGIOUS PARTICULARITIES AND UNIVERSAL RIGHTS

Moments of Citizenship in a Radical Democracy

Molly Baer Farneth

In November 2005, Texas became the nineteenth US state to amend its constitution to ban the recognition of same-sex marriage and to confine marriage to a legal union between one man and one woman. The campaign to pass the amendment relied on the leadership of ministers and the support of citizens with conservative religious convictions that motivated their support for the statute.¹ Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI) citizens were supported by straight allies whose own moral convictions led them to oppose the amendment. In the end, however, a large majority of voters supported the amendment, thereby depriving LGBTQI partnerships of the legal status and privileges associated with heterosexual marriage.

This episode illustrates an age-old tension in democratic politics. On the one hand, the campaign to support the amendment exemplified how a group of committed citizens concert their efforts to draft legislation and gather support for an issue of moral concern to them. The fact that citizens of Texas over-

whelmingly voted in support of the amendment confers one type of democratic legitimacy on the outcome. In this sense, the process leading to the passage of the amendment was a potent example of the force of the *demos* in shaping the public sphere. On the other hand, the rights of LGBTQI citizens were diminished by the statute, in violation of the principles of justice and equality often associated with modern liberal democracy. In the denial of their legal equality, LGBTQI citizens were not given public reasons for the amendment that they could “reasonably be expected to endorse,” to use the words of John Rawls.² In this sense, it was an example of the tyranny of a majority over the rights of a minority. This situation poses the question: how is a just and fair democracy constituted in light of a diverse citizenry citing a multiplicity of moral and religious frameworks?

This question often lies at the center of conversations about the intersection of religion and politics. In light of such concerns, many liberal philosophers, like Rawls, hesitate to grant religious discourse a substantial role in the public sphere, arguing that democratic citizens must be able to justify their positions with reasons that all citizens might be able to accept. Religious beliefs are too controversial, too particularistic, to warrant a place in public conversations about collective moral concerns. Others decry the influence of secular liberalism and the loss of a common moral framework in modern society, arguing that there no longer exists a set of values or practices that can unify the public. Some of the philosophers and theologians who maintain this position, including Stanley Hauerwas and Alasdair MacIntyre, advocate a retreat from the broader public into distinct communities whose members share a definite tradition. In his recent work, Jeffrey Stout has presented a position that seeks to learn from, and then move beyond, these two views. In *Democracy and Tradition*, Stout argues that democracy itself is a tradition that citizens with different religious traditions hold in common and to which we can turn for adjudication between particular moral perspectives.³ Stout identifies democratic values and practices that comprise a common morality to which every citizen, religious or non-religious, has access.

While Stout’s work goes a long way in considering how democratic values and practices themselves might constitute the moral glue that holds society together, questions remain about the extent to which this emphasis on tradition allows for the inclusion of previously excluded voices. We would be remiss to ignore the fact that our country includes groups of people who remain outside of the democratic structures that Stout describes. These groups may be politically, socially, economically, or otherwise marginalized in ways that exclude them from fully sharing the democratic tradition that has become nor-

mative throughout much of society. How are such groups to interact with the majority population, whose tradition they may not fully share?

Although rarely explicit about the role of religion in democracy, one may see the work of political philosopher Sheldon Wolin as addressing this very concern. According to Wolin, over-reliance on democratic institutions and traditions will inevitably exclude the moral perspectives of a variety of citizens. Rather than focusing on the bounded political power of constitutions and institutions, Wolin advocates the power of citizens to act collectively to challenge and shift political norms. The kinds of active citizenship and collective action that Wolin supports can give voice to those marginalized populations whose experiences are not adequately accounted for by the secular, rational, liberal state.⁴ Collective action can serve as a vehicle for a plurality of moral perspectives to enter the public sphere outside of the practice of reason-giving.

In the following pages, I will first outline Wolin's critique of constitutional democracy as well as his opposing notion of fugitive democracy. I will then turn to an analysis of religiously-motivated social movements to discuss how the particularities of specific citizens' experiences and moral frameworks may challenge or engage universal democratic norms. Finally, I will visit the work of Dipesh Chakrabarty for a suggestion of the dialectical relationship between two different modes of citizenship—the autonomous, rights-bearing *pedagogical* citizen and the disruptive and creative *performative* citizen. The result of this essay will be an understanding of the critical role that serious attention to both particular moral claims and a democratic tradition of justice and the good can play in a radical democracy.

Particular Demands: Contesting Bounded Power in Fugitive Democracy

Wolin understands constitutional democracy to be a political system in which the institutionalization of ethics, practices, and behaviors takes precedence over the political power of the *demos*, and he suggests that the modern preference for constitutional democracy is rooted in James Madison's work in the *Federalist Papers*.⁵ Following the ancient critics of direct democracy, Madison defends national government against the factionalism that he believes is inherent to the rule of the people. In *The Federalist, No. 10*, Madison writes:

...it may be concluded that a pure democracy, by which I mean a society consisting of a small number of citizens, who assemble and administer the government in person, can admit of no cure for the mischiefs [sic] of faction. A common passion or interest will, in almost every case, be felt by a majority of the whole; a communication and concert result from the form of government itself; and there is nothing to check the

inducements to sacrifice the weaker party or an obnoxious individual. Hence it is that such democracies have ever been spectacles of turbulence and contention; have ever been found incompatible with personal security or the rights of property; and have in general been as short in their lives as they have been violent in their deaths. Theoretic politicians, who have patronized this species of government, have erroneously supposed that by reducing mankind to a perfect equality in their political rights, they would, at the same time, be perfectly equalized and assimilated in their possessions, their opinions, and their passions.⁶

In this passage, Madison outlines the most common charge against radical democracy, namely that a direct democracy will always be subject to the oppressive and destabilizing forces of factionalism since citizens will never share identical opinions or passions. According to Wolin, the form of constitutional democracy favored by modern democrats is premised upon this Madisonian model of governance. Wolin argues, however, that this representative, constitutional model involves drawing boundaries around political power in order to protect the stability and order of the *status quo* from the demands of the *demos*. According to Wolin, constitutional democracy is not really democracy at all.⁷

Therefore, Wolin rejects constitutional democracy, instead embracing the claim that democracy must be “inherently unstable, inclined toward anarchy, and identified with revolution.”⁸ Wolin uses these characteristics as the basis of a radical democratic model that rejects institutionalization. In this way, he returns to the fundamental principle of Athenian democracy: the political power of an active, creative *demos*. Wolin elaborates:

This democracy might be summed up as the idea and practice of rational disorganization. The claims of the *demos* and its kind of power appear to ancient critics and modern democrats as both inefficient and disruptive because the *demos* has been keyed to values other than the economy of power suggested by Max Weber and Robert Michaels and championed by a long succession of priests, philosophers, warrior chiefs, and kings who have presented variations on the same theme: that ruling should be organized by some representatives of ‘the best,’ of those who truly know how to organize, exercise, sacralize, and exploit power.⁹

In emphasizing the active nature of democracy, Wolin suggests that this form of government involves the disruption of power by citizens who contest the boundaries set by the institutionalization of the political.

Against the conscripted, bounded power inherent to constitutional democracy, therefore, Wolin endorses a notion of *fugitive democracy*. In this view,

democracy must not be understood as a system of laws, practices, and institutions. Instead, it refers to the moment in which the citizen reclaims political power for herself. Wolin writes, "Democracy is a political moment, perhaps *the* political moment, when the political is remembered and recreated. Democracy is a rebellious moment that may assume revolutionary, destructive proportions, or may not."¹⁰ Fugitive democracy requires "the taking back of one's powers, not just the revocation of legitimacy."¹¹ The nature of fugitive democracy also requires that its victories are fleeting. It is a constant process of probing, critiquing, and demanding of the political realm, since the moment that the goals of the insurrection are achieved, they comprise a new hegemony. As Wolin suggests, democracy must be recast as "a mode of being that is conditioned by bitter experience, doomed to succeed only temporarily, but is a recurrent possibility as long as the memory of the political survives."¹²

In fugitive democracy, then, citizen action and social movements comprise the core of democratic politics. Wolin writes, "In my understanding, democracy is a project concerned with the political potentialities of ordinary citizens, that is, with their possibilities for becoming political beings through the self-discovery of common concerns and of modes of action for realizing them."¹³ The mode of citizenship required for fugitive democracy is a creative force that participates in the formation and renewal of the political through a variety of activities involving the generation and deployment of political power by groups of citizens who share concerns.¹⁴ Wolin elaborates, "[Citizenship] is about a capacity to generate power, for that is the only way that things get established in the world. And it is about a capacity to share in power, to cooperate in it, for that is how institutions and practices are sustained."¹⁵

According to Wolin, political actors are embedded in relationships and communities that motivate and guide their actions. Citizens who are bound together will be more effective in fugitive democracy. Wolin writes:

A political being is not to be defined as the citizen has been, as an abstract, disconnected bearer of rights, but as a person whose existence is located in a particular place and draws its sustenance from circumscribed relationships: family, friends, church, neighborhood, workplace, community, town, city. These relationships are the sources from which political beings draw power—symbolic, material, and psychological—and that enable them to act together.¹⁶

The individual is rooted in communities that provide her with a source of meaning and a set of values and practices. From these resources arise the opportunity for collective political engagement. Social movements, the politi-

cal actions of a community of citizens, add the dynamic element to politics that Wolin would argue revises and renews democracy.

By emphasizing collective action, Wolin rejects Madison's fear about the instability and oppression that can characterize factionalism. But what about collective action that rests on the particular moral imperatives of a subset of the population? Religious values frequently contribute to the mobilization of social movements in the United States. Because religion provides a comprehensive moral framework for individuals and religious communities, it can be a powerful mobilizing force for those who find that the dominant social order is out of line with their morality. As Christian Smith writes, "Religion affords groups of people meaning and direction by providing sets of beliefs and practices grounded not in the ordinary, mundane world, but in the divine, the transcendent, the eternal, the holy, the spiritual."¹⁷ Of course, this is a source of grave concern for liberal philosophers like Rawls, who suggest that public conversations about moral issues require referents that we can all access and that we can all be expected to accept.

Wolin's vision of fugitive democracy is premised upon the mobilization of political actions that express grievances and demands situated in the particularities of diverse human experiences. This vision neither requires citizens to appeal to universal rights or democratic tradition, nor does it restrict the grounds of debate through a Rawlsian model of public reasoning. Insofar as it allows for a proliferation of voices in American public life, fugitive democracy seems poised to expand equality and freedom. When certain religious and moral perspectives are not linked to universal notions of justice and the good, however, they may run the risk of restricting the rights and liberties of other members of the population in order to enact a particularistic vision.

The successful effort in Texas to pass a constitutional amendment denying LGBTQI citizens the privileges associated with legal marriage, for instance, frequently called upon theological sources to garner legitimacy. The movement drew support from networks of religious people and relied on the leadership of conservative Christian ministers. The Texas Restoration Project, chaired by Rev. Laurence White of Our Savior Lutheran Church in Houston and comprised of socially-conservative pastors, promoted the ban as part of an effort to "establish Bible-based morality" in Texas.¹⁸ Texas Governor Rick Perry, also a supporter of the ban, added symbolic weight by signing a copy of the proposed ban in an evangelical church school.¹⁹ The success of the amendment can be seen as a significant example of fugitive democracy: a group of citizens mobilizing to promote their particular perspective in the larger public sphere. However, the movement also challenged a fundamental assumption of liberal

democracy: namely, that all citizens should be granted equal rights and equal protection under the law. In this instance, the religious imperatives that mobilized the political action stood in conflict with the rights, beliefs, and practices of another subset of the population.

Modern democracies have a diverse citizen body that includes individuals of a variety of religious and moral perspectives. This diversity corresponds to a multiplicity of understandings of human experience and divergent conceptions of the good life. Certainly, these beliefs and values should be admissible in public discourse; to the extent that they indicate the diversity of human experience, attention to these particularities is critical to democratic inclusion. While a conception of democracy predicated solely upon active citizenship allows for the expression of diverse worldviews, it does not necessarily protect minority and marginalized populations from the political power that the majority can wrest through collective action. It should not be required that social movements express their grievances through liberal, rationalistic discourse as Rawls suggests; to do so may undermine the difference implicit in a pluralist democracy. Rather, a range of rhetorical strategies and moral reference points—whether universal or particular in scope—must be admissible in public discourse in order to express such diversity and difference. But without universal rights and adjudicating mechanisms, such particularistic demands may result in grave inequalities and injustices.

The American civil rights movement powerfully illustrates how religious networks can mobilize collective action around an issue of moral and political importance. Civil rights leaders frequently appealed to the universal rights that comprise broad democratic ethics. In his *Letter from Birmingham City Jail*, for instance, Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. writes that “an unjust law is a code inflicted on a minority which that minority had no part in enacting or creating because they did not have the unhampered right to vote.”²⁰ Here, King draws not on the particular beliefs or texts of his religious tradition but on a broader democratic tradition. His reference to the constitutional right to suffrage and the democratic norms implicit in this right are a powerful justification for the legitimacy of the goals of the civil rights movement, expressed in rhetoric that all citizens—black or white, Christian or non-Christian—could understand.

At the same time, the black church was the center of the civil rights movement, providing the ideological perspective that linked participants together and compelled them to work for social change.²¹ As social movement theorists Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald write: “Given the church’s institutional centrality in the early days of the struggle, it is hardly surprising that the initial ‘framings’ coming out of the movement had a dis-

tinctly religious cast to them.”²² These framings attended to the particularities of the experiences of black people in a racist society as well as the specific moral imperatives of a Christian framework. Neither the leaders of the civil rights movement nor the countless citizens who supported and sustained the movement limited themselves to the type of secular language that liberal philosophers advocate. As Stout suggests, the dialectical relationship between these two types of rhetoric shifts the normative vocabulary of democracy. According to Stout, King’s sermons “are paradigmatic because they move ‘reasonableness’ forward, thus exercising some authority over future applications of the relevant concepts.”²³

These two quite different mobilizations—the Texas marriage amendment and the civil rights movement—raise important questions about fugitive democracy. Without recourse to a common morality, how can we adjudicate between competing moral claims? And can a radical democracy attend to both universal rights and religious particularities in order to balance the demands of democracy, justice, and equality?

Pedagogical and Performative Modalities of Democratic Citizenship

The work of Dipesh Chakrabarty provides a helpful model of radical democracy in a pluralist society. Like Wolin, postcolonial theorist Dipesh Chakrabarty is dissatisfied with the limited political realm inherent in liberal democracy. According to Chakrabarty, the secular, rational, liberal state is an inadequate political vehicle for the expression and representation of the plurality of possibilities for human experience. Chakrabarty joins Wolin in noting the importance of social movements and of active, creative forms of citizenship that challenge the norms of the liberal state.

In his model, Chakrabarty attempts to hold the universal and the particular in a productive tension. According to Chakrabarty, the universal can “give us a critique of capitalist imperialism and afford elusive but necessary glimpses of the Enlightenment promise of an abstract, universal but never-to-be-realized humanity.”²⁴ It is this notion of the abstract, universal, rights-bearing individual—the citizen of constitutional democracy critiqued by Wolin—that supports calls for the expansion of rights and privileges to all people. At the same time, Chakrabarty acknowledges the particularities of diverse life-worlds that cannot neatly fit the mold of a secular, rational, liberal democracy. When the multitudinous expressions of human experience are allowed to question and challenge the universal, the former can “modify and interrupt” the hegemony of the latter. Like Wolin, Chakrabarty expects democracy to have an

agonistic quality as a process of constantly disrupting and shifting the terms of democratic debate.

Chakrabarty suggests that this agonistic democratic process requires two contrasting categories of citizenship.²⁵ The first is *pedagogical citizenship*. As the name implies, pedagogical citizenship refers to the activities of the citizen who has been taught or trained to be a political subject in a liberal democracy. This is the kind of citizenship to which Stout frequently appeals, for it emphasizes a common democratic tradition and a position from which moral claims might be considered. Recognizing that not all citizens are equal inheritors of the democratic tradition, however, Chakrabarty seeks a second model of citizenship. This second category is *performative citizenship*. As an example of performative citizenship in the context of postcolonial India, Chakrabarty cites “the peasant as full participant in the political life of the nation...long before he or she could be formally educated into the doctrinal or conceptual aspects of citizenship.”²⁶ Understood more broadly, the performative citizen is one who is a political actor without reference to the virtues of bounded liberal politics. The activities of the performative citizen extend beyond democratic tradition in order to challenge the assumptions of liberal values. As Chakrabarty writes, “the nation and the political are also performed in the carnivalesque aspects of democracy: in rebellions, protest marches, sporting events, and in universal adult franchise.”²⁷ In this way, the notion of performative citizenship creates space for the actions of protest and rebellion that cannot be easily contained within a bounded, liberal democracy.

Performative citizenship may be thought of as an analogue to the citizenship of Wolin’s notion of fugitive democracy. Opposed to the static, domesticated citizenship of constitutional democracy, performative citizenship involves the potentially revolutionary activities of social movements that threaten to dismantle and transform the political. The performative citizen challenges the central authority of the state by demanding that it recognize the deep plurality of human experiences. Moreover, it often does so without privileging rational reason-giving over other forms of expression. In these and other ways, it rejects the settled behaviors and domesticated discourses of constitutional democracy.

Both Wolin and Chakrabarty also acknowledge the momentary and fleeting quality of this category of citizenship. Chakrabarty argues, for instance, that “democracy requires hitherto neglected groups to tell their histories and these different histories come together in accepting shared rational and evidentiary rules. Successfully incorporated ‘minority histories’ may then be likened to yesterday’s revolutionaries who became today’s gentlemen. Their success helps

routinize innovation.”²⁸ For Wolin and Chakrabarty, any successful effort to reclaim political power or to shift the terms of political debate may become the foundation of new hegemonies. Therefore, performative citizenship recasts democracy as a process of *constant* critique and struggle against institutionalized norms. For those worried about who might be excluded by a so-called common morality, this model may provide modest relief as the normative commitments of the democratic tradition become explicitly open to evaluation and critique.

Chakrabarty’s insistence on maintaining the legitimacy of both categories of citizenship, however, is an important addition to the body of radical democratic theory. According to Chakrabarty, attention to both the universal and the particular are equally important in the construction of a just political community. As rights-bearing individuals in a liberal democracy, pedagogical citizens are crucial to the expansion of social justice on the grounds of universality. Through pedagogical citizenship, Chakrabarty’s model of radical democracy accounts for indispensable notions of justice and the good, even as he notes that “*what is indispensable remains inadequate.*”²⁹ The inadequacy of these universal categories leads Chakrabarty back to the particular. The political action of performative citizens embedded in a plurality of life-worlds can fundamentally challenge the hegemony of the secular, rational, liberal democracy. The dialectical relationship between these two categories is vital to a radical, pluralist democracy. The result is a political process that is subject to disruption and renewal while at the same time providing the infrastructure (linguistic, institutional, and otherwise) to defend and uphold the rights and liberties of the most vulnerable citizens.

The citizen may oscillate between these two political identities; in the first she is motivated by her particularities, the life-world that she inhabits and which sets her apart from other groups of citizens, while the second is the sense in which she is the abstract, rights-bearing individual and therefore motivated by her commonalities with other citizens. This understanding of citizenship complements Wolin’s fugitive democracy, since it posits the citizen as an individual embedded in a larger political sphere, able to adjudicate between the commonalities she shares with all citizens and the particularities unique to those experiences from which she draws meaning. At times, this may result in acts of dissent or disruption against the institutionalization of one form of the political in order to reclaim political power for citizens at the margins. At other times, this may mean appealing to the values and practices of the democratic tradition that Stout describes.

It is useful to briefly return to Madison here, since it was his concern with factionalism that led him to constrain the power of the *demos*. Madison writes:

A zeal for differing opinions concerning religion, concerning government, and many other points...have, in turn, divided mankind into parties, inflamed them with mutual animosity, and rendered them much more disposed to vex and oppress each other than to cooperate for their common good.³⁰

According to Madison, religious belief and practice, when implicated in the political action and aims of groups of citizens, lead to factionalism and oppression. The legacy of this concern is evident both in Rawls' efforts to constrain the role of religious reasoning in public discourse and in MacIntyre's suggestion that religious and moral pluralism has led to the fragmentation and moral vacuity of society.

Of course, religious citizens will bring their commitments into the public sphere, because religion provides meaning and a core set of values for many individuals, and Rawls is correct in his instinct that citizens must, at times, be protected from the demands of the religious and moral convictions of a powerful faction. Unlike Rawls, however, I do not believe that political discussion and actions always require citizens to call upon a kind of public reason that all citizens can reasonably be expected to endorse. To do so gives insufficient attention to the differences among and particularities of members of the *demos*, particularly those who stand outside of the traditions of the majority. At the same time, I question MacIntyre's assertion that moral claims cannot be made, evaluated, and settled in the context of a pluralist society. I suggest that the dialectical movement between dialogue and disruption, universality and particularity, contributes to a public sphere marked by dynamism as well as tradition. Citizens enacting fugitive democracy—or, to use Chakrabarty's term, performative citizens—offer a critical assessment of the political when they refuse the terms of liberal democracy. At the same time, the constitutions and institutions of liberal democracy, along with the pedagogical mode of citizenship that references the equal rights and responsibilities of citizens, are indispensable to a just and fair political system. The movement between these modalities of citizenship is constant and agonistic.

The kind of political renewal that Wolin calls for requires citizen-led activities that challenge and shift the political. Without recourse to constitution or institution, however, Wolin leaves democrats no recourse against anti-democratic claims. In a constitutional democracy, by contrast, citizens who object

to the outcome of the Texas same-sex marriage vote are able to contest its outcome by appealing to constitutional rights in federal courts. Although not a perfect solution, citizens who seek the expansion of equality and justice must at times rely on the norms and adjudicative mechanisms inherent within liberal democracy.

Individuals and social movements that can oscillate between performative and pedagogical modes of citizenship—as the civil rights movement did—are perhaps most likely to achieve their goals within the scope of broadly shared democratic ethics. Yet while some citizen-led social movements appeal to democratic ethics and tradition, others refuse to provide public reasons for their efforts. As Chakrabarty suggests, this option must be left open as a site from which fundamental critiques of the moral tradition posited by political liberalism may emerge. Ultimately, the diversity of the *demos* will require that the radical, pluralist democracy maintain an agonistic quality as it adjudicates between competing claims and expands to include previously unrepresented forms of political practices, moral perspectives, and human experiences. In this sense, democracy is not a system that can be established once-and-for-all but a constant dialectic process of struggle and negotiation.

NOTES

- 1 Robert T. Garrett, “Gay Marriage Ban Coasts,” *Dallas Morning News*, 9 November 2005. See also Ian McCann, Jon Nielsen, Tiara M. Ellis, Emily Ramshaw, April Kinser, and Kimberly Durnan, “Marriage Ban Draws Voters,” *Dallas Morning News*, 9 November 2005.
- 2 In Rawls’ effort to reconcile the goals of democracy, equality, and justice using the ideal of public reason, he suggests that citizens are to “conduct their fundamental discussions within the framework of what each regards as a political conception of justice based on values that the others can reasonably be expected to endorse and each is, in good faith, prepared to defend that conception so understood.” See John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 226.
- 3 Jeffrey Stout, *Democracy and Tradition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).
- 4 While Stout does acknowledge the important role of civil disobedience, he suggests that it still takes place within the bounds of the democratic tradition of reason-giving. He writes, “Democracy isn’t all talk. Now and then there is also a lot of marching involved, for example...[but] it is in democratic discourse that the claims and reasons of marching protestors get expressed.” See Stout, 6. What I hope to describe in the following pages is a form of active citizenship that can extend beyond reason-giving in order to allow for critiques of the terms of deliberative democracy itself.

- 5 Sheldon S. Wolin, "Norm and Form: The Constitutionalizing of Democracy" in *Athenian Political Thought and the Reconstruction of American Democracy*, ed. J. Peter Euben, John R. Wallach, and Josiah Ober (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 32-33.
- 6 James Madison, "The Utility of the Union as a Safeguard Against Domestic Faction and Insurrection," *The Federalist*, No. 10, www.constitution.org/fed/federa10.htm, Accessed on 20 January 2006.
- 7 Sheldon S. Wolin, "Fugitive Democracy" in *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political*, ed. Seyla Benhabib (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 34.
- 8 Wolin, "Norm and Form," 37.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 37-38.
- 10 Wolin, "Fugitive Democracy," 43.
- 11 Wolin, "Norm and Form," 56.
- 12 Wolin, "Fugitive Democracy," 43.
- 13 *Ibid.*, 31.
- 14 Sheldon S. Wolin, "What Revolutionary Action Means Today," in *Dimensions of Radical Democracy*, ed. Chantal Mouffé (London: Verso, 1992), 251.
- 15 *Ibid.*, 250.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 251-52.
- 17 Christian Smith, *Disruptive Religion: The Force of Faith in Social Movement Activism* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 5.
- 18 R. G. Ratcliffe, "Ministers Ask Faithful to Help Ban Gay Marriage," *Houston Chronicle*, 17 September 2005.
- 19 W. Gardner Selby, "Voters Add Gay Marriage Ban to Constitution," *Austin American-Statesman*, 9 November 2005.
- 20 Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham City Jail," in *A Testament of Hope: the Essential Writings of Martin Luther King*, ed. J. M. Washington (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1986), 293.
- 21 Aldon Morris, "The Black Church in the Civil Rights Movement: The SCLC as the Decentralized, Radical Arm of the Black Church," in *Disruptive Religion: The Force of Faith in Social Movement Activism* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 29.
- 22 Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy, and Mayer N. Zald, eds., *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996), 11.
- 23 Stout, 81.

24 Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000) 254.

25 Here, Chakrabarty elaborates on the work of Homi Bhabha, who distinguishes between the *pedagogical* and the *performative* elements of nationalism in his essay, "Dis-semiNation." Bhabha writes, "In the production of the nation as narration there is a split between the continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical and the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative." See Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 145.

26 Chakrabarty, 9.

27 *Ibid.*, 10.

28 *Ibid.*, 100.

29 *Ibid.*, 88, emphasis mine.

30 Madison, *The Federalist*, No. 10.

JUSTIN MARTYR, THE MONTANISTS, AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE OTHER

Second Century Reasons for Subordinating the Holy Spirit

David W. Jorgensen

In her article “Why Three? Some Further Reflections on the Origins of the Doctrine of the Trinity,” Sarah Coakley summarizes the modern challenge to trinitarian Christian theology, and usefully organizes the numerous and variegated strands of influential modern trinitarianism into a collection of five “types.” The first of these types one might say is not trinitarian at all, for it calls for a dismantling of the Trinity on the grounds that the Holy Spirit “need not be hypostatized as personally distinct from the Father.”¹ “Spirit” may still be understood as divine, “God-in-God’s-communication-to-the-world,”² or it “could just as well be seen as a metaphor (one amongst many) for God’s action in the world,”³ but in any case, proponents of this first type maintain that its distinctiveness as a separate “person” is not experientially verifiable. This critique goes back to Schleiermacher, who understood the Holy Spirit as merely God’s animating and unifying presence in the Church, and therefore as some-

thing which did not require full hypostatization.⁴ The question of the hypostatization of the Spirit has been picked up more recently by a number of British critics of trinitarianism, such as Geoffrey Lampe, James Mackey, and, notably, Maurice Wiles. It is, in fact, Wiles's "justly famous" article, "Some Reflections on the Origins of the Doctrine of the Trinity," to which Coakley addresses her response.⁵

The essential question raised by Wiles is this: "Why hypostatize the Spirit at all?" In other words,

Binitarianism would have been more logical (accounting for divine transcendence on the one hand and immanence or 'incarnation' on the other); or, if one wanted to 'hypostatize' other divine attributes, why stop at the 'Spirit' of God?⁶

The explanation Wiles offers is that the triadic baptismal formula⁷ became fixed very early on, exercising, in Coakley's words, "a strongly authoritative—but ultimately arbitrary—clamp on more properly critical reflection;"⁸ the church entered a "dogmatic slumber," "becoming duped by its own authority and tradition."⁹ Coakley acknowledges as meritorious "Wiles's distinctly modern challenge."¹⁰ She responds to the second part of his claim by arguing that there was no such dogmatic slumber in the early centuries, and that the ante-Nicene writers engaged the questions of trinitarian doctrine with a great deal of creativity.

In my small contribution to this debate, I am interested in the first half of Wiles's claim: the idea that the triadic baptismal (and, I will add, eucharistic) formulas became fixed very early in the church's life, and that these therefore put an arbitrary trinitarian "clamp" on theological speculation in the ante-Nicene period. I propose it is this reality that explains how trinitarian doctrine emerged intact from the second century, the period that is the focus of this essay. For in this period there arose strong tendencies to subordinate the Holy Spirit, and after we examine these tendencies and their rationales, it may seem surprising that trinitarianism held the day against binitarianism, a theology that was not only, as Wiles observes, more logical, but, as I will show, more politically expedient.

In this essay I will examine the claims made by Justin Martyr and about the "Montanists" concerning the Trinity, especially the role of the Spirit. I agree with Coakley that Justin subordinated the Spirit. However, I will argue, along with Wiles, that Justin articulated more of a model of binitarianism, in which the Son and Spirit are deliberately conflated, than the three-tiered hierarchy of Father-Son-Spirit that Coakley finds in Justin. In this analysis it will be seen

that Justin preserved the prophetic function of the Spirit but relegated it to the past. I will next turn to an analysis of the rhetoric of the heresiologists of the second to fourth centuries, including both Justin, who did not comment on the “Montanists,” and several others who did. Bringing the discourse analysis of two recent monographs by Daniel Boyarin and Laura Nasrallah to bear on this subject, I intend to demonstrate that both Justin and the anti-Montanists had similar rhetorical projects in view: the delineation of an orthodox “Christianity” that relied on the construction of “Judaism,” on the one hand, and “Montanism,” on the other. In the construction of both of these “others,” the “orthodox” had good rhetorical reasons to downplay the role of the Spirit.

Justin’s “Trinitarianism”

In *1 Apol.* 6, Justin introduces a “coequal” trinitarian expression of the Godhead. After we remove a long subordinate clause, the line reads simply, “Him [God the Father], and the Son, and the prophetic Spirit, we worship and adore.” Justin’s Greek is admittedly ambiguous here, but in light of other trinitarian formulations throughout *1 Apology* we must reject Coakley’s assumption that Justin means to include as a fourth object of worship and adoration the “host of angels” mentioned.¹¹ But soon after this, as Coakley rightly observes, Justin “notoriously obscures the function of the Holy Spirit.”¹² The confusion begins in *1 Apol.* 13, where Justin says Christians worship not only “the Maker of this universe,” but Jesus Christ, “having learned that He is the Son of the true God Himself, and holding Him in the second place, and the prophetic Spirit in the third, we will prove.” We immediately observe in this formulation a subordinative, even hierarchical description, in which the Son and Spirit, while valued above everything save God the Father, are not actually made coequal with “the true God.” Also, as in *1 Apol.* 6, Justin uses the term “prophetic” rather than the expected “holy” to describe the Spirit. Finally, unlike the Father and the Son, the Spirit is not explicitly named as an object of worship in *1 Apol.* 13.

Whereas Coakley takes Justin’s formulation in *1 Apol.* 13 as the key to understanding his trinitarianism, I find that he is not content with a three-tiered hierarchy. Rather, he further obscures the function of the Holy Spirit by collapsing it with the Son. At one point (*1 Apol.* 33) he explicitly states, “It is wrong, therefore, to understand the Spirit and the Power of God as anything else than the Word, who is also the first-born of God.” He goes on to claim that, on the one hand, the prophets are inspired by no other than the Divine Word (*1 Apol.* 33, 36), and on the other, that which speaks through the prophets is the “prophetic Spirit” (*passim*). So while he emphasizes the prophetic role

of the Spirit, at the same time he conflates the Spirit with the Word or Son (and also Power). We see here evidence that Justin is paying lip service to a preexistent trinitarian formula, but preferring, in actuality, a binitarianism, and one which subordinates the Son/Spirit to the Father.

To get a sense of how significant the Spirit's role in prophecy is for Justin, it is useful to do a word count. Justin uses *pneuma* as the third person of the Trinity thirty-five times in *1 Apology* (but not at all in *2 Apology*). Twenty-four of the instances, or sixty-nine percent, are of the form "Spirit of prophecy" or "prophetic Spirit" (*to prophetikon pneuma* or *to pneuma prophetikon*). This is his preferred term for the Spirit. He occasionally uses variants of "Spirit of God" (*to pneuma theou; tou theiou pneumatos*), but most of these (five of seven times) refer to the *pneuma theou* that moved over the waters in Gen 1:2. "Holy Spirit" (*[tou] pneumatos [tou] agiou*) is only used in four instances, all of which are quotations from either the gospels (a harmonization of Luke 1:31-5 with Matt. 1:20-1), a eucharistic prayer, or a baptismal formula, and even in one of his descriptions of the latter, he explains the Spirit on the grounds that through the prophets, the Spirit foretold all things about Jesus (*1 Apol.* 61). Clearly, for Justin the Spirit's most important function was the prophetic.

In Justin's *Second Apology*, really an addendum to the first, he does not use *pneuma* at all. The Spirit is most conspicuously absent in *2 Apol.* 6, in which he explains the various names of God and of Christ. In this chapter we find evidence only of the binitarianism observed earlier: The Son, the Word, was begotten by God, the Father and Creator, and was with God the Father before creation; the Son was also anointed by God as Christ, and was made man as Jesus the Savior, but the Spirit is nowhere mentioned. In this chapter devoted to articulating carefully the names of God and Christ and their meanings, this Son of God is nowhere identified as God, and so the subordinated Son we encounter in *1 Apology* is repeated here. I agree with John Behr's assessment that Justin "shares the common philosophical presupposition of his day that as God is so totally transcendent to created reality he needs an intermediary, his Word, to act for him and to mediate between himself and creation."¹³ Whereas for Christians, says Justin, this intermediary is the Word, for "Greeks" it is, unbeknownst to them, the *sperma tou logou*, the seed of the Word, that is sown by the sowing Word, the *logos spermatikos* (*2 Apol.* 8.3 and 13.3), who is Christ himself speaking through Scripture,¹⁴ which the pagan philosophers had derived in an impure form through Justin's theory of plagiarism.¹⁵ The Spirit as a distinct person is completely lost in *2 Apology*, its prophetic role being fully conflated with that of the Word.

Finally, it is worth observing with John Behr that in reconstructing Justin's conception of the Trinity, incorporating evidence from Justin's *Dialogue With Trypho* complicates things somewhat. Here I will say only that the basic tenet of a subordinated Word still holds.¹⁶ But I will have more to say about this later on, for the "two Justins" Behr observes cannot be adequately reconciled without taking into account Justin's rhetorical purposes.

Throughout the *Apologies*, then, the second and third persons of the trinity are thoroughly entangled. There can be little doubt, as Wiles states plainly, that in Justin's thought the Godhead was as much binitarian as it was trinitarian.¹⁷ Why does Justin appear to pay lip service to a trinitarian formula, yet in fact subordinate the Spirit by merging it with the Son? The answer lies in the nature of discourse concerning heresy that arose in the mid-second century, with Justin himself being a primary author of that discourse.

Two Powers in Heaven

In the mid-twentieth century, Walter Bauer overturned the hegemony of the "Eusebian" view of history that claimed orthodoxy always chronologically preceded heresy, a notion first articulated by Tertullian at the beginning of the third century. But Bauer still retained the notion of orthodoxy and heresy as reified essences; thus he was able to say that at times "heresy" preceded "orthodoxy."¹⁸ More recently, Alain Le Boulluec and others have shifted the scholarly conversation away from the concept of heresy and orthodoxy as competing historical essences that vie with one another for adherents, and towards a discussion of heresiology, the history of the idea of heresy itself.¹⁹ Under this approach, we attempt "to engage critically the ancient politics of religious difference rather than unwittingly reproduce its strategies and results."²⁰ This approach changes how we read ancient texts, summarized by Laura Nasrallah in this way: "By participating in a given discourse, a text constructs through rhetoric a vision of the world as it should be, and seeks to exercise language in order to convince its audience of the power and reality of that vision."²¹ Specifically, Justin's writings ought not to be read as primarily describing the aspects of Christian doctrine that make orthodox Christianity distinct, but as seeking to construct the orthodox Christianity he describes. Therefore, *pace* Bauer, heresy may not precede orthodoxy any more than orthodoxy may precede heresy; they are created as notions at the same time.

In fact, Le Boulluec claimed that Justin was a (if not the) crucial figure in shifting the definition of the Greek word *hairesis* from its original meaning of "a group of people, a party, or sect marked by common ideas or aims" to "a

party or sect that stands outside the established tradition, a heretical group that propounds false doctrine in the form of a heresy.”²² As Le Boulluec summarized his research, “It amounts to this: the concept of heresy originated with Justin.”²³

Daniel Boyarin contends that “a significant part of the function of heresiology, if not its proximate cause, was to define Christian identity.”²⁴ He also observes that at least as late as the second century, there were many people who were both Jews and Christians, and for whom the distinctions of identification did not yet make a difference.²⁵ Boyarin takes up the specific example of Le Boulluec’s inventor of heresy, Justin Martyr, and engages in a close reading of Justin’s *Dialogue With Trypho* to demonstrate the process of border construction from the Christian side of the fence. This border between so-called “Christianity” and “Judaism” began to be constructed in the second century by the heresiologists, on one side, and on the other by their Jewish counterparts and “co-conspirators,” the Rabbis.

In the *Dialogue*, Justin ostensibly attempts to prove to Trypho, a “Jew,” that God has a second person, and Trypho disputes this. Rather than being a “straightforward theological disputation between Judaism and Christianity,” this text actually attempts to appropriate what had been a “common theological inheritance”—i.e., Logos theology—as a distinguishing mark for the Christian side of the new border.²⁶ For well into the rabbinic period, “most (or at any rate many) non-Christian Jews did see the Logos (or his female alter ego, Sophia) as a central part of their doctrines about God,”²⁷ as had already been demonstrated by Alan Segal in his pioneering work in this area.²⁸ Indeed, at the very same time Justin was writing the *Dialogue*, the Rabbis were constructing their primary definition of heresy as a belief in “two powers in heaven.” Counted among the “two power” heretics were so-called orthodox Christians such as Justin.²⁹ Jews as prominent as Philo of Alexandria had unabashedly described the Logos as “a second God”³⁰ at a time when Pharisaism was one *hairesis* among many. By the mid-second century, however, Pharisaism was identified with authentic Judaism, and the term *hairesis* indicated pejoratively any sect that deviated from the true way.³¹ On the Christian side of the fence, meanwhile, rather than trying to convince Jews to accept the Logos, the *Dialogue* in reality attempts to deny the Logos to the Jews, with the ultimate goal of establishing a Christianity distinguishable from Judaism by virtue of its belief in the Logos.³² In this goal, Justin and other heresiologists were aided by the Rabbis. At one point in the *Dialogue*, Justin even indicates that he is aware of the Rabbis’ positioning, for he refers to “what you call an heretical party among you” (*Dial.* 62.2). Both the heresiologists and the Rabbis were, in fact, engaged

in power maneuverings by claiming the right to define the norms of the section of Judeo-Christianity they had carved out for themselves.

In this project of self-identification, conflating the Spirit with the Logos or Son works to Justin's advantage. The demarcation of idea space within Judeo-Christianity was fought, not over three powers in heaven, but over two. "Two Powers" was the inheritance bequeathed from an earlier age. It is for this reason that Justin uses "Power" (*dynamis*) throughout both the *Dialogue* and the *Apologies* as another name for the Son and/or Spirit:

It is wrong, therefore, to understand the Spirit and the Power of God as anything else than the Word, who is also the first-born of God, as the foresaid prophet Moses declared; and it was this which, when it came upon the virgin and overshadowed her, caused her to conceive, not by intercourse, but by Power (*1 Apol.* 33).

Justin constructs "Christians" over against "Jews" in the *Dialogue* by appropriating Logos theology for the one side and denying it to the other. But in the *Apologies* he constructs "Christians" over against "Greeks" using different rhetorical means. He seeks to persuade educated Greeks of the truth of the Christian philosophy by claiming the Greek concept of the Logos is essentially correct, being derived from the Jews through his theory of plagiarism, but now extant in Greek philosophy in a diluted form. Therefore we have an answer to John Behr's complaint that

...there seem to be, as it were, two Justins: the Justin of the *Apologies*, who addressed the Greek world and was prepared to see in Greek philosophy a means of partially knowing God, and the Justin of the *Dialogue*, who engaged with Jewish thought, demonstrating on the basis of Scripture that Christ is indeed the Son of God.³³

Although there is some overlap of rhetoric, by and large Justin employs different rhetorical means to suit these two ends. And although the prophetic agency of the Spirit is acknowledged by multiple scriptural proofs, the nature of the acknowledgement (i.e., demonstrating that all prophecies have been fulfilled) simultaneously relegates this activity to the past.

"Montanism"

Justin seems not to know of the movement called "Montanism" by heresiologists of the late fourth century and following, although it was supposed to have begun around the time of his writing or shortly thereafter. "Montanism" was supposedly a movement that emphasized the role of the Spirit in new proph-

ecy and derived its moniker from its founder, Montanus. As Laura Nasrallah rightly points out, it is often characterized by both ancient and modern writers as “frenzied, a barbarian and heretical aberration erupting at the edges of the Roman empire.”³⁴ This characterization by writers from the fourth century to today, however, overlooks the fact that Christianity itself was born in a province on the edges of the Roman empire. “Montanism” is also frequently described in language of disease by modern writers, who thereby redeploy a discourse that begins as early as Tertullian (*Prae.Haer.* 2-3). Coakley, for example, refers to “the outbreak of Montanism,”³⁵ while Robert Grant states “it was at first confined to Phrygia in Asia Minor,”³⁶ and describes Christian leaders as dealing with the *symptoms* without understanding the *underlying causes*.³⁷ We should observe at the outset of this section that the term “Montanist” was not used until the late fourth century, earlier writers preferring the term “Phrygian.”³⁸

Before turning to the so-called “Montanist” phenomenon, I would like to briefly reflect on the way Coakley, in her response to Wiles, construes the “Montanists” vis-à-vis Justin Martyr. Coakley interprets the question of the Trinity in this period this way:

“Was the church to follow Justin’s rationality-based theology, centred on the Word and *rapprochement* with Greek theology, and explicitly subordinate the Spirit? Or was it to be true to the older heritage of the primacy of the Spirit’s prophetic function?”³⁹

Coakley argues convincingly for the “older heritage” of the Spirit’s importance, tracing this heritage through Acts, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the *Epistle of Barnabas*, and the *Didache*.⁴⁰ Even so, this way of framing the question requires a lot of unpacking. It assigns to Justin a “rationality-based theology” that is not self-evident.⁴¹ It further postulates a theology centered on the Word and subordinating the Spirit, but as we have already seen, Justin does a great deal of conflation of these two concepts, and more often than not they appear to be coequal but subordinated to the Father. Finally, she presents a choice the church had between this “newer” theology of Justin’s and the “older” heritage in which the Spirit’s prophetic function had primary place, but again, as we have seen, the prophetic function of the Spirit was also most significant for Justin, even if that Spirit was subordinated, along with the Word, to the Father. So characterizing Justin and the “Montanists” as polar opposite positions of subordinating vs. exalting the Spirit does not, I think, accurately portray the landscape of the second century. Rather, we see Justin, close to the ecclesiastical structure of Rome, downplaying an inherited trinitarian formula without rejecting it outright, all the while upholding the prophetic agency of the Spirit

in the past. At the same time, we see the sectarian “Montanists” as an apparent threat to ecclesiastical authority because of their belief in direct access to revelation and prophecy via the Spirit in the present.

There is a greater problem in Coakley’s reconstruction of second century pneumatology, however, although one that is by no means unique to her. The problem is that she accepts the heresiologists’ claims about the “Montanists” at more or less face value, including Eusebius’s “revealing” descriptions of their ecstatic states in which they, in the famous phrasing of his anonymous source, moved from “voluntary ignorance” to “involuntary madness.”⁴²

In *An Ecstasy of Folly*, Laura Nasrallah has convincingly undermined the traditional understanding of “Montanism,” revealing it to be “a category manufactured by ancient heresiologists and then utilized by modern scholars.”⁴³ As I have mentioned, the term “Montanism” did not appear until the late fourth century. Even Tertullian, who traditionally is understood to have “joined” the Montanists, never uses the term; he probably did not imagine himself “joining” any such thing.⁴⁴ The most common term to denote this “sect,” as I have said, was “the Phrygians.” This nomenclature, while ostensibly merely deriving from the origins of the sect in the province of Phrygia of Asia Minor, allowed the heresiologists to characterize the prophesiers as on the fringe geographically and, by implication, theologically. This term is used by our most important sources, Hippolytus of Rome (c. 180-230), the anonymous source (c. 193) quoted by Eusebius of Caesarea (fourth century) and the Anti-Phrygian source (c. 170-230) found in Epiphanius of Salamis (fourth century).⁴⁵ Epiphanius, however, associates and confuses the Phrygians with other sects such as the Tascodrugians, Quintillianists, Priscillianists, Pepuzians, and Artotyrites.⁴⁶ Furthermore, it is difficult even to reconstruct the origins of a group following a leader named Montanus, because the heresiologists’ documentation of (in the form of attacks on) this man form part of a larger pattern of discourse that challenges a community’s leader in order to undermine the authority of the group as a whole.⁴⁷ We cannot even say for sure that Montanus was the leader, for the customary focus on Montanus marginalizes the roles of the female prophets Priscilla and Maximilla, a project the heresiologists were certainly interested in.⁴⁸ In short, we can no longer say with certainty that the “Montanists,” as a recognizable sect, ever existed.

Even if we grant the existence of a historical prophet Montanus from Phrygia, it is certain that there was an ongoing debate about the role of new prophecy throughout the Empire within the church of the first four centuries. Within this debate, the characterization of prophets who challenged ecclesiastical authority as adherents of a sect that had spread outward from the

backwater of the empire like a disease is most usefully seen as a rhetorical ploy to marginalize the primacy of new prophecy. By association, the function of the Holy Spirit as prophetic was either relegated to the past (as was the tactic of Justin Martyr) or confined within ecclesiastical limits via other rhetorical means—for example, a discourse of rationality and madness.⁴⁹

Like the concept of Judaism, the concept of Montanism was useful in the early heresiologists' construction of a Christian identity. However, we must attempt to distinguish the goals of the fourth century (and later) heresiologists if we are to portray an accurate picture of second century pneumatology. With the "Montanist" phenomenon this becomes even more challenging because of the way *modern scholars* construct "Montanism" for their own purposes: it "functions as an explanatory device—or even a driving engine—for various historiographies of early Christianity" including, for example, canon formation and the rise of church office and institutionalization.⁵⁰ Rather than uncritically accepting the heresiologists' portrayal of "Montanism" as a reactionary movement that suddenly erupted at the edges of the empire, bringing back ecstatic prophesying that had characterized the church's first generations, we need to evaluate the likelihood that "Montanist" was a convenient label to be applied to unsavory prophesiers in the course of a centuries-long debate over the role of prophecy in the church that cut across lines of so-called "orthodoxy" and "heresy." Irenaeus, for example, refused to condemn the prophesiers. Rather, he criticizes those who do condemn them and by so doing "set aside at once both the Gospel and the prophetic Spirit." He reminds his readers not only of the Paraclete promised in John, but also of 1 Cor 11:4-5, in which Paul "speaks expressly of prophetic gifts, and recognises men and women prophesying in the church." Those who rebuke these prophets, according to Irenaeus, are sinners.⁵¹

It is reasonable to assume, consistent with the traditional view of Montanism, that what was at stake were political and sexual issues. The ecclesiastical authority of the bishops was being challenged by direct revelation, and these prophets included "wretched women"⁵² among their numbers (one of whom, apparently, even saw Christ appear as a woman).⁵³ Eusebius reports that so-called "Montanist" prophets claim to be filled with the prophetic or revelatory gifts of the Holy Spirit, much like the experiences described in Acts; Tertullian has been used to confirm this, although he does not call himself a Montanist.⁵⁴ Eusebius maintains that their prophecy is "false," "abnormal," and "contrary to the manner which the Church had received from generation to generation from the beginning."⁵⁵ But is it correct to conclude, with Coakley, that "Montanism gave the Spirit a bad name"?⁵⁶ Is it not more reasonable to assume that

heresiologists gave the Spirit a bad name by constructing as “Phrygians” or “Montanists” those who displayed a dangerous misappropriation of the Spirit’s gifts?

In Nasrallah’s extensive analysis of Epiphanius’s Anti-Phrygian source, she finds that this source does not reject all charismata but, like Eusebius, questions whose charismata are true. The Phrygians’ gifts are not true because “*prophetic charismata are limited to the past, even if God’s grace and other gifts exist currently in the church.*”⁵⁷ As with Justin, “what is at stake for the Anti-Phrygian is the identity of true Christianity...and the ability to anchor one’s claim to be part of the true church in a secure realm of knowledge.”⁵⁸

Conclusions

The rhetorical objective of the anti-Montanist writers was similar to Justin’s: to construct an orthodox Christianity over and against an “other,” in this case, the “Phrygians” or “Montanists.” Whereas Justin’s project was largely (if not completely) theological, being concerned with orthodoxy or “right belief,” the anti-Montanist writers were as much concerned with “right practice” or orthopraxy; prophecy and revelation were spiritual gifts understood to be of doubtful relevance or even dangerous. Both of these projects, however, had the same theological effect on second century pneumatology: the subordination of the Holy Spirit within an alleged doctrine of the Trinity.

Given this state of affairs, I return to the question I posed in the introduction: How was trinitarian theology able to emerge intact from the second century? There were good reasons for subordinating the Spirit, and it seems evident that the only thing that kept subordination from turning into full demotion was the preexisting baptismal and eucharistic formulas, which were impossible to evade and still retain a pretense of “orthodoxy.” So while the early formulas did not serve, in Coakley’s memorable phrase, as a complete clamp on all critical reflection, they still served as signposts to denote the limits within which that reflection had to take place. Therefore this analysis of the state of second century pneumatology provides strong supporting evidence to Wiles’s essentially correct conclusion that “our Trinity of revelation is an arbitrary analysis of the activity of God, which though of value in Christian thought and devotion is not of essential significance.”⁵⁹

As I have indicated, a crucial component of Coakley’s response to Wiles’s challenge is to demonstrate that a number of theological options were in play in the ante-Nicene period. She succeeds here, but this demonstration does not remove the main obstacle, the arbitrary restrictions set on that speculation by

the formulas, which, with Wiles, I still find operating behind all of the rhetorical positioning.⁶⁰

NOTES

- 1 Sarah Coakley, "Why Three? Some Further Reflections on the Origins of the Doctrine of the Trinity," *The Making and Remaking of Christian Doctrine: Essays in Honor of Maurice Wiles*, ed. Sarah Coakley and David. A. Pailin (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 32.
- 2 Coakley, 32.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Coakley is actually responding to a position derived from a thorough understanding of Wiles's writings.
- 6 Coakley's summary of Wiles's challenge, 30-31.
- 7 Preserved in the New Testament in Matt. 28:19.
- 8 Coakley, 29.
- 9 Ibid., 30.
- 10 Ibid., 30-31.
- 11 Ibid., 42. The Roberts-Donaldson translation, with the ambiguous part in italics: "But both Him, and the Son (who came forth from Him and *taught us these things, and the host of the other good angels who follow and are made like to Him*), and the prophetic Spirit, we worship and adore, knowing them in reason and truth, and declaring without grudging to every one who wishes to learn, as we have been taught." By adding the parentheses this translation rules out the possibility that the host of angels is meant to be a fourth item to be worshipped and adored, yet it preserves a remaining minor ambiguity that arises because "taught" (*didaksanta*) takes a double accusative: are the host (*straton*) of angels a second indirect object, along with "us", or a second direct object, along with "these things"? The translators suggest two alternative translations that would force a choice. The first is "*taught these things to us and to the host of the other good angels...*" The second is "*taught us about these things, and about the host of the other good angels...*" It is likely Justin meant both, hence the ambiguity.
- 12 Coakley, 42.
- 13 John Behr, *The Way to Nicaea, The Formation of Christian Theology*, vol. 1 (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 103.

- 14 M. J. Edwards, "On the Platonic Schooling of Justin Martyr," *Journal of Theological Studies* 1991, 25.
- 15 Behr, 108.
- 16 See Behr, 104, for the basic statement of the claim, and 107-10 for the difficulties introduced by two apparently different conceptions of the Word.
- 17 Maurice Wiles, "Reflections on the Origins of the Doctrine of the Trinity," *Working Papers in Doctrine* (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1976), 9. Wiles shows that Justin was not alone among "orthodox" writers in conflating the Son/Word/Spirit. See Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.*, IV.20.4,8; and Hippolytus, *Con. Noet.*, 11, 12.
- 18 Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 3; Karen King, *What is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 110-15.
- 19 Boyarin, 3.
- 20 King, 19.
- 21 Laura Nasrallah, *An Ecstasy of Folly: Prophecy and Authority in Early Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 5.
- 22 Boyarin, 3.
- 23 "Il revient à Justin d'avoir inventé l'hérésie." Alain Le Boulluec, *La notion d'hérésie dans la littérature grecque IIe-IIIe siècles* (Paris: études Augustiniennes, 1985), 110. Cited in Boyarin, 4. My translation. See also King, 24.
- 24 Boyarin, 4.
- 25 Boyarin, 7; James D. G. Dunn, *The Parting of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1991), 230-43.
- 26 Boyarin, 29. For an excellent summary of the range of scholarly opinion on the historical reality of Trypho, see Timothy J. Horner, *Listening to Trypho: Justin Martyr's Dialogue Reconsidered*, Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology, vol. 28, ed. Tj. Baarda et al. (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 15-32.
- 27 Boyarin, 38.
- 28 Alan Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports About Christianity and Gnosticism*, vol. 25, Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity, ed. Jacob Neusner (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977)
- 29 Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, 119, 220ff. Boyarin, 38.
- 30 Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, Ch. 11.
- 31 Boyarin, 41.
- 32 *Ibid.*, 38.

- 33 Behr, 107.
- 34 Nasrallah, 7.
- 35 Coakley, 42.
- 36 Robert Grant, *Augustus to Constantine: The Rise and Triumph of Christianity in the Roman World* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 132.
- 37 Ibid., 142.
- 38 Nasrallah, 158.
- 39 Coakley, 42.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Justin certainly uses a rhetoric of rationality. I am not sure if Coakley refers to this, or if she means Reason (*Logos*) was central to his notion of the second person of the Trinity over against the third; I would disagree with the latter, as I have been arguing that Justin conflates these two persons more than Coakley admits.
- 42 Coakley, 43.
- 43 Nasrallah, 157.
- 44 Grant, 139, even dates Tertullian's joining of the movement precisely to the year 212, although he does not explain his reasoning; it is probably due to the content of Tertullian's writings, which themselves are sometimes dated on the presumption of a pre- and post-conversion to Montanism. Roberts (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol IV; 6, 8ff) remarks on the notorious difficulty of fixing dates for Tertullian and his writings.
- 45 The dating of Hippolytus and Eusebius's Anonymous Source are from www.earlychristianwritings.com. For the dating of Epiphanius's Anti-Phrygian source, see Nasrallah, 167-70. The "Anti-Phrygian source" is Nasrallah's preferred term for what other historians have called Epiphanius's "Anti-Montanist source." Epiphanius himself uses neither term but "Anti-Phrygian" is closer to his own terminology; see Nasrallah, 167ff.
- 46 Nasrallah, 166. Epiphanius, *Pan.* 48.14.3-5; 49.2.6.
- 47 Nasrallah, 158n7.
- 48 Anne Jensen, *God's Self-confident Daughters: Early Christianity and the Liberation of Women* trans. O. C. Dean, Jr. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 139. Cited in Nasrallah, 158n9.
- 49 Nasrallah, *passim*.
- 50 Ibid., 159.
- 51 This is my reading of the Latin text (*Adv. Haer.* III.11.9). Roberts & Donaldson insert "(the Montanists)" into their English translation to make it read as if Irenaeus was criticizing the prophesiers rather than their opponents! This insertion seems unwarranted, but cf. Irenaeus's forthright condemnation of unnamed "false prophets" in IV.33.5.

52 Hippolytus, *Refutatio omnium haer.* 8.19; see Coakley 44n33.

53 Epiphanius, *Pan.* 49.1. Although, once we start down the road of reading the heresiologists with a hermeneutic of suspicion, we must agree with Ross S. Kraemer's observation that claims such as this one may be "standard rhetorical calumny...with little historical utility" (Kraemer, *Women's Religions in the Greco-Roman World*, 10). That is, it is just as likely this strange claim of Epiphanius is a fiction created or reported with slanderous intent, following a common tendency in the Greco-Roman period to feminize the Other. See also Kraemer, "The Other as Woman," 123 and *passim*.

54 Eusebius, *H.E.* V.16.6ff; Tertullian, *De anima*, 9.

55 Eusebius, *H.E.*, V.16.6ff

56 Coakley, 44.

57 Nasrallah, 171-74.

58 *Ibid.*, 194.

59 Wiles, 15.

60 Professor Coakley has informed me that I may look forward to a clarification of her position on the Trinity in her forthcoming four-volume systematic theology.

ON THE INCLUSIVE INTERPRETATION OF SURA 33:40, THE “SEAL OF THE PROPHETS”

Sohrob Nabatian

Muhammad is not the father of any one of your men, but the Messenger of God, and the Seal of the Prophets; God has knowledge of everything.

(Sura 33:40)¹

This paper inquires into the ambiguous and consequential epithet of the Prophet Mohammad, given only once in the Qur’an in Sura 33 verse 40, of “seal of the prophets” (*khatam al-nabiyyin*). The most common interpretation of this verse in Sunni Islam has been that Mohammad is the supreme and final Prophet, completing the mission begun by previous prophets and succeeded by no one.¹ This interpretation excludes previous prophets from the level of Mohammad, and precludes the possibility prophets after Mohammad. In contrast, this paper advocates the viability of more inclusive interpretations of the “sealing of prophecy” based on the term’s original indeterminacy and the esoteric prophethood of thirteenth century Sufi master Muhyiddin Ibn ‘Arabi.

In the first section, general remarks on the uses and cultural understandings of the word “seal” (*khatam*) are followed by a survey of the evidence in the Qur’an and hadith supporting both inclusivist and exclusivist interpretations

of the phrase *khatam al-nabiyyin*.² An analysis of the earliest literature suggests that for some within the early Muslim community, Mohammad was seen as one link aligned and equal to many others within a long prophetic chain, whereas the exclusivist interpretation of Mohammad as the supreme and final prophet gained predominance in the centuries after Mohammad's death. The second section turns toward esoteric interpretations of the sealing of prophecy in the writings of Ibn 'Arabi. Ibn 'Arabi describes an interconnection between messengerhood (*risala*), prophecy (*nubuwwa*), and sainthood (*wilayya*). In this scheme, the sealing of prophecy denotes the impossibility of future prophetic legislation, but permits "general prophecy" such as the interpretation of previously revealed sacred law. For Ibn 'Arabi, the seal marks a process of both essentialization and immanencing of divine revelation, a condition that recapitulates his wider eschatological structure.

In reviewing these varying interpretations of the sealing of prophecy, we observe how a crucial hermeneutic ambiguity became determined in the development of Sunni tradition, and subsequently how this ambiguity was revisited and creatively reinterpreted by Ibn 'Arabi to signal the increasing immediacy and interiority of revelation. My intention in connecting the semantic and exegetical indeterminacy of *khatam* with Ibn 'Arabi's mystical insight is to show that there exists within Sunni tradition historically sound and compelling alternatives to the standard, exclusivist interpretations of Sura 33:40 of prophetic finality and supremacy.

General Interpretations of *khatam al-nabiyyin*

The Word *khatam*

To begin our discussion it is useful to comprehend the material culture that would give rise to the phrase *khatam al-nabiyyin*. The Arabic word *khatam* signifies a seal, signet ring, the impression made by a signet ring, and any object that has received the impression of a seal.³ Already some ambiguity is introduced when these meanings are transferred to Mohammad. As *khatam al-nabiyyin*, he could be the impressor (e.g. actively impressing upon some other separate entity), the entity that has received an impression from something else, or the content of the impression. Considering the plurality of meaning that derives from a single root in the Arabic language, it is possible that all three meanings could co-exist concurrently within the semantic field of the word *khatam*.

Understanding the cultural importance of a signet ring further helps to shape our discussion. There is abundant evidence that seals were used in pre-

Islamic middle-Eastern cultures in general, and several hadith relate that they were in use in Arabia at the time of the prophet.⁴ The personal seal was the primary means of communicating the holder’s authority, approbation, and word of honor. These seals usually took the form of a signet ring fashioned with the bearer’s name, family, title, or other symbolic information, similar to the European coat of arms.⁵ The seal was used much as a signature, giving validity to a letter or document. It was also used to identify property, especially books, and to guarantee the security of property.⁶ All of these uses have a deep symbolic resonance when applied to a seal of prophethood. A seal of prophethood would legitimate and guarantee prophethood and keep it secure. Furthermore, it would communicate the nobility and promise of the owner, in this case Allah. Interestingly, kings and high nobility at the time of Mohammad did not seal their own documents. Instead, they retained seal-bearers whose specific duty was to carry the royal seal and employ it at the king’s request. The status of a seal-bearer, therefore, was exalted—it is testimony to the king’s trust in the bearer’s worthiness to wield his authority.⁷ This yields an interesting inference when applied to God, the King of the universe: Mohammad then becomes his seal-bearer, honored with the trust and authority of his Lord.

In these practical uses of a seal, the functions of legitimating and communicating approval are primary. From where, we may ask, did the connotations of finishing and “closing off” arise in the context of *khatam al-nabiyyin*? Certainly a seal has a function of closing and securing, as in the case of an envelope or a package. There is an obvious consequence, however. Anything that is sealed must eventually be opened in order to be of any use. Envelopes and packages are sealed in order to preserve their incorruptibility for a later date when the contents will be used. In the case of Mohammad, this would imply that prophecy has been sealed in order to be opened at a later time, which completely undermines the notion of prophetic finality.

From this analysis of seals in the material culture of Mohammad’s Arabia, the word *khatam* taken by itself carries primary meanings of legitimating, guaranteeing, and communicating the owner’s identity, and only a tenuous connotation of finality.

The Bodily Seal

In addition to the rich semantic meanings of *khatam* described above, an important bodily corroboration to Sura 33:40 was held up as evidential in the interpretations of the phrase *khatam al-nabiyyin*. Early traditions report that Mohammad had a particular mark or protuberance on his back between the

shoulders, which was considered to be the mark of the seal of prophethood (*khatam al-nubuwwa*). According to Islamic tradition, this is how the Christian monk Bahira recognized Mohammad as a prophet: When the young Mohammad passed by Bahira's desert abode in a caravan of Abu Talib, the monk's curiosity was aroused by a cloud following the boy and providing shade. Upon investigating Mohammad's body, Bahira discovered a mark between his shoulders that was foretold in unnamed scriptures as the seal of prophethood. This confirmed Bahira's suspicions of Mohammad's prophetic vocation.⁸ Furthermore, there is a hadith of the Prophet's companion Jabir ibn Samura where he says: "I saw the seal on his back as if it were a pigeon's egg."⁹ Another friend of the Prophet, 'Abd Allah ibn Sarjis, reports in a hadith: "I then went after him and saw the seal of prophethood between his shoulders on the left side of his shoulder having spots on it like moles."¹⁰ For Islamic tradition, this physical mark represents a significant corroboration to the Qur'anic revelation of 33:40, however, it does not provide any insight into the actual meaning of the seal. For this we must look to the understandings of prophecy and its meaning in the Qur'an and the early Muslim community.

The Problem of *khatam al-nabiyyin*

One can hardly understate the importance of prophecy in Islam. The very profession of faith includes an acceptance of prophecy in both particular and general terms, that is, in accepting Mohammed as messenger (*Mohammadun rasul Allah*) one also accepts revelation as humanity's principal connection to the Source.¹¹ Furthermore, the human race is a product of prophecy through Adam, the original, archetypal human and the first in a long chain of prophets including and perhaps culminating in Mohammad. In their indispensable function of reminding humanity of its primordial responsibility to God through spiritual, social, and legal guidelines, the prophets are an indispensable grace. For this reason the Qur'an emphasizes in several passages that no community will be left without a prophet.¹²

The human dependence upon prophecy and God's promise of its continuity is challenged, however, by the doctrine of prophetic finality based upon Qur'an 33:40. The standard interpretation of this verse is that Mohammad is the supreme and final Prophet, completing the mission begun by previous prophets and succeeded by no one. This is not a self-evident interpretation, however, when the above-mentioned ambiguity of the word *khatam* is considered. A further examination of the Qur'an and early hadith literature suggest possible inclusive interpretations of *khatam* that are more egalitarian

with regards to previous prophets, and open-ended with regards to potential future prophets, which emphasize the legitimating, verifying, and securing functions of a seal. When juxtaposed against contrary evidence conforming to the standard, exclusivist position, we must agree with Yohanan Friedmann’s conclusion that the exclusive doctrine of finality and supremacy of the *khatam* became authoritative and hegemonic only after several centuries in which more ambiguous and open-ended interpretations co-existed.¹³

Evidence for Prophetic Inclusivity

A brief survey of evidence in the Qur’an, hadith, and early Arab literature suggest that the doctrine of prophetic finality and supremacy associated with the phrase *khatam al-nabiyyin* was not established at the time of Mohammad and the first Muslims, and that Mohammad’s prophecy was considered on an equal footing to the other prophets.¹⁴ The equality with and openness to other prophets both past and future constitutes what I am calling prophetic inclusivity.

The Qur’an itself has several verses that suggest such an egalitarian and inclusive interpretation. Throughout the Qur’an we find verses that emphasize Mohammad’s membership in a long line of prophets as an authenticating and legitimizing source. These do not explicitly communicate a superiority or finality, however. The Qur’an speaks more frequently of the plurality and similarity of prophets than it does of finality or supremacy, which are only hinted at ambiguously in one phrase in Sura 33:40. In fact, the Qur’an puts great value upon seeing the unity of prophets and making no distinction between them.¹⁵

Amongst the vast collections of hadith we also find sayings of the Prophet supporting a more inclusive interpretation. Reflecting the ambiguous nature of hadith in general, however, there are conflicting traditions that support both inclusivist and exclusivist interpretations. Suggesting a more egalitarian and inclusive interpretation, we find numerous hadith where Mohammed praises other prophets as having an equal or higher spiritual status. For example, in one tradition the Prophet declares that Jonah had achieved the same spiritual vision as himself in his own mystical ascension (*me’raj*): “Do not prefer me to Yunus ibn Matta [i.e. Jonah] because he saw in the belly of the fish what I saw on the upper part of the Divine Throne.”¹⁶ Similarly, Mohammad is recorded as saying, “Prophets are brothers in faith, having different mothers. Their religion is, however, one...”¹⁷ In a hadith of Abu Dawud, furthermore, the Prophet does not accept the title “the best of creation” (*khayr al-bariyya*) because he considers it better suited to Abraham.¹⁸

A saying attributed to 'Aisha¹⁹ suggests very strongly that the Prophet's intimates were not under the impression that *khatam* denoted finality. 'Aisha is recorded as saying in an early hadith: "Say (that the Prophet is) the seal of the prophets and do not say that there is no prophet after him."²⁰ This saying necessitates a broader interpretation of *khatam*, which cannot possibly denote "final" in 'Aisha's mind.²¹ Here it would seem that the word *khatam* signifies an important legitimating function, but that it is incorrect to understand it as meaning "last."

Another hadith that casts doubt on the finality of prophethood comes from Mohammed himself, at the burial of his infant son Ibrahim. According to a tradition, Mohammed placed a hand upon Ibrahim's grave following the interment and said: "By Allah, he is a prophet and a son of a prophet."²² The obvious conclusion is that Mohammed expected his son would have been a prophet if he had survived, and perhaps considered him as such even in death. If this is so, Mohammed cannot have considered himself the last prophet.²³

These traditions suggest very strongly that Mohammed did not understand himself as the final and supreme prophet, and did not want to be seen as such. There are, of course, further hadith among the multitude that suggest opposite conclusions. Nevertheless, these sayings offer a valuable glimpse into a period where the doctrine of prophetic finality was not established. In the early period, we must remember, the Islamic community did not see themselves as a clearly defined community of faith separate from Christianity and Judaism, and were acutely aware of their spiritual kinship with the other prophetic traditions. In this context, one must wonder whether the qualities of exceptionality, superiority, and finality would have occurred to the first Muslims as positive attributes for their Prophet.²⁴

Early Islamic literature also suggests varying interpretations of the "seal" in the Muslim community after Mohammad's death. A verse from the compilation of the poet Umayya ibn Abi al-Salt, for example, describes Mohammad as a man "by means of whom God sealed the prophets before him and after him."²⁵ Here, the intimation of post-Mohammedan prophets denies the connotation of finality in the word *khatam*. Rather, the verse understands *khatam* as a seal of authenticity extending into both past and future. This is text indicates that the doctrine was not universally established in early Islam. Similarly, we find other Arab commentators and literary figures taking "seal of prophets" to mean "best of the prophets" or beauty of the prophets.²⁶

Evidence for Prophetic Exclusivity

We have seen that the Qur’an describes a hierarchy of rank and divine preference among the various prophets, but it does not explicitly name Mohammed as the greatest, most preferred, or final among them.²⁷ The doctrine of Mohammed’s finality and pre-eminence developed explicitly in the hadith literature, rather, in traditions and sayings that contradict those previously mentioned. The emphasis on finality and supremacy of Muhammad over and against other prophets, and precluding future prophets, constitutes what I am calling prophetic exclusivity.

One of the most important hadith concerning Muhammad’s finality, which later became important for Ibn ‘Arabi, involves the tradition of the brick wall. In Muslim’s *Sahih* Muhammad says: “The similitude of mine and that of the Apostles (before me) is that of a person who constructed a building and he built it fine and well and the people went round it saying: ‘Never have we seen a building more imposing than this, but for one brick, and I am that final brick.’”²⁸ Similarly, in a tradition recorded by Al-Tirmidhi Muhammad says: “I was preferred to the (other) prophets... I was sent to all people and the prophets were sealed with me.”²⁹ These traditions leave no ambiguity as to Muhammad’s prophetic finality and ascendancy. In another saying, Muhammad identifies himself as “the last to come” (*Aqib*):

I am Muhammad and I am Ahmad, and I am al-Mahi (the obliterator), by whom unbelief would be obliterated, and I am Hashir (the gatherer) at whose feet all mankind will be gathered, and I am ‘Aqib (the last to come) after whom there will be no Prophet.³⁰

The doctrine of Muhammad’s prophetic pre-eminence is also related to his unique role in the judgment. A well-known hadith relates that Muhammad will be preferred among prophets as the intercessor to his community, whose intercession will be first (before other prophets) and accepted by God: “I shall be pre-eminent amongst the descendents of Adam on the Day of Resurrection and I will be the first intercessor and the first whose intercession will be accepted (by Allah).”³¹

Conclusions

In reviewing the evidence of Qur’an, hadith, and early Arabic literature, we find opposing interpretations of the phrase *khatam al-nabiyyin*. The Qur’an itself offers little evidence, other than the phrase itself, that Muhammad is not the

final prophet, nor does it explicitly announce Mohammed's prophetic finality. It does mention an ambiguous ranking of prophetic status, but weighed against the repeated exhortations not to make distinction between the apostles, we find little Qur'anic support for a doctrine of prophetic finality and pre-eminence.

The hadith present substantial evidence for both interpretations of the word *khatam*, and it would seem that for Sunni Muslims in general the issue has been decided by general consensus over time. Nevertheless, the existence of hadith suggesting the prophetic status of Mohammed's son, and 'Aisha's cryptic rejection of Mohammad's prophetic finality indicate that the doctrine was not clearly established at the time of Mohammad, and that alternative understandings existed in the early Muslim community. This conclusion is further supported by early Islamic literature that describes the seal in a manner that other prophets could follow Mohammad, and by the functional meanings of *khatam* of which approval, legitimation and communication of authority are prior to any intimation of finality.

The question of *why* Sunni tradition came to favor a doctrine of prophetic finality over a more inclusive interpretation is a complex one that deserves a full historical analysis beyond the scope of this paper.³² For our purposes, it suffices to emphasize that more egalitarian and inclusive interpretations of prophetology were current and perhaps primary during the formative stages of Islamic revelation. The existence of plural understandings of Mohammad's prophecy in these earliest stages challenges the now-standard Sunni assumption of prophetic finality, and opens a new dimension of exegetical inquiry into the meaning of *khatam al-nabiyyin*. The second part of this paper examines the hermeneutic indeterminacy of Sura 33:40 in the light of Ibn Arabi's mystical prophetology, finding therein a coherent understanding of *khatam al-nabiyyin* that represents a compelling alternative to exclusivist doctrines of prophetic finality.

Ibn 'Arabi's Interpretation of *khatam al-nabiyyin*

With the doctrine of prophetic finality firmly established in Sunni Islam soon after Mohammad's death, the obvious question emerged: How is the indigent human race to survive without divine guidance? True, a legal and religious code (*shari'a*) as well as strong tradition based on Mohammad's life (*sunnah*) had developed from which Muslims could take inspiration and direction. Still, there can be no substitute for the living guidance of an enlightened being, and had not God promised revelation to all communities?³³ Mystics and others acutely concerned with spiritual and moral development required guidance even after

the Prophet’s revelation, and they developed systems and schools of thought that permitted spiritual guidance within the doctrinal limitations of sealed prophecy. Of these, Ibn ‘Arabi’s prophetic philosophy presents an intricate and profound understanding of revelation’s continued presence in the world.

The writings of Ibn ‘Arabi, traditionally called by the epithet *al-shaykh al-akbar*—the greatest shaykh—are complex and difficult to comprehend. This is perhaps intentional; they were after all intended for advanced students initiated in the Sufi path.³⁴ James Morris notes that Ibn ‘Arabi intentionally scattered key metaphysical teachings throughout his magnum opus, the *Futuhāt Makkiyya*, so that only his most gifted students could comprehend them.³⁵ Indeed, he had a vested interest in dissuading antagonistic *ulema* or other powerful figures who would be unable to grasp the depths of his work.³⁶

This depth is especially clear in the case of prophetology, a subject upon which Ibn ‘Arabi’s insight and nuance are arguably unparalleled in Islamic thought. Ibn ‘Arabi’s prophetology is mostly presented in two works: *The Meccan Revelations* and *The Bezels of Wisdom*, the latter of which is entirely devoted to the subject. According to Ibn ‘Arabi, much of these works were inspired directly by the personal revelations of prophets and angels. It would be impossible to cover the extent of this esoteric prophetology here—the following discussion is limited to the status and meaning of *khatam*. We shall see that the “sealing of prophecy” for Ibn ‘Arabi plays a critical role in a wider eschatological narrative of increasing interiority of revelation, culminating in the day of judgment and the close of the cycle of creation.

The intricacy of Ibn ‘Arabi’s esoteric prophetology presents a challenge to minds accustomed to logical chronology and narrative. In this regard it is helpful to present a key background concept of Ibn ‘Arabi and Sufism in general: *nur Mohammadiyya*. This all-important phenomenon is the ultimate source of all prophecy, and the uniting, cohesive background to Ibn ‘Arabi’s apparently fragmented and otherwise confusing prophetological system.

Nur Mohammadiyya

The term *nur Mohammadiyya* refers to the esoteric concept of a primordial Mohammedan light, found most remarkably in Sufism. The concept derives from Qur’anic passages such as 33:36: “O Prophet, We have sent thee as... a light-giving lamp,” and interpretations of verses like 5:15, which reads, “There has come to you from God a light,” as well as the infamous “Light Verse” in Sura 24:35.

The concept of *nur Mohammad* took on tremendous importance to Islamic mystics, who understood it as a pre-eternal prophetic reality, and the perfect form of human existence.³⁷ As such it is also called *haqiqah Mohammadiyya*, the “Mohammedan Reality,” and is the prototype of the *insan kamil*, the “Universal Human” of Sufi theosophy. This development was inspired by numerous cryptic hadith where Mohammad alludes to his own pre-existent, trans-historical nature. For example, one tradition relates: “O Jabir, God created the light of your Prophet out of His Light before he created things.”³⁸ In another tradition Mohammad says, “I am the first man to have been created and the last to have been sent.”³⁹ Perhaps the most famous hadith records Mohammad as saying, “I was a prophet when Adam was between water and clay.” These and a great many more sayings point to a trans-historical, primordial light or reality that is instantiated in the physical person of Mohammad.

Mystical philosophers understood this reality to be the primordial Intellect, the first emanation of God. From this perspective, the “Mohammadan Light” is itself the transcendent prophetic reality, an incandescent spirit of guidance that manifests itself partially in all other prophets, and then completely in Mohammad, the final seal of the prophets. This idea of *verus propheta* is reflected in a hadith that describes the spirit of Mohammad traveling from prophet to prophet 124,000 times, “*min nabiyyin ila nabiyyin*” until alighting completely in its final epiphany as Mohammad ibn Hisham.⁴⁰

This mystical perspective of *verus propheta* frames Ibn ‘Arabi’s discussion of prophethood, anthropology, and cosmology in general. According to Ibn ‘Arabi, the transcendent Mohammadan light is the primary reality of creation, through which all else came to be:

The first creation was primordial dust (*al-haba’*), *materia prima*. The first thing to be endowed with existence was *haqiqah mohammadiyya rahmaniyya*, not confined to any space because illimitable. God epiphanized Himself by means of His Light to this dust, which is called by speculative thinkers the first universal matter and in which the entire universe existed *in potentia*, and each thing that was in this dust received this Light according to its capacity and predisposition, as the corners of a room receive the light of a torch, and are more fully and brightly lit up the nearer they are to the torch. Indeed, God said, “The symbol of His Light is like a niche with a torch in it” (Qur’an 24:35), thus comparing His Light to a torch. Now there was nothing in the dust that was closer to the light, or more disposed to receive it, than the Reality (*haqiqah*) of Muhammad, which is also called the Intellect. He [Mohammed] is thus the

head of all the universe and the first thing to come into existence... And the universe proceeds from this epiphany.”⁴¹

As the primordial creation, this Mohammanan reality is the foundation of all creation: “The Mohammedan Reality was endowed with existence, and then out of it He drew the universe.”⁴² As such, the Prophet is the primordial form encompassing all of creation: “The Prophet is the ultimate kind (*al-jins al-‘ali*) who contains all kinds, the supreme father of all creatures and of all men, even though his clay (*tinatuhu*) only appeared afterwards.”⁴³

This cosmogonical understanding of *haqiqah Muhammadiyah* is indispensable in understanding Ibn ‘Arabi’s prophetology. From this perspective, Mohammed is not an individual selected by God to be the last prophet, but rather the primordial prophetic force fully hypostasized in one person. The concept of *khatam*, therefore, connotes not just the end of a sequence, but also the full epiphany of a primordial, eternal power upon a human being. This view is far more harmonious with the meaning of “seal” as a stamp that carries the owner’s authority and word of honor. Thus Ibn ‘Arabi writes of Mohammad in the final chapter of *Fusus al-Hikam*:

He is the most perfect creature of the human race. For this reason things begin with him and will be sealed by him: indeed, he was a prophet when Adam was between water and clay; and then through his elemental form, he was the Seal of the Prophets.⁴⁴

For Ibn ‘Arabi, *khatam* must be understood in the context of *nur Muhammadiyah*. The seal is not a mark of finality, but rather a degree of presence of prophetic light, which by its own fullness seals past and future revelation. This view preserves the uniqueness of Mohammad’s status as seal, but affirms it within a continuity of prophetic revelation extending from the beginning to the end of time. But what is the meaning of Mohammad’s distinct status within prophetic history? What is the consequence for the ongoing manifestation of prophetic light?

Wilayya, Nubuwwa, Risala

In order to understand the meaning of *khatam al-nabiyyin* for Ibn ‘Arabi, we must distinguish three categories of revelation: *wilayya*, *nubuwwa*, and *risala*, which translate as sainthood, prophethood, and messengerhood respectively. These three interconnected dimensions of guidance form a structure of increasing exteriority of revelation.

The Arabic word *wilayya* encompasses many meanings: friend, adherent, protector, supporter, owner, slave, neighbor, and other related concepts.⁴⁵ Of the three dimensions of revelation, *wilayya* is outstanding as the eternal, core aspect. This is because *al-wali* is one of the ninety-nine attributes of God, and as such is considered by most Sufis to be eternally existent. This assumes special importance for Ibn 'Arabi because of the importance placed on the divine names in his cosmogony. While we cannot cover that topic here, we may say briefly that, for Ibn 'Arabi, the ninety-nine attributes constitute the original forms within the being of God, in whose interaction and reflection all of creation is manifested. These attributes are co-essential with Allah, and are therefore eternal and unending. Ibn 'Arabi considers these names to be the "ontological basis for the existence and becoming of everything else."⁴⁶ *Wilayya* or sainthood, therefore, is eternal and cannot end whereas *nubuwwa* (prophecy) and *risala* (the message) are conditioned by time and history.⁴⁷ By achieving this state, therefore, the saint is ontologically plugged in to the foundation and basis of all existence.

Of the three categories, the saints' perception of revelation is also the most subtle, interior, and esoteric. According to Ibn 'Arabi, the saint or "friend of God" receives revelation through inner inspiration (*ilhaam*) or through the casting of wisdom into the heart by angels, who are known as "casters" (*al-mul-qiyat*). This corresponds with Sura 42:51: "It belongs not to any mortal that God should speak to him, except by inspiration (*ilhaam*), or from behind a veil, or that He should send a messenger (i.e. an angel) and reveal whatsoever He will..." The saints are not always conscious of the whole procedure, however;⁴⁸ the revelation of *wilayya* is interior, personal, and mysterious.

The prophet (*nabi*) is necessarily also a saint, for sainthood is the esoteric core of revelation. There were 124,000 prophets before Mohammad, according to the widely accepted hadith of Ibn Hanbal, of whom only twenty-five are named in the Qur'an. Prophethood is like another degree of sainthood, but it includes a more external, exoteric, clear communication through the ability to clearly witness and receive messages from angels.⁴⁹ Prophethood contrasts with sainthood, however, in that it is not an attribute of God. It is therefore created, and subject to the finitude of creation. Indeed, Mohammad, the seal of the prophets, sealed both prophecy and messengerhood alike:

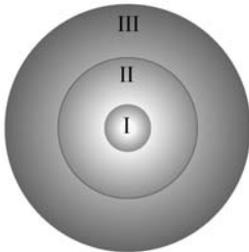
Know that Saintship is an all-inclusive and universal function that never comes to an end, dedicated as it is to the universal communication (of divine truth). As for the legislative function of Prophecy and Apostleship [i.e. messengerhood], it came to an end in Moham-

mad. After him there will no longer be any law-bringing prophet or community to receive such, nor any apostle bringing divine law...⁵⁰

A messenger or apostle (*rasul*) is a prophet with a further degree of exterior responsibility, namely to communicate divine messages to his community and establish legal and religious framework.⁵¹ In contrast to the many saints and prophets, Islamic tradition counts only six messengers: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Mohammad.⁵² Messengerhood (*risala*) is the most exterior and exoteric kind of revelation, and like the prophets, the messengers receive their mission directly from the angels. Messengers establish new laws and are permitted to abrogate previous ones.

Thus we find three levels of revelation, the more exterior ones encompassing the interior. The messenger is both prophet and saint, the prophet is a saint, and sainthood is the most essential, core quality of revelation. We may imagine this system as concentric circles of increasing exteriority:

SPHERES OF REVELATION



	I. <i>WILAYYA</i>	II. <i>NUBUWWA</i>	III. <i>RISALA</i>
DIVINE ATTRIBUTE	Yes (<i>Al-Wali</i>)	No	No
SEALED	No	Yes	Yes
HISTORICITY	Eternal	Historically Conditioned	Historically Conditioned
METHOD OF REVELATION	<i>Ilhaam</i> /Inner Angelic	<i>Wahy</i> /Outer Angelic	Outer Angelic
CONTENT	Non-legislative	Possibly legislative	New legislative
NUMBER	Innumerable	124,000	6

In this diagram, the sealing of messengerhood and prophecy indicate the collapsing of the two outer circles, leaving only the inmost core of revelation.

Henry Corbin gives a further image to help understand this structure. He describes *risala* as a shell, *nubuwwa* as the almond, and *wilayya* as the almond oil.⁵³ This metaphor effectively communicates that the most essential and subtle aspect of revelation is invisible and pervasive of the fruit, whereas the outer layer is hard and protective. This corresponds with the general mystical understanding of the divine attributes *al-batin* (the Hidden) and *al-zahir* (the Manifest) as they pertain to religion; the innermost secrets of faith are protected by the outer shell of laws and religious structures.⁵⁴

Non-Legislative Prophecy

Although the eternal sphere of *wilayya* persists in our own post-prophetic age, the status of revelation is still somewhat ambiguous. The question remains: How exactly do the saints manifest divine guidance if prophecy and messengerhood are sealed? Here Ibn 'Arabi makes a distinction between legislative prophecy (*nubuwwa al-tashri*) and non-legislative or general prophecy (*nubuwwa 'amma*). Legislative prophecy is the type that brings with it new laws and statutes, and that is disseminated to a community. There is no question in any of Ibn 'Arabi's writing that this type of prophecy was definitively sealed by Mohammad:

No Angel ever descends with revelation upon the heart of any other than a prophet, nor with any divine command whatsoever. For the *Shari'a* has been established, and the obligatory, the incumbent, the recommended, the indifferent, and the reprehensible have all been clarified. Hence the divine command was cut off with the cutting off of prophecy (*nubuwwa*) and messengerhood (*risala*). That is why the Messenger of God did not content himself with the cutting off only of messengerhood, lest someone imagine that prophecy still remains in the community, for he said, "Verily prophecy and messengerhood have been cut off, so there will be no prophet after me and no messenger." Hence not a single one of God's creatures remained to whom God would give a command which would be a Law whereby he would worship.⁵⁵

Clearly, legislative prophecy is closed. Although no new divine Law can descend, however, the interpretation and explanation of these previously revealed laws is still possible: "God has locked the door of angelic descent with rulings of the Law, but He has not locked the door of descent with knowledge of those rulings into the hearts of the *'awliya* [i.e. the saints]."⁵⁶ This is the critical point: The saints, despite the esotericism of their revelation, are permitted to interpret and illuminate scripture and *shari'a* according to their own revelatory experience, which is called "general" or "universal" prophecy:

God, however, is kind to His servants and has left for them the universal Prophecy, which brings no law with it. He has also left to them the power of legislation through the exercise of individual judgment (*ijtihad*) concerning rules and regulations. In addition, he has bequeathed to them the heritage of legislation in the tradition, "The learned are the heirs of the prophets." This inheritance involves the use of individual judgment in certain rulings, which is a form of legislation.

Crucially, the content of this interpretation must be within the *shari'a*, for the right to abrogate a previous law was sealed with Mohammad. Ibn 'Arabi comments on this in a description of the saint's ascent to the divine names:

When they arrive at the names in their ascents, the names effuse upon them sciences and their own lights to the measure of the preparedness... In this the friends [i.e. the saints] have no need for an angel or a messenger, since these are not the sciences of Law-giving (*tashri'*) but rather lights which allow them to understand that which the messenger has brought in his revelation or the scripture that has been sent down upon him, or the book, but nothing else.... The knowledge of this friend can never go outside of the revelation brought by the messenger from God, or the scripture, or the book.... What is opened up to any friend of God is only the understanding of the Mighty Book.... Hence the knowledge of the friend never leaves the Book and the Sunna in any way. If someone should leave them, that is not knowledge, nor is it knowledge of friendship (*wilayya*)...⁵⁷

Interestingly, the nature of the saint's knowledge is called a “light,” suggesting the presence of *nur Mohammadiyya*. Indeed the Mohammedan light or reality is essential to all religious inspiration, including *wilayya*. In a remarkable passage, Ibn 'Arabi explains how the revelation given to a saint is actually a resonance of Gabriel's revelation to Mohammad:

The prophets among the friends in this community are those individuals whom God places within one of His self-disclosures. Then He makes the loci of manifestation (*mazhar*) of Mohammad and Gabriel stand before him. Then the spiritual locus of manifestation (Gabriel) allows him to hear as he addresses Mohammad's locus of manifestation with the rulings of the Law. Once the addressing is finished and the heart of the friend who possesses this locus of witnessing is delivered from fright, he perceives through his rational faculty all the rulings of the Law comprised in that address and appearing within the Mohammadan community. This friend takes those rulings just as the Mohammadan locus of manifestation took them.... Then the friend is returned to himself, and he has retained in his memory everything by which the Spirit has addressed the locus of manifestation of Muhammad.... He takes the ruling of the Prophet, and he puts it into practice “upon a clear sign from his Lord.”... “When man renounces his own individual desire, shrinks from his own ego, and prefers his Lord to all else, then God sets up before him in place of the form of his own soul the form of a divine guidance, a real form from the Real, so that he may walk proudly in diaphanous capes of light. This form is the Law of his prophet and the messengerhood of his messenger. It casts to him from his Lord that within which lies his felicity.”⁵⁸

This passage demonstrates Ibn 'Arabi's mystical genius in illuminating the structures of faith; the saint is not receiving revelation at all, in actuality. Rather, the ongoing Mohammedan revelation has been placed within the saint's being, and with a fine attunement the saint is able to hear and express the resonance and echoes of this internal dialogue. According to Ibn 'Arabi, this expression may take the form of a legal ruling or even a new custom:

The friend is never commanded to follow a knowledge within which there is a Law-giving which abrogates his Law." However, he may be inspired to arrange a form which has not been specified in the Law in respect of its whole, though in respect of the differentiation of its parts, you will find it to be something set down by the Law.... Hence, he makes manifest a form which had not been manifest in the Law as a whole. The friend has this measure of Law-giving, and by doing this he does not leave the Law by which he is addressed, since the Lawgiver has set down in the Law that he should legislate to this extent.... Hence the Prophet has set down in his Sunna that the friend may set down a custom, though it must be something which does not oppose an established Law through making lawful that which is unlawful or making unlawful that which is lawful. Such is the friend's share in prophecy.⁵⁹

Ibn 'Arabi has brilliantly shown how, in the state of *wilayya*, powerful revelation may occur that provides guidance for a community, without challenging the doctrine of sealed prophethood. In this way the saints are "heirs of the prophets," receiving and communicating prophetic guidance in the legally acceptable modality of *nubuwwa 'amma*.

Conclusion

It may seem at first glance that this elaborate prophetic philosophy, of which we have only given a summary, is merely a complicated maneuvering around an uncomfortable point of doctrine, a means of legitimating Sufis who, much like the "greatest shaykh" himself, received "general prophecy" on a regular basis, sometimes from the Prophet Mohammad directly.⁶⁰ A closer reading, however, reveals a more nuanced understanding of revelation reflecting a broader eschatological structure of increasing interiority, a spiritual "big crunch" where creation returns to its Source.

As the states of *nubuwwa* and *risala* are sealed, revelation occurs through an increasingly inner process. By attuning to inner prophecy, the saints participate in revelation without the prophetic rank. Thus Ibn 'Arabi interprets the hadith of Mohammad: "The wise of this community are as the prophets of the children of Israel."⁶¹ In the light of increasing interiority of divine pres-

ence and revelation, Ibn 'Arabi interprets Qur'an 48:4: "It is He who sent the Shekinah into the hearts of the believers, that they might add to their faith..." From this Ibn 'Arabi infers that whereas the Presence of God was manifested externally to the Hebrews (i.e. the Ark of the Covenant), it lowers into the hearts of the Mohammedan community, especially in the saints: "The Signs (*ayat*) given to the Children of Israel were visible; those which are given to us are in our hearts."⁶²

The interiorization of revelation is a part of the general interiorization of creation. Eschatologically speaking, we are facing the slow collapse of the human experiment. The very first human, Adam, was also a prophet and messenger, but these aspects of human religiosity have been sealed. Now that external, law-giving revelation has closed, humanity interacts with God in the state of *wilayya*—the sealing of prophecy thus represents a centripetal collapse of divine revelation into its vital essence. In this pseudo-prophetic state, the revelation of God may only be perceived through inner attunement and effort. Whereas the functions of prophecy and messengerhood were limited to particularly chosen beings, the state of *wilayya* exists as a divine potentiality within every human heart, and is thus more universal and accessible.

According to Ibn 'Arabi, the eschatological collapse will continue with the immanent "sealing of sainthood" in the return of Jesus that will announce the end of time.⁶³ Almost immediately afterwards, the human race itself will be sealed by the mysterious "seal of children,"⁶⁴ after which the outer world collapses completely and life goes on, for better or worse, within the being of God. This is the ultimate destination of the human journey from outer to inner. Crucially, Ibn 'Arabi does not claim that the sealing of prophecy implies *less* divine revelation, but rather that it occurs in a more interior and possibly widespread basis. It does not represent the estrangement of creation from its Source, but rather its increasing intimacy as the *nur Mohammadiyya* becomes increasingly manifest within the human heart. Ibn 'Arabi's esoteric prophetology recapitulates the larger Islamic eschatology in which all exterior realities collapse into their Source. Judgment day marks, in this sense, the "sealing of creation," the contents of which shall then be securely and eternally in the possession of their Owner. One by one, all levels of complexity in creation are sealed and returned to their Source—the sealing of prophecy marks the beginning of this "great return."⁶⁵

Final Remarks

In connecting Sura 33:40's semantic and exegetical indeterminacy with Ibn 'Arabi's mystical insight, this paper has sought to show that there exists within Sunni tradition historically sound and compelling alternatives to the standard, exclusivist interpretations of the phrase *khatam al-nabiyyin*.

In both a semantic analysis of the term *khatam* and its explication in Qur'an and hadith literature, the phrase is ambiguous and open to interpretation. In his writings, Ibn 'Arabi recovers some of the creative ambiguity about the nature of prophecy in the early Muslim community, and clarifies it with an interpretive framework that shows ever-increasing intimacy, through *wilayya*, of the Creator to creation.

The "sealing" of prophecy, in this view, does not simply represent Mohammed's finality or pre-eminence over other prophets. For Ibn 'Arabi, the sealing of messengerhood (*risala*) and legislative prophecy (*nubuwwa al-tashri*)—the outermost layers of revelation—represents a new era in Allah's interface with humanity. While laws and traditions remain critical points of contact, the amperage of the vital current of revelation is now grounded in the intimacy of *wilayya*, the essential potential of human religious experience.

When Ibn 'Arabi's prophetology is compared with the meanings of *khatam* discussed in the first part of this paper, we find a nuanced but coherent fit with the data, providing a spiritually compelling and exegetically sound alternative to exclusivist interpretations of the sealing of prophecy. The phrase *khatam al-nabiyyin* becomes determined not as an undermining of prophetic status before and after Mohammad, but rather a modification in the refraction of prophetic light such that it illuminates the human heart more directly, accessibly, and intimately.

NOTES

- 1 While Shiite traditions generally accept the doctrine of prophetic finality, and most of the following discussion is therefore relevant, Shiite interpretations of prophetology are sufficiently distinct as to require separate treatment outside the scope of this paper.
- 2 "Hadith" refer to the sayings and traditions of the Prophet. Hadith, along with Qur'an, form the canonical basis for Islamic theology, or *kalam*.
- 3 J. Allan, "Khattam, Khatim", *Encyclopedia of Islam, New Edition* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 1102.

- 4 Ibid., 1103. The Prophet himself is supposed to have had a signet ring.
- 5 Ibid., 1102-4.
- 6 Allen relates that goods would be tied up in a package, and the knots sealed with the owner’s seal as opposed to securing something with lock and key. Ibid., 1103.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Martin Lings, *Muhammad, his life based on the earliest sources* (Vermont: Inner Traditions, 1983), 29-30.
- 9 Imam Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, trans. ‘Abdul Hamid Siddiqi, vol. 4, no. 5790 (Lahore, 1981), 1251.
- 10 Ibid., no. 5793, 1252.
- 11 See Frithjof Schuon, *Understanding Islam* (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom Books, 1998), 5-7.
- 12 For example, Sura 13:7: “Thou art only a warner, and a guide to every people”, Sura 16:36: “Indeed, We sent forth among every nation a Messenger, saying: ‘Serve you God, and eschew idols,” and Sura 35:23-24: “... not a nation there is, but there has passed away in it a warner... their Messengers came to them with the clear signs...” Furthermore, not all of these messengers are known to the world, as in Sura 40:78: “We sent Messengers before thee; of some We have related to thee, and some We have not related to thee.”
- 13 In Y. Friedmann, “Finality of Prophethood in Sunni Islam”, *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, vol. 7 (Jerusalem: 1986), 177-215.
- 14 The following discussion draws heavily from the excellent analysis of Y. Friedmann, *Ibid.* Cf. Friedmann, *Prophecy Continuous, Aspects of Ahmadi Thought and its Medieval Background* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).
- 15 For example, Sura 2:130: “Say you: We believe in God, and in that which has been sent down on us and sent down on Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, and Jacob, and the Tribes, and that which was given to Moses and Jesus and the Prophets, of their Lord; we make no division between any of them, and to him we surrender;” Sura 2:285: “The Messenger believes in what was sent down to him from his Lord, and the believers; each one believes in God and His angels, and in His Books and His Messengers; we make no division between any one of His Messengers;” Sura 3:84: “Say: ‘We believe in God, and that which has been sent down on us, and sent down on Abraham and Ishmael, Isaac and Jacob, and the Tribes, and in that which was given to Moses and Jesus, and the Prophets, of their Lord; we make no division between any of them, and to Him we surrender;” and Sura 4:151: “And those who believe in God and His Messengers and make no division between any of them, those—We shall surely give them their wages; God is All-forgiving, All-compassionate.
- 16 Hadith recorded in collections of al-Bursawi *Tafsir Ruh al-bayan*, al-Bukhari *Sahih*, and Abu Dawud *Sunan* (no. 4670). See Friedmann, 178.

- 17 Muslim, vol. 4, no. 5836, 1261.
- 18 *Sunan*, no. 4672, also in Ibn Hanbal's *Musnad* and Muslim's *Sahih*, quoted in Friedmann, 178-79. Scholars drawing different conclusions suggested that Mohammad was being modest about his own prophecy and avoiding criticism of other religions out of a sense of *adab*. This raises the question why such modesty did not become a *sunna* of the Islamic community and doctrine in general. Other scholars suggested that Mohammad was not aware of his own spiritual rank (Friedmann, 179).
- 19 'Aisha was Mohammad's wife and is considered one of his closest confidantes.
- 20 "*Qulu khatam al-nabiyyin wa la taqulu la nabiyya ba'dahu.*" Hadith recorded in Al-Suyuti's collection *al-Durr*, quoted in Friedmann, 192.
- 21 Scholars of a different opinion offered two explanations. One is that 'Aisha was referring to the eventual return of Jesus, who is in fact a pre-Mohammadan prophet, and as such is still under Mohammad's "seal." Secondly, scholars drew a distinction between legislative and non-legislative prophecy, which, as we shall see, allows that a prophet should come under the pre-existent Mohammadan *Shari'a*. See Friedmann, 192.
- 22 Collected in Al-Jerrahi's *Kashf al-Khafa*, quoted in Friedmann, 188.
- 23 This event, however, is a subject of disagreement among scholars of hadith. Scholars who disagreed with this interpretation said that the finality of Prophethood prevented Ibrahim from surviving, precisely because he would have become a prophet. He could not survive, therefore, because his father had sealed prophecy. Friedmann, 189. To my mind, the explanation of this miscarriage does not correspond to the otherwise efficient prophetic economy of Islam.
- 24 Friedmann, 214.
- 25 Diwan of Abi al-Salt, ed. Schulthess, vol. 12 (Leipzig, 1911), quoted in Friedmann, 186.
- 26 For in-depth analysis of the issue in early Islamic literature, see Friedmann, 186.
- 27 For example, in Sura 2:253: "And those Messengers, some We have preferred above others; some there are to whom God spoke, and some He raised in rank;" and Sura 17:55: "...and we have preferred some Prophets over others..." These verses were interpreted as indicating Mohammad's superiority over other prophets (Friedmann, 178).
- 28 Muslim, vol. 4, no. 5673, 1235.
- 29 Friedmann, 182.
- 30 Muslim, vol. 4, no. 5810, 1255. Other variations include the epithets *al-khatim* or *al-muqaffi*, both which indicate "the last." Friedmann offers an interesting interpretation of these hadith in the context of an immanent eschaton: if the Prophet understood himself to be living at the end of Time, it is quite logical that no prophet could follow him. This shifts the emphasis from Mohammad's inherent superiority to his particular chronological situation (Friedmann, 183).

- 31 Muslim, vol. 4, no. 5655, 1230.
- 32 One typical hypothesis, held by Friedmann in his 1986 article (183), attributes the development of this doctrine to the socio-political context of Islam after Mohammad's death, where a number of Arabs were making claims to prophecy in the volatile atmosphere of Islamic expansion. This dogmatic preclusion of any other legitimate prophetic claim would have solidified and stabilized the early community during this time of massive upheaval. In this regard, we cannot ignore Sunni/Shiite polemics: as the community supporting 'Ali ibn Talib's political supremacy distinguished itself theologically in the first centuries AH with devotion to the Imams, it seems natural that Sunni *ulema* would favor interpretations limiting prophetic and revelatory legitimacy to the singular person of Mohammad.
- 33 See n11, above.
- 34 R.W.J. Austin, introduction to Ibn Al-'Arabi, Muhyiddin, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, trans. R.W.J. Austin (New York, Paulist Press: 1980), 20.
- 35 James Winston Morris, "Ibn Arabi's Messianic Secret: from "the Mahdi" to the Imamate of Every Soul," *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society* 30 (2001), 1.
- 36 Whether he would have been horrified or simply bemused that secular academics with little to no relationship Islam would struggle with his texts centuries later is an interesting question.
- 37 Not incomparable to the Christian conceptions of the Christ/Logos as light, e.g. the Gospel of Thomas logia 24: "There is a light within a man of light, and he lights up the whole world." See Stevan Davies, *The Gospel of Thomas and Christian Wisdom* (New York: Seabury Press, 1983).
- 38 Non-canonical hadith of Zurqani, quoted in Michel Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints, Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn 'Arabi*, trans. Liadain Sherrard (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1993), 63.
- 39 From the collection of Ibn Sa'd, quoted in Chodkiewicz, 63.
- 40 Tradition related to Ibn 'Abbas commenting on Qur'an 26:219, also found in the collected hadith of al-Bukhari. See Chodkiewicz, 65.
- 41 *Futuh al-Makkiyya*, 6:119.26-29, quoted in Chodkiewicz, 68.
- 42 From Ibn 'Arabi's *Anqa' Mughrib*, quoted in Chodkiewicz, 69.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 Chodkiewicz, 69.
- 45 Abid Nayif Diyab, "The Hierarchy of the Perfect Man according to Ibn 'Arabi," *Al-Shajarah*, vol. 4, no. 2 (Kuala Lumpur: 1999), 78.
- 46 Ibid., 192.

47 Izutsu, 254.

48 According to Ibn 'Arabi: "The *awliya* witness the angels, but they do not witness the casting itself; or they witness the casting and they know that it was done by an angel, but they do not witness the angel. No one combines the vision of the angel and the angel's casting except a prophet or a messenger." Ibn 'Arabi, *Futubat al-Makkiyya* 2:569.10, quoted in William C. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge, Ibn al-'Arabi's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989), 260.

49 Izutsu, 255.

50 Ibn 'Arabi, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, 168.

51 Izutsu, 255.

52 Some lists also include the prophet David.

53 Henry Corbin, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, trans. Liadain Sherrard (London: Islamic Publications for The Institute of Ismaili Studies, 1993), 44.

54 Interestingly for our discussion, the outermost shell of an almond, like a seal, must be broken in order to partake of the contents.

55 Ibn 'Arabi, *Futubat Makkiyya*, 3:38.23, trans. in Chittick, 262.

56 Ibn 'Arabi, *Futubat Makkiyya*, 2:569.10, trans. in Chittick, 260.

57 Ibn 'Arabi, *Futubat Makkiyya*, 3:55.29, trans. in Chittick, 258.

58 Ibn 'Arabi, *Futubat Makkiyya*, 3:70.23, trans. in Chittick, 258.

59 Ibn 'Arabi, *Futubat Makkiyya*, 3:55.29, trans. in Chittick, 258.

60 The introduction to *The Bezels of Wisdom*, for example, famously recounts how the Prophet Mohammad impressed the contents of the book upon Ibn 'Arabi's heart.

61 Chodkiewicz, 73.

62 Ibn 'Arabi, *Futubat Makkiyya*, quoted in Chittick, 73.

63 The issue of the seal of sainthood is a fascinating one that could not be accommodated at length in the scope of this paper. It is treated at length in Chodkiewicz.

64 Referring, of course, to the children of Adam. The "seal of the children" will therefore be the last human being to be born (Ibn 'Arabi, *The Bezels of Wisdom*, 70).

65 I borrow this phrase from Imam Bilal Hyde's translation of Sura al-Fatihah: "Praise be to God, Loving Lord of all the worlds. Everlasting Mercy, Infinite Compassion. Eternal Strength of every living being, Whose Majestic Power embraces us on the day of the great return." Downloaded from the Hilal Institute on February 24, 2007, from <http://hilalinstitute.org>.

THE ROLE OF ASCETICISM, MEDITATION, AND GNOSIS ON THE JAIN PATH

Disputed Mechanisms of Bondage and Liberation
Reflected in Hemacandra's Treatise on Spiritual
Discipline (*Yogaśāstra*)

Elon Goldstein

The Significance of the *Yogaśāstra* within the Study of Religion

In a number of religious traditions concerned with spiritual disciplines, we encounter regimes of asceticism, technologies of mental and emotional training that can be classified under the rubric of meditation, and the possibility of a higher-level knowledge that functions as a kind of gnosis. In instances where some or all of these elements are present, questions naturally arise as to how the elements are or are not related and how they may or may not function in conjunction with one another. Must gnosis follow inexorably from meditation? What leads to spiritual liberation—asceticism, meditation, or gnostic insight? What role do asceticism and meditation play in liberation, and what is the theory of the soul (or the mind, or the person) that undergirds the practices of asceticism and meditation in a given tradition? What are the relative valuations attributed to asceticism, meditation, and gnosis? In what

ways are these elements responses to what are seen as the fundamental problems in human existence?

Our questions may take on an increasing level of specificity. For instance, the Jain tradition—an ancient Indian religion that originated at least by the fifth century BCE and that continues to this day as the religion of millions in India and in diaspora—has asked over the past two millennia fundamental questions regarding the soul: Is the soul pure or not? Is the soul’s potential for freedom, bliss, and omniscience an ever-present, innate trait in all people, or is it something to be achieved as a result of spiritual practices? If freedom is innate to the soul, then suffering can be explained through an occlusion of the soul’s underlying purity. In that case, what accounts for this occlusion and how may the occluding factors be removed?

It ought to be immediately apparent that questions about the make-up of the human being, the relation between a soteriological scheme and human nature, and the roles of asceticism, meditation, and gnosis within such a soteriological scheme are concerns that have manifested in many religious traditions across time and space. Hence, the function of asceticism, meditation, and gnosis vis-a-vis inherited tradition, religious authority, and innovation often may become an important focal point for study. An examination of the aforementioned issues in Jainism yields distinctive questions and conclusions that not only provide a fruitful basis for comparison with different religions but also may prompt us to interrogate familiar sources from other traditions in innovative ways.

This essay probes how the issues mentioned above play out in ancient and medieval Jainism. More specifically, this essay focuses on a practice manual replete with discussions of asceticism, meditation, and gnosis, the twelfth-century *Yogaśāstra* [*Treatise on Spiritual Discipline*] by the polymath Hemacandra (1088-1172/3 CE),¹ one of the most accomplished figures in the history of South Asian religions. According to the Jain tradition’s self-understanding, Jainism as a religion of eternal truths has been rediscovered and re-revealed by a series of omniscient teachers called Tīrthaṅkaras [Ford-makers]. Scholars of religions recognize the most recent Tīrthaṅkara, Mahāvīra, to be a historical figure roughly contemporaneous with the historical Buddha. Mahāvīra, then, is generally acknowledged among scholars as the founder of Jainism which from its beginnings around the fifth century BCE seems to have contained an order of renunciants, monks and nuns, as well as laypersons. The highest aim of the Jain religious life has always been *mokṣa*, the soul’s blissful, permanent liberation from the binding net of cause and effect that propels one interminably from rebirth to rebirth. Also, a particular, uncommonly rigorous asceticism has been

a crucial defining mark of Jain renunciants from the religion's inception. While the Jain tradition has given rise to much diversity over time, the broadest division is that between Svetāmbara and Digambara Jains, a division in place at least by the early centuries of the common era. The distinctions between these two sects revolve around numerous factors such as specific rules for renunciants (e.g., to wear clothes or to live naked), the spiritual status of women (e.g., whether women can or cannot achieve liberation; whether women can become nuns or not), and the accepted scriptural canon. Although the demographics of the two sects are unclear during the first millennium CE, the Svetāmbaras have been the more numerous of the two divisions for the past millennium up to the present day.

Hemacandra, active in the twelfth century, is generally recognized by Jain tradition and by scholars of religion alike as one of the most influential Svetāmbara figures in history. The present study of Hemacandra's *Yogaśāstra* aims to provide an example of how and why a major thinker deals with complex, longstanding topics in the Jain tradition in light of his original vision and the circumstances of his time. While the text is interesting for its own sake, a study of the *Yogaśāstra* is all the more relevant because Hemacandra's treatise immediately gained normative status as the standard handbook on Svetāmbara Jain practice and has retained that status down to the present.² The *Yogaśāstra* also has influenced Digambara Jains. In addition, the text has served as a model representation of Jainism for Hindus in later Indian history. For instance, in his seminal *Sarvadarśanasamgraha* [*Compendium of All Outlooks*], the Vedāntic doxographer Mādhava draws his account of Jainism primarily from the first four chapters of Hemacandra's text.³

A look at some facts about the social setting in which the *Yogaśāstra* was composed can help to contextualize—however partially—the significance of its viewpoint concerning asceticism, meditation, and the mechanism of liberation. Recognized for his vast learning, Hemacandra became the court scholar for the Caulukya king Jayasiṃha Siddharāja (c.1094-1143) and was a mentor to Jayasiṃha's successor, Kumārapāla (c.1143-1172).⁴ Under both rulers, the state cult worshipped Śiva, and Jayasiṃha himself was a Śaivite. Kumārapāla, who early in life was also a Śaivite, later took the vows of a Jain layman. Whether the act of taking Jain lay vows made Kumārapāla a Jain or whether he retained allegiances to multiple religious traditions is difficult to determine and is beside the point. As attested by inscriptional evidence, Kumārapāla materially supported the Jain community, promoted Jain ethics, and discouraged animal sacrifice throughout his realm in Gujarat.⁵ Hemacandra says in the final verse of the *Yogaśāstra* that the text was written at the request of Kumārapāla. The

king may or may not have provided the impetus for Hemacandra to compose his text, but it is safe to assume that King Kumārapāla was an important part of the text's intended audience.

The *Yogaśāstra* of Hemacandra: Method or Mess?

The *Yogaśāstra* of Hemacandra, arguably the most influential treatise ever written on Jain yoga, presents a number of conundrums related to Jain practice. To begin with, the text advocates a welter of techniques for spiritual discipline, many of which are said to lead to liberation. The problem is that the presumptions underlying such techniques are not always compatible. Is bondage caused by the material karma (the effect of prior actions that in this case is envisioned as possessing a material substance) that obscures the soul (*jīva*)? If so, then liberation (*mokṣa*) would result from physically-oriented asceticism (*tapas*) since asceticism would function as a material antidote to a material problem. Or, is bondage caused by ignorance of the soul's everpresent freedom, a freedom occluded due to a lack of discrimination between the soul and all that is not the soul (*ajīva*)? In the latter case, liberation would ensue from knowledge of the soul, and the knowledge or experience of resting in the soul would constitute the basis, method, and result of Jain practice. The first scenario, in which karma is the problem and *tapas* is the solution, accords with the earliest canonical texts as well as with one of the touchstones of Jain tradition, Umāsvatī's treatise on all aspects of the Jain path from approximately the fifth century CE, *Tattvārthasūtra* [*Concise Exposition on the Meaning of Reality*]. The second scenario, in which the problem of bondage consists of ignorance and the solution consists of knowledge gained through meditation on the soul, is a less mainstream Jain position but does recur in the works of a number of important thinkers such as Kundakunda, Amṛtacandra, and Yogindu.⁶ Both tendencies appear in Hemacandra's *Yogaśāstra*, raising the question of why this is the case and of how the text really envisions the mechanism of bondage and liberation.

Closely related to the first problem, a careful reading of the *Yogaśāstra* introduces a second problem concerning the role of meditation (*dhyāna*). The problem of meditation comprises a subset of the first problem about the nature of bondage and its solution. Nonetheless, since meditation receives extensive treatment in the *Yogaśāstra*, it is worthwhile to highlight the questions about meditation in their own right. The *Yogaśāstra* prescribes numerous mental meditation practices not found in any prior Śvetāmbara text (as well as some exercises not found in any prior Jain texts whatsoever).⁷ The *Yogaśāstra* claims that many of these new mental exercises—which include visualization of the

outer and inner aspects of the Jina (i.e., Mahāvīra, the most recent founder of Jainism), specific types of mantra recitation (utterances whose sounds possess special power), and non-fixatedness of attention (*amanaska*)—lead directly to liberation. In large sections of Hemacandra's treatise, these novel mental practices replace *tapas* (asceticism) as the effective means for achieving liberation. How can such claims be possible in light of Jain ideas about the materiality of karma? What theory of meditation is operative in such instances? In other places within the *Yogaśāstra*, meditation is classified as a subtype of *tapas*, and meditation correspondingly signifies an effort to stop mental and physical activity. Reading through these seemingly conflicting accounts, the reader is pressed to ask, what, exactly, is meditation according to the text? How does meditation work? If the *Yogaśāstra's* accounts of meditation are irreconcilable, what does that mean? Hemacandra is a brilliant thinker, a giant in South Asian intellectual history comparable to Western polymaths such as Leonardo da Vinci or Goethe. Since he presumably has total command over his own text, the *Yogaśāstra's* contradictory accounts are not readily attributable to oversight. So why would Hemacandra purposefully include incompatible standpoints?

This essay will demonstrate that the two sets of issues outlined above—(1) the plethora of liberatory practices based on irreconcilable premises and (2) the inconsistencies about the nature and role of meditation are interrelated. In fact, the second set of issues follows contingently upon the way in which the *Yogaśāstra* tries to deal with the first group of questions, questions pertaining to the true mechanism of bondage and freedom. In order to clarify how the *Yogaśāstra* approaches the nature of bondage and its concomitant solution, this essay is divided into two main parts. The first part traces the positions taken on the issue of bondage and liberation in a few major Jain texts prior to the *Yogaśāstra*. The second part examines the mechanism of bondage and liberation together with meditation practice in the *Yogaśāstra* itself.

Two Jain Models of Salvation Prior to Hemacandra's *Yogaśāstra*

The Problem of Karma and the Solution of Tapas in Early Jain Sūtras and Śāstra

How are bondage and liberation envisaged in the earliest Jain scriptures known as sūtras? The first part of the *Ācārāṅga Sūtra* is believed to be the oldest extant Jain text and is dated approximately to the third or second century BCE.⁸ The *Ācārāṅga* does not spell out the mechanism of bondage and liberation in the detailed way that it covers the minutiae of correct conduct for Jain renunciants, but the text does offer many hints of its underlying viewpoint. The *Ācārāṅga*

is most revealing in the section where it narrates Mahāvīra's path to becoming a Tīrthaṅkara.⁹ Mahāvīra practices by enduring beatings, ridicule, hunger, thirst, heat, cold, insect bites, sharp plants, lack of sleep, and additional privations. Other sections that prescribe practice for an ideal Jain mendicant enjoin a seeker to tolerate the same kinds of hardships borne by Mahāvīra.¹⁰ In the *Ācārāṅga Sūtra*, when meditation is mentioned at all, it essentially means the intent to endure austerities. No mental practice whatsoever is explicated. In short, the implied path (i.e., the solution to the problem) is one of careful conduct and non-activity of the body through tolerating all difficulties. For this seminal presentation, the practice of tolerating difficulties constitutes the practice of *tapas*. Based on the *Ācārāṅga Sūtra*'s focus on conduct and especially on *tapas*, we can infer that the problem presupposed by this earliest of Jain texts is that of karma. For, as will be seen below, it is an axiom of slightly later Jain texts that *tapas* can burn away karma and bring about liberation by unfettering the soul. The relation between the practice of *tapas* and the removal of karma, a relation merely implied in the *Ācārāṅga*, is first made explicit in a canonical text from the second earliest strata, the *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra*.¹¹ The *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra* asserts, "...when by penances [Prakrit: *tavas* =Sanskrit: *tapas*] he has shaken off the remnant of Karman, he will become an eternal Siddha."¹²

The preeminent early non-canonical text in the Jain tradition, the *Tattvārthasūtra* of Umāsvāti composed between 150-350 CE,¹³ expands upon the *Uttarādhyayanasūtra*'s formulation that links *tapas* to the eradication of karma and to resultant siddhahood. *Tattvārthasūtra* IX.3 states that "Austerities [*tapas*] wear off *karma* as well as inhibiting it"¹⁴, and verse X.3 declares that "the elimination of all types of *karma* is liberation."¹⁵ Likewise, verse X.1 explains, "Omniscience arises when deluding *karma* is eliminated and, as a result, knowledge-covering, intuition-covering and obstructive *karma* are eliminated."¹⁶ As the latter quote makes evident, the *Tattvārthasūtra* enumerates many types of *karma*. The text also views *karma* as a material substance: "Because of its passions, the soul attracts and assimilates the material particles of karmic bondage."¹⁷ Consequently, according to the *Tattvārthasūtra* the soul's bondage is real in a physical sense, and this view seems to hold true for the prior Jain tradition as well. The view of material *karma* binding and obscuring the immaterial soul constitutes the mainstream position of Jainism irrespective of sectarian divides.¹⁸

As a segue into an examination of meditation in the *Tattvārthasūtra*, let us consider a few formulations in the *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra* and the *Tattvārthasūtra* meant to encapsulate the entire Jain path. Later thinkers interpret these formu-

lations of the entire path in divergent ways as part of their disputes about the function of meditation. The *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra* says, “Right knowledge, faith, conduct, and austerities; beings who follow this road will obtain beatitude.”¹⁹ At another point, the same sūtra distills the path into the three elements that become the normative expression of the religion, the *ratnatraya* (three jewels): “...knowledge, faith, and right conduct are the true causes of final liberation.”²⁰ Taking a cue from the *Uttarādhyayana*, *Tattvārthasūtra* I.1 famously defines the *mokṣamarga* (path to liberation) as the *ratnatraya*.²¹ Although the *Uttarādhyayana* and the opening verse of the *Tattvārthasūtra* affirm that correct knowledge, faith, and conduct are all indispensable, the three components are not necessarily equal in enabling liberation. As the passages quoted above have shown, conduct—especially the *tapas* (asceticism) that burns away karma—does the crucial work of facilitating liberation whereas faith and knowledge function as prerequisites that support *tapas*.

Any careful consideration of meditation (*dhyāna*) in the *Tattvārthasūtra* must specify the rubric under which meditation is classified: knowledge (*jñāna*), faith (*darśana*), or conduct (*cāritra*). This point is important because, as will become clear below, the threefold categorization of the *ratnatraya* provides a basis for alternative interpretations of the Jain path by later thinkers such as Kundakunda. Moreover, if we can determine under which rubric meditation is situated in the *Tattvārthasūtra* and if we can delineate its function in Umāsvāti’s text, then we will be better prepared to discern its place and function in Hemacandra’s *Yogaśāstra* where the whole issue becomes far more vexed.

Besides detailing the many hardships that a seeker must endure on the path, chapter nine of the *Tattvārthasūtra* also subsumes meditation (*dhyāna*) under a form of internal *tapas*.²² The early commentaries on IX.20 add that meditation means restraint of body, speech, and mind.²³ Meditation does not signify a means for contacting directly the *jīva* and then using this experience as the path itself toward liberation. Furthermore, *Tattvārthasūtra* IX.42 explains that *śukla-dhyāna* leads to liberation.²⁴ The latter assertion demands clarification.

The highest two types of *śukla-dhyāna*, namely, “subtle infallible physical activity” (*sūkṣmakriyāpratīpāti*) and “irreversible stillness of the soul” (*vyūpara takriyānivartīni*), connote near-total and total stoppage of body and mind, as both the names themselves and the commentaries suggest.²⁵ The two highest types of meditation are undertaken by a seeker who has reached the threshold of liberation (the thirteenth and fourteenth of the fourteen *guṇasthānas*), and they lead immediately to “disembodied liberation.”²⁶ Hence, these two highest types of meditation, being total stoppages, are synonyms for the culmination of the ascetic non-activity that destroys karma. The early commentaries on

Tattvārthasūtra IX.42 indicate that these meditations are not really mental so much as physical. *Tattvārthasūtra* IX.42 is consonant with IX.20: meditation is a kind of *tapas*, and the final moments of *tapas* lead straight to liberation as all remaining *karmas* are removed.²⁷ We will see this notion of meditation recapitulated almost identically in Hemacandra's *Yogaśāstra* under the presentation of *śukla-dhyāna*.²⁸

Insofar as the *Tattvārthasūtra* may constitute the Jain religion's dominant view of the mechanism of salvation, the text enables us to draw some broad conclusions about meditation and knowledge in relation to liberation. For the *Tattvārthasūtra*, meditation is a type of *tapas* which in turn is a type of conduct (*cāritra*). The *cāritra* of *tapas* makes possible liberation. *Tapas* does not create the soul's bliss and omniscience, but *tapas* does facilitate the emergence of innate omniscience by removing the karmic obscurations (*jñānāvaraṇīyakarma*) that have been obstructing the soul's freedom since time immemorial. In sum, "...the basic strategy is one of extreme asceticism—fasting and immobility... Crudely, you have real physical bondage, which can be broken only by physical means."²⁹ According to the *Tattvārthasūtra*, knowledge cannot and does not bring emancipation. Knowledge can at best direct one toward the path of ascetic conduct that aims at stopping action. By stopping action, one halts the accrual of new karma, and by enduring austerities, one burns away the karma that is already present. Even positive knowledge such as knowledge of the scriptures only accumulates more karma. Non-omniscient knowledge cannot contact the omniscient knowledge of *kevalajñāna* because that omniscience is covered by obscuring *karmas*.³⁰ In this scheme, one cannot directly meditate upon the soul (*jīva*) or imaginatively identify with the *jīva*'s essence. The *jīva* is completely inaccessible until one reaches liberation by removing the karma that obscures the *jīva*. Nor can one rely on a realization through gnosis or intellect exemplified by the Upaniṣadic realization that the *ātman* is *brahman*. Knowledge is truly valuable for liberation if and only if it directs one to practice asceticism. Asceticism, in turn, includes the cessation of bodily activity, and, in the influential formulation of the *Tattvārthasūtra*, this cessation is what is meant by meditation.

The Problem of Ignorance and the Solution of Meditative Knowledge in Gnostic Jainism

We have already seen the assertion in Jain *sūtra* (scripture) and *śāstra* (systematic treatise) that "...knowledge, faith, and right conduct [i.e., the *ratnatraya*] are the true causes of final liberation."³¹ For later interpreters, the question is how to

understand the meaning of the terms knowledge and conduct. Contrary to the *Tattvārthasūtra* in which conduct trumps knowledge, a small number of later thinkers reinterpret the meaning of the *ratnatraya* in favor of knowledge. For example, to Kundakunda, knowledge connotes gnosis of the soul and therefore comprises the key component for effecting liberation. I term this move “gnostic Jainism.” Kundakunda lived and wrote sometime between the fifth and eighth centuries CE,³² probably closer to the fifth.³³ Other prominent exponents of the gnostic Jain position include those who followed Kundakunda, probably in the sixth-century: Amṛtacandra, Kārtikeya, Pūjyapāda, and Yogindu.³⁴ Since Hemacandra’s *Yogaśāstra* exhibits the tendencies not only of the mainstream position exemplified by Umāsvāti but also, to a far greater extent, the tendencies of the gnostic position exemplified by Kundakunda, a closer investigation of Kundakunda’s standpoint on liberation is now in order. Johnson’s studies provide a lucid introduction to Kundakunda’s texts concerning the path, especially the *Samayasāra*, and my summary of the gnostic Jain position primarily follows Johnson’s work.³⁵

There is an insolvable tension inherent in the *Tattvārthasūtra*’s position regarding bondage, and Kundakunda’s *Samayasāra* exploits this tension in order to formulate an alternate position on the topic. The paradox lies in the question of how the immaterial soul whose nature is freedom, bliss, and omniscience, can ever really be bound by material karma. In essence, how can something material affect something immaterial? The *Tattvārthasūtra* never tackles this paradox directly. It simply presumes that the immaterial soul is bound and obscured by material karma, and then lays out the rest of its doctrinal system accordingly. Kundakunda comes up with a different answer altogether. He holds that in fact the soul cannot be bound by material karma and never has been.³⁶ Instead, because the mind fails to discriminate between what the soul is and what it is not, a person remains in the condition of bondage. The occlusion of the soul by karma is apparent, not real. Meditation for Kundakunda is a mental discipline that consists of identifying, contacting, and resting in the soul.³⁷ When one can discard fascination with all that is not the soul, then one can rest in the soul, and that is the path.³⁸ The path of resting in the soul leads to full realization of the soul, and that is the fruit. Given the parameters of these assumptions, *tapas* is unnecessary. Johnson describes the overall position:

Kundakunda is not saying that the material world is illusory or unreal, but he is saying that any perceived relationship between the soul and matter is unreal. In other words, he is claiming that karmic bondage is ultimately an illusion—a product of ignorance of the true (non-) rela-

tion between the soul and matter...What this means in soteriological terms is that *knowledge* of the true nature of the self—that it is totally pure and not really connected with matter—becomes the means to realising or attaining liberation.³⁹

Now, Kundakunda never presents his assumptions about the path in as condensed and explicit a manner as in my summary or in the above quote from Johnson. In part, Kundakunda's view in the *Samayasāra* is difficult to pin down because he makes use of two levels of truth.⁴⁰ Kundakunda does not overtly argue to jettison asceticism. He is already considered unorthodox by many within his own Digambara sect, and to repudiate the value of asceticism would fly in the face of Jain orthopraxy. The orthopraxy of asceticism is crucial for the maintenance of the Jain religion's social identity, for a renunciant's credibility and worthiness, and more.⁴¹ Nonetheless, the implications of Kundakunda's postulates are nothing short of radical when considered vis-a-vis the standpoint of the *Tattvārthasūtra*. Meditation for Kundakunda is a means to knowledge, not an ascetic form of conduct. Knowledge, moreover, signifies an experiential knowledge of the soul as being always unbound. Knowledge, not conduct, is thus the key component of the *ratnatraya* that grounds and drives the entire path. Since the soul has never really entered into any real relation of bondage, the soul is theoretically accessible through meditation. This standpoint implicitly dominates not only the *Samayasāra* but also many portions of Hemacandra's *Yogaśāstra*. Even more striking, Hemacandra's *Yogaśāstra* exploits in new ways the potentials inherent in the *Samayasāra*'s view of the soul as both eternally unbound and immediately accessible through meditation. For the *Yogaśāstra* employs an array of sophisticated meditation techniques that were developed in Indian tantric traditions during the centuries intervening between Kundakunda and Hemacandra. Having sufficiently traced certain competing models in the Jain tradition in order to understand better the conflicting tendencies on display in Hemacandra's *Yogaśāstra*, it is time to direct attention squarely onto Hemacandra's text itself.

The Mechanism of Bondage and Liberation in Hemacandra's *Yogaśāstra*

Forcing the *Tattvārthasūtra* into the Framework of Gnostic Jainism

Hemacandra's *Yogaśāstra* consists of twelve chapters totaling 1009 verses, and the auto-commentary, the *Svopajñavṛtti*, comprises about 1000 pages of Sanskrit text. The *Yogaśāstra* was transmitted in manuscripts both with and without the auto-commentary.⁴² The first four chapters of the *Yogaśāstra* amount to

462 verses and thus take up almost half of the entire exposition.⁴³ These chapters can be seen as constituting a whole in themselves, for they give a general summary of the Jain path, and they sometimes circulated in manuscripts as a single unit separate from the rest of the text.⁴⁴ As a self-contained overview, the opening four chapters intimate tensions about models of liberation and meditation that will come to the fore more vividly in later chapters. For this reason, I will begin by examining these four opening chapters, comparing and contrasting them with the presentation of the path found in the *Tattvārthasūtra*.

The four opening chapters of the *Yogaśāstra* present a vision of the path that accords in many respects with the *Tattvārthasūtra*. The first three chapters focus on conduct (*cāritra*), mainly in terms of the vows to be observed and ethical principles such as the wrongness of adultery. One difference from the *Tattvārthasūtra* is that chapters one and three of the *Yogaśāstra* pay more attention to lay conduct⁴⁵, especially the conduct of the exceptional layperson such as the king. This difference offers the first of many indications about the *Yogaśāstra*'s intended audience and purpose, a topic to which I will return later. Chapter one briefly defines the *ratnatraya*, and its definition of knowledge, expounded more fully in the auto-commentary, follows that of the *Tattvārthasūtra* exactly.⁴⁶ Knowledge means knowing the seven principles that form the building blocks of the Jain doctrine and path. For example, one principle asserts the need to stop the accumulation of karma (*saṃvara*); another insists upon the need to eradicate the karma that is already present (*nirjarā*); others present the same definitions of bondage and liberation that I explored above in relation to the *Tattvārthasūtra*. In other words, according to chapter one, knowledge (*jñāna*) provides the proper framework in which to pursue liberation but does not itself yield liberation—that job is reserved for conduct.

At first glance, one might even think that the congruence between the *Yogaśāstra* and the *Tattvārthasūtra* extends throughout chapter four, the chapter that outlines the method for attaining freedom. Most of chapter four explicates the twelve themes of contemplation taken from the ninth chapter of the *Tattvārthasūtra*. These themes include understanding that karma must be extinguished and that it can be extinguished through penances such as “not eating at all” and “mortification of the body.”⁴⁷ Other contemplations urge one to realize that nothing will last, that the body is impure, and that one will definitely experience the fruits of one's actions.⁴⁸ All together, in the *Tattvārthasūtra* the twelve contemplations aim to motivate a person to engage in ascetic practice. In chapter four of the *Yogaśāstra* these contemplations also aim to motivate, but in a different direction.

According to *Yogaśāstra* IV.55-6, the twelve contemplations lead to an absence of self-centered grasping (*nirmamatva*) which in turn produces an attitude of even-handedness or equanimity (*sāmya*) toward things.⁴⁹ Equanimity overcomes the foulness (*kāluṣya*) of attachment and aversion⁵⁰, and this leads to purity of mind (*manaḥśuddhi*).⁵¹ Purity of mind enables the Self (*ātman*) to abide in its own nature (*svasvarupa*).⁵² Now, the claim that the Self can abide in its own nature at any time other than at complete liberation is wholly antithetical to the position advocated in the *Tattvārthasūtra*. Although up to this point it may have appeared as if the *Yogaśāstra* were faithfully following the stance of the *Tattvārthasūtra*, in actuality chapter four of the *Yogaśāstra* tries to bring large portions of the *Tattvārthasūtra*'s presentation into the service of a gnostic Jain approach to liberation.

Despite the *Yogaśāstra*'s discussion about the necessity to dispel karma and the effectiveness of "mortification of the body" (notions imported from the *Tattvārthasūtra* as part of the twelve contemplations that motivate one to undertake the path), chapter four of the *Yogaśāstra* ultimately adopts a position against asceticism and in favor of knowledge as the means to freedom. The text seems to modify its attack on asceticism by claiming that asceticism is ineffective without purity of mind. But a close examination of the logic at work in this chapter demonstrates that asceticism serves no purpose whatsoever in the attempt to gain liberation (and, as will be seen below, the same holds true for the text as a whole). To prove these claims, I will next look more closely at what chapter four has to say about purity of mind and liberation. Then I will discuss how to understand the *Yogaśāstra*'s mimicry of the *Tattvārthasūtra* in its assertion about asceticism being the means for removing karma.

The fourth verse of *Yogaśāstra* chapter four ostensibly seems to uphold the idea that the Self is bound by material karma, the crucial position propagated by Umāsvāti and disputed by Kundakunda:

ayam ātmaiva cidrūpaḥ śarīri karmayogataḥ |
dhyānāgnidagdhakarmā tu siddhātmā syān nirañjanaḥ ||

This very Self, whose nature is consciousness, is possessed of a body
because of contact with karma.

But the Self that is liberated, whose karma has been burned away by
the fire of meditation, is untainted.⁵³

This verse states that the fire of meditation unfetters the Self, but what sort of meditation is it? If the *Yogaśāstra* were to follow the *Tattvārthasūtra*, then

dhyāna here would mean “*śukla-dhyāna*,” the meditation that entails total stoppage of physical activity and that leads the advanced ascetic to disembodied liberation (as discussed above in reference to the *Tattvārthasūtra*). However, numerous other verses in the chapter suggest a different understanding of how to understand the meaning of *dhyāna* in verse IV.4. The immediately preceding verses, *Yogaśāstra* IV.2 and IV.3, read as follows:

ātmānam ātmanā vetti mohatyāgād ya ātmani |
*tad eva tasya cāritraṃ taj jñānaṃ tac ca darśanam ||*⁵⁴

One who knows the Self by means of the Self due to abandoning confusion with respect to the Self, for him, just that is conduct, knowledge, and faith.

ātmājñānabhavaṃ duḥkham ātmājñānena hanyate |
*tapasāpy ātmavijñānahinaiś chettuṃ na śakyate ||*⁵⁵

Suffering, whose existence is due to ignorance of the Self, is destroyed by virtue of knowledge of the Self.

Without discernment of the Self, it is not possible to cut off suffering even by means of asceticism (*tapas*).⁵⁶

Verses two and three are highly reminiscent of Kundakunda’s standpoint.⁵⁷ In these two verses, the source of suffering is ignorance about the Self. This should lead us to suspect that the *dhyāna* which burns away karma in verse four is really burning away ignorance about the Self, thereby revealing the untainted (*nirañjana*) Self. Since verse two says that one can know the Self by means of the Self, the operative model does not presume a real relation between the immaterial Self and material karma. Rather, similar to Kundakunda, the vital task is to recognize the Self or soul (*jīva*) as opposed to karma and to realize that the connection between the soul and karma is only apparent. This idea finds support at IV.52 which states:

karma jīvaṃ ca saṃśliṣṭaṃ parijñātātmaniścayaḥ |
*vibhinnikurute sādhuḥ sāmāyikaśalākayā ||*⁵⁸

The practitioner whose ascertainment of the Self is thorough separates with the sharp instrument of equanimity karma and the soul, which are conjoined.

In order to make the discrimination between karma and the *jīva* or *ātman*, one must have stable attention. Hence, the *Yogaśāstra* verses IV.37-9 emphasize the importance of an undistracted, controlled mind.⁵⁹ As soon as attachment and aversion have been pacified, then the Self can be contacted: “When the rays of equanimity destroy the darkness of attachment, etc., [then] the mendicants experience the intrinsic nature of the supreme Self within themselves.”⁶⁰ Once the Self is contacted, then with a stable, pure mind, one can remain immersed in the Self (IV.45). In sum, meditation in chapter four of the *Yogaśāstra* means resting as the Self in the Self, an endeavor unthinkable for Umāsvāti. The ambiguity of *Yogaśāstra* IV.4, the verse with which we began our discussion of chapter four, is intentional. Hemacandra wants to invoke Umāsvāti’s influential model that believes karma to be the problem and that describes *śukla-dhyāna* as the final moments in the long path of removing karma from the soul. Hemacandra wants to retain the credibility of apparent continuity with earlier tradition; he cannot jettison asceticism altogether, for asceticism serves vital social functions aside from its role in salvific doctrine and praxis. Therefore, he imports the *Tattvārthasūtra*’s twelve contemplations even though the model of karma and *tapas* that those contemplations presuppose is at odds with the *Yogaśāstra*’s understanding of bondage through ignorance. In sum, despite his effort, Hemacandra cannot force the *Tattvārthasūtra*’s viewpoint into the framework of gnostic Jainism without some inconsistencies and ambiguities. The meaning of *dhyāna* in verse IV.4 of the *Yogaśāstra* exemplifies the kind of ambiguity produced from forcing together two incompatible models of bondage and liberation. Nevertheless, the text itself suggests how verse IV.4 ought to be understood. Multiple verses from various parts of chapter four stress the ability of the Self to realize the Self and, by doing so, to overcome or dispel karma. Such verses impel us to read IV.4 in terms of a gnostic model rather than in terms of Umāsvāti’s ascetical *śukla-dhyāna*. This gnostic understanding of *dhyāna* in IV.4 is further confirmed by our next topic for exploration, the rejection of asceticism in chapter four of Hemacandra’s *Yogaśāstra*.

In my examination of Kundakunda’s gnostic approach in part two of this essay, I pointed out that asceticism is rendered worthless if knowledge (rather than conduct) provides the means to freedom. While Kundakunda hedges on this point by retaining asceticism but relegating it to the standpoint of ordinary truth (*vyavahāra-naya*), Hemacandra launches a remarkably overt challenge against asceticism. As we have seen, verses IV.45, 49, and 53 teach that purity of mind is equivalent to equanimity, and this, in turn, allows one to experience the Self. Consequently, Hemacandra values equanimity or purity of mind over asceticism. At first, the text’s position seems to be a sort of compromise. The

text avers that the bodily pain (*kāyakleśa*) stemming from all the stipulations for external conduct contained in the various sets of vows is all for naught without purity of mind.⁶¹ The implication is that asceticism performed with purity of mind is worthwhile. Another verse suggests the same compromise position: “Those who, without a pure mind, undertake severe penances for the sake of liberation, are like those who, without a boat, desire to cross a great ocean by swimming.”⁶² Even though Hemacandra ostensibly acknowledges the potential worth of asceticism if performed with an equanimous or pure mind, such acknowledgments are elsewhere undermined. The verses that exhibit a conditional appreciation of asceticism do so for the sake of insuring the legitimacy of the *Yogaśāstra* by retaining a connection with the ascetic ideals of Jain tradition and the textual authority of the *Tattvārthasūtra*. The apparent approbation of asceticism also supports the Jain community by seeming to endorse (at least in a conditional form) the ascetic praxis that has largely defined the social identity of Jain communities throughout history.⁶³ Half-hearted approbations notwithstanding, the bottom line for Hemacandra’s argument is that asceticism is not essential for liberation, but equanimity or purity of mind is. Two verses make this crystal clear. Firstly, the *Yogaśāstra* proclaims, “With equanimity, [a mendicant] is capable of destroying, within no time, that [amount of] karma which he cannot decimate by ten million lives of intense penance.”⁶⁴ Secondly, the text asks,

tad avaśyaṃ manahśuddhiḥ kartavyā siddhim icchatā |
*tapahśrutayamaprāyaḥ kim anyaiḥ kāyadaṇḍanaiḥ ||*⁶⁵

Therefore, purity of mind must certainly be accomplished by someone desiring liberation.

What is the use of other punishments of the body which consist of *tapas*, learning, and restraint?⁶⁶

What is the use of punishments of the body, punishments so dear to the earliest Jain texts? The ultimate answer in the *Yogaśāstra* is, shockingly, that such punishments have no use at all.

At the beginning of part two of this essay, I noted the prominence given to lay ethics in the text, and, in particular, I called attention to a special section on the ideal conduct for an extraordinary Jain layperson such as King Kumārapāla. Now, I certainly do not want to argue that Hemacandra shifted normative Jain understandings about the nature of bondage and liberation toward a gnostic position merely to cater to the king and other laypersons.

There is no way of knowing with certainty whether social considerations motivated the standpoint about knowledge and liberation taken in the *Yogaśāstra*. My preferred inclination is to take into account religious motives behind the *Yogaśāstra*'s gnostic viewpoint because we see confirmation for such motives in the text. Specifically, in the final chapter of the treatise, Hemacandra purports to write an account of yoga based on his own experience of meditation rather than on oral and written tradition.⁶⁷ As will become evident in the next section below, Hemacandra's personal experience as reported in chapter twelve matches a form of the gnostic model that aims to contact the Self as the path. So, it seems likely that his personal convictions may be an important motive behind his particular knowledge-based presentation of the dynamics of Jain practice.

Whatever the reasons for recasting the path in a gnostic vein, the social implications of such a move are obvious. The path to liberation in the *Yogaśāstra* is theoretically open to laypeople. The key element involves meditation as a practice of establishing the Self in the Self. This is brought about through purity of mind which in turn depends upon the mental disciplines used to pacify attachment and aversion. One need not be a monk in order to practice this inwardly oriented path. In fact, as we have seen, Hemacandra denies the value of asceticism. As a result, Hemacandra's version of the Jain path is much more friendly toward laypeople who want to accomplish the highest fruits of the tradition. The *Yogaśāstra* also makes the Jain path more attractive to potential converts at a time when Jainism was expanding in a self-proclaimed Golden Age.⁶⁸ This brings up a related point that is never addressed in the text. Most written Jain accounts of Jain history hold that liberation is no longer possible in the present world age.⁶⁹ In Hemacandra's *Sthavirāvalīcaritra*, otherwise known as the *Parīṣiṣaparvan*, the hagiographies of the Jain elders, Hemacandra tells the story of Jambū, the last person to have achieved liberation in this age. Nonetheless, as anthropological studies confirm, many Jains today do believe that liberation is possible in practice. The same belief seems to run through the *Yogaśāstra*. As the following portion of my argument will explore, the *Yogaśāstra* affirms that many sorts of practices can bring liberation, and there is no reason to believe that these statements are talking about liberation only in a future world age. Overall, in the *Yogaśāstra*, liberation is asserted to be possible, and the road to liberation is an inward one that does not require leaving home or mortification of the body. One cannot help but notice that this is an arrangement of the Jain path that is more easily accessible and more widely appealing than the highly ascetical, dominant models of prior tradition.

Chapters seven through twelve of the *Yogaśāstra* describe two general types of emancipatory meditation. On the one hand, there are the “traditional” categories of virtuous (*dharmya*) and pure (*śukla*) meditations that are reproduced with few alterations from the *Tattvārthasūtra*. On the other hand, there are new methods that I will label “tantric meditation.” Hemacandra himself does not distinguish between “traditional” and “tantric” or between old and new; these are my designations, and I will have more to say below about Hemacandra’s awareness of historical change within the Jain tradition. As for the traditional meditations, *dharmya-dhyāna* primarily leads to heavenly rebirth and eventually to liberation.⁷⁰ The first two kinds of *śukla-dhyāna* when practiced together form the path tread by Tīrthaṅkaras (the Jain ford-makers such as Mahāvīra).⁷¹ The second two kinds of *śukla-dhyāna* together lead to siddhahood, the highest aim.⁷² Although different sections of the text describe various methods that lead to liberation, the presentation of *śukla-dhyāna* is the only place where the text illustrates in detail what occurs when one attains the state of a Tīrthaṅkara and that of a *siddha*. It makes sense for the *Yogaśāstra* to give just one description of the attainment of liberation. Every time that the text deals with a method leading to liberation, we do not need the same description repeated about the results of this liberation such as how a new Tīrthaṅkara is worshipped by the gods or how the soul rises to the zenith of the cosmos when it becomes a *siddha*.⁷³

It also is logical that the sole description of the two types of liberated being—that of a Tīrthaṅkara and that of a *siddha*—occurs in the section on *śukla-dhyāna*. *Śukla-dhyāna* is a unique type of Jain meditation celebrated in the *Uttarādhyāyana* and in the *Tattvārtha Sūtra*. However, we should not read too much into the fact that, in the *Yogaśāstra*, the full depictions of what it means to become a Tīrthaṅkara or a *siddha* crop up only in the portrayal of *śukla-dhyāna*. Qvarnström, for instance, thinks that the *Yogaśāstra* is alleging that siddhahood can only be brought about by *śukla-dhyāna*.⁷⁴ With respect to this issue, Qvarnström apparently wants to make a distinction between becoming a *siddha* and all other attainments described in the text such as *mokṣa*, omniscience, the union of *ātman* with *paramātman*, and so on. Yet, Qvarnström’s idea does not withstand scrutiny. Granted, a Tīrthaṅkara is a special kind of *siddha* in the sense that a Tīrthaṅkara introduces the Jain teaching into a world-age. But, in the matter of freedom, the text never implies a difference between a Tīrthaṅkara, a *siddha*, an omniscient being, a person who has realized the union of *ātman* and *paramātman*, or any other description of a liberated person.

An entirely different distinction that does occur in the text has to do with the amount of space that the text devotes to its exposition of traditional and tantric meditations. *Dharmya-dhyāna* occupies chapter X.7-24 while *śukla-dhyāna* takes up chapter XI. Whereas the *Yogaśāstra* allots traditional meditations less than two chapters of space, tantric meditations that lead to liberation fill a bit more than four chapters, occupying considerably more verses than do the traditional meditation methods. The discrepancy in the space allocated to the two general kinds of practice, old versus new, is not without significance. The *Yogaśāstra* valorizes the tantric meditations. The following section will investigate the emancipatory tantric practices in light of the issues surrounding bondage and liberation discussed up to now.

Two Roads to Tantric Gnosis: Contemplating the Jina and Losing One's Mind

After submitting an overview of Jain practice in chapters one through four, Hemacandra in chapter five treats various aspects of yogic breath control (*prāṇāyāma*) and the supernormal powers that ensue from such practices. The *prāṇāyāma* chapter is the longest one in the entire text, replete with elements appropriated from non-Jain traditions. I will have more to say about chapter five of the *Yogaśāstra* in section four of this essay below. Next, chapter six, the shortest one in the text, critiques the efficacy of *prāṇāyāma* as a means in and of itself for attaining liberation.

vijñānaikaprasaktasya mokṣamārgo na sidhyati ||⁷⁵

For a person attached solely to the knowledge [of yogic *prāṇāyāma*], the path of liberation is not accomplished.

Instead of dabbling with the powers that come from *prāṇāyāma*, Hemacandra recommends withdrawing the senses and concentrating the mind as the basis for engaging in meditation methods that lead to liberation, or in other terms, *dharmadhyāna*, righteous meditation.⁷⁶ All of the subsequent meditation methods elaborated in the *Yogaśāstra* fall under the rubric of *dharmadhyāna*, righteous meditation.

At this point, in chapter seven, the *Yogaśāstra* introduces four kinds of salvifically efficacious meditation categorized according to the respective meditation object. These four types are termed *piṇḍastha*, *padastha*, *rūpastha*, and *rūpavarjita*.⁷⁷ The remainder of chapter seven engages in an explanation of *piṇḍastha*, and each of the following three chapters deal successively with the

other three types of meditation. Since *padastha*, meditation on mantras, exhibits its unique dynamics in terms of its implicit theory of bondage and liberation, dynamics that depend in part upon Indian theories of *mantraśāstra* and in part upon Jain antecedents such as the *pañcanamaskāra* (the declaration of homage to the foundations of the Jain religion), I must defer the study of *padastha* for another occasion.

First, I want briefly to justify why I label these meditations as tantric even though Hemacandra does not use the term. Tantra is notoriously difficult to define.⁷⁸ Potentially, the term can designate a wide spectrum of divergent movements and ideas within Indian culture and religious history. I am using the term “tantra” in a restricted sense in order to point out important parallels between practices in the *Yogaśāstra* and practices that we know from Hindu and Buddhist contexts. Specifically, by “tantra” I mean salvifically oriented practices (in Hemacandra’s terminology, *dharmadhyāna*) that revolve around contemplation upon and identification with aspects of a deity or an emancipated being. These contemplations often involve visualization of the deity’s surroundings (*maṇḍala*) and physical form, invocation of the deity’s powers through mantra, and realization of the deity’s essential nature through a formless type of meditation method. The *Yogaśāstra* demonstrates all of the above features, common in Buddhist and Hindu practice traditions prior to Hemacandra, while indelibly stamping them with a Jain imprint.

In *piṇḍastha* meditation, the practitioner visualizes him or herself within an idealized cosmological setting, sitting atop a lion-throne and lotus (standard elements in Indian Buddhist *utpannakrama* [generation stage] meditation).⁷⁹ By various means, the practitioner proceeds to imagine and enact his own purification of karma (*karmanirmūlanodyata*).⁸⁰ The process begins by envisioning fire rising from the navel and purifying the heart.⁸¹ This meditation on inner fire has resonances that stem from Buddhist and Śaiva texts. The rising fire closely mirrors the practice of *caṇḍālā* explicated since the earliest Buddhist *yoginī* tantras such as the *Hevajra Tantra* around the start of the eighth century. At the same time, the fire burns the three cities in the outer world, alluding to the stories of Śiva’s destruction of *tripura*. The distinctively Jain mark here is the connection made between the purificatory fire and karma. During the final phase of *piṇḍastha* [VII.23-25], the Jain meditator imagines himself as fully liberated, “...excelling in all sorts of miracles (*atiśaya*), completely free from all karma, endowed with an auspicious magnificence, and appearing as a man inside his own [purified] body.”⁸² This attainment is called *śivasukha*, which Qvarnström translates as “the happiness of liberation.”⁸³ The term *śivasukha* may belie an origin in Śaiva tantric texts such as the early Āgamas studied

by Richard Davis, texts in which the practitioner identifies with Śiva through *ātma-śuddhi*.⁸⁴

The efficacy of *piṇḍastha* for bringing about liberation reveals important information about the *Yogaśāstra*'s conception of bondage and freedom. In the model of the *Ācārāṅga*, *Uttarādhyāyana*, and *Tattvārthasūtra*, imagining oneself to be free from karma would be a pointless exercise. As was seen above, according to early Jain sūtra and śāstra, mental exercises simply accrue more karma and further obscure the soul. Yet, in the practice of *piṇḍastha*, imagining oneself to have a purified body is an effective method for achieving liberation. If there is an underlying logic here rather than an unreflective borrowing from foreign traditions—and I shall endeavor to prove that there is indeed a logic for Hemacandra as to why the tantric methods work—then that logic presumes that the soul or Self can be reached through imaginative means. The imaginative exercises of *piṇḍastha* burn away the karma that keeps one out of touch with the soul. This dynamic becomes even more transparent through the text's treatment of *rūpastha*, which forms my next topic.

Rūpastha entails meditation on the external characteristics of the Jina. Like tantric deities from Buddhism and Śaivism, the Jina is said to have four faces and is to be visualized in all glory.⁸⁵ Alternatively, the meditator can focus on a physical image such as a statue. Either way, the result of such practice is remarkable:

The mendicant (*yogin*) who through the practice [of these two kinds of *rūpasthadhyāna*] has attained [the state of] identity with the [nature of the Jina] certainly views himself as if he has become omniscient, thinking: "I am he who is the Bhagavat and the Omniscient One". In this way he reaches the identity with the [Jina] as he thinks [of himself] as one who knows everything.⁸⁶

If the practitioner can reach identity with the Jina, then, as hinted at by *piṇḍastha*, karma does not render the soul absolutely inaccessible until that karma is removed through physical means, as in the *Tattvārthasūtra*. *Rūpasthadhyāna* works because the operative model is a gnostic one. Initially, a historian of religion might look upon *rūpastha-dhyāna* as a crude sort of borrowing from Buddhist *utpannakrama* methods (and there are later Śaiva equivalents such as Abhinavagupta's *samāveśa sādhana* in his *Parātrīśikā-laghuvṛtti* wherein the *sādhaka* becomes one with Bhairava).⁸⁷ While obviously the practice of *rūpastha-dhyāna* displays a historical indebtedness to tantric meditations developed earlier outside of Jainism, it also accords strongly with longstanding currents from within the Jain tradition, namely, the practice of *bhakti* (a

form of devotional praxis). As John Cort has shown, *bhakti* practices have been important in Jainism from the earliest evidence that we have of the tradition.⁸⁸ These practices naturally have centered around the Jina although theoretically they have sometimes presented paradoxes due to the orthodox belief in the departed Jina's utter disconnection from the *saṃsāric* world. Hemacandra's *rūpastha-dhyāna* employs the sentiments of Jain *bhakti* but endows those sentiments with a new dimension, channeling them into a technical meditative practice able to bring about omniscience.

The practice of *rūpavarjita* functions along lines similar to those already seen in the previous two types of tantric meditation. One focuses on the formless, blissful, untainted consciousness of the Jina, the Jina's inner nature. Accordingly, "If a mendicant (*yogin*) constantly meditates in this manner, having the intrinsic nature [of the Jina] as his support, he obtains identity with that [intrinsic nature], which is free from [the dichotomy between] subject and object."⁸⁹ Verse X.2 adds an additional complication to an understanding of what constitutes the mechanism of bondage. The problem is not described not in terms of material karma covering the soul, nor in terms of ignorance that fails to recognize the soul's everpresent and accessible freedom. Instead, blame is pointed at the polarization of the mind into subject and object. If one can do away with the polarization into subject and object, then the *ātman* absorbs into the *paramātman*.⁹⁰

By making the subject-object dichotomy into the culprit that prevents realization of one's identity with the Jina's nature, the explanation of *rūpavarjita* paves the way for Hemacandra's description (in chapter XII) of practice based upon his personal experience. A few observations about chapter XII can tie together some relevant points connected to the tantric meditations sketched above. Chapter twelve advocates that the practitioner allow the mind to go where it will⁹¹, for thereby it becomes pacified until it "...perceives the Self by means of the Self in the pure mirror of the supreme reality."⁹² Hemacandra draws a sharp distinction between the mind and the Self. The blissful Self does not utilize the mind, but involvement with the mind's busy meanderings perpetuated under the subject-object dichotomy can and does prevent the Self from being known.⁹³ When the mind is no longer employed, then emerge *amanaska* (e.g., XII.38, 41) and *unmānībhāva* (e.g., XII.53-4), roughly synonymous terms that connote a state devoid of the ordinary thinking mind. *Amanaska* connotes a lack of fixation, for it can be both a method and the result.⁹⁴ *Unmānībhāva* is solely a result, the state of "non-mind." Again, these formulations drive home that, despite the *Yogaśāstra's* repeated mentions of karma as the problem to be solved, the real problem is ignorance of the Self,

an ignorance stemming from involvement with dichotomous thinking. Insofar as the text uses the term karma as a synonym for ignorance, the references to karma may make sense. But the invocations of karma may also be a way to pay heed to orthodox Jain tradition while the *Yogaśāstra* carries on with a project quite different from a traditional focus on how to remove the numerous kinds of karma.⁹⁵ Chapter XII verse forty declares that ignorance is composed of the mind and the senses, and, when the mind and senses cease through the accomplishment of *amanaska*, ignorance is removed.⁹⁶ At that time, “*udeti tattvam*,” reality comes forth (XII.36). A final observation has to do with the possible relation of *amanaska* to trends in other Indian traditions. Just as *rūpa-dhyāna* is analogous to Buddhist *utpannakrama* and *rūpavarjita-dhyāna* is the counterpart of Buddhist *sampannakrama*, so, too, *amanaska* can be viewed as analogous to Indian Buddhist siddha practices of formless meditation through non-effort, practices that the Tibetan accounts of Indian *siddhas* often term *mahāmudrā*. There is a sequence of tantric practices at work in the *Yogaśāstra* which begins with a focus on the Jina’s outer form, next moves to the Jina’s inner nature, and finally attends to the innermost nature without any reference to the Jina (or the deity) for support.

From a historical point of view, Hemacandra appears to have borrowed his presentation of the four categories of *dhyāna* based on *piṇḍa*, *pada*, *rūpa*, and *rūpavarjita* from the *Jñānārṇava* of the tenth century Digambara Śubhacandra or else from the same source that Śubhacandra used (since Hemacandra’s explanations follow closely the terminology used by his predecessor Śubhacandra).⁹⁷ Hemacandra is the first Śvetāmbara author to describe the four new types of *dhyāna*. These categories and practices are not found in Haribhadra’s yoga texts, nor are they found in Digambara works prior to Śubhacandra.⁹⁸ Another possibility is that Hemacandra learned about his tantric categories from Kashmiri texts. Hagiographical stories link Hemacandra to Kashmir, perhaps implicitly acknowledging his indebtedness to Kashmiri Śaivism on some points of theory in his *Yogaśāstra*.⁹⁹ In general, the Jains of medieval Gujarat knew about the intellectual developments going on in Kashmir.¹⁰⁰ In his *Kāvyaṇuśāsana*, a poetic treatise, Hemacandra quotes and agrees with the tenth-century Kashmirian thinker Abhinavagupta.¹⁰¹ We have no direct evidence that Hemacandra knew Abhinava’s tantric treatises, but it is certainly in the realm of possibility. In the *Tantrāloka* x.236-62, Abhinava discusses the fourfold category of *dhyāna* based on *piṇḍa*, *pada*, *rūpa*, and *rūpātīta*, treating these as abstract labels that mark four types of meditation practice which in turn lead to four distinct meditative states.¹⁰² This same sort of abstract categorization of meditation is also found in a number of Kaula tantras.¹⁰³ Hemacandra actively

reworks these categories whose terminology originally derives from Kashmiri Śaiva texts and whose basic principles stretch back to early Buddhist and Śaiva tantras. He legitimates them by declaring them to be forms of *dharmadhyāna*, and then he deploys them in a uniquely Jain manner.

Conclusions

If we assume that in his *Yogaśāstra* Hemacandra is consciously innovating—as opposed to believing himself to be merely recapitulating traditional Jain teachings on yoga—then Gary Tubb’s observation about Hemacandra’s treatise on poetics, the *Kāvyañuśāsana* and its commentaries also holds relevance for the *Yogaśāstra*:

...it is precisely in his constant reference to a wide range of other works that Hemacandra might have seemed most original to many readers within the tradition, for in taking material from what had been distinct fields of study and weaving it into the texture of a formal treatise on poetics, he chose to break down barriers that earlier treatises had staunchly maintained.¹⁰⁴

Tubb explains that Hemacandra’s first patron, the Cālukya ruler Jayasiṃha Siddharāja, wanted to surpass the scholarly achievements of Bhoja’s academy, and this motive in part accounts for the “amalgamative” approach not only characteristic of Hemacandra but also of other Jain luminaries in twelfth-century Gujarat.¹⁰⁵ Yet in his *Yogaśāstra*, Hemacandra is not only collecting yogic techniques formerly foreign to Śvetāmbara Jainism, he is going one step further and attempting to reformulate such techniques in a distinctly Jain manner. Hemacandra’s apparent project in the *Yogaśāstra* thus corresponds to the aims that Tubb has identified in the field of poetics: “...amalgamation involves not simply the accumulation of items, but also their unification, and in each of these projects of inclusiveness [dealing with poetics and grammar] the notion of command is as important as that of extent.”¹⁰⁶ Hemacandra’s command in the *Yogaśāstra* over ideas foreign to Jainism, ideas taken from the *Yogasūtras* for example, merits a full study in itself. I have gestured a little bit in that direction with the comments that I have ventured about the forerunners and the possible sources for Hemacandra’s tantric practices in the *Yogaśāstra*.

Hemacandra’s command over the inherited Jain traditions is more relevant to the ground covered in the present essay. On the whole, the *Yogaśāstra* insists that the soul or Self can be brought forth through a variety of methods. Although the *Yogaśāstra* consistently makes recourse to the most standard Jain

model of bondage and liberation exemplified by Umāsvāti's *Tattvārthasūtra*, the true aim of the text is to recast older ideas and practices within a framework that revolves around what I have termed a gnostic approach of directly knowing the Self. This approach utilizes the Self as the path toward the full unveiling of Self. Hemacandra cannot rid his text of all contradictions since a path based on knowledge and a path based on ascetic conduct are not wholly reconcilable. Ignorance as the root of *saṃsāra* requires a different sort of response than does material karma that can only be removed through material means. The *Yogaśāstra* shifts the path's center of gravity from *tapas* toward mental disciplines. The prescribed mental meditation techniques overcome or bypass ignorance, for ignorance of the Self's everpresent freedom constitutes the actual cause of bondage according to the logic behind the text. Conduct retains an important place by virtue of the first three chapters in the text, but, even so, conduct now has more to do with interpersonal ethics than with intensive ascetical practices. Through the above changes, the *Yogaśāstra* opens the Jain path more fully to laypeople who, at least within the logic of the text itself, can follow its inner disciplines all the way to the fruit of liberation. While seeming to recapitulate tradition, Hemacandra's *Yogaśāstra* in fact forever alters the Śvetāmbara Jain path away from the dominant trends of the past and toward a new vision in which contact with the soul is not as far away as it once may have seemed.

NOTES

- 1 On Hemacandra's life, brief summaries can be found in R.C.C. Fynes, *The Lives of the Jain Elders* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), xi; Olle Qvarnström, "Stability and Adaptability: A Jain Strategy for Survival and Growth," *Jain Doctrine and Practice: Academic Perspectives*, ed. Joseph O'Connell (Toronto: University of Toronto Centre for South Asian Studies, 2000), 113; and Olle Qvarnström, *The Yogaśāstra of Hemacandra: A Twelfth Century Handbook on Śvetāmbara Jainism*. Harvard Oriental Series vol. LX (Cambridge: Department of Sanskrit and Indian Studies, Harvard University, 2002), 1-5. The standard detailed study is G. Bühler's account written in German in 1889 and translated into English in 1936 as *The Life of Hemacandrācārya* (Santiniketan: Singhī Jaina Jñānapīṭha).
- 2 Qvarnström, "Stability and Adaptability," 113.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Fynes, x-xi.

- 5 Fynes, xi; Qvarnström, “Stability and Adaptability,” 122, 132-33; Maurice Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature. Volume II: Buddhist Literature and Jaina Literature* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1971), 482-83.
- 6 Padmanabh Jaini, *The Jaina Path of Purification* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 80.
- 7 Later I will discuss the one Jain text prior to Hemacandra that contains hitherto unattested meditation practices of a tantric sort, the *Jñānārṇava* of the tenth-century Digambara Śubhacandra. Hemacandra may have known the *Jñānārṇava*, for the *Yogaśāstra* appears to be indebted to it in certain places, but, curiously, Hemacandra—who cites many sources in his auto-commentary—never cites Śubhacandra’s text as a source. See Paul Dundas “Becoming Gautama: Mantra and History in Śvetāmbara Jainism,” in *Open Boundaries: Jain Communities and Culture in Indian History*, ed. John Cort (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 36.
- 8 Paul Dundas, *The Jains*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2002), 22-23.
- 9 *Ācārāṅgasūtra* [AS] in *Sacred Books of the East: Jaina Sūtra*, vol.22 [*The Ācārāṅga Sūtra; the Kalpa Sūtra*] ed. Hermann Jacobi (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1962 [1884]), 79-87.
- 10 AS, *Sacred Books of the East*, 55-58, 68, 75.
- 11 Fujinaga, “On Mokṣamarga,” *Jainism and Early Buddhism: Essays in Honor of Padmanabh S. Jaini*, ed. Olle Qvarnström (Fremont: Asian Humanities Press, 2003), 206.
- 12 *Uttarāḍhyayasūtra* [UAS] in *Sacred Books of the East: Jaina Sūtras*, vol.45 [*The Uttarāḍhyayasūtra; the Sūtrakṛtāṅgasūtra*], ed. Hermann Jacobi (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1962b [1884]), 18. Reference and Prakrit in Fujinaga, 206.
- 13 William J. Johnson, “Kundakunda: Two-standpoints and the Socio-Religious Function of *Anekāntavāda*,” *Approaches to Jaina Studies: Philosophy, Logic, Rituals and Symbols*, ed. N.K. Wagle and Olle Qvarnström (Toronto: University of Toronto Centre for South Asian Studies, 1999), 102.
- 14 *Tattvārthasūtra* [TAS] of Umāsvāti in *That Which Is* [*Tattvārtha Sūtra* of Umāsvāti], ed. Nathmal Tatia (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1994), 219.
- 15 *Ibid.*, 254.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 253.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 190 [VIII.2].
- 18 Jaini, 80.
- 19 UAS, *Sacred Books of the East*, 152. Reference in Fujinaga, 206.
- 20 *Ibid.*, 123. Reference in Fujinaga, 206.
- 21 TAS, *That Which Is*, 205.

- 22 Ibid., 232 [IX.20].
- 23 Ibid., 233.
- 24 Ibid., 240-41.
- 25 Ibid., 241.
- 26 Ibid., 240-41.
- 27 Ibid., 285.
- 28 *Yogaśāstra* [YŚ] of Hemacandra in *The Yogaśāstra of Hemacandra: A Twelfth Century Handbook on Śvetāmbara Jainism*. Harvard Oriental Series vol. LX ed. Olle Qvarnström (Cambridge: Department of Sanskrit and Indian Studies, Harvard University, 2002), 185-86 [XI.53-61].
- 29 Johnson, "Kundakunda," 104.
- 30 William J. Johnson, "Knowledge and Practice in the Jaina Religious Tradition," *Jain Doctrine and Practice: Academic Perspectives*, ed. Joseph O'Connell (Toronto: University of Toronto Centre for South Asian Studies, 2000), 26-30.
- 31 UAS, *Sacred Books of the East*, 123; also TAS, *That Which Is*, 5 [I.1].
- 32 Johnson, "Kundakunda," 111n35.
- 33 Based on when the hagiographies of Kundakunda begin to appear, some scholars want to date him between 750 CE and 1000 CE (see Dundas, *The Jains*, 107 and n.).
- 34 Jaini, 80.
- 35 See William J. Johnson, *Harmless Souls: Karmic Bondage and Religious Change in Early Jainism with Special Reference to Umāsvāti and Kundakunda* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1995); Johnson, "Kundakunda"; and Johnson, "Knowledge and Practice in the Jaina Tradition."
- 36 Dundas, *The Jains*, 108-110.
- 37 Johnson, "Knowledge and Practice in the Jaina Tradition," 36.
- 38 Ibid., 35.
- 39 Johnson, "Kundakunda," 107.
- 40 Ibid., 106-8.
- 41 Ibid., 105-9.
- 42 Qvarnström, *The Yogaśāstra of Hemacandra*, 14.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 YŚ, *The Yogaśāstra of Hemacandra*, 29-30, 69-75.

46 Ibid., 23 [I.16].

47 Ibid., 91-92 [IV.89].

48 Ibid., 85-96.

49 Ibid., 85-86.

50 Ibid., 84 [IV.49].

51 Ibid., 84 [IV.45].

52 Ibid., 84 [IV.45].

53 Ibid., 77 [IV.4]. Here and in the rest of the paper, I sometimes give my own translation of the *Yogaśāstra* or a modification of Qvarnström's translation based on the Sanskrit text in Qvarnström, *The Yogaśāstra of Hemacandra*. When I reproduce whole lines in Sanskrit, that is always a signal that I am giving my own translation. Usually I find Qvarnström's translation to be adequate, and in those instances I give his translation (signalled by an absence of the accompanying Sanskrit). Occasionally his rendering of terms is too loose for the precise points that I wish to make. In this case, Qvarnström assumes that *dhyāna* means *śukla-dhyāna*, but that is not what the text says. The ambiguity of what *dhyāna* means and how it works in this verse is quite important and ought to be retained in translation. Note that, as a practice, Qvarnström indicates when he is drawing information from the auto-commentary. He does not draw upon it here. He also uses many brackets in his translation, so, when I quote his translation, all brackets are his.

54 Ibid., 76 [IV.2].

55 Ibid., 77 [IV.3].

56 In translating here (and I have merely modified Qvarnström's rendering), I am not certain why *hīna* is in instrumental plural rather than instrumental singular.

57 See Dundas 108-110.

58 YŚ, *The Yogaśāstra of Hemacandra*, 85 [IV.52].

59 Ibid., 83.

60 Ibid., 85 [IV.53].

61 Ibid., 82 [IV.34].

62 Ibid., 83 [IV.42].

63 See Johnson, "Kundakunda," 102-7.

64 YŚ, *The Yogaśāstra of Hemacandra*, 85 [IV.51].

65 Ibid., 83 [IV.44].

- 66 The word *prāya* means “chief part” or “consisting of” here, and, while that makes sense grammatically (taking *prāyāih* as a *bahuvrihi*), it ignores the meaning of *prāya* in the sense of “fasting to death,” a meaning that obviously relates to the discussion at hand. Although the meaning of fasting to death does not fit with the grammatical construction, its echo may nevertheless be present here.
- 67 YŚ, *The Yogaśāstra of Hemacandra*, 187 [XII.1].
- 68 Fynes, xi; Winternitz, 482-3.
- 69 Dundas, *The Jains*, 89.
- 70 YŚ, *The Yogaśāstra of Hemacandra*, 172-4.
- 71 Ibid., 178-183.
- 72 Ibid., 185-86.
- 73 Ibid., 186.
- 74 Qvarnström, “Stability and Adaptibility,” 126.
- 75 YŚ, *The Yogaśāstra of Hemacandra*, 143 [VI.3b].
- 76 Ibid., 144 [VI.6].
- 77 Ibid., 146 [VII.8].
- 78 See André Padoux, “What Do We Mean by Tantrism?” *The Roots of Tantra*, ed. Katherine Harper and Robert Brown (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 17-24.
- 79 YŚ, *The Yogaśāstra of Hemacandra*, 146-47 [VII.11-12].
- 80 Ibid., 147 [VII.12 and 25]
- 81 Ibid., 147-48 [VII.13-18]
- 82 Ibid., 149.
- 83 Ibid., 149.
- 84 See Richard Davis, “Becoming a Śiva, and Acting as One, in Śaiva Worship,” *Ritual and Speculation in Early Tantrism: Studies in Honor of André Padoux*, ed. Teun Goudriaan (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 111-15.
- 85 YŚ, *The Yogaśāstra of Hemacandra*, 165-66.
- 86 Ibid., 167 [IX.11-12].
- 87 See Paul Muller-Ortega, “Becoming Bhairava: Meditative Vision in Abhinavagupta’s *Parātrīśikā-laghuvṛtti*,” in *The Roots of Tantra*, ed. Katherine Harper and Robert Brown (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 213-30.

- 88 John Cort, "Bhakti in the Early Jain Tradition: Understanding Devotional Religion in South Asia," *History of Religions* 42 no.1 (2002), 59-86.
- 89 YŚ, *The Yogaśāstra of Hemacandra*, 168 [X.2].
- 90 Ibid., 168 [X.4]).
- 91 Ibid., 192.
- 92 Ibid., 193.
- 93 Ibid., 193 [XII.33-6].
- 94 It seems to me that Qvarnström's overly literal translation of *amanaska* as "no-mind" is a bit off the mark.
- 95 See Jaini 1979: 107-133.
- 96 YŚ, *The Yogaśāstra of Hemacandra*, 194.
- 97 Qvarnström, "Stability and Adaptability," 125-26; 2002: *The Yogaśāstra of Hemacandra* 101n1, 146n2.
- 98 Qvarnström, "Stability and Adaptability," 126n38.
- 99 Paul Dundas, "Becoming Gautama: Mantra and History in Śvetāmbara Jainism," in *Open Boundaries: Jain Communities and Culture in Indian History*, ed. John Cort (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 36.
- 100 Qvarnström, "Stability and Adaptability," 127.
- 101 Ibid.
- 102 Ibid.
- 103 Ibid.
- 104 Gary Tubb, "Hemacandra and Sanskrit Poetics," *Open Boundaries: Jain Communities and Culture in Indian History*, ed. John Cort (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 53.
- 105 Ibid., 54-55.
- 106 Ibid., 55.

BODIES AND BOUNDARIES

Performativity and the Affective Threshold

Julia M. Reed

If boundaries can be seen as limits that give form to all living, changing organisms, then we will honor them because they give aesthetic shape to our lives and the lives of the communities we inhabit. In practices concerning community discipline and membership, relationships between the individual and community may then be cast differently—as mutually defining and mutually consensual, as dynamic and creative—because they are conversational, not coercive.... Those in the community who challenge its norms would be valued—more than any writer of policy or theology—as the ones best able to initiate conversations that help determine the Body's shape.

—*Julia Kasdorf, "Bodies and Boundaries," Writings from a Mennonite Life*

In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Judith Butler made her revolutionary argument that the subject is constructed as an effect of a "regulated process of repetition" and that these repetitive processes are vulnerable to transformative re-appropriation.¹ Arguing that there is no subject, and no body, prior to their constitutive symbolizations, Butler recasts identity as a performative effect: "acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this on the surface of the

body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause.”² Identity is generated, rather, as an “ontological effect” of a performative process, what Butler characterizes as “a citational accumulation and dissimulation...that produces material effects, the lived necessity of those effects as well as the lived contestation of that necessity.”³ To say that identity is performative, for Butler, is to indicate how acts generally taken as effects of identity in fact *effect* identity. That is to say, the subject “has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality.”⁴ Further, what counts as a legitimate identity, an “intelligible I,” is governed by a set of rules that administer the performance of such acts. Thus describing how subjects come into being leads to an analysis of the processes of signification by which certain acts render subjects in particular ways. As Butler concludes in *Gender Trouble*, signification is this “regulated process of repetition” by which subjects are constituted and compelled to perform certain acts by certain rules, rules that “govern intelligible identity, i.e., rules that enable and restrict the intelligible assertion of an ‘I.’”⁵ The subversion of these rules of identity, Butler contends, involves the “taking up” or “parodying” of such injunctions in order to expose their contingency and the “phantasmatic status” of identity.⁶

How might this program of performative politics generate new forms of relationality between subjects constituted through concrete practices? In this paper I argue that concentrating on the affective dimension of signification, insofar as it concerns an immediate response broadly construed as an emotive and/or sensate, suggests how new forms of relation might be generated through the re-iterative mechanisms of embodied subjectivity.

Precisely what affect is, and how affects may or may not differ from emotions, sensations, and feelings, has been taken up recently by theorists in psychoanalysis and cultural studies such as Brian Massumi (following Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari), Teresa Brennan, and Sara Ahmed.⁷ Massumi draws on Deleuze and Guattari’s re-working of Spinoza, arguing that affect reflects the capacities to change and be changed by other bodies. Emotion, for Massumi, is a personalization of affectivities, a way of making personal and singular a sensation: “I am/feel x.” Affect constitutes the relational substratum of the individuated structure of emotion: “[affect] is social in a manner ‘prior to’ the separating out of individuals and the identifiable groupings that they end up boxing themselves into.”⁸ Sara Ahmed responds that the dissociation of emotion from affect “risks cutting emotions off from the lived experiences of being and having a body.”⁹ Ahmed also insists, however, on relationality: affect, in Ahmed’s work, refers to the inextricability of sensation and emotion in the

lived experience of a socially located body. The association of affect with sense relationality is also made by Teresa Brennan in her study of the “transmission of affect,” i.e., “how the emotions or affects of one person...can enter into another.”¹⁰ I hope, however, to sidestep the necessity of a nuanced definition, and use “affect” to indicate the sociality of bodily sensation as refracted through an individual body.

While Butler does not specifically address the distinction between a sign’s performative effect and its affect, I will argue that her claims about the relationship between the sign and the body in her arguments for the materiality of signification *imply* a theory of affect. One of the most prevalent misreadings of Butler’s work—which Butler addresses in *Bodies that Matter*—claims that the arguments in *Gender Trouble* neglect the body and conceive performativity in a non-material linguistic matrix of disembodied play.¹¹ The relationship between the materiality of the body and signification, however—the relationship in question in *Bodies that Matter*—contextualizes signs on the materialized bodies of their citation and in the signifying communities in which they carry particular effects, and, as the arguments here attempt to show, particular affects. My suggestion is that the principle index of re-signification, or how a sign comes to have a different effect, is the *re-affectation* of the sign: to indicate that a sign has been transformed, in other words, is to point to a change in its affectivity. My arguments are guided by the following questions: might the contextual history of a sign be traceable as a history of its affect? To what extent can an affective response to a sign be generated as an effect of, or as a part of, its re-signification? And how does the notion of affect help us think about ways that Butler’s performative politics transforms existing forms of relation in the process of the misappropriation of signs by signifying bodies?

Consideration of affect, I will argue, not only helps to situate Butler’s theory of citationality in the material communities in which it operates, but also more thoroughly articulates how new forms of relation between the members of those communities might come into being through the misappropriative material practices of re-signification. I begin with a review of Butler’s account of citationality, and how relationality is built into it. Building off of the work of Butler, Elizabeth Grosz, and Sara Ahmed, I then examine how the metaphor of material surfaces positions bodies and subjects in a psychosocial topography, and how shared bodily experiences constitute a sociality of affect. Finally, I consider how we might reveal the non-naturalness of affect and re-signify existing modes of relation through the inhabitation of the boundaries of the psychosocial body.

Citatoriality and Materialization

Drawing on Jacques Derrida's theory of the sign,¹² Butler contends that the iterative or citational structure of signification constitutes embodied subjectivity as a site of contestation between the discursive context of a sign's emergence and the possibility that the sign can break with that context. Performativity as citatoriality is not a single act, but a constant repetition: the possibility and success of a performative gesture is preconditioned by "prior actions, and accumulates the force of authority through the repetition or citation of a prior, authoritative set of practices."¹³ For Butler, this necessity of repetition reveals the contingency built into the structure of authoritative rules, i.e., that there is no "I" who enacts the rule, nor is there actually a rule that is enacted, as both the enacting agent and the enacted authority are dissimulated effects of reiteration. In other words, performative acts emerge from and break with a sedimented past that makes them possible and produces their actor, what Butler calls the "acquisition of being through [citation]."¹⁴ Importantly, the rule or authoritative law issues a normative demand that "mobilizes" but doesn't necessarily determine the citational response; the reiteration of the rule may "consolidate the ruse of its force" or may "cite [it] in order to reiterate and co-opt its power."¹⁵

For Butler, the context or enabling conditions of the performative act—a sedimentation of the prior actions that variously appropriate and misappropriate the rule—reflect the matrices of intelligibility in which matter becomes material for us. The regulatory rule acts as a

boundary that includes and excludes, that decides, as it were, what will and will not be the stuff to which we then refer. This marking off will have some normative force and, indeed, some violence, for it can construct only through erasing; it can bound a thing only through enforcing a certain criterion, a principle of selectivity.¹⁶

How and what stuff is marked off, in other words, is the mechanism by which bodies and the acts they perform are rendered intelligible in particular ways.

In the introduction to *Bodies that Matter*, Butler clarifies how matter and signification are mutually constitutive: matter is materialized by signification, and significatory practices are reiterated by materialized bodies. Matter, Butler argues, is "not a site or surface, but a process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter."¹⁷ The phantasmatic stability of the body conceals the reiterative work necessary

to draw and maintain the boundaries of that body, generating the impression of a causal structure of subjectivity. That is, the impression that feeling and action flow in a unidirectional vector from a determinative ontological basis into the social world sustains the fantasy of the self as a causal agent; rather, the self-authoring subject is an epiphenomenal illusion of performative acts. According to Butler, this “process of materialization” constitutes the body as a material site of iteration, of an enabling authoritative context, appropriative historicity, and the possible “misappropriative break” that “mimes and renders hyperbolic” that authoritative context.¹⁸ Thus Butler’s famous claim in *Gender Trouble* that gender is the “stylized repetition of acts” that produces the illusion of a determinatively, essentially sexed body.¹⁹

In the second chapter of *Bodies that Matter* Butler takes up Freud’s concept of the “bodily ego” as “a projection of a surface.”²⁰ In the discursive constitution of materiality, she claims, the “imaginary morphology [of the bodily ego] is orchestrated through regulatory schemas that produce intelligible morphological possibilities, ...a sense of stable contour, and the fixing of spatial boundary.”²¹ The body, that is, becomes accessible through its articulation in a particular morphological vocabulary: these schemas that determine how “bodies matter” regulate how I can spatiotemporally locate my body, point to its parts, feel it appropriately or inappropriately placed in social space, define it in social space in particular ways. In the last chapter, “Critically Queer,” Butler articulates her central question as a problem of “how certain injuries establish certain bodies at the limits of available ontologies, available schemes of intelligibility.”²² If the materialization of the body is essentially the projection of its surfaces, however, then the constitution of bodies within these available ontologies or intelligibilities is also the differentiation of bodies through the articulation of boundaries and surfaces. We thus might re-articulate the intelligible body in Butler’s account as a inter-relationally intelligible body whose boundary demarcates it from other intelligible bodies.

Insofar as Butler’s call for a performative politics necessarily involves concrete, reiterative material practices, it seems clear that re-signification entails the cultivation of connectedness or dis-connectedness with other bodies. My shift of focus from the relation between the body and the process of materialization to the relation between materialized bodies simply develops the intersubjective connotations of bodily surfaces: the “intelligible morphological possibilities” of the body, I argue, are as much the ways bodies shape each other as the possible ways a single body is shaped. The psychic space of the body’s material surface positions the body in an organized, materialized topography of proximately intelligible bodies, that is, in the projection of surfaces

in an intersychic plane. This seems to be implied in Butler's contention that the "idea" of the body should be "understood as the forcible and materialized effects of regulatory power."²³ Thus, in the morphogenesis of the body, the articulation of surface doubly functions as the phantasmatic delineation of the psychic interior ("I am a woman"; "I am a bounded body, and these hands are mine"), and the criteria of intelligibility of other bodies ("That body is a man, a bounded body, and those hands are his"). As Elizabeth Grosz argues in her reading of Freud's "bodily ego,"

[t]he ego is derived from two kinds of "surface." On the one hand, it is a projection or representation of the body's "outer" surface. In both cases, the surface is perceptual....Significantly, this notion of the body as a whole is dependent on the recognition of the totality and autonomy of the body of the other. The ego is thus both a map of the body's surface and a reflection of the image of another's body.²⁴

This view of the double fabrication of surface is a departure from Freud's own position as articulated in "The Ego and the Id." There, Freud claims that an initial immediate experience of pain generates the internal space of the projected body: "the way in which we gain new knowledge of our organs during painful illnesses is perhaps a model of the way in which in general we arrive at the idea of our body."²⁵ Though for Freud a real experience of pain may in this way *precondition* the psychic fabrication of the body, Butler responds that the "ambiguity between a real and conjured pain...is sustained in the analogy with [Freud's notion of] erotogenicity, which seems defined as the very vacillation between real and imagined body parts."²⁶ Erotogenicity, as Freud claimed in his 1914 paper, "On Narcissism," is the "general characteristic of all organs" of quantitative libido, the "activity of sending sexually exciting stimuli to the mind; ...for every such change in the erotogenicity of libidinal zones there might be a parallel change in the ego."²⁷ For Freud, as Butler argues in the second chapter of *Bodies that Matter*, the phallus is the "original site of erotogenization," the fetishistic fixation of the erotogenic map of the body. Therefore, Butler argues, "we might understand the pain/pleasure nexus that conditions erotogenicity as partially constituted by the very idealization of anatomy designated by the phallus."²⁸ This notion of the bodily ego articulates not only how body parts are defined, but the degree of libidinal investment in those body parts, a quantitative affectivity of bodily surfaces, that, as Grosz writes, draws "a cartography of the erotogenic intensity of the body."²⁹ The perceptual surface of the body as a *body in relation* within a constitutive context of intelligibility, in Grosz's reading, indicates the "sociosexual inscription" of the bodily plane, both as it

demarcates the internal surface of the body and the location of other bodies.³⁰ Grosz thus re-casts the ego as a mapping of erotogenic investments that reflects the dispersion of normative sensations—what I am generally designating as bodily affects.

Thus the organization and articulation of bodily sensations, as Grosz and Butler both seem to indicate, generates both the perceptual surface of the body in a matrix of intelligibility *and* the affective economy that saturates those perceptions. In Freud's case, the idealization of the phallus reflects the inextricability of intelligibility from affect insofar as the significance of body parts encapsulates both their symbolic and erotogenic valences: the map of the body both renders it intelligible as a body and endows it with libidinal value. In this sense, body parts are articulated in a corporeal vocabulary *and* are the sites of normative amounts of pleasure.

Yet this relationship of signification and erotic affect, Butler claims, is a "scene of necessary failure and ambivalence."³¹ In "On Narcissism," Freud makes the contradictory claims that the phallus is the generator of pleasure and is the site of erotogenicity, a property of "all organs." Therefore, Butler argues, Freud institutes the phallus "as that which confers erotogenicity and signification" to the body in order "to suppress the ambivalence produced" by his conflicting claims concerning the libidinal circuitry of the bodily ego: given his definition of erotogenicity, there is no reason why the phallus should be the erotogenic center of the libidinal economy.³² Thus the organization and administration of libidinal investments, according to Butler, is perpetually vulnerable insofar as there is nothing given about the ways in which our bodies are materialized. In the received "hegemonic imaginary"³³ of the heterosexualized, genitized body, the phallus occupies the site of fetishistic administrative privilege, and other body parts are variously situated in the erotogenic grid organized by the phallus. Yet if this organization is arbitrary, the grounding of its intelligibility would seem to be the normativity of its affective values. Affect, in this sense, might suggest the sense of appropriateness or inappropriateness with respect to the pleasure taken in or repulsion from the proper body parts at the proper time (whether one's own or someone else's) and proper feelings of disgust when that affective economy is disturbed.

Returning to the notion of surface as the discursive demarcation of the "interior" body from other bodies, I will now consider how this intersubjective landscape of affective interaction—a relationality of materialized bodies connected by shared sensations of pleasure, disgust, shame, etc.—reflects the very iterative processes of performative compliance and subversion. As Grosz argues in *Volatile Bodies*, the skin forms the morphological boundary of the

psychic/material body, negotiating the osmotic relationship of the materialized body and the materialized world.

The surface of the body, the skin, moreover provides the ground for the articulation of orifices, erotogenic rims, cuts on the body's surface, loci of exchange between the inside and the outside, points of conversion of the outside into the body, and of the inside out of the body. These are sites...of ongoing processes of sensory stimulation which require some form of signification and sociocultural and psychical representation. These cuts on the body's surface create a kind of "landscape" of that surface, that is, they provide it with "regions," "zones" capable of erotic significance; they serve as a kind of gridding, an uneven distribution of intensities, of erotic investments in the body.³⁴

I suggest that this sense of the body as a relational body of libidinal investments—specifically, the ways in which that "erotogenic cartography" is given to us as the materialized contours of the bodily ego—is particularly helpful for unpacking the relational, affective aspect of performative subjectivity and transformation.

Affectivity and Stickiness

As Butler claims in *Gender Trouble*, "if the body is synecdochal for the social system *per se* or a site in which open systems converge, then any kind of unregulated permeability constitutes a site of pollution and endangerment."³⁵ In Butler's arguments, the relationship between the projected surface of the body and the affective character of material life inevitably seems to expose how libidinal economies regulate bodily boundaries. A social morphology of affectivity, that is, would reveal how certain material signs function as the repositories for negative affectivity, signs that threaten to trespass into and contaminate the body, and how others reinforce the contours of the bodily ego by complying with the regulatory mechanisms of its materialization. The non-normative body, as Butler notes, is precisely this hazard of contamination,³⁶ and one whose negative affectivity, I would further emphasize, is contingent on its intelligibility as non-normative, and whose intelligibility as non-normative is mediated by the negative affect of disgust or shame.

Building off of this claim of the relationship between intelligibility and affectivity, Sara Ahmed stresses how we often describe affective properties as inherent to objects—"that is disgusting;" "he is attractive;" "this is shameful," etc.—when affect or what Ahmed designates as "emotion," actually mediates between a subject and object in an intelligible schema of regulation.³⁷

[E]motions create the very effect of the surfaces and boundaries that allow us to distinguish an inside and an outside in the first place. So emotions are not something that “I” or “we” have. Rather, it is through emotions, or how we respond to objects and others, that surfaces or boundaries are made: the “I” and the “we” are shaped by, and even take the shape of, contact with others.³⁸

When Butler discusses the re-signification of the word “queer,” it is difficult to imagine how that re-signification could be indexed without a perceptible change in the term’s affective valence. Butler describes the authoritative historicity of “queer” as a pejorative epithet as “one linguistic practice whose purpose has been the shaming of the subject it names or, rather, the producing of a subject through that shaming interpellation. ‘Queer’ derives its force precisely through the repeated invocation by which it has become linked to accusation, pathologization, insult. *This is an invocation by which a social bond among homophobic communities is formed through time.*”³⁹ The current “misappropriative” power of the term, however, is the result of its “reterritorialization,” Butler claims, that “spawned a different order of values.”⁴⁰

It seems both superficially and substantively true that this different order of values is *affectively* transmitted across signifying bodies, for responses to the deployment of “queer” will reflect its iterative circulation as derogatory, repulsive, ironic, its grammatical mobility as a noun, verb, adjective, etc. What is this refunctioning of “queer,” then, insofar as it has reparatively de-authorized its injurious performative force, if not the re-affectation of the term in and by certain interpretative communities? And how are we to evaluate the history of its re-signification if not through the history of its changing affective associations, from injury to affirmation? When Butler argues that the term should always remain a “site of collective contestation,” she reminds us that the ethics of performative politics must acknowledge the inter-relational, materialized, and contingent contexts of citational genealogies, and that the affect of the term “queer” is always tied to the context and performing bodies of its utterance.

Insofar as the language of affect invokes the relationality of bodies, then, we might consider how to read Butler’s notions of historicity and re-territorialization in affective terms. Ahmed uses the term “stickiness” to express the material circulation of signs:

[W]e can think of stickiness as an effect of surfacing, as an effect of the histories of contact between bodies, objects, and signs. To relate stickiness with historicity is not to say that some things and objects are not ‘sticky’ in the present, [but that] stickiness depends on histories of contact that have already impressed on the surface of the object.⁴¹

Citing Butler's neglect of the distinction between affect and effect, while adopting her argument that sites of signification should be left open, Ahmed suggests that stickiness might help explain why the affirmative resignification of certain marks are easier than others. The obstinacy of certain signs, she writes,

does not mean they cannot operate otherwise. Rather, they simply cannot be liberated from the history of [their] use as violence or insult, even if they cannot be reduced to that history. Another way of putting this is to say that some words stick because they become attached through particular affects.⁴²

There are two senses of sticky that Ahmed considers: first, the metaphorical sense of the historical accrual of affect around a sign—the history of contact—and second, a more literal sense that reflects the synchronic contact between surfaces. Both senses, however, “involve a form of relationality, or a ‘withness,’ in which the elements that are ‘with’ get bound together.”⁴³ Drawing on Ahmed, I argue that both connotations of sticky or stickiness are suggestive: the sense of the aggregative accrual of affect, whether positive or negative, around an object, and the pejorative material sense of the contamination of a bodily surface. In response to Ahmed, however, I submit that this notion of stickiness is fully implied in Butler's account of performativity: I offer an association of stickiness (in both senses) with relationality, a “withness” that binds a sign to an affect, and a subject to another subject, through an affective response in a performative context.

In this sense, I suggest that Ahmed's concept of “metaphorical stickiness” helpfully encapsulates the inextricable discursive and affective features of an iterative historicity by which a “sign...gets repeated and accumulates affective value.”⁴⁴ In this metaphorical sense, all signs (and bodies) would be sticky in the accumulation of the effects and affects of their performative histories. Yet one of the ways to compare performative histories—to adjudicate effect, perhaps—is to compare the changes in affectivity, as Butler does in her introductory comparison of the terms “queer” and “nigger”: “when and how does a term like ‘queer’ become subject to an affirmative resignification for some when a term like ‘nigger,’ despite recent efforts at reclamation, appears capable only of reinscribing pain?”⁴⁵

In Ahmed's argument, the affective economies of hate and disgust are particularly tenacious because the affective associations are so strong and so immediate, and because affectivity and signification are not locatable in signs

but in the iterative circuitry of regulated bodies. While every intelligible mark may carry affect, the particular kind of affect it carries reveals its place in the signifying economy. As normative and unthreatening, Ahmed argues, the sign allows the normative body to “fit into a seamless space” in which the boundary of the body doesn’t have to be maintained.⁴⁶ The boundary of the body is re-constituted, however, once a “sticky sign” enters that space and the body is threatened by possible contamination. In this more literal sense of sticky, the contour of the materialized body is raised in sharp relief against an imminent invader, something sticky, of a “clinging viscosity.” In Grosz’s words,

this horror of submersion, the fear of being absorbed into something which has no boundaries of its own, is not a property of the viscous itself; ...what is disturbing about the viscous or the fluid is its refusal to conform to the laws governing the clean and proper, the solid and the self-identical, its otherness to the notion of entity—the very notion that governs our self representations and understanding of the body.⁴⁷

The *quality* of stickiness, then, might reflect the relation between materialized signs, as a proper entity relates to something that threatens the “notion of [its] entity.” For Ahmed, this quality of stickiness is an effect of the possibility of contact between *different* surfaces, “an effect of surfaces...of the histories of contact between bodies, objects, and signs.”⁴⁸ The relational quality of stickiness, therefore, “becomes disgusting only when the skin surface is at stake such that what is sticky threatens to stick to us.”⁴⁹

If the bodily surface is a synecdoche of “the limits of the socially hegemonic,” as Butler suggests in *Gender Trouble*,⁵⁰ what threatens to stick to us does so because it falls outside the morphological intelligibility of the materialized body, that is, outside of the fiction of the proper entity of the body. Thus the threat of contact is not so much a threat of contact between *different* surfaces, I argue, but the threat of the transgression of the materialized surface itself, the “sense of the stable contour,” in Butler’s terms.⁵¹ Bodies marked as pathological for whatever reason—the sexual deviant, the sick, scarred, or deformed body, the racialized other, the invading immigrant, the many species, essentially, of bodily noncompliance—constantly threaten the invasion of difference into the boundary of the proper.⁵² In Butler’s language, such bodies are unintelligible, “vanquished.”⁵³ I propose this sense of “sticky” as the bodily circuitry of signs that challenge the intelligibility and integrity of the body as constituted by regulatory schemas. In the remainder of this paper I explore how reading stickiness back into Butler’s account of the morphogenesis of the body in this way provides a vocabulary for talking about relational performativity.

Surfacing

How might we think further about performative possibilities with respect to relationality and affect? Butler suggests in *Bodies that Matter* that “if prohibitions in some sense constitute projected morphologies, then reworking the terms of those prohibitions suggests the possibility of variable projections, variable modes of delineating and theatricalizing body surfaces.”⁵⁴ If, as I have been arguing, the “intelligible morphological possibilities” that delineate the borders and surfaces of the bodily ego are materialized in an affective economy, these constitutive prohibitions project morphologies in normatively determinative ways reflected in affective responses. We might imagine, in other words, how the bodily surface will either allow itself to disappear or will re-institute itself depending on the affective indicator of threatening permeability, i.e., the feeling of disgust or repulsion at the propinquity of a “sticky sign” carried by a body. How might we change the stickiness of sticky objects, and re-project the contours of the body, re-theatricalize its surface? As Butler argues, “precisely because prohibitions do not always ‘work,’ that is, do not produce the docile body that fully conforms to the social ideal, they may delineate body surfaces that do not signify conventional heterosexual polarities. These variable body surfaces or bodily egos may then become sights of transfer for properties that no longer belong properly to any anatomy.”⁵⁵ My reading of an affective dimension in Butler’s account of performative materiality builds on these claims concerning variable and vulnerable bodily surfaces. First, because non-normative bodies serve as the depositories for “othered” properties, they open possibilities for a relational re-constitution of materiality, a relation between proximately noncompliant and putatively compliant bodies. Second, since the surface of the compliant body protects it from transgressive pollutants, this relation is phenomenologically accessible as an *experience* of surface, insofar as surface as a bodily boundary emerges in the dissemblance of compliance, as a “proper” body protecting itself from contamination.

Insofar as the body is recognized as a bounded body at the affective threshold, then, this threshold is also the reiterative site of the re-contouring of the body’s surface in relation to threatening pollutants.⁵⁶ Here the two related senses of sticky—the affective history of a sign and its performative force as invasive, repulsive, threatening—capture how the threat of contact between a bodily surface and a sticky sign is essentially an affective relation between materialized bodies, the body that is threatened and the body that carries the sign. This relation, further, reflects the social contours of the bodily ego, the morphological imaginary of material signification. Because, however, the body

is never fully materialized, i.e., is never a completely docile body, each moment of “surfacing,” when the projected surface of the body is reflexively experienced as its boundary against the signs carried by threatening, transgressive bodies, *may become a moment of mutual noncompliance*. I’m not suggesting that affects are easily changed; indeed, as the comparison of the terms “queer” and “nigger” makes clear, performative affect may be the very obstinacy that accounts for the re-signification of one and the stagnation of the other. Yet the stickiness of “queer” and “nigger” is specific to particular relational economies, despite the fact that we might be able to *on the whole* adjudicate their relative purchases. While it may be possible to generally compare the reclamation of “queer” to the failed reclamation of “nigger,” “queer” remains pejorative in certain contexts, and “nigger” has arguably cut off some of its stickiness in certain contexts.⁵⁷ Rather, I would argue that specifying “queer” and “nigger” as signs carried by particular bodies in social space helps to think about how the surface of the bodily ego might be (and has been) re-projected when the threat of contact with non-normative bodies reveals the essential noncompliance of *all* bodies with morphological ideals, and how this re-projection is particular to a moment of relation between bodies.

Insofar as forms of relation are built into the regulatory schemas that also make bodies intelligible, then, the affect transmitted by the body carrying the “sticky” sign is transitive with respect to the “proper” bodies it threatens: disgust generates repulsion or rejection. The moment when the surface of the body is re-designated in response to this transitive affect, the relational imperative is issued: turn away. Might the performative expropriability of relationality occur in this moment of surfacing when the transitivity of affect is rejected? If the encounter with noncompliance, in other words, is an affective encounter with the social morphology of the materialized body, a moment that brings the psychosocial bodily ego into self-reflexive relief, then it also reveals the very morphology that organizes forms of compliance and noncompliance. Reworking the terms of this morphology, and, concomitantly, its embedded forms of relation, then, would involve “taking up” and “citing” the authoritative scripts of materialization *as they have been revealed in the encounter with noncompliance*. Such a misappropriative relational citation implies a mutuality of noncompliance, a communal “inhabitation of the weakness in the norm,” that transgresses and exceeds how that very norm has positioned those bodies.⁵⁸ This is not, importantly, a question of sympathy or compassion.⁵⁹ As Susan Sontag famously remarked about the affective response to war photographs:

So far as we feel sympathy we feel we are not accomplices to what caused the suffering. Our sympathy proclaims our innocence as well as our impotence.

To that extent, it can be (for all our good intentions) an impertinent—if not an inappropriate—response. To set aside the sympathy we extend to others beset by war and murderous politics for a consideration of how our privileges are located on the same map as their suffering, and may—in ways that we prefer not to imagine—be linked to their suffering, as the wealth of some may imply the destitution of others, is a task for which the painful, stirring images supply only the initial spark.⁶⁰

The question becomes how this consideration of our common cartographies brings their boundaries into view so that we might rework those boundaries. If affectivity is embedded in the morphological contours of the psychosocial body, might this acknowledgement of *complicity* in the circulation and rejection of sticky signs be a way of bringing that map into reappropriative proximity? As I have stressed in relation to the re-signification of “queer” and “nigger,” my argument is not that relational re-signification is only possible as a collaboration between a non-normative body and a “normative” body. I foreground the difficulty of classifying a body *in toto* as non-normative or purportedly normative, for bodies carry variously interpretable signs in different contexts of intelligibility. My emphasis, rather, is on the moment of surfacing that exposes the process of materialization through an affective relation to another body, and how bodies affectively respond to these instances surfacing. Rejecting the relational imperative to turn away from the body that carries the polluting sign perhaps begins in the acknowledgement of the non-naturalness of morphological boundaries and consequent forms of relation: is this not finally a humility before the matter of our own bodies, our own noncompliances?

NOTES

1 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 185.

2 *Ibid.*, 173.

3 Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of ‘Sex’* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 12.

4 Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 173.

5 *Ibid.*, 185.

6 *Ibid.*, 187.

- 7 Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002); Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004).
- 8 Massumi, 9.
- 9 Ahmed, 40.
- 10 Brennan, 3.
- 11 Butler, *Bodies that Matter*. Butler relates in the preface that after publishing *Gender Trouble* she was asked, "What about the materiality of the body, Judy?" She responds: "There was a certain exasperation in the delivery of that final diminutive, a certain patronizing quality which (re)constituted me as an unruly child, one who needed to be brought to task restored to that bodily being which is, after all, considered to be most real, most pressing, most undeniable....And if I persisted in this notion that bodies were in some way constructed, perhaps I really thought that words alone had the power to craft bodies from their own linguistic substance?" (ix-x). See also Amy Hollywood, "Performativity, Citationality, Ritualization," *History of Religions* 42 (2002): 93–115.
- 12 See Jacques Derrida, "Signature, Event, Context," *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).
- 13 Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, 227.
- 14 *Ibid.*, 15.
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 *Ibid.*, 11.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 9.
- 18 *Ibid.*, 232.
- 19 Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 179.
- 20 S. Freud, "The Ego and the Id," *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud (SE)*, vol. 19, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1973), 26.
- 21 Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, 14.
- 22 *Ibid.*, 224.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 64.
- 24 Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994), 37-38.
- 25 Freud, "The Ego and the Id," *SE* 19:25.
- 26 *Ibid.*, 59.

- 27 Freud, "On Narcissism: An Introduction," *SE*, vol. 14, trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1973), 84.
- 28 Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, 62. Freud's genitalization of the erotogenic morphology of the body might constitute the phallicization of the penis itself, insofar as the penis is fixed as the origin and center of pleasure and subjectivity.
- 29 Grosz, 34.
- 30 *Ibid.*, 38.
- 31 Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, 62.
- 32 *Ibid.*, 61.
- 33 *Ibid.*, 91.
- 34 Grosz, 36.
- 35 Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 168.
- 36 *Ibid.*, 169. See n40, below.
- 37 Ahmed, 54.
- 38 *Ibid.*, 10.
- 39 Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, 226 (emphasis mine).
- 40 *Ibid.*, 231.
- 41 Ahmed, 90.
- 42 *Ibid.*, 60.
- 43 *Ibid.*, 91.
- 44 *Ibid.*, 90.
- 45 Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, 223.
- 46 Ahmed, 148.
- 47 Grosz, 195. See also Brennan: "[t]he sense of self does depend on boundaries formed by projecting and introjecting affects, it depends on knowing who one is by depositing alien affects in the other. The urge to do this—and maintain boundaries by aggressive means—intensifies as the affects one wants to live without, anxiety especially, thicken socially" (134).
- 48 Ahmed, 90.
- 49 *Ibid.*
- 50 Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 167. Regarding the "homosexual pollutant," Butler further remarks, "The construction of stable bodily contours relies upon fixed sites of cor-

poreal permeability and impermeability. Those sexual practices in both homosexual and heterosexual contexts that open surfaces and orifices to erotic signification or close down others effectively reinscribe the boundaries of the body along new cultural lines" (169).

51 Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, 14.

52 Some recent work on the cultural life of compassion suggests a discomfiting connection between the affect of compassion or sympathy and the affect of disgust. For Lauren Berlant, compassion is essentially "an emotion in operation. In operation, compassion is a term denoting privilege: the sufferer is over there." Recognizing the sufferer as "over there," and oneself as able to ameliorate their suffering, however, is dependent on a structure of intelligibility and in which certain bodies are recognized as suffering bodies. In Berlant's polemic against compassionate conservatism, the moral paternalism of compassion involves the maintenance of bodily boundaries, that is, the preservation of a social space in which the surface of the body may dissolve into its familiar surroundings, protected from abject contaminants. In this contained, undifferentiated space, social bodies luxuriate in the social body, "a sanitized space of sentimental feeling." See L. Berlant, ed., *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004), and L. Berlant, "Sex in Public," *Intimacy*, ed. L. Berlant (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

53 Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, 14.

54 *Ibid.*, 64.

55 *Ibid.*

56 I echo Ahmed's claim here that "one feels better by the warmth of being faced by a world one has already taken in. One does not notice this as a world when one has been shaped by that world, and even acquired its shape" (148).

57 See for example Randall Kennedy, *Nigger: The Strange Career of a Troublesome Word* (New York: Pantheon Press, 2002).

58 Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, 237.

59 See n40, above.

60 Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2003), 45.

THE ALLEGORICAL OBJECT

Emily Ronald

In her work with the Kodi people in Sumba, Indonesia, Janet Hoskins develops the concept of biographical objects, “items endowed with the personal characteristics of their owner,” substituting for the owner in a simple or subtle metaphorical mediation.¹ These domestic objects are correlated with a particular person, through association with a position, event, or tale. They are not created with the intention of forming a story; rather, stories are generated around them, accreting over time. For Hoskins, these objects present “a metaphor of the self” and tell a story otherwise unavailable to public speech.² But there is also a related class of objects that may be used as the intentional site of telling a story that arises from a group, or that could conceivably be told in public speech. In contrast to the “distant form of introspection” that the biographical object provides,³ the allegorical object is created with a purpose of communication, of referencing some concept, idea, or event outside itself. These objects both allow a storyteller to communicate in a manner “other than

public" (from *allos agoreuein*, the Greek roots of "allegory")⁴ and add a host of meaning and nuance contained in the chosen medium.

The Faith Quilts Project is based upon such allegorical objects. Over the past three years, under the guidance of artistic director Clara Wainwright, fifty-six different groups have created fifty-seven quilts in order to represent the idea of "faith." In April, 2006, I had the opportunity to serve as stitcher, volunteer, and volunteer coordinator for the Grand Exhibition of all fifty-seven quilts. They share several of the qualities of Hoskins' biographical objects, such as investment in form, investment in work, and personalized exchange history.⁵ However, they serve as metaphors for groups and traditions rather than selves, and they carry the weight of an allegorical intent. Some are abstract, others representational; some the product of skilled hands, others the work of eager amateurs. In each case, the quilt was intended to represent the makers' ideas of faith in a concrete, visual form. Thus, each quilt had its own story, yet the visual, symbolic, and physical means of telling this story changed from quilt to quilt.

I will explore the concept of the allegorical object using my experience of the Faith Quilts Project as an example of the complicated form of storytelling created by these objects, both for the makers and for the community of which they are a part. Examining these quilts as allegorical objects provides insight into the purpose of allegory as communicative device. The Faith Quilts Project's range of purpose, design, and message demonstrates the possibilities inherent in this form, the complications that arise from its use, and the responsibilities facing a person responding to allegorical object.

Communication of an idea in the form of a quilt is subject to several associations that "frame" the entire message. Some derive from the history of quilts as use-objects rather than art-objects. Others are connected to the physical actions necessary to create a quilt, and still more relate to assumptions about the creators of the quilt. The resulting web of associations accompanies the individual quilt's symbolism and imagery.

The nature of the quilt as use-object first establishes the message as not one of "High Art" but of practical use. The basic purpose of a quilt as use-object is to provide warmth as a bedspread. Many quilts were made by piecing small scraps of fabric together, seeking to use every available fabric, whether it came from worn-out blue jeans, grain sacks, or scraps from clothing.⁶ This also links the quilt to the concept of "women's work", household labor that has traditionally been devalued in comparison to the arts of painting or sculpture. The beauty of a quilt exists alongside its use as a practical household object. Several of the Faith Quilts emphasized this practical nature, but did so in unusual ways. The Kali Puja quilt was created as an item to be used in worship, rotated among the

home shrines of each quilter.⁷ A large “Sacred Space” quilt for a Wiccan group is not used as decoration, but laid out on the ground to mark and consecrate a space for ritual.⁸

The work of stitching separate pieces together carries more metaphorical associations. Two quilts took advantage of the idea of “mending” to demonstrate a particular aspect of faith. The girls’ groups of RAW Art Works created a background of many patches of pink, black, and brown, signifying skin color, and then used large visible stitches to hint to its viewers that people of different races could still be ‘mended’ together.⁹ Likewise, the Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center invited visitors to the Grand Exhibition to stitch silhouettes of buildings to border panels, which symbolized the City of Boston. The makers of the quilt called this “mending, healing, and weaving together bonds of friendship”, and they hoped that the stitches holding the city together would represent a repair of community ties that have been strained during construction of the Cultural Center.¹⁰

Quilt-making has also been tied to the idea of community. Quilting bees and quilting circles often come together to complete large projects.¹¹ Most quilts were created by a small group within the congregation, under the guidance of one or two leaders. The results often emphasized this group participation, dividing the area into one region per stitcher, or using fabric self-portraits as a border around the central image. The quilts of Temple Beth Zion featured twelve panels, each representing one participant’s interpretation of the center concepts, *Chesed* and *Gevurah* (Kindness and Strength). Masjid Al-Qur’an chose to show twelve different paths from darkness to light, each path demonstrating what had brought that person to Islam. This focus on community meant that each quilt could not be read as one individual’s unconnected interpretation of faith, but signifies a joint effort. To the viewer, this grants a kind of community sanction to a particular visual representation of faith.

What sets the Faith Quilts apart from all quilts sharing in the associations of practicality and community are their signficatory purposes. Within the congregation or organization of origin, the individual quilts serve as a means to discuss and explore what these symbols and images mean for its members. In the context of the Grand Exhibition, an intra-community discussion becomes instead an “ambassador of faith,”¹² a means of communicating to a larger audience.¹³ The communal nature of the quilts’ creation makes it difficult to fit them into Hannah Arendt’s model of storytelling as private experience made public. They are closer to stories about particular communities told and reformulated within those communities themselves. Thus they bear more relation to the “mythico-histories” of Liisa Malkki¹⁴ or the village tales cited by John

Berger.¹⁵ In presenting their ‘ambassadorial statements,’ the quilts of the Grand Exhibition demonstrate a range of expression from explicit meaning to almost full abstraction. Within this range, different combinations of abstraction, specificity, and conflict between stated meaning and viewer response arise.

The quilts of St. Frances X. Cabrini Church bear perhaps the most explicit message of the exhibit, but they do so in a manner that parallels the distinction between experience-near and experience-far described by Kleinman and Kleinman.¹⁶ “Vigil” and “Suppression,” when viewed from a distance, appear to be luminous representations of Catholic symbolism. A dove flies toward opening clouds, accompanied by hands spiraling from earth to sky. The door of a church stands open, framed by a tall candle and a bishop’s crozier (Figure 1). A radiant bird descends upon a brick building with a stained-glass window, surrounded by saints (Figure 3). The colors are calm, and the symbols seem peaceful and holy.

Yet, these are angry expressions of protest. In May 2004, the Archdiocese of Boston decided to close 86 churches in opposition to the protest of the parishioners. The church of St. Frances X. Cabrini has been the site of an ongoing vigil by lay Catholics, present at all times to prevent diocese officials from closing and locking it. Bobbie Sullivan, lead quilter, designed these as protests against the closure of these parishes. Close up, the quilts reveal printed messages throughout. “Suppression” includes a definition of the title: to crush, to abolish by authority (Figure 4). Twelve pictures of churches below the brick building are labeled with their set closing dates. The pillar candle of “Vigil” lists a timeline of the events of parish closings (Figure 2); names of parishioners appear on the hands, and names of all parishes closed by the Archdiocese around the border. Any but the most cursory examination reveals the message intended for the quilt to carry: it is a “time capsule,” an expression of confusion and frustration.¹⁷

At the other end of the continuum from explicit to abstract is the work of the Hospice of the North Shore. Brown and green shapes form an undulating pattern over the whole of the quilt (Figure 5). They evoke images of trees in wind or seaweed in water; warp and woof of a weave or perhaps streamers. However, the quilt depicts none of these things exactly. The label provided by the quilters confirms that the image is an abstraction of trees reflected in flowing water. The quilters used choice of fabric (Dupioni silk, an iridescent, expensive fabric, is meant to convey “the vibrancy of human life”) and color (“rich tones...express transitions and passages”) instead of text as their medium of communication.¹⁸

Here, the viewer looks upon a quilt that lacks conventional symbols or representation. Both the intended message (transitions and passages) and the means of communication (text, symbols, and representative depictions) are vague and abstract in comparison to locations, persons, and experiences. The resulting quilt may be read in many different ways, which may not include the intended “reaffirmation of the Hospice mission to maintain the quality and dignity of those in the final stages of life.”¹⁹ The effect of the quilt is to evoke a primarily aesthetic response; explicit communication of the message has a much lower priority.

The possible conflict between the quilters’ intent and the viewer’s reaction when interpreting the imagery of the quilts was made clear to me in the work of a nunnery and a substance abuse day treatment center. The Poor Clares, a community of Franciscan contemplative nuns in Jamaica Plain, chose very bold imagery: against a coarse, plain background, a cross edged in red rises out of a clouded world (Figure 6). The label gives a clear meaning for almost every feature of the quilt: the rosary represents dedication to the Mother of God, the red border represents the fire of the Holy Spirit, and the plain background is like the Franciscan religious habit.²⁰ Upon first viewing it, I instead thought of the plain background as meaning a world drab without the presence of God. The red border, on which gold letters are written, made me think, not of the Holy Spirit, but the blood and sacred heart of Christ, and the arch of the rosary formed a doorway to enter into that new world. These interpretations of the symbolic images and colors do not agree with the quilters’ intent, but do work within the same symbol set of Christianity and thus can be harmonized.

Encountering the Riverside Day Center quilt, however, put my initial interpretation of the images into direct conflict with the intention of the quilters. The central image of the quilt is a house with a tree growing up through the roof, with people looking out the windows and thunderbolts falling outside (Figure 7). My visceral reaction to the quilt was a feeling of unease and oppression. Where the tree was meant to show the path of life, I saw branches like hands raised in a gesture of warning; the dark fabric meant to highlight the candles of individual hopes overwhelmed the tiny lights. Yet the quilters created it as “an open door where everyone is welcome inside to gather with hope, faith, light, and community.”²¹ My initial interpretation set itself directly at odds with this expression of hope.

In these and other interactions with the quilts, there appeared to be a cyclical pattern in the reactions of a viewer regarding an allegorical object, from medium to message and back again. First, a viewer encounters the web of associations in the *medium* in which the allegory is conveyed. Every quilt at

the Grand Exhibition represented hours of labor and care, individual production, community and practicality, regardless of their other symbols and messages. These associations frame all other qualities of the quilt, from the aesthetic response to the intended message and other interpretations. Second, the allegorical object makes demands upon its viewer in a way that a biographical or domestic object does not. This demand is twofold. First, the fact that the object was created with a purpose of communicating a message asks that the viewer begin the process of interpretation. If the viewer chooses not to interpret the image, she is in a way ignoring the story, reducing it to a meaningless arrangement of colors and shapes; she denies the “being seen and being heard by others” that produces public reality and validation.²² A viewer who chooses to see the St. Frances quilts as only “pretty” would be denying the importance of the story Bobbie Sullivan intended. The connection between the aesthetic response and the cognitive response is cut short.

The second part of the demand made by the allegorical object is that attention be paid to the original message of the object’s creators. This “authorial intent” should be considered by the viewer. Had I chosen to completely ignore the hopeful message of the Riverside Day Center quilt, I would have refused this demand, and my experience with the quilt would have been a matter of self-reflection, not communication. We need not grant intent of the creator sole or even primary meaning.²³ However, to do justice to the voice of its makers, to acknowledge the allegorical character of the work, we should take into account the message that was intended to be communicated.

This is not to say that the moral of any one of these quilts is singular; rather, it is to say that an engaged viewer is not free to refrain from the attempt to interpret. In this process of interpretation, examining the conflicts between different “readings” of an object can reveal intriguing insights. Setting one reading against each other provokes explorations of contradictions or paradox. The compelling nature of the Riverside Day Center quilt comes not from my unease or their expressions of hope, but from the curious interaction of the two. The St. Frances quilts gain a peculiar intensity from their conjunction of peaceful beauty and suppressed rage.

Finally, having encountered both medium and message, object and allegory, the viewer considering an allegorical object must come back to the fusion and tension of the two. In viewing the Faith Quilts, I had access to the makers’ stated intent and my own perceptions and associations. What I could not claim to know is the totality of what the object “really means.” My interpretations are not brightly colored; not stitched by hand or textured like silk and velvet; they cannot be taken out of my head and rolled out as sacred space; they will

not keep us warm or decorate our sanctums. The allegorical object shares the qualities of the allegorical tale, the story spoken in the other-than-public. It asks to be read, and can be read in many ways beyond its intended reading. But even as it demands interpretation, it is irreducible and resists any flattening of meaning into a single moral, or even into a plurality of interpretations. Thus, the responsibility of the viewer confronting the object is multiple: to consider the associations of the medium; to take in the message intended by the creator; to explore one's own reading of the message and, if available, alternate readings as well; and, while exploring these readings, not mistake the readings for the object.

Allegory presents its creators with possibilities unavailable in a plain-sense manner of speech; it also opens the possibilities of ambiguity and multivalency. It presents the reader, or the viewer, with responsibilities beyond assimilation of information or aesthetic appreciation. But it is this form of storytelling that allows both reader and author to dissociate the message from its initial context and experiment with different allusions, to redescribe the situation and create surprising connections. When the reader confronts the allegory, a reciprocal give-and-take of meaning is begun, in which she acknowledges the importance of the author's intent but does not discard her own perspectives and context, accepting all the while that the allegory itself will resist reductions from author or reader. Allegory thus offers an opportunity for creating an intersubjective space between an "official," authorized message and an unauthorized interpretation—or a rebellious intent and a domesticating reading—without leaving the irreducible aesthetic sphere.

FIGURES



Figure 1: Church of St. Frances X Cabrini, "Vigil"

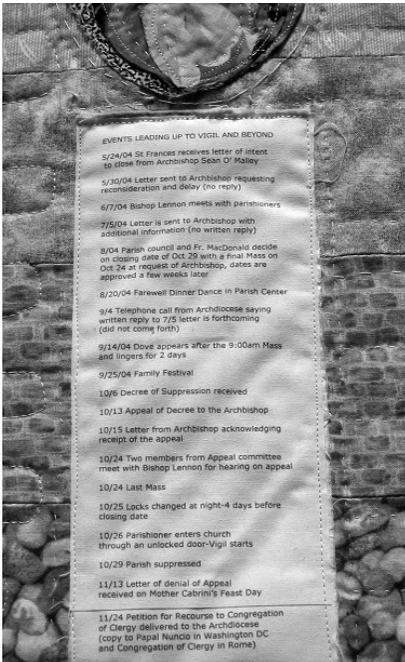


Figure 2: Detail of "Vigil"

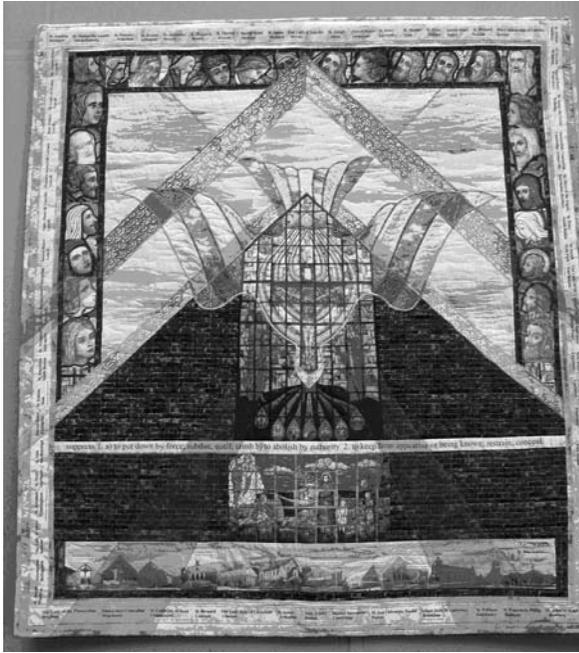


Figure 3: Church of St. Frances X. Cabrini, "Suppression"

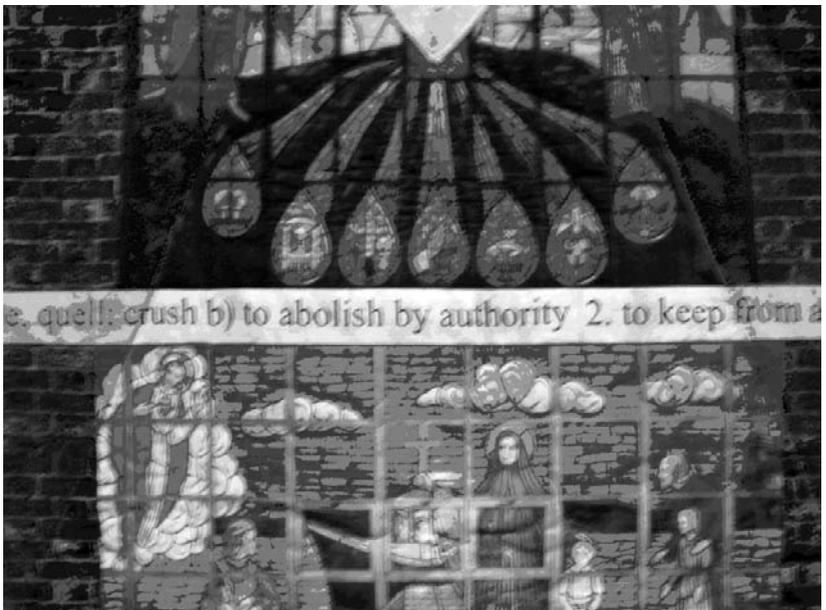


Figure 4: Detail of "Suppression"

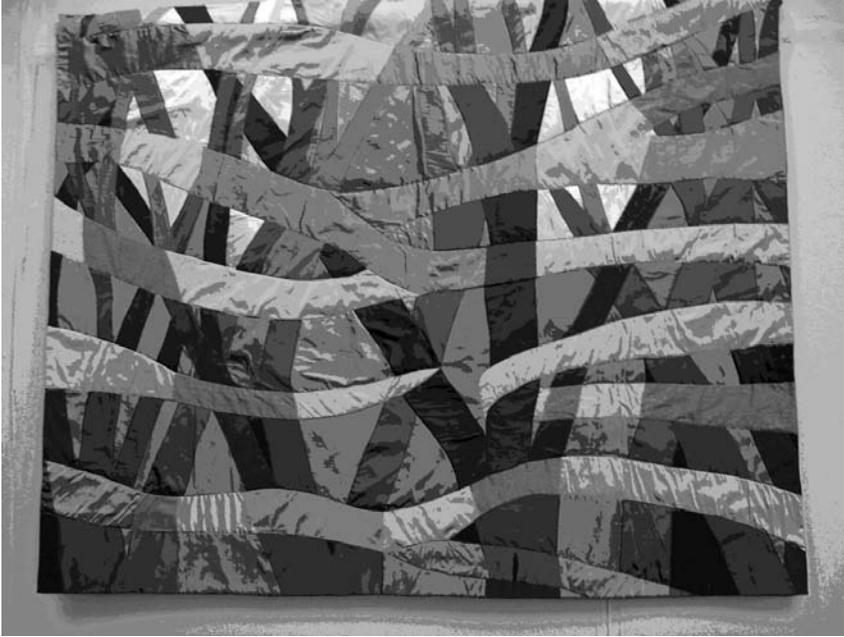


Figure 5: Hospice of the North Shore, "Reflections of Hope: Keeping the Promise"



Figure 6: Poor Clares of Jamaica Plain, "I Will Always Take Care of You"



Figure7: Riverside Day Treatment, "Follow the Light in Your Heart"

NOTES

- 1 Janet Hoskins, *Biographical Objects: How Things Tell the Stories of Peoples' Lives* (London: Routledge, 1998), 7.
- 2 *Ibid.*, 190.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 2.
- 4 Michael Jackson, Class Lecture (HDS 3259, Politics of Storytelling), April 13, 2006.
- 5 Hoskins, 192.
- 6 Isabel Stanley and Jenny Watson, *Practical Encyclopedia of Quilting and Quilt Design* (New York: Hermes House, 2000), 28.
- 7 Label, Kali Puja quilt. Illustrations of five quilts discussed in detail are available in the appendix; images of all other quilts are available in an online portfolio, accompanied by a label naming its contributors and explaining the images in some detail in The Faith Quilts Project, *Portfolio*, Photographs by Richard Howard; labels by lead quilters and stitchers, 2006. Available online (with the exception of the Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center quilt) at <http://www.faithquilts.org/show.php?=&thef>. Photographs of The Faith Quilts Project were taken, with permission, by Emily Ronald, during the Grand Exhibition, April 7-10, 2006. Citations of the labels will read "Label, 'Quilt X'".
- 8 Label, Sacred Space quilt.
- 9 Label, RAW Art Works quilt.
- 10 Label, Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center quilt. The label, titled "An Invitation to Understanding: Mothers, Daughters, and Sisters in Islam," received from Barbara Sahli, personal email to author, April 23, 2006.
- 11 An especially vivid example of the history of practicality and community associated with quilting is the work of the Quilters of Gee's Bend, www.quiltsofgeesbend.com.
- 12 This term was used by multiple people during the course of the Project, including Artistic Director Clara Wainwright, Exhibition Director Brett Cook, and quilter Barbara Sahli.
- 13 "How Would You Illustrate Your Faith," *Here and Now*, WNPR, Boston Public Radio (Boston, MA: WBUR, April 14, 2006).
- 14 Liisa Malkki, "The Mythico-History" in *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology Among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995), 53.
- 15 John Berger, "The Storyteller" in *The Sense of Sight: Writings of John Berger*, ed. Lloyd Spencer (New York: Pantheon, 1985), 16.
- 16 Arthur Kleinman and Joan Kleinman, "Suffering and its Professional Transformation: Toward an Ethnography of Interpersonal Experience" in *Things as They Are: New*

Directions in Phenomenal Anthropology, ed. Michael Jackson (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 172.

17 Label, St. Frances X. Cabrini Church quilts.

18 Label, Hospice of the North Shore quilt.

19 Ibid.

20 Label, The Poor Clares quilt.

21 Label, Riverside Day Center quilt.

22 Hannah Arendt, quoted in Michael Jackson, *The Politics of Storytelling* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2002), ii.

23 Cases in which the creators' intent is not known greatly complicate this process. I believe it may be sufficient to recognize that a message was being communicated, even if the content of that message is now unknown.

CONTRIBUTORS

Molly Baer Farneth graduated from Bowdoin College and will receive her MTS degree this spring. She studies religion and political philosophy and particularly how democratic discourses reflect religious difference in the context of a pluralist society. She plans to do doctoral work in religion.

Elon Goldstein holds a B.A. from Harvard College (1992), an M.A. in Education from Claremont Graduate University (1996), and an MTS from Harvard Divinity School (2004). Prior to graduate school, he worked for ten years, mostly as public school teacher. He is currently a doctoral student in the Study of Religion at Harvard University with a specialization in pre-modern South Asian religions. Elon's academic interests range from theory and method in the study of religion to the areas of South Asian religious ethics, spiritual disciplines, and, above all, South Asian religious scriptures and literature. His research centers on Indian Buddhist, Hindu, and Jain literature preserved in Sanskrit and in Tibetan translation, exploring how and why texts employ sophisticated literary strategies for religious ends. After completing his doctorate, he will happily continue to devote himself to university teaching and research.

Sohrab Nabatian is an MDiv student who did his undergrad work at Concordia University. He is interested in the interdisciplinary studies of Islamic mysticism, comparative mysticism, developmental psychology, psychotherapy, and religion and science. He would like to continue his academic pursuits in this area and is also training to be a hospital chaplain. His professional interests include the integration of spirituality and medicine in healing.

David W. Jorgenson graduated from Dartmouth College and is a second-year MTS student. He studies the history of early Christianity, focusing on the construction of Christian identity, discourses of orthodoxy and heresy, and the history of interpretation of the New Testament and other early Christian writings. David will be a doctoral student at Princeton this fall in the Program in Religions of Late Antiquity. He plans to pursue an academic career.

Emily Ronald is a second-year MTS student who got her B.A. from Williams College. She is interested in the interaction of narrative and ethics, especially in areas where religions interact with each other and with secular culture. She will enter Boston University next fall as a doctoral student in the Department of Religious and Theological Studies, where she hopes to do ethnographic research on American religious communities.

Julia M. Reed is a graduate of Wellesley College and a second-year MTS student. She studies the implementation of feminist and gender theory in religious studies, particularly modern religious thought. Her focus is on the constructions of sexed, gendered, and religious subjectivities through particular rhetorical and bodily practices. Julia will continue her studies at Harvard next year in the doctoral program in Religion, Gender and Culture.