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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

When we first joined the editorial staff of Harvard Divinity School's graduate journal, we decided to change things. We imagined redesigned websites, flashy logos, and thousands of printed copies. We wanted multiple levels of peer-review, laser-like editorial precision, and a heightened—no, poetic—sense of style. We refused to let any aspect of the journal stagnate. We had dreams.

But building and running a journal is hard work, and the modest issue you're currently holding reflects that. If we—along with our fellow editors—have produced something worthwhile, it's in part because of the help we've had through this difficult process. We've relied on friends and colleagues throughout the entire HDS community, many of whom we're honored to acknowledge below. Omissions reflect limitations of space, not of gratitude.

In the Office of Student Life, Tim Whelsky provided constant support and guidance. His help was crucial not only in maintaining the journal's past achievements, but also in envisioning new ways to involve the journal in the HDS community. Likewise, Katie Caponera connected the journal with essential resources for the production process and for campus outreach.

Professor Anne Monius, the journal's faculty advisor, offered invaluable expertise and, as one of original advisors of the journal a decade ago, an important link to the publication's history. She readily answered questions on topics ranging from the overly broad to the hopelessly mundane, providing insight from which the journal benefited immensely.

In the Office of Communications, Kristie Welsh dedicated considerable time and effort to helping us with layout, design, and the printing process. Wendy McDowell, also, was a valuable resource and advisor for many of the challenges of putting together a print/online publication.

The faculty reviewers formed a key part of the journal's current iteration. Each approached submissions with a care that added immeasurably to the quality and depth of this year's issue. We're thankful not only for their time and energy, but for their belief in the academic value of a student-run, student-centered journal.

The student editorial board likewise demonstrated a level of attention and commitment critical to the journal's success. They reviewed the largest number of submissions in the journal's history, invariably offering helpful comments and informed critiques.

Finally, the HDS Student Association generously provided the funding necessary for making this year's issue—and a return to print—possible. We remain grateful to them, and to all those whose efforts enabled this publication.

EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

This issue of *The Graduate Journal of Harvard Divinity School* (formerly *Cult/ure*) marks a distinct departure from the journal's past incarnations. Now entering its tenth year of publication, the journal has offered a consistent, thoughtful forum for the academic explorations of the graduate community at HDS and beyond. With this current issue, the journal takes on a new form, one that remains dedicated to the celebration of student research, but also committed to reflecting on the academic environment in which that research takes place. The journal now bears a new name reflecting its new aims. As the editors of this reshaped publication, our hope is not only to feature the scholarly achievements of the graduate community in religious studies and theology, but also to enable that community to examine and reflect on its own journey through the university.

Here, we offer a set of essays and interviews that foreground graduate work in two senses. You will find academic essays, representative of current trends in the study of religion and a sampling of the most insightful graduate work in today's academy. But you will also find pieces that interrogate not only the work we produce, but the work we act out daily: the work of living, studying, teaching, and building careers in the university. These selections speak to the interests we share as students of religion and to the professional challenges we face as aspiring professors, teachers, activists, or writers. They provide perspectives on the difficulties and joys of academic life, as well as a set of tools for addressing challenges to come.

With this shift in format and mission have come numerous logistical shifts that have radically reshaped the look and feel of the journal, and, though in large part invisible, have consumed much of the energy that went into this year's issue. Most obvious, of course, is the change in name. But this shift reflects a much larger restructuring of the editorial process. All academic submissions now undergo a two-part peer-review, first by our student editorial board and then by a set of anonymous faculty reviewers. We have worked to increase the rigor of the journal's scholarship, and have, with the invaluable assistance of our fellow editors, applied to the journal a new level of editorial care.

Along with this organizational shift comes a new material form for the journal. After several years of online-only publication, the journal now returns to print. And with this new, corporeal presence comes a new virtual one, too: with an updated and redesigned website, the publication is now easily accessible and distributable in multiple formats.

The journal is still evolving and there is much work to be done in the coming years. Here we offer what we see as a strong foundation for the journal's continued growth, and we hope not only for the product to be a resource for our community, but for the process to be one as well. The work of editing, organizing, and writing for the journal is an opportunity for students to develop some of the most crucial skills for a life in academia (and in many other areas as well). With a strong new presence at HDS, the journal can be an integral part of students' growth into scholars.

This issue begins with three academic essays. First, Cody Musselman (Yale) examines the rival conceptions of civil religion and Christian faith at the Gettysburg Battlefield. Her ethnographic work reveals contestations of America's civil religion and questions the relationship of this country's Christian pasts with its ever-shifting present. It pushes us to return to memories of conflict, nation, and God in order to understand contemporary religious tensions.

Next, Kathryn Dickason (Stanford) compares medieval Christian conversations on seals and scars. Her writing connects two disparate types of faith and practice, with considerable implications for our understanding of medieval religious worlds. The body, signification, the fragile link between creation and God—all meet in her consideration of image and skin.

Finally, Matthias Giles (HDS) weaves together Augustine's diverse body of work to distill a coherent—and often ignored—doctrine of the human soul. He places Augustine's writings in conversation with the religious debates of late antiquity, using this careful juxtaposition to illuminate Augustine's own arguments and innovations. The result is a vision of the soul that unites humanity before God.

Following the academic features, the issue includes a set of essays and interviews that address concerns of scholarly research and academic professionalization. First, Khytie Brown (Harvard) reviews Paul Christopher Johnson's edited volume on conceptions of spirit possession in the study of Afro-Atlantic religions. She provides a crucial snapshot of the intersections of religion, racialization, and colonialism.

Then, Kera Street (Harvard) looks into the relation of academic work to living communities. The connection is one that sustains her own scholarly work, and that keeps it grounded in ethical and practical issues central to the place of religion in public and communal life.

Next are two interviews with current doctoral students. Lucia Hulsether (Yale) spoke with the journal about her own work and about the divisions—real or imagined—between the academy and the public, and her own practices for enduring, and enjoying, the stresses of university life. Helen Kim (Harvard) likewise details her own work on transnational evangelicalism, before discussing her own academic path. For her, academic labor is at once intellectual, physical, and spiritual work—especially when writing on the recent past, on little-known topics, or on contemporary politics.

Finally, the journal spoke with Michelle Sanchez, assistant professor of theology at HDS. We touched on her time as both student and faculty at Harvard, as well as the ways she connects her own scholarship to established fields, new conversations, and personal experience. These same connections in turn play critical roles in her own goals as a writer, a scholar, and—perhaps most importantly—a teacher.

The issue before you represents a specific vision of academia and of academic work. As potential scholars, we believe in the need to provide graduate students spaces to test ideas, to make arguments, and to push their intellectual boundaries. But as students, we also know that the university demands a certain type of conduct and strategy. This journal, in its new form, ministers to both these needs. It promotes student work, relies on student input, and facilitates student reflection, critique, and growth. So while the journal certainly embodies an academic standard we hope places it alongside other scholarly publications, we also see it as something more than that. It is a set of tools for future projects, a collection of questions at once theoretical and practical. It notes the many paths that traverse the university, and is a companion to those who travel them.

—Lewis West and Will Morningstar

CONFRONTING IMMORTALITY AT GETTYSBURG:

The United States Christian Commission and Civil Religion

*Cody Musselman*¹

The Reverend John Wega repeats the same refrain every time he introduces a sermon of the contemporary Christian Commission. The United States Christian Commission (USCC) went to the battlefields of the American Civil War “not with rifles or bayonets, but . . . with Bibles and bandages and the love and salvation offered only through the love of Jesus Christ.”² Inspired by the stories of the USCC, a relief agency formed during the Civil War, Wega moved to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, in the early 2000s to re-establish the USCC, which had been defunct since the end of the Civil War. Seeing Gettysburg as a location where Americans come face to face with their mortality, Wega’s new USCC strives to offer a religious outlet for the emotional responses triggered by Gettysburg’s stories of carnage and sacrifice. The motivation behind his efforts is a desire to restore the “story of Christian heritage in America.”³ What better place to establish such a ministry than in a popular patriotic destination where visitors look out over a landscape both sacralized by “a baptism in blood” and secularized by tourism? Peppered with monuments

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- 1 Many thanks to John Wega for his willingness to be interviewed about the USCC, and to Healan Gaston for her guidance, patience, and enthusiasm for this project.
 - 2 A phrase repeated by Wega in nearly every introduction to his sermons available through sermon.net. John Wega, “Sermon: Battlefield Orders,” *Sermon.net*, accessed March 30, 2014, <http://usccgettysburglogchapel.sermon.net/main/main/20016752>.
 - 3 “USCC Homepage,” accessed March 1, 2014, <http://www.usccgettysburg.org/about.asp>.

and casualty statistics, Gettysburg is a place where faith, death, and national identity converge.⁴

Using stories from the past and present Christian Commissions, I will explore how the death toll of the Battle of Gettysburg has enshrined the battlefield as an important national landmark. Beginning with a brief introduction to the history of the USCC and its involvement in the aftermath of the Battle of Gettysburg, this paper will turn to the USCC's recent reincarnation by the Reverend John Wega. Seeing nationalism as the dominant immortality project available to Gettysburg visitors, Wega uses the Christian stories of the Civil War to present an alternative narrative for visitors grappling with questions of mortality. Visitors faced with the degree of casualties suffered at Gettysburg are encouraged to subscribe to what Ernest Becker calls an "immortality project"—inviting individuals to invest their being into something greater than themselves, something that will remain eternal. Using the framework of the immortality project, I argue that Wega tries to create a space for evangelical Christianity to compete with civil religion as the primary immortality project presented to Gettysburg visitors who are confronting mortality and the price of nationalism.

The Historical United States Christian Commission

As one of the most popular Civil War battlefields, Gettysburg gained its historical significance from its being the location of a momentous three-day battle of the American Civil War. With roughly fifty-one thousand casualties, the Battle of Gettysburg was the most gruesome of the Civil War battles and is commonly referred to as the war's turning point. In the aftermath of the battle, volunteers came to Gettysburg to aid the wounded and bury the dead. Among the volunteers were members of the USCC, a relief aid organization distinct from the Union Army's chaplain corps. Several months into the beginning of the American Civil War, members of the Young Men's Christian Association became convinced that the Northern troops needed more faith-based resources. In November 1861 they met in New York City and created the USCC. Led by George H. Stuart, the delegates of the Commission were mostly male laymen and ministers.⁵ The Commission had a small set of paid field agents, but relied primarily on volunteers, also known as delegates, who served terms of two to

4 Harry Stout, *Upon the Altar of the Nation: A Moral History of the Civil War*, (New York: Viking, 2006), xxi.

5 Most of the USCC delegates were male, white, middle class, and Protestant.

six weeks.⁶ Traveling from battlefield to battlefield, delegates provided worship services and prayer to the soldiers. The worship practices of the USCC were influenced by the emotionalism and religious excitement of the evangelical revivalist tradition.⁷ Such practices included tent or camp meetings led by clergy and laymen, extemporaneous preaching, testimonials, and weekday services.⁸

Initially focusing on the spiritual needs of soldiers, the USCC spent much of its first year distributing Bibles, tracts, and religious publications.⁹ As the war drew on, the USCC adapted to the shifting needs of the soldiers and began to function more as a relief agency. They diversified their aid to address soldiers' well-being and morale. They offered medical care, food, clothing, care packages, letter writing materials, and refreshments such as water, lemonade, and coffee.¹⁰ In his account of the Commission's activities after the Battle of Gettysburg, Maryland Committee delegate Andrew Cross pointed to the value of offering a variety of comforts to soldiers. "[N]ever was a cup of cold water given to a sick or dying man more desirable or appropriate," he wrote.¹¹ By distributing beverages and goods, the USCC delegates found a point of entry into "[speaking] a word for Christ" to the soldiers.¹²

As it was conceived, the USCC was meant to serve the soldiers of the Union Army, yet accounts of Southern soldiers receiving relief and aid from USCC volunteers were commonplace in the organization's accounts. Cross wrote, "Our own men thanked us; our enemies wonder while they acknowledged the kindness."¹³ Describing the surprise felt by Confederate soldiers who received aid from the USCC, Cross continues, "they did not expect to be treated this way." He quotes a soldier as having said, "We are not afraid of your iron balls and heavy cannon, but we can't stand this. . . . *This treatment will perfectly subjugate us.*"¹⁴ Another such example is found in the personal journal of J.R. Weist, a

6 Ben Miller, "Onward Christian Soldiers," *New York Times*, December 22, 2011, accessed February 26, 2014, <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/12/22/onward-christian-soldiers>.

7 Daniel J. Hoisington, *Gettysburg and the Christian Commission* (Roseville, MN: Edinborough Press, 2002), 1–37.

8 Christopher Hodge Evans, *Histories of American Christianity: An Introduction* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 1959–2013), 116.

9 Hoisington, *Gettysburg and the Christian Commission*, 5.

10 Miller, "Onward Christian Soldiers."

11 Andrew B. Cross, "Battle of Gettysburg and the Christian Commission" (National Park Service Archives and Library, Gettysburg, PA), 21.

12 J.R. Weist, "Personal Journal of Tuesday July 7, 1863" (National Park Service Archives and Library, Gettysburg, PA), 187.

13 *Ibid.*, 20.

14 Cross, "Battle of Gettysburg and the Christian Commission," 20. Italics in original.

USCC volunteer in the aftermath of the Battle of Gettysburg. Weist describes the baptism by USCC volunteer Reverend Dobson of a dying “penitent rebel soldier,” W.J. White. Weist recorded the effect of the baptism: “At no time did I see a more satisfactory case—so fully prepared and willing to depart and be with Christ. The sad and happy I did think were very beautifully blended here.”¹⁵ Despite the intention of assisting only the Northern army, the USCC transcended political and regional ties. It centered instead on the redemptive capacity of baptism in the name of Jesus Christ. The effect of the Commission’s goodwill was not lost on its delegates. “We have heard many of both sides say that such actions of our Commission will do more to put an end to the war and make us live in peace and harmony under the Union than anything else,” wrote Cross.¹⁶

The aftermath of the Battle of Gettysburg proved to be a time where the relief offered by Christian Commission volunteers was especially needed. As one of the first USCC delegates to reach Gettysburg, Cross described the scope of the battle’s devastation, writing, “Here are thousands of men dying, who have only a few moments to make their preparations for eternity. . . . They lie among strangers, scattered in every direction chaplains cannot reach the one-hundredth of them.”¹⁷ Upon arriving at Gettysburg, Weist recalled the painful and gruesome scenes from the wake of the battle: “Saw what can only be seen after a great conflict—the effects of stern and real war. Dead horses, and many dead rebels unburied—and scattered all over were every thing a soldier carries and wears. The scene was sad and sorrowful. Graves! Graves! Everywhere.”¹⁸ After receiving his assignment with the Second Army Corps, Weist walked the grounds and took in the devastation:

Misery and sufferings enough to sicken and overcome most persons. Limbs piled up like heaps of hay or wood. Men shot in almost every conceivable form. Dirty, filthy, wet—many without garments enough to cover them. Some dyeing [sic], others fast sinking, others in great agony; while others however, were calm, easy and in good spirits. The scenes were pitiful in the extreme.¹⁹

To aid their relief, Weist gave out libations and prayed with soldiers. Amidst the despondency of the battle’s aftermath, Weist found satisfaction in his proselyti-

15 Weist, “Personal Journal of Tuesday July 7, 1863,” 187.

16 Cross, “Battle of Gettysburg and the Christian Commission,” 21.

17 *Ibid.*, 22.

18 Weist, “Personal Journal of Tuesday July 7, 1863,” 186.

19 *Ibid.*, 186.

zation: "Oh how gratifying and cheering when men are prepared to die—when they have Jesus as a refuge and help and friend."²⁰

Gettysburg, it would seem, was not only a turning point of the Civil War, but also a turning point for the Christian Commission. Gettysburg's proximity to major cities like Philadelphia, Baltimore, and New York facilitated the telling of the Christian Commission delegates' efforts. As a result, the USCC received more funding and an increase in volunteers. This allowed the Commission to create more opportunities to serve and expanded its number of paid positions for the remainder of the Civil War.²¹

The United States Christian Commission Reincarnated

The USCC dissolved after the war, only to be reincarnated one hundred forty years later by civilian John C. Wega. After reading journal entries of USCC delegates, Wega, a Pentecostal Christian, became inspired and moved his family to Gettysburg in the early 2000s. There he reestablished the USCC for the purposes of historical interpretation and contemporary evangelization. Wega views the Gettysburg Battlefield as a place where thousands of visitors come face to face with their mortality and need spiritual counseling in response to this encounter. For Wega, this makes Gettysburg the greatest mission field in the United States.

A former biomedical researcher from New Jersey, Wega had not yet been ordained when he moved his family to Gettysburg, where he now serves as the self-appointed chaplain and primary historian of the USCC.²² Under Wega's leadership, the contemporary Christian Commission aims to share the "untold story," to "uncover the buried history" and draw attention to the "relatively unknown" efforts of the USCC in the Civil War.²³ At its peak during the Civil War, the USCC had nearly five thousand unpaid volunteers. From this statistic, Wega asserts that the USCC "remains one of the greatest stories of heroism and courage in the course of our modern history."²⁴ Putting Christianity at the center of the Gettysburg experience is important to Wega, as he wants tourists at Gettysburg to acknowledge the importance of Christianity in United States history. Wega connects a soldier's sacrifice for his country to the story of Jesus's sacrifice for the sins of humanity: ". . . the sacrifice, the duty, the honor, the devotion, so that we may have life. I mean there are some real parallels there to the battlefield."

20 Weist, "Personal Journal of Tuesday July 7, 1863," 188.

21 Hoisington, *Gettysburg and the Christian Commission*, 36.

22 He is also the chaplain for the Adams County, PA, Sheriff's Department.

23 "USCC Homepage."

24 "USCC History," accessed March 2, 2014, <http://www.usccgettysburg.org/history.asp>.

By clearly seeing a Christian narrative within the landscape of the battlefield, the story of the historical USCC makes the evangelization of Wega's Christian faith all the more powerful. In reestablishing the USCC, Wega seeks simultaneously to tell the stories of the nineteenth-century USCC and to emulate the moral lessons they convey. "Wanting to 'be' the US Christian Commission, that's quite a statement," said Wega, "but I think we need to carry on their purposes and their work."²⁵ In reading the USCC documents, Wega sees the delegates' conflation of civic duty and Christianity as a clear indication that Christianity needs to be made the dominant guiding philosophy it once was. Through his work with the reconstituted USCC, Wega hopes to revive modern America's interest in being a Christian nation.

Having visited Gettysburg several times with his family, Wega was struck by the immense extent of the carnage during the Civil War: "Realizing that over six hundred thousand died over the period of four years, I was thinking, 'Well, where were believers in Christ that went out with the Gospel? Was someone going to reach these dying people? Obviously it's a place of people going off into eternity.'"²⁶ Inspired by these questions, Wega began to investigate the ministry of the Civil War. After encountering the USCC in *Incidents Among Shot and Shell* by Edward Parmelee Smith, Wega felt compelled to share the stories of "Christian heroism" contained therein.²⁷ For Wega and his family, Gettysburg, with hundreds of thousands of visitors per year, seemed like the obvious place to reestablish the USCC. "I think this makes Gettysburg, perhaps, the greatest mission field in America. People from all over the country, and all over the world, coming to a place where they are confronted with that [mortality]." The contemporary USCC not only offers visitors an alternative way to engage with Gettysburg's history, but also aims to engage their religious condition.

With Gettysburg as his mission field, Wega has used strategies of living history demonstration and reenactment to aid his ministry. Most recently, Wega has established a museum with Civil War-era USCC artifacts inside his family's coffee and cupcake shop—Johnny Como's Cupcakes—on Chambersburg Street in downtown Gettysburg.²⁸ Wega believes that his collection of USCC

25 John Wega, interview by author, Gettysburg, PA, March 16, 2014.

26 Ibid.

27 *Incidents Among Shot and Shell: The Only Authentic Work Extant Giving the Many Tragic and Touching Incidents that Came Under the Notice of the United States Christian Commission During the Long Years of the Civil War*, (Philadelphia: Edgewood Publishing Company, 1868).

28 Johnny Como's Cupcakes is named after John Como Wega. The cupcake shop is down the street from the location of the USCC's log chapel, which burned down in 2010.

documents and artifacts on display at the USCC museum “give[s] credibility to the [USCC] story.”²⁹ Establishing the credibility of his enterprise is a priority in the tourist-driven economy of Gettysburg, where multiple narratives of and avenues into battle analysis compete with each other.³⁰ In the height of the summer tourist season, Wega attracts attention by dressing in Civil War–era clothing and participating in living history demonstrations.³¹ He finds that tourists are more amenable to discussing religion when he approaches them in period dress: “It’s amazing to see when you go out dressed as the Civil War, the intrigue and the openness that people have with you because they want to learn. Isn’t it interesting at Gettysburg how we can use the history to portray and meet people’s desire to be able to share the gospel?”³² For some reenactors the experience is transportive, and gives them a sense of time travel or “period rush.”³³ This is not the case for Wega. His use of the Union soldier uniform to portray a USCC delegate is not for the thrill of reenacting, but rather is a strategy for advancing his missionary purposes. By embodying the life of a delegate, he is using the past to proselytize in the present. Unlike other living historians, whose missionary efforts focus on the importance of the past, Wega has an additional and more important mission: to spread the Christian gospel.

One of the crowning achievements of the contemporary USCC was the 2005 construction of a controversial twelve-by-twenty-foot-long wooden chapel on Chambersburg Street in downtown Gettysburg. In July of 2010, it was vandalized and then in November of the same year the borough of Gettysburg ordered that the log chapel be shut down because it did not meet zoning code—and was built without proper permits.³⁴ Before there was any legal resolution, the chapel was destroyed in December 2010 in an incident of arson that has

29 John Wega, interview by author, Gettysburg, PA, March 16, 2014.

30 Ghost tours, driving tours, bus tours, National Park Service tours, and historical interpretation events are a few of the entities competing for tourists’ time and money. “Our tours have gained little traction,” said Wega. Since the re-founding of the USCC, the Wegas have begun to focus more on ministry and historical reenactment and less on giving tours.

31 Over the past ten years such living history demonstrations have ranged from holding tent revivals at reenactments to showing his replica USCC coffee wagon and, before 2010, holding church services in the log chapel on Chambersburg Street in Gettysburg before it was destroyed.

32 John Wega, interview by author, Gettysburg, PA, March 16, 2014.

33 Tony Horwitz, *Confederates in the Attic* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998), 212.

34 Scott Andrew Pitzer, “Chapel Challenges Boro order to vacate,” *Gettysburg Times* Nov. 18, 2010, accessed May 7, 2014, http://www.gettysburgtimes.com/news/article_13b1f822-f387-11df-9fcf-001cc4c002e0.html.

yet to be solved.³⁵ Before the chapel's destruction, Wega held regular weekly worship services there.³⁶ Reflecting upon the log chapel, Wega recalled wistfully, "That was pretty amazing to build a wood structure and to start to see eighty to a hundred people come on Sundays. We left it open 24/7. Free Bibles, tracts. You could just kind of sit in there. A place for spiritual resolution."³⁷ The chapel served as a venue in which visitors could find solace during their visit to Gettysburg. "They're faced with a kind of hopelessness about the story [of Gettysburg] and it became a great place for people to come make resolution," said Wega.³⁸ Confronted with the carnage of the Battle of Gettysburg, the chapel sought to provide a non-denominational Christian location where people could contemplate mortality in a context of faith.

Whether they arrived three days after the battle or one hundred fifty-two years later, visitors to Gettysburg find themselves confronted with the gruesome realities of war. Thus, coming face to face with the fragility of one's own mortality remains a defining characteristic of the experience of visiting Gettysburg. "When you come to the battlefield and you hear about all of that stuff, where does it leave you?" Wega asks. "It leaves you in a real dilemma of hope. We've had people come and say 'this place is so depressing.' Because they're not just confronted with what happened a hundred and fifty years ago, those people that lost their lives and all of that—whether they can consciously identify it or not—they're confronting their own mortality, and what will happen when they die." These inescapable reminders of one's mortality make Gettysburg a mission field especially ripe for Christian evangelization, as both the USCC journal entries and Wega's observations attest.

Gettysburg, Mortality, and American Civil Religion

In light of the immense carnage wrought at the Battle of Gettysburg, the contemporary USCC valorizes the response of the nineteenth-century USCC through the rhetoric of heroism. "This is a story of heroes . . . heroes of faith!" the USCC's website exclaims.³⁹ Through this language, Wega draws attention

35 Katharine Harmon, "Three Sought in Civil War Chapel Arson: Chapel owner says ruling fills him with sorrow," *The Evening Sun*, Dec. 4, 2010, accessed May 7, 2014, http://www.eveningsun.com/ci_16778022.

36 "Chapel Destroyed," *Gettysburg Times*, Dec. 3, 2010, accessed May 7, 2014, http://www.gettysburgtimes.com/news/article_9ff4a432-ff59-11df-b458-001cc4c002e0.html.

37 John Wega, interview by author, Gettysburg, PA, March 16, 2014.

38 *Ibid.*

39 "USCC History."

to the idea that “heroism is first and foremost a reflex of the terror of death.”⁴⁰ In *The Denial of Death*, Ernest Becker argues that humans are able to transcend the predicament of mortality through heroism. Heroism, or “hero-systems,” engage the symbolic self whereby a person invests his or her self-worth in something they think will last forever. In this immortality project, “the complex symbol of death is transmuted and transcended by man”⁴¹ and an individual may “earn a feeling of primary value, of cosmic specialness, or ultimate usefulness to creation, of unshakable meaning.”⁴²

At Gettysburg, overt hero-systems are used to attribute meaning to the casualties of the soldiers and to engage visitors in the patriotic hero-project of the United States—encouraging visitors to subscribe to the Nation as something larger than the individual, from which “primary value” or “cosmic specialness” can be derived. As the turning point of the American Civil War and the battle that kept the states united, Gettysburg is a site that simultaneously celebrates national unity and valorizes the death of individuals as sacrifice in service of the nation. Incarnated in the “blood sacrifice” was an American civil religion, with Gettysburg as one of its primary shrines.⁴³

In his 1967 essay “Civil Religion in America,” sociologist Robert Bellah popularized the concept of American civil religion, arguing that a nation comes to some sort of religious self-understanding, and that this should be differentiated from national self-idolization.⁴⁴ The historian Raymond Haberski, in a recent book on *God and War*, describes American civil religion as “a hybrid of nationalism and traditional religion,” made up of a “collection of myths,” that has “an ideological flexibility.”⁴⁵ Catherine Albanese notes that religion is often the cohesive element of society, and within the religiously diverse setting of the United States, religions tend to coalesce around the symbols, practices, rituals and ideals of the civic.⁴⁶ Gettysburg, as a symbol of the national patriotic landscape, is sustained by the rhetoric of sacrifice. When visiting the hallowed ground, the National Park Service visitor center’s orientation film, *A New Birth of Freedom*,

40 Ernest Becker quoting N.S. Shaler, *The Individual: A Study of Life and Death* (New York: Appleton, 1900) in Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1973), 11.

41 Becker, *The Denial of Death*, 24.

42 *Ibid.*, 5.

43 Harry Stout, *Upon the Altar of the Nation*, xxi.

44 Robert N. Bellah, “Civil Religion in America,” *Daedalus* 96, no. 1 (Winter 1967).

45 Raymond Haberski Jr., *God and War: American Civil Religion since 1945* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2012), 5.

46 Catherine Albanese, *America Religions and Religion*, 2nd ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1992), 395.

and signs throughout the park highlight the battle's casualties and implore tourists to recognize the United States as a nation indebted to the dead. Bellah links this rhetoric to Abraham Lincoln's efforts to sustain the Union in his famous *Gettysburg Address*, delivered while dedicating the Soldiers' National Cemetery in Gettysburg. Surrounded by thousands of fresh graves, Lincoln uplifted the ideals of the nation as ones worth dying for. He called upon the American people to rededicate themselves to those ideals, "that these dead shall not have died in vain."⁴⁷

Indeed, efforts made throughout the years by the National Park Service and by local citizens have ensured that the efforts of the soldiers are not forgotten. "The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract," Lincoln said in his address. Even so, efforts to preserve the sanctity of Gettysburg in the one hundred fifty-two years since the battle have been numerous, and have included erecting monuments, holding reunions and battle anniversaries, remodeling the battlefield landscape for a better likeness to that of the 1860s, and holding modern-day reenactments. The construction of the past, writes Bertram Cohler, "is an active, continuing process, carried out by members of a culture sharing symbolic meanings in common and embodied in such aspects of culture as text and monument."⁴⁸ The Gettysburg National Military Park communicates the meaning of Gettysburg as the battle that held the United States together, and emphasizes it as a place of shared meaning for Americans. Stories of Union and Confederate soldiers' valor at Gettysburg have contributed to the narrative of national self-importance, and have turned Gettysburg into one of the United States's most powerful patriotic landscapes.⁴⁹ Glorified as the battle that kept the United States "one nation under God," Gettysburg is a place where much symbolism and rhetoric appealing to American civil religion can be found.⁵⁰

In his 1967 essay, Bellah discusses how the Civil War affected the character and symbols of American civil religion and anticipates new symbolic forms to

47 Abraham Lincoln, "The Gettysburg Address," *Abraham Lincoln Online*, accessed April 15, 2014, <http://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/speeches/gettysburg.htm>.

48 Bertram J. Cohler, "Nostalgia and the Disenchantment with Modernity: Memory Books as Adaptive Response to the Shoah," in *Mourning Religion*, ed. William B. Parsons, Diane Jonte-Pace, and Susan E. Henking (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2008), 211.

49 John S. Patterson, "A Patriotic Landscape: Gettysburg 1863–1913," *Prospects: An Annual of American Cultural Studies* 7 (1982): 315–333.

50 The teaching and recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance to the American flag at public schools in United States is just one way in which young citizens become indoctrinated in the American civil religion.

arise from what he calls a “third time of trial,” amidst the Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War, and the influx of non-Christian immigrants. Bellah drew attention to the existence of a Judeo-Christian American civil religion at the very time the Judeo-Christian label was swept aside for the more inclusive renderings of American religious pluralism. Yet the Protestant influence remained, even as terms defining American religious culture changed. Albanese points out that the various religious traditions present within the United States acquire characteristics of the Protestant mainstream, writing that Protestantism as “the dominant and public religion of the United States” is the common thread in America’s cultural religion.⁵¹ Tracy Fessenden argues that Protestantism’s grip on American culture is so strong that what is presented in popular and legal discourse as secularism is in fact a form of veiled Protestantism.⁵² Civil religion at Gettysburg may therefore be seen as a public Protestant civil religion. In some ways these Protestant undertones aid a Christian encounter with mortality at Gettysburg. Yet this is not enough for Wega.

For Wega, the veiled Protestantism of American civil religion is too secular—devoid of God and without a clear enough path to the Christian faith. This matter is of grave concern for Wega because his mission is to save souls through Christian conversion, and this mission is contested by the National Park Service’s position that embraces traditional liberal Protestant civil religion.

Conclusions

Amidst the wealth of civil religious symbols and rhetoric at Gettysburg, visitors are forced to consider the legacy of their nation as intertwined with war. “The Civil War taught Americans that they really were a Union, and it absolutely required a baptism of blood to unveil transcendent dimensions of that union,” writes Harry Stout.⁵³ War, and invariably death, gives rise to the discussion of religion, since religion becomes most visible in times of death. “There are no atheists in foxholes . . . in a time of test and trial, we instinctively turn to God for new courage and peace of mind,”⁵⁴ said President Dwight Eisenhower in a radio address.⁵⁵ That the Civil War incarnated American civil religion, as Stout

51 Albanese, *America Religions and Religion*, 397.

52 Tracy Fessenden, *Culture and Redemption: Religion, the Secular, and American Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 1–12.

53 Harry Stout, *Upon the Altar of the Nation*, xxi.

54 Raymond Haberski Jr., “War and America’s Civil Religion,” *Huffington Post*, July 2, 2012. Accessed April 24, 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/raymond-haberski-jr/war-and-americas-civil-religion_b_1638152.html.

55 President Eisenhower retired to Gettysburg after leaving the White House in 1961.

asserts, is not surprising since the spiritual and psychological impact of its death toll was high. Indeed, death pervades the legacy of Gettysburg, making the need for immortality projects all the more pressing.

With rhetorics of heroism, sacrifice, glory and unity, the immortality project of the nation is the primary narrative promoted at Gettysburg, thus highlighting its role as a shrine to the nation. Yet this does not satisfy the likes of Wega, who sees civil religion as a venue for misplaced faith. Instead, Wega presents visitors with an alternative, the immortality project of Christianity. As a representative of America's Christian religious right, Wega is dissatisfied with the current formulation of American civil religion because of what it leaves out: an overtly Christian story. "Christian history is not some sub-story that follows history," said Wega, "we're trying to integrate it into the whole story."⁵⁶ For Wega, the notion of America as a Christian nation is at stake in the success or failures of the reincarnated USCC. Today, a century and a half since the Civil War drew to a close, Wega finds himself embroiled in a cultural battle over narratives of history and expressions of faith in America. As the thousands of visitors who come to Gettysburg each year decide how to frame their interpretation of historical events and the meaning of those events for their thinking about their own mortality, Wega presents visitors the stories of Christian exemplars. Entering the battlefield without rifles or bayonets, the USCC delegates of the past offered the injured and the dying the love and salvation of Jesus Christ. Using stories from the past, Wega fights for Christianity as the only viable immortality project at Gettysburg. Yet, when pinned against the capaciousness of civil religion, Wega's USCC is losing ground.

56 John Wega, interview by author, Gettysburg, PA, March 16, 2014.

SEALED IN SKIN:

Sigillography as Scarification in the Late Middle Ages

Kathryn Dickason¹

Only the sign remains of that original sin as you contract it from your father and mother when you are conceived by them. . . . The inclination to sin, which is the scar that remains from original sin, is a weakness as I have said, but the soul can keep it in check if she will.

. . . I have told you of the good the glorified body will have in the glorified humanity of my only-begotten son, and this is the guarantee of your own resurrection. What joy there is in his wounds, forever fresh, the scars remaining in his body and continually crying out for mercy to me the high eternal father, for you! You will all be made like him in joy and gladness; eye for eye, hand for hand, your whole bodies will be made like the body of the Word my son.²

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- 1 The early phases of this project benefitted from insightful conversations with Shahzad Bashir, Kellam Conover, Marisa Galvez, William Mahrt, and Cici Malik. Atticus Bergman, Fiona Griffiths, Barbara Pitkin, and Leah DeVun graciously read previous drafts and provided astute suggestions. I am grateful to the anonymous reviewers and editors for their feedback, which enriched the clarity and cogency of my writing. A special thanks is in order for Hester Gelber, who supported my research from the beginning and helped nourish it to fruition.
 - 2 Catherine of Siena, *Il Dialogo*, XIV, XLI: “Rimase in voi solo il segno del peccato originale, che contraete quando siete concepiti dal padre e dalla madre. . . . Quell’inclinazione al peccato poi, che le resta come una cicatrice, viene indebolita, e l’animo può frenarla, se vuole. . . . Ti parlavo del bene, che ritrarrebbe il corpo glorificato nell’Umanità glorificata del mio Figlio Unigenito, la quale dà a voi certezza della vostra resurrezione. Esultano i beati nelle sue piaghe, che sono rimaste fresche; sono conservate nel suo corpo le cicatrici, che continuamente gridano a me, sommo ed eterno Padre, misericordia. Tutti si conformano a lui in gaudio a giocondità, occhio con occhio, mano con mano, e con tutto il corpo del dolce Verbo, mio Figlio.” In *Il Dialogo della Divina Provvidenza*, ed. Angiolo Puccetti (Siena: Edizioni Cantagalli, 1998), 57, 94–95; trans. Suzanne Noffke and Giuliana Cavallini, *Catherine of Siena: The Dialogue* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 53, 85. It is noteworthy that the Italian term for sign (*segno*) can also denote a mark, signal, or scar. Elsewhere Catherine explains how the pus drained out of Adam’s sin left him and his descendents with a scar (*Il Dialogo XIV*, 56–57),

In these two excerpts, St. Catherine of Siena (d. 1380) gives a religious allegory of scars. In the first passage, procreation transmits the primordial Fall to successive generations. Passed down in the form of scars, these remnants of Adam's transgression expose humanity's moral failings; they are imbricated into the very sinews and sutures of our being. Catherine remains hopeful, as the will to reject evil tempers one's temptation to sin, ushering in a possibility for redemption. Catherine continues to develop this motif in the second passage. Christ's scars remain on his exemplary body for intercessory salvation. Receiving his resurrected, wounded body, Christians can reclaim their likeness to the *imago Dei* (image of God). Catherine's manipulation of the scar turns an accident into an act of providence. The scar encapsulates the transformational thrust of Christianity: from original sin to divine mercy. In this way, I argue, scars function as a seal (*sigillum*), authenticating creation's indelible connection to the Creator.

As Catherine's words, suggest, the medieval scar (*cicatrix*), both actual and symbolic, external and internal, emitted flexible meanings. In hagiography (saints' lives) and visual sources, scars marked the body of a religious practitioner as testimony to a miraculous event. For theologians and polemicists, the incontestable presence of scars validated doctrinal truths and discredited heresy. Battle wounds, illness, and most stigmata produced involuntary scarring. Martyrs, crusaders, and mystics set themselves up to be scarred in the name of God.³ The making of manuscripts, too, involved scarification. Scribes produced written artifacts by inscribing parchment—made from flayed animal hides—with quills and ink. Conscious of their sacrificial act, scribes sometimes stitched sutures onto the manuscript page. Scribal scarification reminded the reader that making a book required the sacrifice of a living animal, just as saving humanity required the sacrifice of the *agnus Dei* (lamb of God).⁴ Scars therefore reconfigured the

and describes Adam's original sin as a "mortal mark," which, according to Puccetti, is comparable to a scar, *ibid.*, 56 n. 1.

- 3 Although this paper focuses on the religious significance of medieval scars, secular sources offer a range of meanings associated with scars, e.g. Francesco Petrarca, *Canzoniere*, *Senilias*, and *De Remediis Utriusque Fortunae*. Incidentally, a recent examination of Petrarca's corpse revealed the presence of multiple scars on his legs, presumably from horse riding accidents, Elisabeth Rosenthal, "Pathologist on the Hunt for Saints and Poets," *New York Times*, October 9, 2004.
- 4 For studies on the sacrificial use of parchment in the Middle Ages, see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Christian Materiality: An Essay on Religion in Late Medieval Europe* (New York: Zone Books, 2011), 89–93; Bruce Holsinger, "Of Pigs and Parchment: Medieval Studies and the Coming of the Animal," *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 124, no. 2 (March 2009): 616–23; *idem*, "Parchment Ethics: A Statement of More Than Modest Concern," *New Medieval Literatures* 12 (2010): 131–36; Nancy Vine Durling, "Birthmarks and Bookmarks: The Example of a Thirteenth-Century French

subject's body (animal, human, or divine) as a meaning-making surface, a sign (*signum*) to be read. They at once sealed the surface of the body and amplified its communicative potential.

Despite the presence of scars and scarification in religious and secular materials, scholars have not studied them in depth. Caroline Walker Bynum and others focus on the symbolic acts of bleeding, weeping, flowing, and wounding in religious practice and the imagination. Yet few investigations have wrestled with the material aftermath, or remainder, of physical rupture.⁵ This paper

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- Anthology," *Exemplaria* 16, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 73–94; idem, "British Library MS Harley 2253: A New Reading of the Passion Lyrics in Their Manuscript Context," *Viator* 40, no. 1 (2009): 271–307; Sarah Kay, "Original Skin: Flaying, Reading, and Thinking in the Legend of Saint Bartholomew and Other Works," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 36, no. 1 (Winter 2006): 35–73; idem, "Legible Skins: Animal Skins and the Ethics of Medieval Reading," *Postmedieval: A Journal of Medieval and Cultural Studies* 2, no. 1 (2011): 13–32; idem, "Flayed Skin as *objet a*: Representation and Materiality in Guillaume de Deguileville's *Pèlerinage de vie humaine*," in *Medieval Fabrications: Dress, Textiles, Clothwork, and Other Cultural Imaginings*, ed. Jane E. Burns (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 193–205, 249–51; Mary A. Rouse and Richard H. Rouse, "From Flax to Parchment: A Monastic Sermon from Twelfth-Century Durham," in *New Science Out of Old Books: Studies in Manuscripts and Early Printed Books in Honour of A.I. Doyle*, eds. Richard Beadle and A.J. Piper (Hants, UK: Scolar Press, 1995), esp. 7–9; Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 306–308.
- 5 Bynum, *Christian Materiality*; idem, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); idem, *Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany and Beyond* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); *Crying in the Middle Ages: Tears of History*, ed. Elina Gertsman (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011); Jeffrey Hamburger, *The Visual and the Visionary: Art and Female Spirituality in Late Medieval Germany* (New York: Zone Books, 1998); Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); Richard Kieckhefer, *Unquiet Souls: Fourteenth-Century Saints and Their Religious Milieu* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984). Some notable exceptions: Georgia Frank, "Macrina's Scar: Homeric Allusion and Heroic Identity in Gregory of Nyssa's *Life of Macrina*," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 8, no. 4 (Winter 2000): 511–30; Virginia Burrus, "Macrina's Tattoo," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 33, no. 3 (Fall 2003): 403–17; Karmen MacKendrick, *World Made Skin: Figuring Language at the Surface of the Flesh* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004); Virginia Blanton, *Signs of Devotion: The Cult of St. Aethelthryth in Medieval England, 695–1615* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007); Valentin Groebner, *Who Are You? Identification, Deception, and Surveillance in Early Modern Europe*, trans. Mary Kyburz and John Peck (New York: Zone Books, 2007). Bynum has some abbreviated discussions about scars and the resurrected body in *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200–1366* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 85–86, 296; idem, *Wonderful Blood*, 104–107, 129, 144–45.

instead show how medieval scars—far from remaining skin-deep—transmitted theological significance for religious communities. Going beyond traces of flawed flesh, medieval scars imbued sacred time, individual identity, and theological premise with perceptible form.⁶

My investigation of the Western medieval sources (c. 1200–1450) demonstrates how scars became theologically intelligible as seals. In medieval material culture, wax seals were indispensable tools of authorization, identification, and communication. A comparison between scars and medieval sigillography, the study of seals, highlights how scars shaped and reconciled the dialectic between individuality and corporate (Christian) identity.⁷ Of particular interest to me in this paper is the religious underpinning of seals' signifying power. For medieval Christians, the semiosis of seals presupposed that humans bear the divine imprint of God, the original seal. In this way, the seal relates to the scarred body of Christ, which re-erected the bridge between humanity and divinity, cosmos and world. To my knowledge, medieval discourse on seals and on scars were not directly related. Semiotically speaking, however, this paper demonstrates how scars and seals operated in a comparable fashion. Both functioned to signify and authorize a particular presence.

This paper contains three sections. First, I address how scars worked sigillographically, essentializing and authenticating personhood in the course of one's life and afterlife. St. Francis of Assisi serves as my principal example. Within the logic of sealing, the scars from Francis's stigmata authenticate a past encounter with Christ and situate him within an apocalyptic landscape. Second, I explore the affinity between scars and seals through the lens of theological aesthetics. The scars of virtuous individuals were beautiful because they achieved semiotic transparency between seal and sealed, which attested to their close relationship with God. In contrast, scars of evil souls were ugly because they disrupted the affinity between the original archetype and the reproduced image. Finally, I assess the scarified body of Christ as the ultimate seal. Presenting the prototype of redemption, Christ's scars impressed salvific presence onto Christians. This

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- 6 I use the term "trace" literally and metaphorically (as in material fragments, remnants of the past, or sketching progression over time). While I do not invoke Jacques Derrida's deconstruction in this paper, his concept of the trace and its ability to signify between presence and absence (see *Of Grammatology* and *Writing and Difference*) is another productive way to think about scars as signs.
- 7 To be clear, I refer to a pre-modern sense of self in which individual identity is self-consciously tied to corporate identity, differing from modern individualism. See esp. Caroline Bynum, "Why All the Fuss about the Body? A Medievalist's Perspective," *Critical Inquiry* 22, no. 1 (1995): 1–33; Colin Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual, 1050–1200* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987).

analysis offers a different perspective on how medieval subjects viewed themselves within the totality of Christian history.

Scarred for Afterlife: The Seal of Identity

Skin, as a sensorial boundary between ourselves and the world, materializes subjective experience. In a classic example from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the flaying of the satyr Marsyas illustrates the intimacy between skin and self. During this horrific incident, Marsyas exclaims "Why are you stripping me from myself?"⁸ This tearing away of Marsyas's identity reduces his body to a single wound.⁹ While skin naturally undergoes many metamorphoses in the course of life, scars—however faded they become—remain on the skin. Despite the passage of time or change of circumstance, the scar maintains its appearance and reveals what may otherwise remain hidden. In poetry, literature, and popular culture, scarred bodies display enduring markers of personal identity; they make the individual stand out from the multitude.¹⁰ In medieval Christianity, the permanence of scarred flesh could not be reduced to a dermatological aberration. Congruent with the seal, the scar reified the individual, refashioning an abstract persona into a concrete symbol. Scars as seals captured one's essence and historicized their rapport with divinity. Both defining factors remained with medieval Christians until the end of time.

During the High and Late Middle Ages, sophisticated theories of the Resurrection took scarification to a new level of significance. According to eschatological theories, the body in general, and scars in particular, were so integral to identity that their physical presence continued in the resurrected body and lasted for eternity. Medieval Christians were not only scarred for life, they were

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- 8 Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, VI, ll. 235–48: "Quid me mihi detrahis?" Interestingly, the Christianized *Ovide Moralisé* glosses Marsyas's sin as vain glory, pride, and false hypocrisy, *Ovide Moralisé: Poème du Commencement du Quatorzième Siècle*, ed. Cornelis de Boer et al. (Wiesbaden: M. Sändig, 1938), 332–33, ll. 1981–2056.
- 9 For a psychoanalytical take on the myth of Marsyas, see Didier Anzieu, *The Skin Ego*, trans. Chris Turner (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), ch. 4. Claudia Benthien reflects on the relationship between skin and subjectivity more comprehensively in *Skin: On the Cultural Border between Self and the World*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).
- 10 Examples of the scar as an individualizing fixture of identity abound in literature, film, and drama, including the poetry of Kahlil Gibran and Sylvia Plath, John Steinbeck's *East of Eden*, J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, the pulp fiction series *The Purple Scar*, a recent film adaptation of *Beowulf* (2007), and William Shakespeare's *Henry V* (act IV, scene iii).

scarred for afterlife. Indeed, a tight correlation between the body and selfhood in the Middle Ages, as Caroline Bynum has shown, undergirds theological debates on bodily resurrection.¹¹ For example, in Augustine's *Civitas Dei* (*City of God*), interrelations between bodily remains, self, and the end of days colored ruminations on medieval individuality.¹² Scars occupied a critical juncture between the particular (individual identity) and the universal (corporate consciousness). Within this dialectic, the scar operated in the same semiotic fashion as the seal. Medieval seals signified through the system of essentialist semiotics, i.e. the association between God (the sealer) and humankind (the sealed) in relation to the divine imprint. Exercising a signifying mode similar to sealing, scars recognized the individual and mimicked one's essential unity between Christians and Christ.

Medieval seals, both ecclesiastical and secular, purported to erase the gap between the signifier and the signified. Though not composed of bodily matter, the seal nevertheless conveyed the most salient attributes of the individual it signified.¹³ Typically appearing on charters, legal documents, and papal bulls, seals authenticated writing and minimized the possibility of forgery. Consider the seal of Robert Fitzwalter (d. 1235). A feudal baron of Essex, Fitzwalter is perhaps most famous for rebelling against King John of England. Along with twenty-four other Englishmen, this revolt culminated in the Magna Carta, the "Great Charter" of 1215 that protected the rights of the Church and the barons, thus tempering monarchical power. Fitzwalter's silver seal-matrix, or sealing device, displays his knightly identity [Fig. 1]. A man of noble rank, Fitzwalter is pictured with knightly accoutrements: horse, hauberk, shield, and helmet. His

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- 11 Bynum, "Why All the Fuss about the Body?" 1–33. Jessica A. Boon has shown the strong correlation between medical understandings of the body and self-knowledge in "Medical Bodies, Mystical Bodies: Medieval Physiological Theory in the Recollection Mysticism of Bernardino de Laredo," *Viator* 39, no. 2 (2008): 261–66.
 - 12 See especially Augustine's *Civitas Dei*, XXII. Important scholarly treatments of these resurrection issues include Bynum, "Material Continuity, Personal Survival, and the Resurrection of the Body: A Scholastic Discussion in Its Medieval and Modern Contexts," in *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 253–54; Burrus and MacKendrick, "Bodies without Wholes: Apophatic Excess and Fragmentation in Augustine's *City of God*," in *Apophatic Bodies: Negative Theology, Incarnation, and Relationality*, eds. Chris Boesel and Catherine Keller (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 79–93; Virginia Burrus, "Carnal Excess: Flesh at the Limits of the Imagination," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 17, no. 2 (2009): 247–65.
 - 13 Brigitte Bedos-Rezak, "The Social Implications of the Art of Chivalry: The Sigillographic Evidence (France 1050–1250)," in *Form and Order in Medieval France: Studies in Social and Quantitative Sigillography* (Aldershot, UK: Variorum, 1993), 1–2.

shield bears his family crest. His horse, donned in the heraldic design of an ally, gallops over a dragon. Medieval seals like Fitzwalter's condensed the definitive traits of an individual: bloodline, social status, and occupation.



Fig. 1

Seal-matrix of Robert Fitzwalter

England, c. 1219

London, British Museum no. 1841.0624.1

Brigitte Bedos-Rezak, an expert in medieval sigillography, has demonstrated how medieval sealing practices encoded individuality within a theological framework. Seals could represent qualities of selfhood as diverse as reason, will, intention, sex, social rank, and imagination.¹⁴ By the tenth century, powerful members of the laity were permitted to have their own seals (a practice formerly granted exclusively to royalty and clergy of superior rank). And by the twelfth century, sealed objects could substitute for the physical presence of the person they signified.¹⁵ Just as the Creator infuses his image onto creation, the seal matrix imprints its icon onto hot wax. Throughout the High and Late Middle

14 Bedos-Rezak, "Signes d'Identité et Princes d'Altérité au XII^e Siècle: L'Individu, C'est l'Autre," in *L'Individu au Moyen Âge: Individuation et Individualisation Avant la Modernité*, eds. Bedos-Rezak and Dominique Iogna-Prat (Paris: Aubier, 2005), 44. Michel Pastoureau has argued that seals, as proto-heraldic devices, could also signify group identity, Michel Pastoureau, *Les Sceaux*, (*Typologie des Sources du Moyen Âge Occidentale*, Turnhout: Brépols, 1981), fasc. 36.

15 Idem, *When Ego Was Imago: Signs of Identity in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 5–57. According to Bedos-Rezak, this shift towards more personalized seals is most evident after the Carolingian period. Whereas Carolingian royal seals abstracted the individual by aligning him with monarchical power, post-millennial seals captured the personal identities of individuals depicted in seals, *ibid.*, 233–35.

Ages, the seal, the sacred origins of its signage, lent legitimacy to its pictorial tokens of identity, presence, and authority. The religious undertones of seals became particularly potent after the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215. Following this council, the transubstantiation, or the transformation of the communion rite into divine presence, became official doctrine. Within this model of the Eucharist, the things (wafer and wine) actualized what they signified (body and blood). This semiotic essentialism reinstated the congruence between the sealer and sealed, matrix and impression. The seal's transparent agency was theologically generative. It helped restore humankind's original likeness to God, which had been obscured in the postlapsarian age following Adam's sin.¹⁶ Therefore, the post-Lateran IV incarnational theology gave warrant to seals (even of a secular variety) to simulate individual presence and evoke its divine source.

The marked bodies of thirteenth-century saints provide further evidence for this semiotic shift. Embossed with the image of Christ, the scarred body of St. Francis of Assisi (d. 1226) was the paragon of individual and integral holiness. Francis received numerous scars that signified his exceptional sainthood and portrayed him as the crucified Christ. For instance, a letter by Elias of Cortona (d. 1253), one of the earliest members of the Franciscan Order, extols Francis's scars:

And now I announce to you a great joy, a new miracle. The world has never heard of such a miracle, except in the Son of God, who is Christ our Lord. A little while before his death, our brother and father appeared crucified, bearing in his body the five wounds, which are truly the stigmata of Christ. His hands and feet were as if punctured by nails, pierced on both sides, and had scars that were the black color of nails. His side appeared pierced by a lance, and often gave forth droplets of blood.¹⁷

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- 16 Idem, "Medieval Identity: A Sign and Concept," *American Historical Association* 105, no. 5 (2000): 1491–1503. Even Abelard began to theorize to what extent someone's personhood could be signified in the absence of their bodily presence, *ibid.*, 1503. For an etymological analysis of this semiotic principle of likeness, see Bynum, *Christian Materiality*, 231. And for Augustine's position, see Belford Darrell Jackson, "The Theory of Signs in St. Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana*," in *Augustine: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Robert A. Markus (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1972), 131.
- 17 Attrib. Elias of Cortona, *Epistola Encyclica de Transitu Sancti Francisci* (c. 1253): "Et his dictis, annuntio vobis gaudium magnum et miraculi novitatem. A saeculo non est auditum tale signum, praeterquam in Filio Dei, qui est Christus Dominus. Non diu ante mortem frater et pater noster apparuit crucifixus, quinque plagas, quae vere sunt stigmata Christi, portans in corpore suo. Nam manus eius et pedes quasi puncturas clavorum habuerunt, ex utraque parte confixas, reservantes cicatrices et clavorum nigredinem ostendentes. Latus vero eius lanceatum apparuit et saepe sanguinem

Francis's stigmatic body emblemized his extraordinary personhood. Duplicating the trace wounds of Christ's body, as medievals understood them, Francis bore the true likeness of God. His scars both set him apart (in the true sense of the word *sacer*), and refashioned him as a transparent image of divinity imprinted onto matter. As evident from Elias's account, Francis's scars garner significance by impressing, or sealing, his Christ-like persona. The stigmata, as sealed scars, places Francis's identity along a historical continuum. It documents a past event and foreshadows an imminent return, transporting the saint's essence for life and afterlife.

Elsewhere, Francis's disciples draw attention to the timelessness of his scar. Thomas of Celano (d. 1265), the first biographer of Francis, privileges the saint's side scar as his residual wholeness. Francis's interaction with the seraph, however transient, formed a flowing mark on his side: "His right side was marked with an oblong scar, as if pierced with a lance, and this often dripped blood, so that his tunic and undergarments were frequently stained with his holy blood."¹⁸ This vision at once stamped Francis's body with a personal signature and recalled the intercessory discharge from Christ's side wound, as depicted in late medieval Last Judgment scenes. More specifically, the fluidity of Francis's scar reflects Thomas's desire to represent Francis as a timeless exemplar of holiness and to foster an unchanging vision of the Franciscan Order.¹⁹

evaporavit." In *Fontes Franciscani*, 245; trans. Regis Armstrong, J. A. Hellmann, and William Short in *Francis of Assisi, Early Documents: Volume Two, the Founder* (Charlottesville: InteLex Corporation, 2006), II: 490; Arnold I. Davidson, "Miracles of Bodily Transformation, or How St. Francis Received the Stigmata," *Critical Inquiry* 35 (2009): 458; Cf. Bernard McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism: Men and Women in the New Mysticism, 1200–1350* (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1998), 62. The term *stigmata* derives from the Greek word for mark, but can also refer to a sign or scar. The Vulgate employs the same term in Galatians 6:17.

- 18 Thomas of Celano, *Vita Prima Sancti Francisci*, II.3: "Dextrum quoque latus quasi lancea transfixum, cicatrice obducta, erat, quod saepe sanguinem emittebat, ita ut tunica eius cum femoralibus multoties respergeretur sanguine sacro," in *Fontes Franciscani*, 371. St. Bonaventure's *Legenda Maior* describes a similar scar: "Dextrum quoque latus quasi lancea transfixum, rubra cicatrice obductum erat, quod saepe sanguinem sacrum effundens, tunicam et femoralia respergebat," in *Fontes Franciscani*, 892; Adrian House, *Francis of Assisi: A Revolutionary Life* (Mahwah, NJ: Hidden Spring, 2001), 262–63. It is noteworthy that Julian of Speyer, Francis's second biographer, eliminated much of Thomas's text, yet nearly duplicated his predecessor's description of the scar. (Julian of Speyer, *Vita Sancti Francisci*, XI.62: "In latere vero dextro cicatrice obductum vulnus apparuit, quod et sacrum sanguinem saepius evaporans tunicam ipsius necnon et aliquoties femoralia tinxit." In *Fontes Franciscani*, 1080.)
- 19 For a discussion about Thomas of Celano's biographical application of indefinite time, see Hester Gelber, "Revisiting the Theater of Virtue," *Franciscan Studies* 58 (2000): 26–29.

In consonance with the seal, the scar enables the part to stand in for the whole. For the early Franciscans following the death of their founder, the image of his scar activates the saint's holy, and wholly omnipresent, nature.

Francis's identification with the seal became even more important in later decades when St. Bonaventure (d. 1274) recognized Francis as the sixth seal of Revelation (Apocalypse 6:12–17).²⁰ In tension with Thomas of Celano's purist position, the deployment of Francis's scars in Bonaventure's *Legenda Maior* (*Major Legend*) promotes religious reform. Following the death of its founder, the Franciscan Order, split between two principal factions, the Spirituals and the Conventuals. The former group aimed to maintain Francis's own lifestyle and to practice their devotion to him outside the strictures of ecclesiastical authority. The latter sought to assimilate the Order into the world while working within the institutional framework of the Church.²¹ In 1260, the Chapter of Narbonne commissioned Bonaventure (the newly elected Minister General) to compose an authoritative biography of Francis, presumably to harmonize the Order's festering conflicts.²² With his Conventual leanings, Bonaventure was more calculating in his recounting of Francis's exemplary virtue. Rather than emphasizing his individual idiosyncrasies, the *Legenda Maior*, as Hester Gelber has argued, presented an image of Francis in the form of an "anagogical appropriation" of the body of Christ.²³ In other words, embodied devotion achieved mystical ascent. Despite the *Legenda Maior's* miraculous milieu, Bonaventure makes it clear that Francis's body, as a sign of sanctity, is always

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- 20 Bonaventure's prologue to *Legenda Maior Sancti Francisci* affirms Francis's identity as the sixth seal of the Apocalypse: ". . . sub similitudine Angeli ascendentis ab ortu solis signumque Dei vivi habentis adstruitur non immerito designatus. . . . Positus est perfectis Christi sectatoribus in exemplum . . . veram etiam irrefragabili veritatis testificatione confirmat signaculum similitudinis Dei viventis, Christi videlicet crucifixi, quod in corpore ipsius fuit impressum." In *Fontes Franciscani*, 778–79. See I Corinthians 1:22 for another relationship between sealing and Christian identity.
- 21 Susan J. Hubert, "Theological and Polemical Uses of Hagiography: A Consideration of Bonaventure's *Legenda Major* of St. Francis," *Comitatus* 29 (1998): 48–49.
- 22 Raphael M. Huber, *A Documented History of the Franciscan Order, 1182–1517* (Milwaukee: Nowiny Publishing Apostolate, 1944), 522–27; Damien Vorreux, "Introduction to the Major and Minor Life of St. Francis," in *St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies: English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis*, ed. Marion A. Habig, trans. Paul Verreux (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983), 615–26. Cf. Dante, *Paradiso*, canto XI, eds. Robert Durling and Ronald Martinez (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3:230–231, ll. 106–108.
- 23 Hester Goodenough Gelber, "A Theater of Virtue: The Exemplary World of St. Francis of Assisi," in *Saints and Virtues*, ed. John Stratton Hawley (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 31–32.

dependent upon his resemblance to God.²⁴ Perhaps in light of these internal politics, Bonaventure validates Francis's stigmata with the image of the papal seal:

To confirm this with greater certainty by God's own testimony, when only a few days had passed, the stigmata of our Lord Jesus were imprinted upon him by the finger of the living God, as the seal of the Supreme Pontiff, Christ, for the complete confirmation of the rule and the commendation of its author.²⁵

Bonaventure recasts Francis into a faithful follower of the traditional ecclesiastical structure. The saint's scars acquire authenticity through their connection to papal *auctoritas*. By identifying Francis's stigmata with the papacy, Bonaventure's version of the side scar has a decidedly ecclesiological purchase on the Conventual position. The scar encodes orthodoxy, paralleling how the seal accredits validity.

The *Legenda Maior*, which became the official biography of Francis, championed a typological presentation of the saint. In this mode of representation, Francis presented a typos, an impression or pattern, referring back to its original mold: the *imago Dei*. Christ, the ideal seal, manifests the perfect convergence between Logos and flesh, sign and thing. His presence is so totalizing that it continued to resonate after he left the terrestrial world for his celestial throne. For instance, "The Ascension of Christ" as narrated in Jacob of Voragine's *The Golden Legend*, tells how Christ permanently marked the earth on which he once walked:

Regarding the place from which Christ ascended, Sulpicius, bishop of Jerusalem, says, and the *Gloss* [*Glossa Ordinaria*] also says, that when a church was built there [the Mount of Olives] later on, the spot where Christ had stood could never be covered with pavement; and more than that, the marble slabs placed there burst upwards into the faces of those who were laying them. He also says that footmarks in the dust there

24 E.g. Bonaventure, *Legenda Maior*, XIII: "Disparens igitur visio mirabilem in corde ipsius reliquit ardorem, sed et carne non minus mirabilem signorum impressit effigiem." In *Fontes Franciscani*, eds. Enrico Menestò and Stefano Brufani (Assisi: Porziuncola, 1995), 892; trans. R. Armstrong et al., *Francis of Assisi, Early Documents*, 2:632–33.

25 *Ibid.*, IV: "Quod et certius constaret testimonio Dei, paucis admodum evolutis diebus, impressa sunt ei stigmata Domini Iesu digito Dei vivi tamquam bulla summi Pontificis Christi ad confirmationem omnimodam regulae et commendationem auctoris." In *Fontes Franciscani*, 813; trans. Armstrong et al., *Francis of Assisi, Early Documents*, II: 559–60; Cf. McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism*, 96, 98.

prove that the Lord had stood on that spot: the footprints are discernible and the ground still retains the depressions his feet had left.²⁶

Here divinity forever seals the earth with holy presence and scarifies earthly matter with remnants of his Incarnation. Christ's traces reside on the utmost layer of the earth, just as scarred flesh extends beyond the epidermis. Like the seal, they defy forgery and maintain integrity. The Latin text employs the term *vestigium* for both for footmark and footprint. With each step, Christ's feet engage in an act of sealing, imprinting divinity onto matter and investing the vestigial imagery with phenomenal presence. The sealed earth authenticates Christ's spectral continuity, propelling his absence into an actual afterlife.

Beyond Skin-Deep: The Theological Aesthetics of Scars and Seals

The theological aestheticization of scars strengthened the interrelation between seals, signs, and holiness. Hagiographic materials contain numerous examples of this aesthetic turn. Following his stigmatization, St. Francis developed a red scar over his side wound, which contracted into a circle and "looked like a beautiful rose," according to Bonaventure.²⁷ Francis's body replicated the wounds of Christ, but Bonaventure chose to highlight the scar's aesthetic dimension rather than stressing physical pain. In a well-known example from medieval German mysticism, Henry Suso (d. 1366) carved Christ's initials (IHS) onto his heart with a stylus, cutting his flesh in the divine monogram. Suso then

26 Jacobus de Voragine, *De Ascensione Domini*: ". . . cum ibi postea edificata esset ecclesia, locus ille in quo institerunt uestigia Christi ascendentis nunquam potuit sterni pavimento, immo resiliabant Marmora in ora collocantium. Calcati etiam pulueris a domino hoc dicit esse documentum quod uestigia impressa cernuntur et eandem adhuc speciem uelut pressis uestigiis terra custodit." In *Legenda Aurea*, ed. Giovanni Paolo Maggioni (Tavarnuzze: SISMELE • Edizioni del Galluzzo, 1998), I: 481; trans. Granger Ryan and Helmut Ripperger, *The Golden Legend* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1941), I: 292.

27 Bonaventure, *Legenda Maior*, II.15, "vulnus autem lateris rubeum et ad orbicularitatem quamdam carnis contractione reductum rosa quedam pulcherrima videbatur." In *Fontes Franciscani*, 906; trans. *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, 2:646. This passage occurs in the chapter about the transferal of Francis's body and his canonization. In following, Bonaventure offers a description of Francis's rose-budding side that recalls the Transfiguration of Christ, *Legenda Maior*, II.15, in *Fontes Franciscani*, 906. For insights into the multi-symbolism of the rose in the Middle Ages, see Rachel Fulton, "The Virgin in the Garden, or Why Flowers Make Better Prayers," *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality* 4, no. 1 (2004): 1–23.

“tore open his tunic and saw that his breast was flooded with radiance and surmounted with a gold cross imbedded with precious, glistening stones.”²⁸ The scars of mortification illuminate with revelation as Suso’s body transforms into a *crux gemmata* (bejeweled cross) in glory. This transformation runs contrary to Elaine Scarry’s claim that physical pain collapses intersubjective understanding.²⁹ Suso’s auto-scarification liberates communication. Personal pain projects a visual spectacle; penitence progresses into beauty. Readers enter the event, delighting in *admiratio* of the shimmering emblem. Sealing their subjects with a new identity, these scars aestheticize the body in unique ways that enable the scar to substitute for the virtue of the saint him/herself. Forged as transparent referents of the image of God, the scars of Francis and Suso corroborate their *imitatio Christi* (imitation of Christ), wholeness, and transcendence.

In the Middle Ages, the importance bestowed upon wholeness, or integrity (*integritas*) was religious as well as aesthetic. Scars could signify the beauty of God, to which humankind aspires. In the writings of Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas, beauty was a theological and philosophical concern.³⁰ Christ channeled his spiritual pulchritude into human flesh. And because Christ never

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- 28 Heinrich von Seuse, *Leben*, IV: “In dem entsank er im selb und ducht in, daz neiswaz liehtes us drungi von sinem herzen, und er lugte dar: do erschein uf sinem herzen ein guldin krúz, und dar in waren verwürket in erhabenr wise vil edelr stein, und die luhten zermal schon.” In *Deutsche Schriften: Im Auftrag der Württembergischen Kommission für Landesgeschichte*, ed. Karl Bihlmeyer (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1907), 17, ll. 3–7; trans. Frank Tobin, *Henry Suso: The Exemplar, with Two German Sermons* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1989), 70–71. Jeffrey Hamburger suggests that images of Suso’s bodily inscription parallel Christ’s incarnate Logos: “A bleeding monogram inserted into the text of *The Exemplar*, it does more than simply illustrate this passage, it identifies the corpus of Suso’s writings with the *corpus Christi* in the most immediate and tangible fashion,” *The Visual and the Visionary*, 263. For other references to the aesthetics of medieval scars, see Jill Ross, *Figuring the Feminine: The Rhetoric of Female Embodiment in Medieval Hispanic Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 56–75; Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 83; Mechthild von Magdeburg, *Das Fliessende Licht der Gottheit*, ed. Gisela Vollmann-Profe (Frankfurt: Deutscher Klassik Verlag, 2003), 82, 148.
- 29 Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).
- 30 Aquinas articulates a triune theological aesthetic with his three primary conditions of beauty: *consonantia* (harmony, proportion, or symmetry), *claritas* (brightness), and *integritas* (or *perfectio*, perfection or completeness), Umberto Eco, *History of Beauty*, trans. Alastair McEwen (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc.), 2004, ch. 4. The Thomist standards of theological aesthetics signify beauty with their close conformity with divinity, and *integritas* in particular was crucial to medieval notions of embodiment, idem, *The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Hugh Bredin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 89, 92.

ceases to be beautiful as God and righteous as a man, even his scarred beauty can never be diminished.³¹ Christ's resurrected body retained its scars to signify further, rather than to undermine, his glory. Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae* extends the Augustinian notion that Christ's bodily markings will not defile him, but rather accentuate his incorruptibility: "Those scars which remained in Christ's body are not scars of corruption or of defect. Since they are signs of virtue, they are ordered to manifest a greater degree of glory. They even appeared in the places where wounds were a special type of beauty."³² And as he concludes, "The scars, therefore had to be permanent. . . . Thus it is clear that the scars which Christ manifested after the resurrection never left his body afterwards."³³ The beauty of Christ's scars was not just visual. Its splendor revealed to viewers Christ's essential, everlasting meaning.

Within the semantic realm of theological aesthetics, even ugly scars can serve as carriers of sanctity and salvation. In his letter to Oceanus Jerome eulogized the reformed noblewoman Fabiola (d. 399) for her public penitence, which effectively botched her former beauty: "As Fabiola was not ashamed of the Lord on earth, so He shall not be ashamed of her in heaven. She laid bare her wound to the gaze of all, and Rome beheld with tears the disfiguring scar which marred her beauty."³⁴ Jerome's statement implies that the Romans failed

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- 31 On the one hand, Christ's triumph over death inspired the *Christus victor* theme, whereas the Passion influenced the *Christus deformis* motif, see Ann W. Astell *Eating Beauty: The Eucharist and the Spiritual Arts of the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 51–54; Candida R. Moss, "Heavenly Healing: Eschatological Cleansing and the Resurrection of the Dead in the Early Church," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 79, no. 4 (December 2011): 1009–10.
- 32 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 54, art. 4, rep. to obj. 1, "Ad primum ergo dicendum quod cicatrices illae quae in corpore Christi permanserunt non pertinent ad corruptionem vel defectum; sed ad majorem cumulum gloriae, in quantum sunt quaedam virtutis insignia. Et in illis locis vulnere quidam specialis decor apparebit." In *Summa Theologiae: Latin Text and English Translation, Introductions, Notes, Appendices, and Glossaries*, ed. C. Thomas Moore, vol. 55 (London: Blackfriars, 1964), 30–35.
- 33 *Ibid.*, rep. to obj. 3: "Ex quibus apparet quod semper in ejus corpore cicatrices illae remanebunt. . . . Unde patet quod cicatrices quas Christus post resurrectionem in suo corpore ostendit nunquam postmodum ab illo corpore sunt remotae," ed. Moore, 34. For medieval attitudes toward postmortem scars, see Irina Metzler, *Disability in the Middle Ages: Thinking about Physical Impairment during the High Middle Ages, c. 1100–1400* (London: Routledge, 2006), ch. 3.
- 34 Jerome, *Epistola LXXVII ad Oceanum, de Morte Fabiolae*: "Non est confusa dominum in terris et ille eam non confundetur in caelo. Aperuit cunctis vulnus suum et decolorare in corpore cicatricem flens Roma conspexit," in *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, 55:42. Jane Tibbetts Schulenburg's study on early medieval nuns and their response to Viking invasions provides another example of voluntary disfigure-

to understand the meaning of Fabiola's scar. While they saw it as detrimental to her self-worth and objective value, Jerome read Fabiola's scar as a sign of her exceptional devotion and her compatibility with Christ.

The aesthetic desirability of scars is particularly striking given the general distaste for their appearance in the Middle Ages. Consider the evidence from medieval surgery and surgeons' preferences regarding the tools and techniques of their trade (thread, needles, sutures). For the Italian surgeon Guglielmo da Saliceto (d. 1277), it is clear that the surgical scars aroused an aesthetic concern:

Some people sew it up as skimmers sew up skins, and this suture gives the prettier scar. It is also done with [individual] knots and stitches, and here the threads are wrapped around twice the first time and once the second, so that the knot will stay tight, leaving a certain distance between one stitch and the next.³⁵

Similarly, the surgical treatise of Henri de Mondeville (d. 1316) warns his readers about the procedure of removing encysted growths. If done sloppily, it may result in an aesthetically unpleasant scar:

An ugly scar remains there, due not only to the broad cut but to the skin and flesh that originally covered the growth, because since they had been stretched to cover and surround the growth, and nothing of them is removed with the growth, many wrinkles are left in the scar. . . . Others cut off the growth together with the skin and flesh, and if it is a big one, this makes the ugliest of scars.³⁶

ment in the service of God. In order to protect their virginity and repel potential rapists, a community of Germanic nuns willingly cut off their noses. See "The Heroics of Virginity: Brides of Christ and Sacrificial Mutilation," in *Women in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. Mary Beth Rose (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986), 46–52.

35 Guglielmo da Saliceto, *Chirurgia*, II. 3: "Nam vulnus a quibusdam suitur ut pelliparii suunt pelles, et hec sutura pulchrioris est cicatrizationis. Fit etiam cum nodis et neccatione, et in hac sutura revolvitur filium in prima neccatione bis et in secunda semel ut nodus firmior remaneat et dimittatur inter neccatum et neccatum distantia aliqua." In Michael McVaugh, *The Rational Surgery of the Middle Ages* (Firenze: Edizione del Galluzzo, 2006), 99. Medieval surgeons often praised the formation of white pus, as opposed to fetid pus, which was believed to produce better healings and scarring than the latter type, Rosanne Gasse, "The Practice of Medicine in Piers Plowman," *The Chaucer Review* 39, no. 2 (2004): 193–94, n. 12.

36 Henri de Mondeville, *Chirurgia*, III.1: "Quia cicatrix remanet ibi turpis tam propter incisionem secundum latum quam propter cutem et carnem, quae erant super apostema, quae propter comprehensionem et defensionem apostematis distendebantur et quia de eis nihil amovebant cum apostemate, ideo ibi in cicatrice remanent multae rugae. . . . Alii totam excrescentiam cum cute et carne amputant et isti, si sit magna, turpissimam faciunt cicatricem," in McVaugh, *Rational Surgery*, 124. Additional

While Christ's scars remain forever beautiful, scars, like seals, were intrinsically unseemly when they distorted the image of their divine prototype. For instance, Bedos-Rezak has provided examples in which seals served as carriers of an individual's *difformitas*. Despite the mechanic regularity of sealing, the seal could not dissimulate the evil person behind it. Bedos-Rezak finds evidence for this phenomenon in medieval invectives. According to their reasoning, the seals of suspect individuals would not be considered credible markers of their identity or true repositories of divine presence: "Dissimilitude was the reducible difference between a good model and its aspirant copies, but deformity implies the deliberate bending of the model's template."³⁷ Since humankind was crafted in God's image through a type of divine imprinting, the copy should retain the original presence of its maker. However, if someone despoiled his own image through impiety or sin, he damaged his relation to the divine prototype. When an individual's malicious character distorted his relationship with the God, his seal of identity no longer enjoyed proximity to divine presence. Accordingly, the wicked are ugly inside and out; *conformitas* degrades into *difformitas*.³⁸

In line with this logic, Christ's persecutors were often branded with scars, skin lesions, and tattoos. These imperfections accentuate their ugliness and

materials on the ugly effects of medieval scars include Alaisina Yselda, "Na Carencia al bel cors avienenz," in *Songs of the Women Troubadours*, eds. Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner, Laurie Shepard, and Sarah White (New York: Garland, 2000), 96-97, ll. 17-20; Paolo Santoni-Rugiu and Philip J. Sykes, *A History of Plastic Surgery* (Berlin: Springer, 2007), 55; Marie-Christine Pouchelle, *The Body and Surgery in the Middle Ages* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 167, 227; Claudio Da Soller, *The Beautiful Women in Medieval Iberia: Rhetoric, Cosmetics, and Evolution* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Missouri-Columbia, 2005), 118; Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *Not of Woman Born: Representations of Caesarean Birth in Medieval and Renaissance Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 33, 39.

37 Bedos-Rezak, "Difformitas: Invective, Individuality, and Identity in Twelfth-Century France," in *Norm and Krise von Kommunikation: Inszenierungen Literarischer und Sozialer Interaktion im Mittelalter*, eds. Alois Hahn, Gert Melville, and Werner Röcke (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2006), 268.

38 *Ibid.*, 263-66. Bedos-Rezak draws from Arnulf's *Invectiva* (c. 1133), in which he criticized the *difformitas*, or bad image, made by the sinful and the enemies of Christ: "You, Pietro, as you roll from vice to vice, obfuscating the brightness of the divine face that was sealed upon you [*signatum super te lumen divini vultus*], de-forming the image of God [*deformata jam divinitatis imagine Dei*], obscuring by your turpitude the resemblance to this image [*et ipsius similitudine flagitiis offuscata*], how dare you presume to be the successor of Christ, without first assuming his resemblance?," cited in *ibid.*, 266. Paralleling Bedos-Rezak's analysis of essentialist semiotics, Judson Boyce Allen, in his overview of medieval literary theory, explains that sin entailed trespassing the sign, whereas innocence required accepting the sign, *The Ethical Poetic of the Later Middle Ages* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 44.

distance from divinity.³⁹ Such tropes extended into popular, local legends. In medieval lore, the “witch’s mark” displayed a dark, demonic inverse of saintly stigmata.⁴⁰ According to a twelfth-century Scandinavian story, Judas received a scar in childhood before he became separated from his family. Years later, his mother recognized the scar following an incestuous union. In this Oedipal drama, Judas’s scar superimposes taboo onto memory, providing a myth of origins for his epic betrayal.⁴¹ Moreover, in medieval biblical exegesis, the character of Cain underwent stages of increased deformation. The ambiguous “mark of Cain” (Genesis 4:15) was often construed as a protective sign (*signum*) by early commentators. Medieval exegetes interpreted it in more incriminating ways: Cain’s curse, his descent into hell, his animal nature, his supposed blackness, or even his Jewishness (the latter contrasting with Abel’s proto-Christian symbolism).⁴² Whatever meaning was made of Cain’s mark, it clearly served as a visual indicator of his depraved identity.

Medieval poets, too, deployed the sigillographic discourse of *difformitas*. These writers tended to exhibit anticlerical overtones. Hugh Primas, a cleric and popular poet of twelfth-century Orléans, exposes the corrupt clergy (posing as black sheep lurking among the innocent) by the scar of gluttony on their throats.⁴³ Despite the clergy’s attempt to blend in among the white sheep, their scars signify their inner *difformitas*. Dante Alighieri goes even further by defacing the corrupt papacy, “[whose] scar of infamy will disfigure the Apostolic See, even until the fire for which the heavens and the earth have been reserved.”⁴⁴ In

39 Ruth Mellinkoff, *Outcasts: Signs of Otherness in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Age*, vol. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 168, 185, 230.

40 Dyan Elliott, *The Bride of Christ Goes to Hell: Metaphor and Embodiment in the Lives of Pious Women, 200–1500* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 264.

41 Wolf, “The Judas Legend in Scandinavia,” *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 88, no. 4 (1989): 464; Elizabeth Archibald, *Incest and the Medieval Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 109–110, 218–19. Cf. medieval literary treatments of birthmarks that shame their possessors: Jean Renart, *Le Roman de la Rose ou Guillaume de Dôle: Publié d’après le Manuscrit du Vatican par Gustave Servois* (New York: Johnson, 1965), 115, ll. 3817–18, 151, l. 5037; Gerbert de Montreuil, *Le Roman de la Violette ou de Gerart de Nevers*, ed Douglas L. Buffum (Paris: H. Champion, 1928), 29–30, ll. 646–67.

42 Idem, *The Mark of Cain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 51–94.

43 Hugh Primas, XVIII, ll. 109–110: “Quantum gula sit lecatrrix, none signat hec cicatrix?” in *The Arundel Lyrics*, 206–7. For more historical context, see James Holly Hanford, “The Progenitors of Goliath,” *Speculum* 1, no. 1 (January 1926): 44–50; Christopher J. McDonough, “Hugh Primas 18: A Poetic Glosula on Amiens, Reims, and Peter Abelard,” *Speculum* 61, no. 4 (October 1986): 806–35.

44 Dante, *Epistola VIII*: “. . . cicatrixque infamis Apostolicam Sedem usserit ad ignem, et cui coeli et ierra sunt reservati,” in *Dantis Alagherii Epistolae: The Letters of Dante*, ed.

this letter, Dante, already exiled from Florence for the past twelve years, writes to a group of Italian cardinals, urging them to restore the papal seat of Rome as they prepared for conclave in 1314.⁴⁵ Dante's allegory of the scar alluded to the reprobate Pope Clement V (d. 1314), infamous for his execution of the Knights Templar and for displacing the Roman papacy to Avignon. Clement's disfiguring scar subverts the legitimacy of the papal seal. Though countering the ideals of theological aesthetics, this unseemly scar and deformed seal nevertheless partake in semiotic essentialism. Scars as seals encase the entirety of one's being.

Saved by Scars, Sealed with a Promise

Christ's scars partook in the economy of grace. Etched into the ethos of the Resurrection, these ghostly remainders helped recalibrate this singular event into a continuous process of mercy and forgiveness. Sealed but never closed off, Christ's scars were a radical site, a state of exception by which human history negotiated and corrected its errors. Theologians treated the doctrinal authenticity of Christ's scarred body as an evidentiary document, recalling the function of seals. Viewed contractually, just as seals guaranteed legitimacy, Christ's scars promised salvation. For instance, Dionysius the Carthusian (d. 1497), who argued that Christ willingly poured out all of his blood as a gift, likens the side wound to a door:

For truly a door, like a window, is opened, and thus . . . for us the spiritual door through which the sacraments of the church flow, without which no one enters into true life. And just as from the side of Adam in his first sleep in paradise Eve was formed, so from the side of the second Adam was formed the church. . . . Thus they who saw him who was pierced and the Jews will see this in a future judgment, for the scars of Christ's five wounds are preserved in his body not only to certify his resurrection but also to convict at the last judgment those guilty of the sin of his death.⁴⁶

Paget Jackson Toynbee (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1920), 142, 147.

- 45 Toynbee, "The Laurentian Codex (Cod. Laurent. XXX,8) of Dante's Letter to the Italian Cardinals (Epist. VIII)," *Modern Language Review* 13 (1918): 207–208.
- 46 Dionysius the Carthusian, *Expositio Passionis*, art. 25: "Nam vere, sicut otium vel fenestra aperitur, sic iste miles aperuit nobis ostium spiritual per quod sacramenta Ecclesiae emanarunt, sine quibus ad veram vitam nemo intravit; et sicut de latere Adae premi dormientis in paradise formata est Eva, ita de latere secundi Adae formata est Ecclesia. . . . Habetur Zach. XII. Illa autem transfixio proprie fuit in Christi lanceatione. Et hoc videbitur a Judaeis in futuro iudicio: nam cicatrices quinque vulnerum Christi praeservatae sunt in corpore ejus, non tantum ad certificationem suae

Dionysius explains the significance of the side wound in creational, ecclesiastical, and sacramental terms. The afterlife of Christ's wounds, in the form of everlasting scars, offers testimony at the Last Judgment. Moreover, Dionysius employs the language of certification (*ad certificationem*) to describe the five scars, which prove Christ's triumph over death. In conjunction with the practice of sealing, the scars of God officiate the Resurrection, verifying the promise of salvation.

The passability of Christ's body enables an infinite concatenation of sealing, linking the faithful to the first impression. Christ's scar, as the original scar from which all others derive meaning, operates in an identical fashion to the sealing process.⁴⁷ Bedos-Rezak articulates how seals work in technical and theological terms:

As *impressio* the seal was a mark, which actualized presence through an originating contact with its causal agent. The very act of imprinting articulated and dramatized these principles of marking origin and materializing presence. The conflation of the seal's mechanical origin (the matrix) with its human causation (the sealer) naturalized the process of representation, since the seal produced itself as a physical extension of its owner. The seal impression, thus participating in a natural relation with the sealer it represented, embodied the real presence of the individuals who affixed them. The seals' mode of signification was through incarnation.⁴⁸

Seared with scars, the resurrected body of Christ materializes his divine status. As the ultimate seal, Christ's scars are at once temporary and timeless; their historicity presumes their futurity.⁴⁹

A leaf from a late medieval gradual, or liturgical music book, showcases this paradox [Fig. 2].⁵⁰ Framed by a border of angels, *putti*, satyrs, mermen, and

resurrectionis, sed etiam ad convincendum in extreme iudicio de peccato suae mortis." In *Doctoris Ecstatici D. Dionysii Cartusiani Opera Omnia: In Unum Corpus Digesta ad Fidem Editionum Coloniensium*, vol. 42 (Monstrolii: Typis Cartusiae S.M. de Pratis, 1896), 545–565; trans. Bynum, *Wonderful Blood*, 170–71.

47 Karmen MacKendrick extends the impact of this phenomenon in her analysis of "multipliable bodies," in which Christ's stigmata stays with him yet migrates to other bodies, "The Multipliable Body," *Postmedieval: A Journal of Medieval Cultural Studies* 1, nos. 1/2 (February 2010): 112–13.

48 Bedos-Rezak, *When Ego Was Imago*, 235.

49 Cf. Steven Connor's ruminations on dermal modification (which allow the skin to be in and out of time), *The Book of Skin* (London: Reaktion Books, 2004), 72.

50 Gradual, Antonio da Monza, illuminator, J. Paul Getty Museum, Ms. Ludwig VI 3, folio 16 recto (Rome, late fifteenth or early sixteenth century); Margaret Scott, *Fash-*

decorative objects, a historiated initial depicts Christ trampling over his tomb in triumph [Fig. 3]. Stigmatic traces on his hands and feet remain detectable, while the artist draws attention to Christ's lateral scar. In the foreground, his tormentors, clad in pagan armor and accented with orientalized features, contrast with Christ's modest shroud, *contrapposto* stance, and gesture of blessing. This painted miniature accompanies the musical notation for the introit hymn on Easter Sunday: *Resurrexi et adhuc tecum sum Alleluia* (I have risen and I am with you, Alleluia). His scarred side carries the trace of its former wound, enabling religious onlookers to read the history of his body. The accessible aperture provides a passage to salvation; vestigial matter now signifies conversion, redemption, and transformation. As Karmen MacKendrick explains, "somatic eternity is not the endurance of the body but the transfigurative rhythm and rupture of time and the fullness of life, in and through the flesh."⁵¹ With the unfolding and consummation of the Christian myth, Christ's subjects are likewise marked, as foretold in Revelation 22:4 ("And they shall see his face: and his name shall be on their foreheads").⁵² Sealing the faithful gives them a role in the chain of events that comprise and finalize Christian history. Cast from the same mold, Creator and creation engage in an ongoing interaction between past/future, individual/collective, and humanity/divinity.

ion in the Middle Ages (Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 2011), 100–101; the Getty's Open Content Program: <http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/1373/antonio-da-monza-gradual-italian-late-15th-or-early-16th-century/>. Accessed June 30, 2015. For other relevant illustrations, see *Speculum Salvationis Humanae*, The Hague MMW 10 B 34, folio 39 verso (Cologne, c. 1450); *Speculum Salvationis Humanae*, The Hague, MMW 10 C 23, folio 42 verso (Germany, c. 1400–1450); *Ci Nous Dit XCIV*, Château de Chantilly, Musée Condé, MS. 26, folio 69 verso (France, c. 1340).

51 MacKendrick, *Fragmentation and Memory: Meditations on Christian Doctrine* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 133.

52 ". . . et videbunt faciem eius et nomen eius in frontibus eorum," in *Biblia Sacra: Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem*, 1905. Interlinear annotation from the *Glossa ordinaria* explicates that the servants of God shall behold his face in an open expanse, directly and without mediation: "Non enigmat ut nunc sed sicut est. Dei vocabuntur et agni. . . . Id est in aperto, sicut in aperto eum confessi sunt," in *Glossa ordinaria*, 4:577. Cf. Apocalypse 7:2–4, 13:14–17, 14:1. The miraculous birthmark of Margrave Frederick the Undaunted, which, according to his subjects, rendered him an eschatological emperor of the Last Days, see Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 142–43.



Fig. 2

*Gradual, Antonio da Monza, illuminator
Rome, late fifteenth/early sixteenth century*

J. Paul Getty Museum, Ms. Ludwig VI 3, folio 16 recto

Image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program



Fig. 3

Detail, historiated initial with the Resurrected Christ

Functioning as seals, scars could collapse the distinction between fragment and totality. As explained in the previous section, medieval Christianity favored *integritas* and other attributes pertaining to physical harmony. Yet the remarkable sufferings, displaced appendages, and unique markings of the body could metonymically signify one's identity *in toto*. A medieval account of the life of St. James the Apostle (son of Zebedee) exemplifies this idea. James prayed to the Virgin Mary on behalf of a dismembered devotee who had been deceived by the devil. This intercession restored the young man to life bearing only the scars of his past mutilation.⁵³ Whereas Christ's passable body promotes fluid

53 *Idem, De Sancto Iacobo Apostolo*: "Post triduum igitur solis in illo cicatricibus remanentibus iter arripuit et inuentis sociis omnia per ordinem enarrauit." In *Legenda*

exchange, Mary's body remains the impassible *hortus conclusus* (enclosed garden) of chastity.⁵⁴ The scars of the healed man registered his closeness to Mary, whose sealed body he now mimicked. Integrating pieces into wholeness, his scars signified his physical and spiritual completion (*perfectio*).

The signifying agency of the scar-seal achieves its highest potency with Christ. For medieval Christians, his scarred image verified the promise of restoration. St. Catherine of Siena expressed in one of her own prayers ("How Fitting Mercy Is to You!") that Christ's scar may re-signify the communities of the faithful in relation to his redemptive flesh: "In mercy you preserved the scars in your Son's body so that he might with these scars beg for mercy for us before your majesty."⁵⁵ Catherine's oration stresses the totalizing significance of scars for medieval Christians. Tarnished by the lineage of original sin, human beings lost their initial closeness to God and, as a result, lost a part of their own identity as creatures emanating from a perfect origin. Christ, as the new Adam, reverses the old Adam's infamous scar by bearing the traces of his own sacrifice. Renewing the semiotic consonance between God and humanity, Christ's scarred body recalibrates the seal's *conformitas*. All subsequent scars derive significance from their relation to this divine point of reference. In paradise, resurrected bodies will maintain their own scars as keepsakes of their mortal past. The scar in turn transcends individual identity by collectively sealing the triumph of salvation

Aurea, 1:659; trans. Ryan and Ripperger, II: 8. Compare this scar with that of John of Damascus, after the Virgin Mary healed his amputated arm, *Vita Ioannis Damasceni*, in *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne (Paris, Garnier Fratres et J.P. Migne Successores 1860), 94: 429–84.

- 54 For discussions of Mary's sealed body, see Honorius Augustodunensis's *Sigillum de Beatae Mariae*, analyzed by Rachel Fulton in *From Judgment to Passion: Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary, 800–1200* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 248–64; Miri Rubin, *Mother of God: A History of the Virgin Mary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 27, 219, 311, 378. Mary was of course the exception, as medieval women were believed to possess relatively unsealed, boundary-breaching bodies. For the gendering of bodily fluids in medieval women, see K. Lochrie, "The Language of Transgression: Body, Flesh, and Word in Mystical Discourse," in *Speaking Two Languages: Traditional Disciplines and Contemporary Theory in Medieval Studies*, ed. Allen J. Frantzen (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), 124–25; Peggy McCracken, *The Curse of Eve, the Wound of the Hero: Blood, Gender, and Medieval Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), ch. 1.
- 55 Catherine of Siena, *Oratio XIX*, ll. 85–87: "Ex misericordia dimisisti cicatrices in corpore agni unigeniti tui, ut cum ipsis coram maiestate tua pro nobis misericordiam postulet." In *Le Orazioni di S. Caterina da Siena*, ed. Guilianni Cavallini (Roma: Edizioni Catheriniane, 1978), 217; trans. Mary O'Driscoll, *Catherine of Siena: Passion for the Truth, Compassion for Humanity. Selected Spiritual Writings* (Hyde Park, New York: New City Press, 1993), 64.

over sin. Although superficially added to his body, Christ's scars evolved into the *sine qua non* of his sacred corpus. They emerged as a definitive locus for deliverance in which the contingent became necessary, the *signum* became the *sigillum*. At the end of time, it is through Christ's scars that the hinge of history makes its mark.

Conclusion

Beyond the confines of medieval Europe, a legacy of sealing the self seems to be with us today. The normalization of tattoo culture and aesthetic scarification reveals a compulsion to brand the body with a specific identity.⁵⁶ Like the medieval seal, this *pars pro toto* essentialism, also apparent in reconstructive and cosmetic surgery, aims to represent the self within an image on the body.

Other modern practices, however, seem to subvert the essential self. The black market of body commodification, or the transplantation, harvesting, and trafficking of human organs, creates a bioethical and ontological quandary. In contrast to medieval *integritas*, body commodification uproots individuals' vital organs (dead or alive) and implants them across geographic, ethnic, and gendered lines, reducing one's body to "spare parts."⁵⁷ Moreover, in the digital age, as prosthetic devices create virtual avenues of interaction. iPads, Google Glass, selfie sticks, and personal drones forge physical and sensory extensions of the body. As bodily surrogates, digital tools change patterns of mediation between self and society, therefore changing the construction of the individual.

In this nexus of post-modern sensibilities and technologies, scars still cling to a condensation of the self. They testify to a phenomenon, to an event that demands our presence. Our scars are quintessentially our own, and trace

56 Other powerful examples of scarified identity derive from ritual practices in several non-Western religions. For select studies, see Jame C. Farris, *Nuba Personal Art* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 32–36; Maryrose Cuskelly, *Original Skin: Exploring the Marvels of the Human Hide* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2011), 62–63; Ariel Glucklich, *Sacred Pain: Hurting the Body for the Sake of the Soul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 133–34.

57 Renée C. Fox and Judith P. Swazey, *Spare Parts: Organ Replacement in American Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), xiv–xv. For anthropological and historical studies on organ transplants, see Nancy Scheper-Hughes, "Bodies for Sale: In Whole or in Parts," in *Commodifying Bodies*, eds. Scheper-Hughes and Loic Wacquant (London: Sage Publications, 2002), 1–8; Lawrence Cohen, "Where It Hurts: Indian Material for an Ethics of Organ Transplantation," *Daedalus* 128, no. 4 (1999): 135–65; Barbara Newman, "Exchanging Hearts," 1–20; Caroline Bynum, "Material Continuity, Personal Survival, and the Resurrection of the Body: A Scholastic Discussion in its Medieval and Modern Contexts," *History of Religions*, 31, no. 1 (1990): 57–64.

the meanderings of our personal journeys, as well as the values, desires, and memories that have accumulated in the course of our existences. In the Middle Ages, scars exerted such powerful valences because of the specific pre-semiotic conditions—the Fall, Incarnation, and Resurrection—that helped implement the scar-as-seal. Theological precedents that were in place during the Middle Ages licensed scars to mediate between the contradictions of sin and sanctity, ugliness and beauty, living and dead, genesis and *eschaton*. The anthropology of the sign depended upon a historically specific anthropology of humankind. Seals and scars, as this paper has shown, exerted a similar semiotic impetus, one that indexed authenticity with a religious resonance. Within a Christian and sigillographic frame of reference, scars promised a homecoming to mythic origins. Their meanings shifted between one context and another. Those in power manipulated them to serve specific agendas. But most importantly for medieval subjects, scars, like seals, reclaimed the Augustinian principle of semiotic integrity: the sign is the thing. They held up a transparent mirror to the faithful showing them from where they came, who they were, and how they will return. They were the beginning of the end.

THE UNITY OF MANKIND AND THE SUNDERED ADAM:

An Exploration of Augustine's Works on the Origin of Souls

*Matthias Giles*¹

The unity of human beings is deeply important both in Augustine's early and late works. Standing behind his writing is the idea that, despite the diversity of human beings, they are somehow one, inextricably united. Augustine's case against the Donatists testifies to this; he earnestly attacked the Donatists' separatism as "the most grievous sin that is involved in separation itself."² The urgency of unity led him even to accept the use of coercion against his earlier inclination. So great is the power of unity for Augustine that it at times appears as the most integral ingredient needed for salvation. "Since the Catholic Church . . . contained within her bosom either some that were rebaptized or some that were unbaptized," writes Augustine to the Donatists, "either the one section or the other must have won their salvation only by the force of simple unity."³ The Catholic Church, for Augustine, is the great unifier.

Schism and disunity were painful wounds for Augustine because, I suggest, he believed all human beings to be linked in their very soul. Augustine, however, never gave a comprehensive and unequivocal exposition of the origin of the human soul. Consequently, many scholars have debated over his actual

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- 1 I would like to thank Charles Stang and my fellow classmates for the lively seminar on Augustine at HDS for which this paper was initially written and John Zaleski for his encouraging skepticism that propelled my enthusiasm to write it.
 - 2 Augustine, "On Baptism," in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: The Writings against the Manichaeans and against the Donatists*, vol. IV ed. Philip Schaff (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2007), 421.
 - 3 Augustine, "On Baptism," 434.

views and whether he preferred one position to others. Scholars such as Gerard O'Daly (in *Platonism Pagan and Christian*) and Pawel Kapusta (in *Articulating Creation, Articulating Kerygma*) conclude that we have insufficient evidence to determine Augustine's view. Indeed, in his writings, Augustine presents multiple hypotheses on the origin of the soul and addresses them in a variety of ways across different works. Nevertheless, I contend that by examining the works in which Augustine gives his most detailed explorations of these hypotheses one can discover Augustine's own position.

Donald Burt suggests that Augustine is more concerned with the future of human beings than with their origin.⁴ This paper will demonstrate that uncovering Augustine's understanding of the origin of the soul illuminates his deeply rooted concern for unity and reveals much about the nature of the Christ, the future of human beings in the New Jerusalem and the meaning of a universal Christianity. It is through examining the origin of human beings that we can better understand and appreciate the meaning and import of their future. Through a reading of *De libero arbitrio*, *De genesi ad litteram*, and *De anima et ejus origine*, I will review the major hypotheses on the origin of the soul that Augustine addresses and trace the development of his thought through time, attending to what is at stake in taking one position over another. After establishing Augustine's own position, I will reconcile this with his view of original sin and concupiscence, a concept deeply interwoven with that of the origin of the soul. This paper will conclude by bringing to light how this allows us to better understand Augustine's perception of the unity of human beings and the two heavenly and earthly cities described in *De civitate dei*.

De libero arbitrio: Four Hypotheses

In *De libero arbitrio*, probably written in year 388 CE soon after his conversion to Catholicism, Augustine puts forth four theories of the origin of the human soul. As Robert O'Connell notes, these four theories were not without precedent. None other than Jerome presents "the very same hypotheses and intimates that any well-read person knew they were the ones taken seriously in learned discussions of the time."⁵ These "current" theories presumably included a fifth, "Manichaeic" theory that Augustine omits but Jerome includes. Due to his all too recent disillusionment with Manichaeism, it is not surprising that

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- 4 Donald X. Burt, *Augustine's World: An Introduction to His Speculative Philosophy* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1996), 224.
 - 5 Robert J. O'Connell, *The Origin of the Soul in St. Augustine's Later Works* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1987), 33.

Augustine refuses to entertain a theory that suggests the human soul derives from God's substance.⁶ Augustine takes the remaining four theories given in *De libero arbitrio* as potentially plausible positions to hold. They are: a) traducianism/propagation, in which "only one soul was originally created, and the souls of all men since born derive their origin from it,"⁷ b) creationism, wherein "souls are created separately in individual men as they are born,"⁸ c) preexistence, in which "souls pre-exist in some secret place and are sent out to quicken and rule the bodies of individuals when they are born,"⁹ and d) pre-existence with volition, which assumes that "souls existing in some place are not sent by the Lord God, but come of their own accord to inhabit bodies."¹⁰

If we take seriously that these four theories were all current and widely held among the educated at the time Augustine wrote *De libero arbitrio*, we can also surmise that by adopting or refuting any one of them Augustine would have faced open resistance from those who held the views he found unfavorable. This offers one explanation for why he omitted rather than refuted the Manichean hypothesis. It is understandable that Augustine then demonstrates a particular reticence to show any preference for one theory over another. As a new convert to Catholicism he judiciously concludes, "None of these views may be rashly affirmed. Either that question, because of its obscurity and perplexity, has not been handled and illuminated by catholic commentators on Holy Writ. Or, if it has been done, their writings have not come into our hands."¹¹ For those of us who wish to determine Augustine's own inclinations, on paper he remains frustratingly agnostic.

Traducianism/Propagation

Despite Augustine's apparent agnosticism, he does briefly explore each of these hypotheses for their compatibility with scripture and the penal condition of humanity due to the Fall of Adam and Eve. Augustine finds the first theory, traducianism or propagation, to be logically consistent with the concept of inherited sin. "If," he writes, "only one soul was originally created, and all men since born derive their origin from it, who can say that he did not sin when the first man

6 Augustine does briefly address this fifth hypothesis and rejects it as an impossibility in some of his later works on the soul. See *De genesi ad litteram* Books Seven and Ten.

7 Augustine, "On Free Will," in *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, ed. J.H.S. Burleigh (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953), 203 (*De libero arbitrio* 3,xx,56).

8 Ibid., 203 (*De libero arbitrio*, 3,xx,56).

9 Ibid., 204 (*De libero arbitrio*, 3,xx,57).

10 Ibid., 205 (*De libero arbitrio*, 3,xx,58).

11 Ibid., 206 (*De libero arbitrio*, 3,xxi,59).

sinned?”¹² All future human souls, being contained in Adam’s soul, thereby participated in Adam’s sin and his subsequent punishment. As Robert O’Connell states, by this hypothesis “the connection between sin and merited punishment is unambiguously clear, but qua souls, we are not ‘other’ than Adam!”¹³ This theory’s explanation for the inheritance of original sin is arguably the strongest and cleanest of that of the four theories, and its implications are far reaching. Not only is the soul the location of inherited guilt; the unity of all human beings also lies in the shared origin of every soul in the soul of the first man.

Creationism

The justice of the penal condition of human beings is less clear in the second theory: in this telling, each soul is created separately at birth. Nevertheless, Augustine asserts that “it appears not to be unreasonable but rather most appropriate and in accordance with right order that the ill desert of an earlier soul should determine the nature of those which are created afterwards.”¹⁴ This conclusion strains the human sense of justice because there is no direct link between the punishable transgression and each individual human soul. Whereas the first hypothesis lays blame on all human souls due to their participation in Adam’s disobedience, the second theory admits no such connection. Adam’s given nature is categorically distinct from the given nature of all later human beings, thus creating a clear disconnect between Adam and all of later humanity. Through no fault of their own, later souls receive a nature lower than that which Adam received at his creation. Augustine implicitly concedes that all later human souls would not properly remain guilty of original sin, although they receive the blemished nature of its consequences. A later soul could only “rightly be held guilty of sin” if it does not make “good use of the power it has received.”¹⁵ Despite this, as in the first hypothesis (traducianism/propagation), the human soul bears the mark of original sin.

Pre-existence

Like the second hypothesis (creationism), the third and fourth hypotheses, which take souls to be pre-existent “in some secret place,” do not suggest that souls are culpable for their damaged condition. Rather, they are given the

12 Ibid., 203 (*De libero arbitrio*, 3,xx,55).

13 O’Connell, *The Origin of the Soul in St. Augustine’s Later Works*, 33.

14 Augustine, “On Free Will,” 204 (*De libero arbitrio*, 3,xx,56).

15 Ibid.

“opportunities for ministering to the restoration of the integrity of the body.”¹⁶ What is notable about these latter hypotheses is that they shift the location of the damage caused by Adam’s disobedience from the soul to the physical body: “the flesh coming from a sinful stock causes this ignorance and toil to infect the souls sent to it. Only in this sense are they to be called sins, and the blame for them is to be ascribed neither to the souls nor to their Creator.”¹⁷ Not only is the consequence of Adam’s disobedience written into the physical body, but also the nature of that damage is such that it invades the previously undamaged soul like an infectious disease.

In summary, the first two hypotheses, traducianism/propagation and creationism, both locate the consequence of original sin in the nature of the soul. The first does so via participation and the second by precedence. The latter two hypotheses both hold that God created human souls as pre-existent to their incarnation and map the damage of original sin onto the physical body rather than the soul. Only the first hypothesis imputes guilt to human souls in regard to original sin. All of the other hypotheses understand human souls as affected by original sin only in that they enter into earthly existence in a lower condition than did Adam.

Though *De libero arbitrio* is one of Augustine’s early works, it outlines some of the rudimentary strengths and weaknesses of each theory of the origin of souls. Because his later expositions on the origin of the soul address the same four hypotheses in various forms, *De libero arbitrio* remains a helpful reference for exploring those works. One such work is *De genesi ad litteram*, or “The Literal Meaning of Genesis,” written between 401 and 414 CE. This exegesis of the first three chapters of Genesis holds an extensive exploration of the origin of the soul and, because it is ostensibly a literal interpretation of the scripture, it includes a number of issues not addressed in *De libero arbitrio*.

De genesi ad litteram

In *De genesi ad litteram* we meet a very different Augustine. Between the writing of *De libero arbitrio* and *De genesi ad litteram*, Augustine was forcibly ordained as a priest and later a bishop. No longer a new convert with philosophical ideals, Augustine was now a catholic bishop burdened by the responsibility of caring for his flock. In the midst of the Donatist controversy and with Pelagianism on the horizon, *De genesi ad litteram* reads as a refreshing island floating amid a sea of anti-heretical writings. Even so, the need to curtail heretical ideas was

16 Ibid., 205 (*De libero arbitrio*, 3,xx,57).

17 Ibid.

never absent for Augustine. In *De genesi ad litteram* Augustine refutes the Manichean understanding of the soul on multiple counts, immediately rejecting the hypothesis, omitted in *De libero arbitrio*, that the human soul is derived from God's substance. This is declared heretical primarily on the basis that the human soul is changeable and God is not.¹⁸ He then rejects both the corporeality of the soul and the Origenist theory of transmigration of souls to which, according to Augustine, the Manicheans also purportedly adhered.

In Book Seven, Augustine explores a number of positions, rejecting some while remaining agnostic toward others. His only certainty in this book is the conclusion that the rational soul "is made from nothing."¹⁹ By Book Ten, however, he presents only two theories on the origin of the soul, traducianism/propagation and creationism. Having previously concluded that the soul is created from nothing, he ostensibly reopens the possibility that the soul might be created, not from nothing but, from "some spiritual and, of course, rational creature."²⁰ Though Augustine presents these two possibilities as mutually exclusive, we need not understand them that way. In fact, I will suggest that Augustine's later theory works to reconcile them.

The reason why Augustine shows some doubt as to the creation of souls out of nothing stems from Genesis 2:2–3. He interprets the words "God rested from all the work that he had done in creation," to mean that all creation out of nothing concluded after the sixth day. It is because of this that he writes, "it is quite unreasonable to hope to demonstrate that something is made from nothing once the works were finished in which God created all things simultaneously."²¹ Though Adam and Eve were created within the six days, all later human beings were not. Thus, if we accept the previous conclusion that souls are created out of nothing, the creationist hypothesis is untenable.

In order to trace the implications of Augustine's assertions we must distinguish between the creation of Adam's soul and the creation of the souls of his progeny. Augustine's difficulty with creation out of nothing applies only in regard to Adam's progeny, not Adam himself. With this in mind, we can discern that the origin of souls *ex nihilo*, out of nothing, makes untenable the hypothesis that "souls are created separately in individual men as they are born,"²² (creationism) but does not threaten the traducianism/propagation hypothesis.

18 Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, trans. John Hammond Taylor, vol. II, (New York: Newman Press, 1982), 4 (*De genesi ad litteram*, 7.4.6).

19 Ibid., 31 (*De genesi ad litteram*, 7.28.43).

20 Ibid., 101 (*De genesi ad litteram*, 10.4.7).

21 Ibid., 102 (*De genesi ad litteram*, 10.4.7).

22 See note 9.

Curiously, Augustine does not allow the reader to reach the conclusion that the traducianism/propagation hypothesis could resolve the apparent dilemma between the need for creation out of nothing (established in Book Seven of *De genesi ad litteram*) and the impossibility of such creation after the sixth day (Genesis 2:2–3). Instead, he shifts the reader's attention by limiting the alternative to creation out of nothing (creation of souls from some pre-existing spiritual, rational creature) to the argument that God creates souls either from angels or the substance of Godself. By defining, or rather limiting, this option in such a way Augustine encourages the reader to dismiss it entirely before he or she can posit the possibility that the pre-existing rational creature from which God creates souls, is the soul of Adam.

Perhaps Augustine does not explore this possibility here in *De genesi ad litteram* because he is concerned, in this moment, with the origin of human souls in terms of substance and not in method. Whereas the traducianism/propagation theory distinguishes between the creation of Adam's soul and the manner in which later souls are derived from it, the creationist theory considers each instance an identical act of independent creation. One might conclude from this that Augustine implicitly assumes the creationist hypothesis when he presents the possibilities for the derivation of the substance of the soul above ("nothing" or a pre-existing creature). Even if this is the case, however, he continues Book Ten by examining the two hypotheses as equally plausible.

After examining a series of scriptural passages he concludes, "it is difficult to determine the origin of the soul on the basis of scripture."²³ He turns instead to examining the two hypotheses "in the light of original sin and the practice of infant baptism."²⁴ As one might similarly conclude from *De libero arbitrio*, here Augustine seems to argue that the traducianism/propagation theory is more logically consistent with the tradition of infant baptism than is creationism. The infant's "contamination by contact with sinful flesh can in no way be imputed to it if it was not created from the first soul of Adam who sinned."²⁵ Augustine silently asks: for what other reason than its own guilt must the infant be baptized before death in order to attain salvation?

Despite some equivocation leading up to the final chapter, Augustine concludes Book Ten of *De genesi ad litteram* and its exposition of the origin of the soul with a clear, if tentative, preference for the traducianism/propagation hypothesis. "After pursuing this investigation as thoroughly as time has allowed,"

23 Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, 108 (*De genesi ad litteram*, 10.10).

24 Ibid., 113 (*De genesi ad litteram*, 10.14).

25 Ibid., 115 (*De genesi ad litteram*, 10.15.26).

he writes, “I should judge the weight of reason and of scriptural texts to be equal or nearly equal on both sides, were it not for the fact that the practice of infant baptism gives greater weight to the opinion of those who hold that souls are generated by parents [i.e. propagation].”²⁶ His final stance should come as no surprise. As I noted above, his assertion of the soul’s creation out of nothing, in conjunction with his interpretation of Genesis 2:2–3 as meaning that God does not create out of nothing after the sixth day, logically excludes the creationist hypothesis from consideration.

After this promotion of the traducianism/propagation hypothesis, Augustine warns the adherent to this hypothesis against a corporeal conception of the soul, a fault to which Tertullian succumbed. If Tertullian is any indication, the current conception of traducianism/propagation at the time of Augustine was likely to have been a specifically materialistic one. Augustine’s admonishment against a material understanding of this theory not only distinguishes himself from Tertullian (and the Manicheans) but also clarifies his own theory of spiritual traducianism/propagation while maintaining its familiarity to current thought.

Remember the four hypotheses outlined in *De libero arbitrio*: a) traducianism/propagation, b) creationism, c) pre-existence, d) pre-existence with volition. The two hypotheses that are not seriously considered in the later *De genesi ad litteram* (c. and d.) both locate the consequence of Adam’s disobedience in the physical body. The two theories in *De libero arbitrio* that place the mark of original sin in the soul are the same ones that are judged to be “nearly equal” in *De genesi ad litteram*. Can we then conclude that Augustine has rejected the possibility that original sin is mapped onto the physical body? Considering the basis by which he articulated a preference for the traducianism/propagation hypothesis—infant baptism—it seems so.

We should not underestimate the importance of infant baptism for Augustine. It was, after all, arguably the central foundation of his case against the Pelagians, in which he was involved at the time of writing this work. Therefore, the force behind the following statement is considerable: “the custom of our mother church in the matter of infant baptism is by no means to be scorned, nor to be considered at all superfluous.”²⁷ With this in mind, I suggest that Augustine’s preference for the propagation/traducianism theory of the origin of souls is not as equivocal as he, at times, indicates.²⁸

26 Ibid., 127 (*De genesi ad litteram*, 10.23.39).

27 Ibid.

28 Roland Teske, in his article “Augustine’s Theory of Soul,” also concludes that in *De genesi ad litteram* “the first hypothesis [propagation] seems least problematic as rep-

If we conclude that in *De genesi ad litteram* Augustine locates original sin in the soul, this becomes for the traducianism/propagation hypothesis not only the strength by which it outweighs the creationism hypothesis, but also its weakness. This weakness is particularly evident in the case of Christ. Augustine writes, “even if the advocates of traducianism prevail . . . it will not follow that we must believe that the soul of Christ has also come by generation from the soul of Adam, for we cannot suppose that our Lord Himself is made a sinner through the disobedience of the first man.”²⁹ With the blemish of original sin residing in the soul of Adam, Augustine can only conclude that the soul of Christ is a miraculous exception. The soul of Christ, therefore, must be “from the source whence Adam received his, rather than from Adam’s own soul.”³⁰ Later Augustine adds, “the soul of Christ is from the original soul only on the condition that it has not contracted the taint of sin; but if it could not be from that source without the guilt of sin, it has not come from that soul.”³¹ It is difficult to determine whether Augustine considers propagation in regard to the soul of Christ as a serious possibility at the time of this work, or if this remark is merely a rhetorical concession. All indications suggest that he does not, both because he rejected it earlier in Chapter Eighteen, and, because he appears to base his preference for the propagation hypothesis for the origin of other human souls on the premise that the soul is the carrier of original sin.

Yet if the origin of Christ’s soul is the exception that proves the rule, not only does it contradict Augustine’s exegesis of Genesis 2:2–3 and creation ex nihilo, but Christ’s humanity also becomes even further removed from human beings born after the Fall.³² Though such a miraculous exception makes those of us who wish to find a fully consistent system squirm uncomfortably in our chairs, Augustine is remarkably unbothered by the possibility. “[H]ow can we have the temerity, in our human folly, to venture to deny that the divine power can create things which are new . . . ?”³³ For Augustine, God is, after all, omnipotent, and the incarnation of Christ is the most unique and miraculous event of human history.

resenting Augustine’s view at this point.” Roland Teske, “Augustine’s Theory of the Soul,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, ed. Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 122.

29 Augustine, *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*, 120 (*De genesi ad litteram*, 10.18.32).

30 Ibid., 121 (*De genesi ad litteram*, 10.18.33).

31 Ibid., 126 (*De genesi ad litteram*, 10.21.37).

32 Christ’s soul is still created and human if it comes from “the source whence Adam received his.” Ibid., 121 (*De genesi ad litteram*, 10.18.33).

33 Augustine, *City of God*, trans. Henry Bettenson (New York: Penguin Classics, 2003), 501 (*De civitate dei*, XII, 21).

*De anima et ejus origine*³⁴

In *De anima et ejus origine*, written ten to twenty years after *De genesi ad litteram* in 421 CE, Augustine maintains that in his earlier work,³⁵ he “did not venture to define anything about the propagation of the soul.”³⁶ Despite his supposed previous agnosticism he shows clear preference, yet again, for the traducianism/propagation theory. Augustine remains noticeably anxious not to discount the theory that souls are “severally assigned to each person without propagation [sic], as the first was to Adam,”³⁷ yet his own preference for the theory of propagation is obvious.

De anima et ejus origine suggests that Vincentius Victor, toward whom Augustine directed this work, was a proponent of the creationist theory.³⁸ Augustine dedicates Chapters Sixteen and Seventeen of Book One to a defense of the origin of souls by propagation, stating that “the passages of scripture adduced by Victor do not prove that souls are made by God in such a way as not to be derived by propagation.”³⁹ Though Augustine might wish his reader to believe that his defense of the propagation theory serves only to maintain an agnostic equity between it and the creationism/insufflation theory, Chapter Thirty-Three leaves no illusion as to his own equivocation. He writes, “As for the opinion, that new souls are created by inbreathing without being propagated, we certainly do not in the least object to its maintenance—only let it be by persons who have succeeded in discovering some new evidence.”⁴⁰ Here, Augustine shows his true colors. Though “new evidence” may be found to refute the theory of propagation (for such is the definition of theory), until such evidence is found, he seems to say, it is best to assume the origin of souls via propagation.

In the midst of the Pelagian controversy at the time of writing this work, Augustine was acutely aware of the Pelagian undertones of the creationist/insufflation theory that Vincentius Victor propounds. Those who hold to such a theory cannot, logically, “affirm that souls become sinful by another’s original sin,” but they must not, Augustine warns, conclude from this “the now damnable and very recently condemned heresy of Pelagius, to the effect that the

34 Also known as *De natura et origine animae*.

35 This refers to a small work found and refuted by Vincentius Victor. It is toward this refutation that *De anima et ejus origine* is directed.

36 Augustine, “On the Soul and Its Origin,” trans. Peter Holmes, vol. 5 of *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 1st series, ed. Phillip Schaff. (Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing, 1887), <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1508.htm>, (26/xvii).

37 *The Retractions*, Book II, chapter 56, concerning *De anima et ejus origine*.

38 It seems Victor, upon reading this “small work,” concluded that Augustine adhered to the propagation/traducianism theory.

39 Augustine, “On the Soul and Its Origin,” 17/xiv (*De anima et ejus origine*).

40 *Ibid.*, ch. 33.

souls of infants have not original sin.”⁴¹ From this comment in *De anima et ejus origine*, we know that Augustine still holds that original sin is marked on the soul rather than the body. It is once again the North African tradition of infant baptism that holds together both his case against the Pelagians and his theory of the origin of souls via propagation.

Original Sin and Concupiscence

Having established Augustine’s preferred theory of the origin of human souls and some of the tensions therein, let us turn to his understanding of original sin in order to flesh out the implications of the theory of traducianism/propagation and make sense of the exceptional nature of Christ. It is already clear that Augustine’s theory of the origin of souls is intimately connected to his understanding of original sin. Only because all human souls participated in Adam’s disobedience does infant baptism hold such power and significance for him. We should be able, then, to read the theory of traducianism/propagation into Augustine’s account of original sin in works such as *De civitate dei*, and *De nuptiis et concupiscentia*. Though Augustine’s expositions of the origin of the soul explain the manner by which original sin is present in every human being, he does not explain the nature of that sin. It is in *De nuptiis et concupiscentia* and *De civitate dei*, both written around the same time as *De anima et ejus origine*, that Augustine explains the nature of original sin.⁴² He is, however, strangely silent concerning the theory of traducianism/propagation and emphasizes instead the physical repercussions of Adam and Eve’s disobedience.

In both of these works Augustine avers, “[I]n the punishment of that sin the retribution of disobedience is simply disobedience itself.”⁴³ This disobedience is marked on the body as the unwieldy will of the male erection. The very physicality of concupiscence, which appears in these two works, might suggest that Augustine has shifted course from the earlier pieces examined above, in which he locates the consequence of original sin in the soul, to the opinion that original sin dwells in the physical body.

Augustine remarks that Adam and Eve covered their sexual organs out of shame because “[i]t is the punishment of sin; it is the wound and vestige of sin. . . . It is the law in the members that resists the law of the mind.”⁴⁴ He also

41 Augustine, “On the Soul and Its Origin,” ch. 34 (*De anima et ejus origine*).

42 Though *De civitate dei* as a whole was written over number of years, Book Fourteen, which contains his most explicit elaboration of the fall of Adam and Eve and the nature of its repercussions, was written in 420 CE. See Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 282.

43 Augustine, *City of God*, 575. (*De civitate dei* XIV,15).

44 Augustine, “Marriage and Desire,” trans. Roland J. Teske, in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, vol. 24, ed. John E. Rotelle (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1998), 66.

affirms that “no one born from man and woman, that is, through that union of their bodies, is found to be free from sin; the one who is free from sin is also free from this manner of conception.”⁴⁵ From these two statements, Augustine specifies that the union of bodies is necessary for the transmission of original sin. Keeping in mind, however, the fact that Augustine reveals his belief in the propagation theory of the origin of souls in *De anima et ejus origine*, written at approximately the same time, I suggest that he understands the union of bodies as necessary not only for the propagation of flesh but also for the incorporeal propagation of souls.

One might read Augustine’s use of Wisdom 12:11, “for their seed was cursed from the beginning,” as meaning that original sin is contracted through the physical substance of the semen. Indeed, it is possible that Augustine had some kind of conception of the role of the male seed in the propagation of the soul. If he did, however, in light of his admonition against Tertullian in *De genesi ad litteram*, we should assume that its role would have been non-physical.

This view is not without precedent. Aristotle’s *On the Generation of Animals* states in regard to the soul, “this principle has to be supplied by the semen of the male, and it is when a female’s residue secures this principle that a fetation is formed.”⁴⁶ It was a common understanding in ancient physiology that the male provided the dynamic principle and also contributed, along with seminal residue, pneuma (wind or spirit). In fact, Aristotle writes, “the physical part, the body, comes from the female, and the Soul from the male.”⁴⁷ Despite the fact that Augustine writes long after Aristotle, very comparable ideas remained current during his lifetime, particularly in the work of Pliny.⁴⁸ Indeed, such an understanding actually helps reconcile the apparent tension between Augustine’s works on the origin of the soul and his explanation of “concupiscence of the flesh.” Augustine’s understanding that “the whole human race was in the first

45 Ibid., 62 (*De nuptiis et concupiscentia*, II,5,15).

46 Aristotle, *On the Generation of Animals*, trans. A.L. Peck (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1943), 175.

47 Ibid., 185.

48 Pliny writes the following in Chapter Seventeen, Book Seven of *Naturalis historia* in regard to menstrual flux: “For in very deed, it is the material substance of generation: and the mans seed serveth in steed of a runnet to gather it round into a curd: which afterwards in processe of time quickeneth and groweth to the forme of a bodie.” (<http://penelope.uchicago.edu/holland/pliny7.html>). Here he clearly understands the female to contribute the matter and the male the formative principle, using the same cheese metaphor that Aristotle uses in *On the Generation of Animals*. Concerning Augustine’s familiarity with Pliny specifically see, Mary Emily Keenan, “St. Augustine and Biological Science,” *Osiris* 7 (1939): 588–608.

man, and it was to pass from him through the woman to his progeny, when the married pair had received the divine sentence of condemnation" is best understood in view of this.

The case of Christ's birth may indeed be the exception that proves the rule. Given these Aristotelian ideas, the miraculous exception to the traducianism/propagation theory, the soul of Christ, makes sense. Christ had to be born without "marital intercourse" not only because he needed "to be conceived without that concupiscence" of "sinful flesh,"⁴⁹ but also because a father producing human seed would have "dragged"⁵⁰ out a human soul from the soul of Adam (through the parents) which had participated in that first act of disobedience. Similarly, because in this understanding of physiology the female contributes the physical matter, Christ's flesh was fully human, derived from the body of Mary. It would have been the formative forces accompanying the newly created soul that shaped the physical matter.

Augustine's contention that Christ was not subject to original sin affirms that, in his understanding, original sin resides in the soul, the site of the will. Concupiscence is a consequence of original sin and its mark on the body is due to the soul it contains, not the body itself. The mark is not the erection in itself; rather it is the will of the erection, the will that is unwieldable. Because for the couple after the Fall "licit and honorable intercourse cannot take place free from the heat of sexual desire [concupiscence],"⁵¹ propagation is subject to this disobedient will. The will is not a physical substance though it wields physical substances. Just as we move our arms and legs with our will, the wayward will of concupiscence moves the limb of the phallus. This is to say that in reading Augustine's statements on the "concupiscence of the flesh" the emphasis should be put on "concupiscence" rather than "flesh."

Unity

Now that we have established that Augustine shows clear preference for the traducianism/propagation theory of the origin of souls and that it does not conflict with Augustine's account of original sin and concupiscence, we can better understand Augustine's perception of the unity of human beings. Not only are human beings united by their fallen state, their endless struggles with concupiscence, and a common ancestor, but their very souls are bound together. Successively

49 Augustine, "Marriage and Desire," 37 (*De nuptiis et concupiscentia*, I,12,).

50 *Trahuntur*, meaning "to drag."

51 Augustine, "Marriage and Desire" 45 (*De nuptiis et concupiscentia*, I,24,27).

dragged from that one original soul, as Robert O'Connell remarks, "qua souls, we are not 'other' than Adam!"⁵²

Roland Teske notes that in *De quantitate animae*, an early work written around the same time as *De libero arbitrio* (388 CE), Augustine "rejects the idea that soul is merely one" and "also rejects the idea that the soul is simply many."⁵³ From this he suggests that Augustine may "[have] in mind the Plotinian hypostasis 'soul,' in which individual souls partake and which makes them somehow one despite their diversity."⁵⁴ "In any case," Teske writes, "he finds less objectionable the idea that soul is both one and many—precisely the view . . . which he may have found in *Ennead* 4.9."⁵⁵

It is not entirely certain that Augustine is working with this Plotinian concept, particularly in his later works, but the connection is intriguing.⁵⁶ This unity despite diversity articulates well the picture of the traducianism/propagation theory of the origin of souls. We must not, however, take this unity to the extreme. Though all human beings may have begun as one soul, the soul itself "is happy in one person and unhappy in another, and one and the same being cannot be happy and unhappy at the same time."⁵⁷ Rather than imagining a larger, "world soul" in which all human souls participate, it is better to suppose that the late Augustine envisions humanity as a single organism made multiple by the Fall of Adam.

In *De civitate dei*, his magnum opus and exposition of human history past and future, Augustine repeatedly emphasizes the underlying unity of human beings. This unity is visible even in the act of creation, and it is specific to the human being. God created "some living creatures of a solitary habit. . . . He made others gregarious, preferring to live in flocks and herds. . . . Yet neither of these classes did he produce by starting with individuals of the species; he commanded many to come into existence at once."⁵⁸ The human being, however,

52 O'Connell, *The Origin of the Soul in St. Augustine's Later Works*, 33.

53 Teske, "Augustine's Theory of Soul," 119.

54 *Ibid.*

55 *Ibid.*

56 Admittedly I am not well-versed enough to be able to determine the extent to which Augustine's conception of the origin of the soul is commensurate Plotinus's hypostasis "soul" or archetypal man. Robert O'Connell's book *The Origin of the Soul* involves an extensive investigation of Augustine's works in light of *Enneads* 4.2–5, 5.8, and 6.4–5 in particular. He comes to the conclusion that Augustine understood the Plotinian Ideal Man to have been Adam, both the archetype and the historical individual, in which all human beings sinned as one man. Though rather different than my conclusion it may not be entirely incompatible.

57 *De quantitate animae* 32.68 (cited in Roland Teske, "Augustine's Theory of Soul," 119).

58 Augustine, *City of God*, 502 (*De civitate dei* XII, 22).

was created “as one individual; but that did not mean that he was to remain alone, bereft of human society. God’s intention was that in this way the unity of human society and the bonds of human sympathy be more emphatically brought home to man.”⁵⁹ This unity is emphasized again through the creation of Eve. “And to this end . . . he decided not to create her in the same way as he created man himself. Instead he made her out of the man, so that the whole human race should be spread out from the one original man.”⁶⁰

Through this unity we are bound together not just in similitude of nature or by physical relationship to a single ancestor, but in our very being, our soul:

For we were all in that one man, seeing that we all were that one man who fell into sin. . . . We did not yet possess forms individually created and assigned to us for us to live in them as individuals; but there already existed the seminal nature from which we were to be begotten.⁶¹

This “seminal nature” is not the physical semen, nor is it the anachronistic concept of genetic material. It is the pre-individuated soul, “the man in whom we all existed at that time,”⁶² from which all souls would be “dragged.”

Yet the division of the human race is not a mere illusion. The unity of this one man, Adam, has been painfully divided, physically and psychically. The disobedience of all human beings in the being of Adam “was so great that there was a great change for the worse in his nature.”⁶³ This change in nature not only resulted in the struggle of concupiscence but it ultimately sundered the unity of mankind. If Adam had not disobeyed the command of God, Adam and Eve would have produced the exact number of the elect, and no more.⁶⁴ Now, however, the number of the elect is selected by the grace of God from among the crowds of sinners, leaving some forever severed from this unity.

As Peter Brown states, for Augustine “the Catholic Church was a microcosm of the re-established unity of the human race.”⁶⁵ Perhaps the greatest glory of the resurrection for Augustine is the final, perfect unity of humanity, both with itself and with God. This unity is assured by yet another compensatory shift in nature for the human being: a truly free will.⁶⁶ Augustine writes:

59 Ibid., (*De civitate dei* XII, 22).

60 Ibid., 503 (*De civitate dei* XII, 22).

61 Ibid., 523 (*De civitate dei* XIII, 14).

62 Ibid., 524 (*De civitate dei* XIII, 15).

63 Augustine, “Marriage and Desire,” 51 (*De nuptiis et concupiscentia*, I,32,37).

64 Augustine, *City of God*, 567 (*De civitate dei* XIV, 10).

65 Brown, *Augustine of Hippo*, 220.

66 This “will be the result of God’s gift, not some inherent quality of nature” Augustine, *City of God*, 1089 (*De civitate dei* XXII, 30).

“The first freedom of will, given to man when he was created upright at the beginning, was an ability not to sin. . . . But this last freedom will be more potent, for it will bring the impossibility of sinning.”⁶⁷

Augustine left a thread throughout his works, which reveals his own position on the origin of souls. An understanding of Aristotelian propagation can help harmonize this with Augustine’s notion of original sin and the nature of Christ. Through this, Augustine reveals a picture of human unity on an enormous scale. The unity of the resurrection is not an Origenist utter unity of mind. It is a marvelous unity-with-individuation such that “the thoughts of our minds will lie open to mutual observation,”⁶⁸ “the same freedom in all, indivisible in the separate individuals.”⁶⁹ Though the resurrection ostensibly heals the wound of the Fall, we are left with the nagging discomfort of the sundered portion of Adam meted out for punishment. Perhaps for Augustine this provides for God’s perfect Justice. Adam, in the elect, is healed and made once again whole. Adam, in the condemned, receives his punishment. Mercy is given and justice obtained.

The church as the body of Christ and the notion of Christ as the new Adam take on a new reality. If we take seriously the idea that Augustine, and perhaps other early Christians, imagined all of humanity as a single organism which was made painfully multiple by the Fall, we might better understand both the terror of separation from the church and the desperate, often violent, impulse to convert others. Though Christ, through the church, is the healer and unifier, the sundering of Adam can never be undone for Augustine. A portion of that wound will always remain, just as the wounds of the crucifixion remained visible to Thomas and his fellow disciples on the body of the resurrected Christ.

67 Augustine, *City of God*, 1089 (*De civitate dei* XXII, 30).

68 Ibid., 1087 (*De civitate dei* XXII, 29).

69 Ibid., 1089 (*De civitate dei* XXII, 30).

BOOK REVIEW:

Spirited Things: The Work of "Possession" in Afro-Atlantic Religions, edited by Paul Christopher Johnson (University of Chicago Press, 2014)

Khytie Brown

Within the history of the anthropological study of religion, anthropologists have paid keen attention to the seemingly fantastic workings of noncorporeal entities in the lives and bodies of those they designate as religious and, by virtue of this particular expression of religiosity, as possessed. In particular, the familiar anthropological trope, bearing striking resemblance to nineteenth-century travelogue writings and which makes recurring appearances in the scripted fictions and fantasies of the horror film genre, is that of the orgiastic scene of dark-skinned natives ecstatic, writhing, contorted, moaning, and foaming in cultic ecstasy as body and consciousness are elided to make room for deities to speak and act. European encounters with the native Other, geographically situated in the Americas and Africa and woven through missionary reports, travelogues, and ethnographies, have indelibly helped to craft the contemporary category of spirit possession, at once strange and exotic and uncomfortably familiar. While anthropologists have previously explored the meanings of spirit possession, Paul Christopher Johnson's edited volume *Spirited Things: The Work of "Possession" in Afro-Atlantic Religions* revisits the familiar trope with a new lens, interrogating the "material dimensions and mediations of spirit possession" as a "defining and even constitutive feature of Afro-Atlantic religions" that is inextricably linked to the history of trans-Atlantic slavery and its *thingification* of persons into beings which were possessable.¹ The volume,

1 Paul Christopher Johnson, "Introduction: Spirits and Things in the Making of the Afro-Atlantic World," in *Spirited Things: The Work of "Possession" in Afro-Atlantic Religions*, ed. Paul Christopher Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 2, 4.

instead of taking a phenomenological approach to the study of spirit possession, examines the theoretical relationship between material possessions and spirit possession within the history of the Afro-Atlantic. More critically, the collection of chapters emphatically turns away from spirit possession as “exotica” but instead attends to “the *means* of, *conditions* of, and *mediations* of spirits’ presence.”² *Spirited Things* takes the old anthropological fascination with spirit possession and places it in conversation with what Johnson argues is the most prominent category guiding contemporary anthropology of Afro-Atlantic religions: materiality. The chapters challenge the prevailing dichotomy between spirit and materiality and foreground the reality that spirits can only be made manifest through materials. In doing this, the volume raises questions about the relationship between persons and the body, sensory epistemologies, space and place, agency, temporality, the global circulation of commodities, imaginings of modernity, mimesis and fakery, spiritual technologies, and theoretical genealogies as they are deployed and worked within the interpretive realm of Afro-Atlantic religions as well as within scholarly interpretations of Afro-Atlantic religions. Of central importance is the orientation that European colonial exploitation and domination were key in the conceptualization and imagining of spirit possession and thus the volume largely presents possession as a product of the European gaze.

The volume is deeply engaging, theoretically rich, and topically diverse, as it surveys “Afro-Atlantic ritual complexes” in their specificities from Afro-American Pentecostal spirit possession in Brazil and Haiti, critiques of spirit possession as a category in Vodou, the dialectics of “ensoniment” among the Ejamba of North Fairmont, Philadelphia, spiritual agency in Cuba, and minstrelsy and séances in the United States. Weaving together these diverse African diasporic locales and situated practices is the overarching concern with, what Johnson terms, the “the ritual production of spirits from a regime of things,” wherein the term possession holds double meaning.³ That is, spirit possession is the “ownership or occupation of the body by unseen agents” that are limited by history and materiality *as well as* the analogical relationship between ownership of material possession and tropes of the body as property.⁴ The opening chapter of the volume, “Toward an Atlantic Genealogy of ‘Spirit Possession,’” penned by Johnson, functions as an appropriate initiation into the semiotic work of possession.

2 Ibid., 7.

3 Ibid., 18.

4 Paul Christopher Johnson, “Toward an Atlantic Genealogy of ‘Spirit Possession,’” in *Spirited Things: The Work of ‘Possession in Afro-Atlantic Religions*, ed. Paul Christopher Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 35.

Chapter One primes the reader to think through the implicit question of how possession is working in this particular Afro-Atlantic milieu. The chapter maps the multiple, but tightly related, discourses and legal actions which Johnson contends both named and constrained “spirit possession” over a period of four centuries. “Spirit possession” is worked, as the title of the volume emphasizes, through and against emerging ideas about the modern state, the rational individual agent, and the properly comported civil subject. Johnson argues that the free individual, who is necessarily the propertied individual, was constructed against anxieties and threats of the automaton or zombie (a mechanical machine-body without will) on one hand and the primitive animal ruled by passions on the other. Johnson makes an important intervention here by locating spirit possession within other popular colonial mythologies of zombies, cannibals, and unrestrained chimeras of man and beast (like, for example, racialized horror movie figures such as King Kong). Spirit possession can then be read as one among a category of European colonial concerns about dangerous specters located in other lands and seated in Other bodies that have the potential to disrupt, if not completely destroy, civil governance. Johnson goes further, in keeping with the book’s central thesis—that there is a semiotic and theoretical link between spirit possession and historically constituted notions of property and servitude—and makes the claim that based on the roots of the Latin origins of the term possession (which means “to be able to sit”), notions of property preceded notions of spirit’s being able to occupy flesh. Johnson furnishes a genealogy that maps how terms of property were transferred to ideas about the human body, ownership, and will and centralizes “Religion” as a fundamental player in this project. He presents a convincing case for how “Religion” as a generic class of human thought was made, and subsequently purified of spirits, to become a universal feature of a universal man who was self-possessed and thus could choose of his free will to believe in a Christian, monotheistic God. Johnson cites the evolutionary bend to this project, wherein an “anthropology of the savage” was constructed. The savage was represented by his propensity for magic, superstition, fetishism, and idolatry, among other abominable practices, from which religion had evolved and elevated itself. More importantly, the savage was geographically located in Africa and the Americas.⁵ Johnson makes the bold argument that Europeans’ fear of unrestrained religious frenzy, in which bodies became machines and slaves to spirits, and which African religions served as metonym, was used as justification for the possession of Africans in chattel slavery. Essentially, Johnson’s argument is that “spirit possession was predicated on the idea of persons as a kind of prop-

5 Ibid., 24.

erty; the person who is or can be possessed by others (spirits or slaveholders) is contrasted to the autonomous property-owning individual, the modern citizen and liberal subject.”⁶

Anthropologist Michael Lambek, who closes the volume with a brilliant afterword, poses several thoughtful and poignant critiques and questions to the arguments presented in the volume. Lambek states in his essay that he is going against the spirit of the volume and wants to assert that perhaps too much should not be read into the term possession. He challenges Johnson’s aforementioned argument that spirit possession is predicated on the idea of persons as kinds of property. Lambek argues that for Johnson spirit possession is conceived of as always hybrid and produced in the encounter with Europe. This is true of a certain type of spirit possession, which many of the contributors to the volume discuss in their ethnographies; however, Lambek notes that spirit possession is multiple and must have existed in various forms before the arrival of Europeans to West Africa and even in Europe before the proliferation of Christianity. His primary critique warns of the dangers in the problem of misrecognition of “spirit possession.” He poses crucial questions to scholars: “What was the actual nature of the phenomenon, and in what respects or to what degree has that original nature escaped or been irreversibly transformed by the act of misrecognition?” “What means or avenues of escape do the misrecognized hold?” “How do we ensure that we do not continue to misrecognize practices of spirit possession (by whatever name), once again in light of our’ (Euro-American) concerns with our own self-conceptions, self-conceptions now inevitably historically and genealogically formed?”⁷ These questions are invaluable and arguably every scholar studying practices of “spirit possession” should invest in these questions as they construct theories about the practices they witness in the field.

Lambek’s afterword aims to complicate Johnson’s analyses, and is successful in doing so, as he pulls together the contributions of the authors of the other chapters under the themes of mimesis and metaphor to highlight the complex tapestry that is “spirit possession.” Returning briefly to the problem of misrecognition which Lambek raises, he argues that spirit possession can be a live metaphor within anthropology because it holds double ambiguity in terms of spirits who possess a host as well as the host’s possession of a spirit(s) whom he or she can summon to serve them, their family, or even clients. Lambek uses his own ethnographic experience among the Malagasy of Mozambique and the Mayotte

6 Michael Lambek, “Afterword: Recognizing and Misrecognizing Spirit Possession,” in *Spirited Things: The Work of “Possession” in Afro-Atlantic Religions*, ed. Paul Christopher Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 259.

7 *Ibid.*, 259.

to pose questions about metaphor and translation as necessary parts of ethnographic work and, taking the notion of double ambiguity further, he argues that in his own work spirits do not possess their host in the sense of legal ownership (whether by purchase or contract). Possess in the West African context of his work does not mean to own but rather, to have. He argues that in these worlds commodity fetishism and slavery may not be present or dominant and thus he does not “buy” Johnson’s argument that “notions of property preceded and guided notions of spirits’ capacity to “sit” in flesh.”⁸ Lambek asserts that this is a story Westerners now want to tell themselves and, while it may speak to Afro-American experiences of enslavement, it leaves Africans silent. While Lambek’s critique is sound and not without merit, it seems to reflect the age-old tension within studies of the Afro-Atlantic, hailing from the great Herskovits-Frazier debate, about the source of Afro-American culture.

On one side there is the argument that the trauma of slavery erased all African cultural inheritances and thus Afro-Atlantic cultures are strictly a product of life in the Americas and are wholly a result of creolization. On the other side is the hypothesis that African cultural inheritances were not completely erased but are still a present influence in Afro-Atlantic cultures; one can in fact locate and trace contemporary “African retentions” right back to the continent. Lambek’s critique seems to hinge on the unarticulated, but nevertheless present, question about the place of Africa as an originary space of not only enslaved peoples, but of Afro-Atlantic cultures. To use Johnson’s arguments about possessions, materiality and commodity fetishism in persons, one could quite crassly view West Africa in particular as the source of an “original product” and the Americas as importers of possessable persons and salable cultural productions. One of the provocative and necessary aspects of *Spirited Things* is its focus on the Afro-Atlantic world as a geographical and conceptual region that was uniquely created under the forces of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Johnson’s introduction to the volume sufficiently answers Lambek’s critique as he sketches the parameters of possession not as generic and universal (he later provides the genealogical roots of the current generic use), but as the amalgamation of spirits and things in the making of the Afro-Atlantic. Therefore, while Johnson’s analyses, as well as the analyses of the contributing authors, are applicable to more general theoretical questions about possession, bodies, commodities, agency, and modernity, it must be foregrounded that the work of possession in the volume is primarily as it is concretized and given flesh within the particularities of Afro-Atlantic histories, geographies, spaces, and places and—undeniably—within notions of

8 Johnson, “Toward an Atlantic Genealogy,” 23.

ownership and control over bodies and lands as evidenced in colonialism and chattel slavery. Johnson further supports this by pointing to historical sources stating that spirit possession in fact gained a force and frequency in the Afro-Atlantic world “under and after the regimes of slavery” in a manner that was different from African forms, so much so that African-born slaves in Brazil, for example, were surprised at how prominently and frequently possession featured in creole practices.⁹

Spirited Things does not set the reader up to believe that she will find comprehensive and universalized definitions of possession. Lambek’s challenge about misrecognition poses questions of how we know we are misrecognizing if we can never locate an original, if we have to translate, and if, according to Johnson, there is an inseparable, dialectic relationship between European images of possession and how possession itself is shaped by uses in Western philosophy. Johnson’s genealogical mapping of the term in the first chapter is again strategically placed to respond to some of these questions. Therefore, while the reader may run into definitional problems, uncertainties about misrecognition, and questions about the appropriateness of terms (Lambek, for example, offers trance and dissociation as other terms to characterize “spirit possession”), Johnson provides theoretical tools for grappling with the ethnographic materials presented in the other chapters through a framework for thinking about the very ways in which these vast and varied practices are not ahistorical, but emerge out of a particular genealogy that then gives way to different workings of the term possession, as well as the lived practice.

The chapters in the volume can be arranged under several kinds of themes, which Johnson and Lambek delineate differently. Johnson groups Palmié and Polk’s chapters, “The Ejamba of North Fairmount Avenue, the Wizard of Menlo Park, and the Dialectics of Ensoniment: An Episode in the History of an Acoustic Mask” and “‘Who’s Dat Knocking at the Door?’ A Tragicomic Ethiopian Spirit Delineation in ‘Three Parts,’” as historical chapters focused on the material regimes that constitute possessions and spirits. Wirtz and Brazeal’s chapters “Spiritual Agency, Materiality, and Knowledge in Cuba” and “The Fetish and the Stone: A Moral Economy of Charlatans and Thieves” are coupled by Johnson to focus on semiotic processes out of which spirits appear, whereas Lambek couples these chapters as primarily addressing notions of mimesis and truth. Selka and McAlister’s chapters “Demons and Money: Possessions in Brazilian Pentecostalism” and “Possessing the Land for Jesus” focus on the interface between Afro-Creole spirit possession and Pentecostalism as

9 Ibid., 27.

it relates to laws, land, and money. Richman and Romberg's chapters "Possession and Attachment: Notes on Moral Ritual Communication among Haitian Descent Groups" and "Mimetic Corporeality, Discourse, and Indeterminacy in Spirit Possession" also focus on genealogies and mimesis: the former maps how possession has been deployed in Vodou and the latter examines the "creative powers of mimetic corporeality" in the folklorization of spirit possession.¹⁰

Each chapter intricately responds to the question of how spirit possession is being worked in this ethnographic milieu. All the chapters contribute inventive access points to engage the question of the relationship between spirit possession and material things in the Afro-Atlantic, with close attention to issues of race, identity, law, theology, semiotics, and a myriad other thematic foci. Yet one of the most alluring threads between the chapters is the attention to the somatic and the sensual as integral to material practice. This is not a case of *fascinating cannibalism*—a term that Fatimah Tobing Rony coined to describe the voracious consumption of the racialized Other by Westerners, in a frenzy of horror and fascination, which is occasioned by "the ethnographic." Instead of orgiastic scenes depicting an uncontrollable and perverse sensuality, attention to the sensual and the somatic in this volume begins with the body that is rendered ownable. The ownable body, capable of being bought and sold, as well as possessed by noncorporeal entities, then opens itself for questions about spirit and materiality and how the immaterial (spirit) is made discernible in materials (bodies and objects). The analytic of "transduction" is then mobilized to describe "how spirits are rendered sensible through processes of materialization and dematerialization and the power derived from shifts in semiotic modality."¹¹ Spirits have to be "registered in the form of sensible experiences." Kristina Wirtz poses a question that several of the other authors respond to: "In what representational economy do spirit materializations in bodies come to make objective sense?"¹² Activating spirits, as Johnson states, takes work—mechanical, aesthetic, memory and material work. The chapters in this volume excavate multiple forms of the working of possession, but all utilize the senses, notions of sensibility, and bodily technologies. Thus, contrary to typical renderings and theorization of spirit possession, which Johnson states are often read as

10 Raquel Romberg, "Mimetic Corporeality, Discourse, and Indeterminacy in Spirit Possession," in *Spirited Things: The Work of "Possession" in Afro-Atlantic Religions*, ed. Paul Christopher Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 228.

11 Johnson, "Introduction," 8.

12 Kristina Wirtz, "Spiritual Agency, Materiality, and Knowledge in Cuba," in *Spirited Things: The Work of "Possession" in Afro-Atlantic Religions*, ed. Paul Christopher Johnson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 99.

simply coded sites of “expressive culture,” *Spirited Things* parses out the necessary relationship between the ephemeral universe of spirit and materiality. The book then reinvigorates the often-problematic discussion of spirit possession in anthropology by locating it within a Western intellectual genealogy, within a specific Afro-Atlantic geography, within particular Afro-Atlantic ritual complexes, and within material exchanges and relationships of bodies and commodities. This careful treatment of spirit possession in the book renders it, as Johnson argues, not merely atavistic, but modern and even “hypermodern,” and thus critical to contemporary discussions about the human, the multiplicity of modernities, pluralism, postcolonialism, transnationalism, and postracialism, to highlight but a few debates in various academic fields.

DOING *REAL* SCHOLARSHIP: Reflections on Research beyond Ourselves

Kera Street

My partner and I have this conversation often. In the midst of discussing some theorist or interesting twist in the methodological approach to my research project, suddenly overwhelmed by my disciplinary jargon, he'll roll both eyes to one side of his head and let out an exaggerated sigh. "What does all this mean in *real* life?" it usually starts. "Do religious studies scholars just read books all day and make things up from what they see?" it usually continues. The first few times our conversation ventured down this path, it was hard not to take offense while spewing my doctrinal commitments with a self-righteousness common of the humanities. The next few times we had this discussion, compelled by his commitments to his own field of study at the cross-section of biology and psychology, I could see where, for him, and others like him, the disconnect was happening. For him, as a neuroscientist, theories and methods were simply obsolete without hard, statistical data to back them up. And though, in time, he has been able to own up to his own epistemological blind spots and biases, his constant concern for the *real* has sparked a parallel concern of my own.

Because a term like *real* carries such weight and nuance, particularly in the realm of academia, it's important to outline what I mean when I use it in relation to both the broader field of religion as a category of analysis, as well as my own particular project on race, sexuality, and women's religious social networking. By *real*, what I mean to imply is not the polarity between existence and non-existence, or genuineness and inauthenticity, but, instead, the notion of actuality, where *real* serves as a stand in for a sort of tangibility that includes

yet transcends the senses. In this framing, realness is best understood through causes and effects, or the series of chain reactions and tangential consequences that don't just give research meaning, but make it possible from the start. This sort of realness privileges the full context of scholarship by first asking how, why, and for whom this research matters. Functioning, then, as a kind of metric of relatability, realness, as I've come to understand it, lifts the veil masking our own self-importance—however well-meaning and well-placed it may be—to bridge the gap between meaningful work and the various communities that are impacted by it.

For my doctoral project on the parachurch organization Pinky Promise—an evangelical network of women committed to conservative understandings of biblical womanhood, including premarital abstinence and marital submission—bridging this gap has meant truly privileging the voices of my informants over the narrative and research expectations I've constructed by myself. Especially given their allegiance to traditional notions of gender and sexuality as more than just a countercultural commitment, disrupting my own preconceived notions of who these women are and what they're doing has pushed me to consider the full complexity of their lived religious experiences. This translates into my work in at least two ways. First, as an ethnographer, privileging the voices of my informants over my own forces me to acknowledge my ethnographic authority and account for the ways I select, arrange, and highlight their stories. By confronting my subjectivity, I am able to place their experiences at the foreground of the research in a way that distinguishes their accounts from my interpretations. This kind of introspective honesty unsettles embedded claims of objectivity—implicit or otherwise—while astutely pointing out the perspectives that mistakenly get taken as truths.

The second way this translates into my work is through conceptions of religion as lived, extending beyond the confines of religious institutions, practices, and beliefs. By emphasizing the voices of my informants, and not just the official narrative or organizational account of Pinky Promise, my project looks at the ways that religious actors *do* religion—how they call upon and engage theological ideas and concepts in the everyday. This attention to the daily realities of religious folk, namely the ways that their faith-based motivations animate their quotidian experience, allows me to highlight how these women act out their commitments to Pinky Promise ideals, even as they push against solitary, fixed notions of what those ideals mean or look like to them.

For my second project—a sponsored study on faith communities' understandings of sexual and gender-based violence in the Boston area—bridging the gap has been necessary not only for the sustainability of the research, but

also for strengthening relationships with stakeholders who do this work outside the academy. Alongside our effort to engage leaders and laypeople alike in order to capture their viewpoints, connecting with ministers and professionals whose concerns are greatly informed by the experiences of victims/survivors has colored our understanding of this work in a number of ways. First, it has forced us to recognize the sheer number and diversity of perspectives and approaches to the issue. Having to reckon with the plurality of the field keeps us attentive to the range and reach of its concern. Second, it has also forced us to recognize our accountability to this plurality. In this context, accountability does not imply that as researchers we necessarily agree with or subscribe to the modes or tactics of this community, but rather that we are committed to creating and maintaining opportunities for dialogue and discussion across efforts and intentions. Thinking about accountability in this way opens up channels for cooperation that would otherwise be lost to professional divisions. By linking across these divisions instead, we acknowledge the interdependence of our work and the mutual benefits of our commitments.

The final revelation of our work on faith communities and sexual and gender-based violence is the realization that our research has implications that extend beyond the particularities of this study. More than the sum of its parts, what this revelation forces us to recognize is that our research speaks a language of possibility that reaches beyond the academy and transcends fixed translations. Knowing this, I am compelled to not just present concrete answers, but to offer a thick description that gives account of the context and perspectives at play. By addressing possibility in this way, I'm able to present themes that emerge from this work, while, at once, creating space for twists, turns, and divergences that may result from its presentation.

Though this ongoing conversation with my partner has forced me to interrogate my own research interests in a way that has sometimes been quite uncomfortable, the questioning it has sparked has been extremely helpful to the process of outlining what I appreciate most about religious scholarship and thereby what I've come to identify as real research. More than statistics or theories or methodologies that speak to one discipline or another, real research, for me, is relational. It's a dedication to the loose communities whose depth naturally breathes sustaining life into our topics. As such, in seeking to do real research, our goal should not be to simply find these communities and acquiesce to their ways of knowing, but, instead, to be in conversation with them in a way that neither shies away from their epistemologies or the implications of its translation. As actual, tangible, and relatable, real research, then, necessarily moves us outside of ourselves into a broader relationship that embraces its impact.

PLURALISM AND POWER: An Interview with Lucia Hulsether

Lucia Hulsether is a doctoral student in religious studies at Yale University and a graduate of HDS's Master of Divinity program. Her current work interrogates the logics of pluralism and interfaith dialogue, and questions how these seemingly benign terms can, at times, act as cover for harsher economic and social realities. But her experience as a student also speaks to the power of reworking interactions in a more concrete sense, whether through feminist mentoring or radical pedagogy. We spoke with Lucia over email about her work, her writing, and her time in the academy.

Can you give an overview of your interests? How did you come to study religion, and what specifically draws you to your area of focus?

LH: I try to work at the intersection of critical ethnic studies, history of capitalism in the Americas, and queer and feminist critique. How did I end up in a religious studies department? The simplest answer is that I have often found excellent mentors and intense, interdisciplinary conversation partners in departments organized under the heading of religion. I also think that religion offers a unique angle into and a decent umbrella over the concerns I've named. I have come to think of religion as the question of how people dream of alternative worlds, and then strive—tragically, comically, unconsciously, maybe with success, more likely with harrowing consequences—to make those worlds concrete, to suture dreams to bodies, to legislate difference. Those dreams, those worlds, and the blurriness that sabotages my linguistic parsing of the two hinge on—and are unhinged by—regimes of race, gender, and sexuality.

I have not yet chosen a dissertation topic, but my projects so far have all touched in some way on a specific set of questions: when, and through what means, do aspirations to create a multicultural world enact raced and gendered violence? What is the relationship between liberal discourses of multiculturalism and the expansion of free markets? I've tended to explore these questions through projects on the advertising strategies and histories of multinational corporations—Coca-Cola, Google, TOMS Shoes—but this summer I've turned my eye to smaller microfinance and fair trade outfits, which often posi-

tion themselves as the alternative to exploitative capitalism. I just returned from Guatemala, where I combined historical study and ethnography in an attempt to understand how and to what ends a solution to global wealth gaps came to be seen as a problem of integrating more people into free markets—i.e. opening lines of credit for the world's poorest people and offering individual citizens in the Global North the opportunity to administrate this debt.

What role did HDS play in forming your current academic project? What were the opportunities and challenges the environment posed during your time here?

LH: Harvard Divinity School is invested in an ideal of multicultural, inter-religious community, and it grounds its institutional identity in this ideal. My work is invested in interrogating ideologies of difference, especially ideologies of religious difference. So, we can already see the potential tension between the university I entered three years ago and the critical questions that have animated me. In reality, though, I could not have ended up in a more appropriate or stimulating place. For three years, I was immersed in a community participating in and producing what I took to be the object of my critique (and, of course, I did this too). This in itself was intellectually provocative, but I also think that when institutions lean into a discourse, they tend to also attract many people who want to interrogate that same discourse. If the goal is to think critically about formations of religious difference, it is hard to do much better than the communities of conversation that seem to converge at HDS.

How have you found the shift from your work at HDS to your doctoral studies? In retrospect, what resources were most valuable in preparing yourself for further academic research?

LH: I did not experience significant difference in intellectual intensity, conversation quality, or output-demand in my first year of doctoral work. The most tangible differences, as I see them, have been the more immediate presence of anxieties about the job market and other more general issues of feeling increased pressure around academic performance. These issues are formative and sometimes devastating ones for many graduate students, especially for those who are already targeted by the racism and sexism that run rampant in our universities. One of my feminist mentors tells all of her students, "People die in graduate school." She also tells us, "The best work is done by happy, healthy people." It's

true. Managing wellbeing in the context of what can become all-consuming and draining work is one of the most urgent, and least talked about, issues in graduate school.

Before and after my transition to doctoral work, and I expect for a long time after I'm done, my most valuable resources have been practices that refuse the cycle of highs-and-lows so common in academic life. I'm talking about the despair of days-long writers' block and self-doubt, followed by spurts of manic breakthrough production until after the point of diminishing returns. I make a point of moderating my work patterns and staying in a place of consistency. This makes for a boring answer to the question, but I tend to think that low-drama living and writing facilitates better work! So here it goes: I rarely spend more than two hours per day writing, and I stop myself at a pre-determined time even if I am on a roll. I always put down my pen in mid-sentence, so that I can easily pick right up the next day. I look forward to my allotted writing time, just as much as I look forward to the other things I do on a daily basis—like cook a nice meal, go to the gym, and spend time with people I love. My academic work is a very important part of a whole, rich life, which includes numerous equally important centers of gravity.

In terms of writing applications and formulating projects, what have you found most useful to you? And what have you found most challenging?

LH: I approached the doctoral application process as one of investigation into patterns in my own work. What issues were emerging repeatedly? How would I summarize the themes of my work and, most importantly, its stakes? I did not propose a specific project, but instead I wrote my application as a series of image-driven answers to those questions that I had posed to myself. People do not believe me when I say this, but I relished every minute of it. What a luxury to spend a summer becoming more articulate about my own work, and to think of avenues through which to deepen it! Of course this kind of thinking is hard, but the difficulty was part of why I loved it. By the end of the writing and reflecting process, I felt much more clarity about the investments of my work at that moment in time (or at least I felt better about my capacity to express them). That clarity mitigated one of the toughest parts of the application process, which involves the inevitable games of comparison among applicants competing for the same slots, who sometimes also happen to be classmates and friends. I tried to treat the writing and reflection part of the process a gift in and of itself, so that whatever the answers in the crapshoot that is PhD admissions, I could

do a better job of detaching them from the substance and potential of the work I aimed to do.

Back to your own work, how do you see your interests as speaking to current scholarly conversations, but also to people outside of academia?

LH: I think that the stakes of my research and writing are fairly similar regardless of audience, so here I'll address the communities of discourse that have formed me and that are catching my interest right now. On one hand, within religious studies, a broad conversation about the grounds and meanings of the secular (and variously secularization, secularity, secularism . . .) has grabbed me as a potentially fruitful entry point into thinking about histories of capitalism. Quite a bit of the work on secularization/secularism has focused on what Tracy Fessenden calls its presumptive Protestantism. Whether or not we find that thesis compelling, its underlying point is that it unmasks the disciplines and norms undergirding what may otherwise appear as religion-neutral freedom or liberatory pluralism. On the other hand, within fields of ethnic studies and gender and sexuality studies, there has been a turn toward interrogating discourses of race, gender, and sexual difference—especially discourses of multiculturalism and pluralism—as certain technologies of control in the context of late capitalism. Lately, one question on my mind is how to bring these two literatures into conversation with each other. The former tends to be less-than-precise at considering race, gender, and sexuality; the latter has done very little to think theoretically about religion and its histories, and particularly the capacity of religion to function as a technology of racial formation. Both sets of literatures are getting at something important, which relates to a question of how what feels like—and is understood as—liberation ends up functioning as something more akin to control. This issue seems too big to be confined to either “inside” or “outside” of academia, or for that matter inside or outside of certain scholarly conversations. It seems like it can straddle lots of lines and that how I express the problem has more to do with how I want my voice to enter into the exchanges that my colleagues are already having.

This takes a lot of listening. For me, academic work can be like a puzzle where the goal is to connect conversations that have a lot to do with each other but that, for whatever issue of institutional gerrymandering, haven't always found their chemistry. Now, a benefit of religious studies (and American studies, for that matter) is its tradition of interdisciplinarity. Our projects can employ diverse methods, address multiple audiences, and build from a range of litera-

tures. For me, writing for audiences “outside of academia” amplifies this sense of interdisciplinarity and offers a more blatant opportunity to get creative with form—for no other reason than that “outside of academia” is not structured by departmental headings. I want to stress that the basic intellectual quality can remain pretty consistent. Cultural theorist Fred Moten says that accessibility isn’t a matter of content; it’s about having the patience, creativity, and generosity to actually explain something in a way that gives credence to the people with whom you’re speaking. So much of pedagogy—whether written on the page or spoken in a classroom—is a matter of being curious about what new frames can come from new conversation partners and about learning to frame ideas so that they connect to what expertise is already there.

You’ve also done a fair bit of writing for non-academic publications. How does this fit into your academic work and goals?

LH: Although in an instrumental sense I recognize the different genres of writing and the variant worth that kinds of publications have on a CV, I struggle to separate substantively what we have called academic work and non-academic writing. Both are work! And my hope is that both can hold comparable weight, even if in different genres or for different audiences. I do not think I am being intellectually or politically responsible unless I can explain what I am doing to somebody who is not an expert in my field—not only because this might mean I’ve been lazy or impatient in my own comprehension of a concept, but also because it refuses risk. Someone once asked me if I wrote for non-academic venues because “the bar is lower for what they will accept, so you don’t have to work as hard.” I almost fell out of my chair. In what world and with what assumptions can someone decide that intellectual and political standards are lower, or learning opportunities less profound, outside of universities?

Let me be clear that I do not find this kind of attitude in the interview question! I just want to emphasize that I have learned things in the process of writing popular articles that have turned out to be underpinnings of my work and papers in more formally academic settings, and vice versa. Whether I’m writing for a popular audience or a seminar, I try to root my essay in solving a problem I haven’t gotten a handle on at the outset. I lead with questions. One of my favorite pieces I ever wrote (in any genre) started as a challenge/irritation: I kept reading, and deploying, the term neoliberalism without actually getting the sense that anyone (including me) could state its contours in an accessible way. I set the following goal for myself: to write a piece that would

offer a definition, both to make a resource available to a wider audience awash in economy-speak and, closer to home, to force myself out of an intellectual elitism in which I plastered zombie nouns over the poetry, precision, and patience that an explanation requires. That particular effort, and especially the conversations that grew around the eventual piece, continues to boomerang back as a resource in all of my writing.

Thinking of writing more broadly—how has your academic writing evolved, and what do you think have been the most useful or influential factors in developing your voice as a student and aspiring scholar?

LH: Feminist mentoring—both mentors I have had and mentoring I have done—has been the single most important part of my development as a scholar. I attended a women’s liberal arts college in which our religious studies department was run on a Freirian model of democratic education. Now, a lot of people throw around Freire as a pedagogical token, without ever changing the distribution of power in their classrooms and departments, but this was an absolute institutional overhaul happening in our little corner of the humanities building. Students outnumbered faculty on most committees, we rotated chairship in department meetings (there were no faculty-only meetings), we instituted collaborative processes for reviewing department policy and syllabi, and all members of the department were encouraged to present our work locally and nationally. (“You don’t have to apologize for being in the room,” a feminist mentor told me when as a college senior I was worried about being the youngest person on my panel at AAR.) It was a collective process of unlearning and then staking ourselves against a consumer-student, faculty-expert model of education. We took for granted that teaching and learning were overlaid processes, and everyone was responsible for contributing to the work and knowledge. The department also provided a kind of informal overhead for the staff-led campus Living Wage Campaign, a fact that made scholar-activism the rule rather than the exception.

It was a lively, exciting place to begin my formation in the academy and in adult life. I am especially grateful because, since then, other models of education—models where students wait to present work, where they don’t participate in curriculum development, where there is some magical shift after the PhD, and where there is a strong status distinction between faculty, students, and staff—have struck me as a intuitively bizarre, even as my experiences at Harvard and Yale remind me that my background is the weird one. I say all

of this by way of an answer in part to explain some of my responses above. When I resist the distinctions between academic/popular forms of writing and audience, it is in part because of remembering how rich and transformative this work was in a place where such binaries cut against not just our critical theories, but also all common sense. Even as I navigate very different institutions now, I still think back to my time at Agnes Scott as a kind of plumb line for what sort of feminist teacher and learner I would like to become, whether in a university setting or not.

Advice for future students?

LH: I have a rejoinder to common advice that I've heard given to students considering doctoral work. This advice is that if you can think of doing ANYTHING else—literally, anything—you should leave the doctoral pipeline and do the other thing instead. This advice is normally given because there are no jobs (true) or because somebody is trying to emphasize that being a professor is not as glamorous as their starry-eyed students think (likely true as well).

Not really having the retrospect that would qualify me to give stone-set advice, I will give my best intuition, which is the following: we should go onto and continue in doctoral work ONLY if we can imagine ourselves in many, many other lives than the life of a professor. If right now we can't enthusiastically imagine ourselves doing anything else—and for many of us this makes sense, since school is what we know—we need an opportunity to grow our imaginations. This is partly an issue of job security (we know the refrain: most don't get jobs). But I think the stakes are higher if we do get jobs. In doctoral study we are preparing to teach students, who are chasing and falling into a range of careers. My best teachers, within the university and not, have been the ones who esteemed, empathized with, and stood in awe of a range of paths—even if it was not their own trajectory.

Although I love teaching and research and want to dedicate my life to it, there are infinite ways to teach and write and research. There is nothing intrinsically superior about doing this work in the context of a university. I can learn and think just as much in talking to people, in an elementary school, in a non-profit, in a worship service, in a political protest, in an interfaith meeting.

THE WORK OF RELIGIOUS HISTORY:

An Interview with Helen Kim

As a doctoral student at Harvard with interests in Asian-American religion, Helen Kim has simultaneously drawn on a deep commitment to the study of evangelical Christianity at HDS and worked to establish connections with scholars who work in her developing field, or who also employ transnational historical perspectives. Her work likewise speaks to her own field, while also approaching questions that resist the limitations of specific places or times. Helen spoke to the journal about this dual approach to scholarship, as well as her own academic development, research strategies, and reflections on Harvard and beyond.

Could you give an introduction to your work and the driving questions behind what you're doing?

Helen Kim: This is a topic I've been thinking about in a variety of ways since I was a master's student, so around five or six years. Maybe even longer than that—actually, as an undergrad, some of these ideas were already formulating. My dissertation project is a transnational religious history. I seek to understand the rise of evangelicalism in the late twentieth century through a transnational lens. Most narratives about evangelicalism in the twentieth century frame it as a national narrative, but one of the key features of the evangelical tradition is that it is constantly reaching out to other nations. There's a global spread—some call this imperialism, some call it a mission. There are many different names for what it is; my project is basically about how critical those international connections, regardless of how one frames them, were to the movement. I focus on the United States and South Korea.

You mentioned this has been five or so years in the making. Was there something that originally drew you toward this project?

HK: It's related to some of the questions that I wrestled with as an undergraduate, which is now a long time ago for me. It's even related to our capitalism and religion class—"Christianity, Capitalism, and Consumerism in Colonial North America and the United States" with Catherine Brekus—and specifically how

Marx called religion the opiate of the masses. Is religion in fact an opiate? This question led me to thinking about evangelicalism in particular: the evangelical tradition is one that has appealed to the masses. In my advisor David Hempton's work, he writes about the spread of eighteenth-century evangelicalism through the Methodist movement, and he talks about how evangelicalism appealed to poor people, to African-Americans, and to women. It appealed to the marginalized. As an undergrad, I wondered about why the marginalized are attracted to a tradition like Christianity, and, specifically, to pretty conservative forms of it, if it's an opiate. Of course, Marxists would say, because it's an opiate! This was a fine answer, but seemingly limited as well, since it was hard for me to believe that the masses lacked such agency that they were duped by their religious tradition. Liberation theology was an option for the poor, but a lot of people chose, even in Latin America, Pentecostalism. Why? These are the types of questions I've had since my time as an undergrad, and that I continued to think through when I got to HDS as a master's student and into the PhD program.

In your dissertation prospectus, you talk about religion's role in shaping the way we talk about "model minorities." How do you see religion as affecting the development of these conversations?

HK: Rudy Busto, who works at UC Santa Barbara, wrote an important article that I read as an undergraduate about Asian-American evangelicals. One of the contemporary stereotypes or ideas about Asian Americans is that they're model minorities; that's a construction that developed in the late twentieth century. Busto observed that an unprecedented number of Asian Americans were attracted to evangelicalism, and that the tradition exacerbated the myth of the model minority; it held Asian Americans to standards of piety that exoticized them, and straightjacketed them not just as model minorities but as model moral minorities.

That was a really important essay for me as a college student. I was active in an evangelical organization at the time—I thought, "This is a really fascinating perspective!" I was an English and ethnic studies major, so I was also taking the critiques that come from ethnic studies really seriously, too. Busto is trained as an ethnic studies and religious studies scholar, so that's where his critique comes from. What I share with Busto is in seeking to understand why people are attracted to religious traditions that seemingly inhibit their "progress" and liberation. That, of course, means we have to interrogate what assumptions undergird our definitions of progress.

Since your work is centered on the recent past, what challenges have you found dealing with topics that are still changing and evolving?

HK: When I was taking my qualifying exams, I was able to study evangelical history from the eighteenth century and the history of Christianity in general from 1650 to the present. That was helpful because it helped me see how many of the themes and scholarly questions continue into the twentieth century. One of the things I enjoy about reading Dean David Hempton's work is that he addresses perennial questions that also come up in my own thinking on the late twentieth century. That's what's really nice about studying a tradition that's been around for so long.

At the same time, not all the characters I'm going to write about are dead. Many of them are, but not all. Even the movements I'm writing about are alive and well. Campus Crusade is an organization about which I've written; they're still going strong, and are one of the largest missionary organizations in the world. During my PhD coursework, I wrote a paper about how the archives speak back: in my case, going to the archives wasn't just encountering dead peoples' sources. It was also encountering real people who gave feedback about my work. It's good because I get a lot of insider perspective, but it's also a challenge because I have to contend with live feedback. It's a negotiation with my subjects. I took an ethnography class with Marla Frederick, and some of the work we did there was very helpful. Obviously, my project is a historical project, but she trained us to work with real people.

How has HDS in particular shaped your project and pushed it in new directions? What sorts of resources have you found most useful at HDS?

HK: First and foremost: the people. They choose really, really, good faculty. In American religion and history of Christianity especially: Dean Hempton works in that area, and Jonathan Walton and Marla Frederick have been pivotal in my doctoral studies. Catherine Brekus and David Holland are now at HDS. Not to mention Ann Braude, Dan McKanan, and Healan Gaston have all been crucial for our field here. As a master's student, I was also trained by Marie Griffith and Leigh Schmidt. The school brings in all these great people—you don't really realize how privileged you are to work under them until you are in different circles, and you understand you've been trained by people who are themselves also exceptionally trained.

I never thought I could study a tradition like evangelicalism in a serious, academic way. For some reason, while I've been at HDS, so many great scholars who work on this tradition have taught here. They take the tradition seriously, but they're also ready to critique it, just as the students here take it seriously but don't hesitate to critique it. Given that we're in a religiously diverse context, there's always many perspectives at the table. I never feel that I'm seeing things from a skewed or uncritical perspective. I think it's a good experience for a scholar, to be sharpened from so many sides.

People talk about this a lot, but the library as a resource is a big deal. You can get anything and everything. Having Andover Library right there, a theological library right there, fully devoted to us, is such a privilege. By now I've studied at other campuses, and religion is just not that central. Even as an undergrad at Stanford—Silicon Valley dominates a place like Stanford. To have our own corner devoted to religion, even though I know sometimes we're under fire too, is really, really nice. I've loved that.

Beyond the American religious studies faculty, have you found interesting connections in other academic areas of focus?

HK: Definitely. One of the professors with whom I really loved taking classes was Laura Nasrallah. Her "Letters of Paul" class was transformative. Interestingly enough, it had fun connections to my work. She's a historian of an earlier period, but she raises really fascinating questions about Paul as a missionary, and Paul as a Jew. There are questions of race, ethnicity, power, empire, and the spread of a tradition that have relevance into the modern and contemporary periods of Christianity that I study. We've also discussed how scriptures get interpreted and used in the context of the contemporary United States; she's interested in talking about those sorts of things, as well.

The flipside of the last question is whether there have been any challenges that have come up over the past few years working on your project, either in terms of HDS, academia, or the research process in general.

HK: I don't think academia is for the faint of heart. It's serious work, and it has required a real devotion on so many levels of my life. It's intellectual work and it's physical work; it's emotional labor and it's spiritual labor. I've appreciated Stephanie Paulsell's perspective on academic study as a formational experience,

especially in reference to Simone Weil's essay "Reflections on the Right Uses of School Studies with a View to the Love of God." Weil and Paulsell have pushed me to think about the quality of my attention and engagement with my work as something that goes beyond the books that I read and the words that I write.

This has come up with my advisor, too. We've talked about how you get the sense that there is something more at stake in writing history, and in writing religious history. These are peoples' lives. It's pretty weighty work and it requires a lot of great mentors, professors, and resources.

Another challenge I have negotiated is in taking the initiative to pioneer a space for me to think about Asian-American religion. Harvard doesn't have any tenured faculty who teach in this area. I have strong academic networks with folks outside of Harvard through conferences and professional friendships, where a lot of those interests have developed. It's an enduring interest of mine that I have cultivated independently and with my advisor's support. He's the one who let me take an exam in that field and he's the one who really advocated for my interests.

What did that involve, when you decided that was something you wanted to pursue in more depth?

HK: It has meant that I have had to take on a pioneering mentality, take initiative at every step, and learn all of my academic languages very well so that I can bridge old and new ideas. I also maintain close professional friendships outside of Harvard through conferences, take writing and publishing opportunities to do work in this area, and I keep my advisor in the loop about all aspects of my research interests.

How have you thought of the way that teaching fits into your time here, not only as a student, but also as someone who's helping lead a classroom?

HK: Students here are really bright. That's one of the benefits of being at a place like HDS: people ask really good questions. Maybe it'll be in a reading response, like in the capitalism class, and also in the women and gender class I did with Professor Brekus. People will raise questions, in some cases about material you've already read or about which you've already had a certain thought. I had a student, maybe the first semester I was a Teaching Fellow,

write about a book I had read multiple times. They took it, did a good reading of it, and then took it to a whole other level—it was inspirational, actually.

I enjoy reading student papers. I get to learn a ton from the way people think, and I love seeing how people think on paper. It's a huge privilege to go line by line and see how someone is putting ideas together. How does it affect my research? Sometimes I do feel that there's a pretty strict separation between teaching and research. There isn't always a one-to-one correlation. I see professors do this. For example, they don't like to announce their work in class too much. There is a sense of separation, which implies, "here's my work—here's the work of the class." What I've observed from other professors, too, is that you want to make space for students' ideas to germinate, so that you're not feeding them ideas or telling them about your research the whole time.

Have you experienced challenges addressing issues of gender, capitalism, race, and religion in class settings, as those are evolving topics but also ones that are relevant and, for some, contentious?

HK: Honestly, at a place like HDS, it doesn't feel that way. I think I've taken more classes on women and religion than almost any topic in my field. And I've been trained by a lot of people—Professors Braude, Griffith, Brekus, and Frederick—whose writing has worked to re-center the narrative on women.

As we know, race can be a heated subject, especially when one considers everything that's happened—and is still happening—this past year in our country. We have to do a better job everywhere, including in the academy and in American religious studies classrooms. When the Charleston shooting happened, all of the exam material that I did on interrogating the concept of the "black church" with Professor Frederick immediately came to mind. The time we are taking to think and write does have bearing on real life problems. We're not studying contemporary events at HDS, especially in American religious history, but the past does have relevance for the present, and I hope it sharpens how we respond to present-day issues.

How do you think academic work like this should speak to people outside of academia, and, specifically, how would you like your own work to move through academia and outside the university?

HK: That's a great question—and a controversial one. It seems that academics have strong opinions either way. Certainly, I have an understanding that

academic work needs to be accountable to the standards of the academy. As a budding religious historian, I'm primarily accountable to the intellectual standards and conversations of the community.

I think some of the best intellectual work, some of the best books, and some of the best research, not only meets those criteria, but also goes above them and speaks to enduring questions that we struggle with in the present. If my work could do that that would be great—that's an ideal. But when academic work is done well, when you've done your homework, when you've really dug, I think you can get to that point when you hit the perennial questions, the ones that touch on human lives even today. As historians, we're asking questions of the past, but we're asking questions that also have bearing on the present.

If we can hold ourselves to those high standards, if we can produce work that hits that sweet spot, then we can ask hard questions that help us address crises and problems in the world today. Especially for those of us doing American religion and thinking about race—if you look back at our history, it has to give you a confidence about what's at stake and what the problems are. I hope this sort of historical outlook sharpens our ability to respond in ways that have integrity.

PUSHING THE LIMITS OF THEOLOGY: An Interview with Michelle Sanchez

Assistant Professor of Theology Michelle Sanchez joined the HDS faculty in 2014. Her work puts the histories and theologies of the Protestant Reformations, and John Calvin's writing in particular, into conversation with both a rich tradition of past scholarship and fields which, until now, have not engaged deeply with Reformation material. Her interests stretch from the doctrine of providence and Calvin's concern with signification to political theology, law, secularization, and modern politics. Professor Sanchez spoke with the journal about the overlap of theology and lived experience, as well as about her relation to her field, her pedagogical goals, and the legacies of the Reformations.

I wanted to start with a general question. How would you describe your project and interests, and where do you see them going in the future?

Michelle Sanchez: I am officially in the field of theology, and I have great interest in theology as a discipline. My project, as it stands now, is my dissertation, for which I am actively working on getting a book contract. It's the kind of thing that—when you get a job, if you get a job—right out of grad school, you spend the first year or two trying to find the right publisher and to re-craft your dissertation into a book. In a very logistical sense, that's what I'm working on.

But I guess the way I'm approaching this answer is by thinking about kinds of publishers. It's another thing you don't really think about as a grad student. I didn't think about it; I just thought, I'm going to write about what I'm going to write about and respond to my committee. You look at publishers—they have very specific agendas. My work is in the field of theology, but I'm interested in rethinking what theology is, disciplinarily. That has to do with having a more capacious view of how theology functions in society, one that includes things many people wouldn't necessarily label theology but that, if you study the tradition, resonate with religious practice and thought. I'm interested in, for example, political theology, and the crossover between theological conceptions of law and the way law gets talked about outside of theology. There are a ton of terms that get transferred and complicated in interesting ways. So my work is interested in challenging these boundaries, and in challenging the boundaries of theology—but when you pitch that to a publisher that doesn't do theology,

even if they do literary theory, ethics, religion, or politics, they'll say, "Oh, your work sounds really great, but we don't do theology."

I am interested in remaining within the field of theology, but also in always pushing those boundaries a little bit. It's a problem when these fields get treated as so distinct from one another and hermetically sealed. I think we all benefit from sharing methods, especially when there are all kinds of questions circulating about where the humanities fit. One of the ways the humanities can make a contribution is by realizing the very porous boundaries between all of these different fields as well as the way that, in working together, we can contribute to our understanding of society. That approach can shed real light on thorny questions we all face in politics, public life, the economy, or ethics.

How do you see your work in relation to scholarship on the Reformation, as that's such a huge body of work? And how do you see that dynamic as working out with Calvin in particular? Those are such canonical texts.

MS: That's a question I think about *a lot*. When I first started working on Calvin, I was very self-conscious about working on Calvin. I didn't want to be seen as just another Calvin scholar, and I didn't want to have to define myself strictly by the terms of that field as it exists. I was uncomfortable with the idea. But over the last several years—writing my dissertation, and now on the faculty—I've tried to build relationships with people in Calvin studies and to know them personally. I find that their work is really helpful, even though the places I want to take Calvin, and the circles in which I want Calvin to be read and thought with, are not necessarily the ones Calvin studies scholars have already created. They've still done a lot of really helpful work, and just because I might want to find ways to move beyond the scope of their work doesn't mean it's not excellent work on which I rely heavily.

In some ways, I feel more comfortable in that circle: I need them, I like them, and they have been gracious to me. Sometimes, before you know any better, you're afraid that people who have an establishment don't want newcomers, but I think that sells most people short. Many people are interested in thinking beyond existing boundaries, and Calvin scholars also care deeply about how theology matters today, or why people should continue to read Calvin. There could be some fuddy-duddy who doesn't want things to be done differently, but I don't think that accurately describes most people. What they care about, and what we should care about, is that you're doing your work well. If they have a critique about how I'm writing, I want to know that critique; I don't want to

be doing bad scholarship. Then we can have a discussion about whether other methods are useful, but that can be—and it has been for me—a mutually beneficial discussion.

I see myself as a kind of an ambassador from Calvin studies to outsiders. Not to promote Calvin in any kind of confessional sense. Sometimes people get confused about that, and as any scholar of religion knows well, working with religious writers can lead to that kind of confusion. Occasionally people think I'm an apologist, but I definitely don't see myself that way. What I do think is that Calvin's writing is interesting enough that more people should care about it, much in the same way they care about someone like Augustine. Plenty of people read Augustine as a political theologian, or as a major figure in the late Roman Empire, or as a philosopher, and they don't feel they have to be a Christian, or agree with all of his work. But because of the way Calvin has been talked about in public life, people do get the idea that if you like him, it must mean that you are a Christian or are within the Reformed tradition. That's one of the reasons I'm trying to test the waters by publishing outside presses that do theology, and that's why it was important at least to explore. I want people who are not self-consciously doing theology but who are interested in the intellectual history of the modern West to think, "Oh, he's an interesting thinker."

Everyone across the board will admit that Calvin is influential. But they think they already know why he's influential, because they've read Weber, or they've read a number of other people who have some generally Weberian take. Weber's been critiqued from a number of angles, but he still persists. They say death by a thousand cuts—Weber's got a thousand cuts and somehow his argument about Calvinism hasn't died. There is something obviously compelling about the connection between Protestantism and capitalism: you look around and all the Calvinist societies are at the forefront of a certain kind of capitalism. I think that's why Weber's argument still lives, but that doesn't mean his analysis is as full as it should be. That's in part what I'm trying to offer. We all agree that there's a resonance here, but if we read Calvin more closely as a philosopher, as a literary artist, or as a community leader, we'll get a much more complicated view of this connection. It will resist Weber on some level, but it will also help us understand why that resonance is there.

Could you talk a little more about how your rereading of Calvin interacts with Weber's work?

MS: One of the major angles from which I read Calvin has to do with his interest in language and in the function of words, or what I more generally refer to as signification. Sometimes the term signification comes off as a more recent, theoretical, “postmodern” term, but Calvin actually talks about signification a lot. It’s an important term in theological history—Augustine had his famous theory of signs, for example. One of the fascinating things for me is that interest in signs, signification, and language drops out at some point in early modern or modern philosophy. Kant, who is hugely important in almost every area of understanding what it means to be a modern philosopher or think in modern categories, doesn’t talk a whole lot about language. He talks about concepts, understanding, senses, and yet he doesn’t put a lot of weight on how language works communally to shape or obscure our concepts of things. That’s been a growing interest in philosophy more recently, but it’s not new.

Readings of Calvin suffer from not attending to the complicated ways he’s using language. For example, when people read Calvin as emphasizing the use of scripture, it’s very easy to read him anachronistically as taking scripture and trying to impose it on the world, or as setting up a theocracy through the rule of scripture. But a close reading, I think, compellingly reveals that he’s got a much more complicated view of how words relate to the world—it’s much more of a negotiation. If you recognize the complex way that language is working to shape the world and the reform of the world—especially for Calvin, as he’s interested in reforming Earth, the city, and the church—then it’s hard to read his views of predestination, or any doctrine, in such a stringent, authoritarian way.

It could be true, and I think it is true in some cases, that Calvin’s complicated view of how language and teaching works got simplified, and that it became something like, “God is determining everything, and you’re either saved or not saved.” People *were* anxious about that, and maybe it did make them work harder to look for signs of their salvation on earth, as Weber argues. I don’t contest that this kind of reaction might have happened, more than once. But if Calvin’s own writing is more philosophically and theologically complicated than that, then there’s a good chance that other more complicated stuff happened, too. People still read his writing, and writing works in complicated and unpredictable ways. Part of my project is to show that there are other effects of this body of writing that carry within them an internal critique of what has become the dominant interpretation of how these doctrines worked.

If we want to critique the way capitalism works today, or the way we view authority or revelation, it is helpful to see how complicated these views were in a major thinker, and then to use that reading as an immanent critique. I think it's important for some forms of critique to be embedded in a living tradition that has already been forming societies in complicated ways for hundreds of years.

Could you talk more about the stakes of this, of going back and rereading Calvin, especially in relation to people in political theology or similar fields?

MS: My interest in going back to a canonical figure like Calvin came from reading Foucault, Derrida, people who are working on genealogy—in the general, less technical sense of the word—or writing a history of the present and how we came to hold as central the categories that we use today. The question, then, is how we learn to critique those categories that exclude much of what human life and human embodiment entail. I see myself as contributing a tool for rereading Calvin in a complicated way. Part of the project of genealogy is looking at the nuances of signs and signification, with a certain kind of confidence that these signs have effects in shaping the world. Likewise, we can trace the way they've been negotiated and shifted incrementally to give us the world we have today. If I can do a more exhaustive study of how the signs work in Calvin, of how the text is shaped, and of how the arguments are made, that's precisely a way of bringing out the complexity of the present. Part of the goal here is to remember other ways of being beyond the ones we take for granted. They're often embedded in these traditions that are still living, but that these traditions themselves have forgotten. It's a project of memory, a project of recovering.

If you look at Derrida, for example, many of his books are, in a sense, commentaries on some canonical work. *The Gift of Death* is on *Fear and Trembling*, and he rereads Kafka in *Before the Law*. In some ways, I see myself as doing a similar task, rereading a major figure who, for whatever reason, hasn't yet been reread by contemporary figures. I think this is a project that we will benefit from continuing for some time, until we've exhausted its usefulness and moved on to something more useful for the future.

Agamben, for example, does a lot of this kind of work. He recently wrote a book on providence, right at the same time I was working on providence. Lucky for me, he didn't mention Calvin at all, and Luther only in brief. He's

writing a history of the present around the terms of economy and governance, looking at historical views of providence, and somehow he doesn't talk about the Reformation at all. There are probably complicated reasons for that—I don't presume to know what they are. Maybe he didn't think it was important, maybe he wanted to tell a story that was older than the Reformation. But that still leaves open a space to say, "if I agree with your methods, but then I read these other texts, what does that do to your argument?" That's part of my project, too.

You teach about the Protestant Reformations, but you also teach about modern questions, the religious right, and more current topics. How do you see those two areas relating to each other in a topical sense, or even in a pedagogical sense?

MS: Usually when people ask me what I teach, I say I teach on the Protestant Reformations and their legacies. So in some ways, that's the encapsulation of how these things connect. The religious right class that I taught is specifically focused on recent appropriations of Calvinism that have come to be known as Christian Reconstructionism, and which have affected the American religious right intellectually in complicated ways. That's actively changing, even as we speak—I need to think more about where that movement stands now. But it was a huge force in the 1970s through the 1990s. Even if its relevance is decreasing on the political landscape in the United States—which I'm not entirely sure is happening—the intellectual roots of the movement remain an important piece that's often missing in public rhetoric. In other words, understanding the way a certain appropriation of Calvinism gave, and continues to give real intellectual weight to the religious right. Often, the religious right gets written off as anti-intellectual and undereducated, which is just not true; it's a different type of logic. So that's my stake in that class.

But there are also other classes. For example, I'm teaching a course coming up called "After Luther." It starts with Luther, moves through Kant, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche, and ends with Bonhoeffer. That is also a legacy of the Protestant Reformation and it's also interested in politics. You can't not be interested in politics and theology when you end up with Bonhoeffer. He's taking a very present political and ethical crisis and thinking about it with his own theological tradition. In a way, it's a course that was conceived backward, because Bonhoeffer brings together Kant, Nietzsche, and Luther, in order to think through what it means to take part in a plot to execute a head of state.

How do you as a pastor, a Christian theologian, conceive of that? He draws on all of these resources, all of which point back to topics that Luther helped to make important. Luther was at least one well-known, early modern public intellectual who shape these topics about which everyone had to care. Take the question of what it means to follow the law or not follow the law. How do you relate to the law? Can you even follow the law? How do you think of a form of goodness outside of the law? How do you deal with your own inability to be a good person in relationship to an unknown and uncontrollable entity such as God, an unpredictable sort of overseer of your world?

That course is an example of a legacy question as well—what are the varieties of ways in which early Protestant theologies were negotiated, rejected, and re-appropriated? But in all cases, whether it's the religious right or the impact of Luther and Calvin on mainstream modern philosophy, it has to do with, once again, this question of how theological ideas are deeply inscribed in questions that concern everyone, whether or not they identify as religious, or Christian, or even Western. In part due to globalization, and in part due to the colonization that preceded globalization, many people have some stake in being familiar with the complexity of questions so that they can find ways to be effectively critical of their effects.

The other branch of courses I teach has to do with doctrinal categories. Those are a little less connected to the Reformation in particular. I'm teaching a course in the fall on providence, called "Life before Death," and I'm teaching a course in the spring on arguments for God's existence. My providence course starts with Job, Plato, and the Stoics, and it moves through Christian theology and modern philosophy to several novels and ends with contemporary film. It passes through the Reformation, but is far from limited to the Reformation. Similarly, the existence of God course starts with early arguments and asks, "What are these arguments hoping to achieve?" I'll say from the outset that most of the time I don't think the authors pictured someone who didn't believe in God suddenly believing because they read the argument or heard the argument. So the question is, what's actually going on with the attempt to provide an argument? But similarly, I start early and move through the Reformation—which for the most part didn't actually attempt to prove God, the reformers weren't concerned with that—before looking at more contemporary debates over God's existence, and how they differ from the more ancient project or medieval project of talking about confidence concerning God's existence.

What films are you using in the providence course?

MS: *Melancholia* and *Hugo*. They came out roughly at the same time, but they're very different films. One is animated; one is super realistic, mythically realistic. Part of my choice of those films is idiosyncratic—I watched them when I was working on the early part of my dissertation, and I thought, “There are so many connections here!” Both of them deal with the question of how meaning is constructed in the absence of what would seem to be an outside intelligence giving us meaning. When they hear the term providence, people think, “I know that term, it's a theological term. It has to do with Christian theology.” When I ask people, they answer that providence is the Christian belief that God orders the world and gives it meaning and its final conclusion. But if you look at basically any text that deals with providence, it's a lot more interesting and layered than that. Providence—especially for the Stoics, who deeply influenced the way Christians talk about it—has to do with giving human beings the resources they need to face questions that they can't ultimately answer. In the absence of knowing, how do you deal with calamities? What are the practices you do to organize your world so you can face the next day? Maybe you've been given a diagnosis that you're going to die. How do you properly live those next three weeks? Maybe there's life after death, maybe there's not; I'm sure very few people who are facing death are absolutely certain. So how do they live and how do they draw from these resources? *Melancholia* is about the absence of any kind of meaning in the universe at all, and then the end of the world. What does it matter how you die? Does it matter if you have a good death or a bad death? Does it matter if you commit suicide? *Hugo* is about the modern view of the world as a machine, and finding your place in this machine. Can being part of the machine provide meaning in the way we want?

How did you arrive at Calvin and the Reformation, and what drew you to them originally?

MS: The obvious answer—and if I gave any other answer and somebody researched my past, they'd say I was lying—is that I grew up in a Reformed church, where Calvin was the main guy, the one everyone cared about. But that fact actually made me *not* study Calvin for a long time. When I went to college, I thought, “I already know that, I want to study all these other people.” When I was doing a master's, during my third year or maybe at the end of my second, I took a course on Reformed Christian thought. I didn't intend to take it, I just

went the first day to see what it was about. The way it was presented intrigued me, so I took the course.

Even though I grew up in a Reformed church, I had never read Calvin. I know now, from talking to other people, that this is pretty common experience. You think Calvin is one thing, because you hear him talked about in a certain way, usually in very conservative communities. And then you read him, and you realize he's way more interesting and complicated than you thought. I didn't, however, necessarily come into my PhD thinking I was going to work on Calvin, but as time went on, I realized I had a unique perspective. Most people who don't have the familiarity with the community don't care about Calvin, or they think everything has already been written. But growing up in the community, having the exposure to that alongside the academic world, gave me a kind of ability to see the complexities of Calvin's theology and his influence.

Why should somebody care about the complexities of a community of which they're not a part? Sometimes people can generate that, but it can be hard to generate when the community has gotten so much ugly press. Why would somebody want to study Christian Reconstructionism sympathetically, for example? Unless, like me, you grew up in it and you constantly—even though you're very critical of it—have a sense of the human beings who are part of it. I felt I could bring this to the table and that it gave me a head start with already having a kind of ethnographic familiarity. I don't write ethnographically about these communities in a formal sense—these are memories I'm dealing with, and to a certain extent ongoing relationships. But I've found that it's always helped my academic writing to have a sense for the humanity of all involved.

I don't know what other people say about how you come to your topic. It's a snowball. You start working on something, people find it interesting, you work on it more. Pretty soon you have a project. You're not going to go start another whole project when you've got a snowball waiting here. But I like it, I'm glad it happened the way it did. It wasn't anything I had by design.

Looking back at your time at HDS, what were the most valuable resources for you while you were here, or the things you think were most influential in how you have developed as a scholar?

MS: I wasn't one of the more social people, partly for reasons of personality, partly just because I was busy with all the other stuff I was doing. So at HDS in particular, the resources I had were the two everybody has: classroom and professors, and Field Education. Field Ed especially was important. I switched

from MTS to MDiv, and part of the reason I switched was that I wanted the chance to work in a church. Of course, Field Ed can take place at any number of sites, but for me, it was important that it was a church. The sense I had, as I was discovering who I was as an academic, was that I had a whole lifetime of experience in these church communities that already gave me conceptual tools helpful in asking questions about things like the doctrine of providence.

But also I had a sense that, even though I was an academic, I didn't want only to remember the past: I wanted to be involved in living communities in the present. Switching to MDiv and doing Field Ed in a church turned out to be the best decision ever. I'm still involved in that church. It's a community that's very different from the Harvard community. It's in South Boston, and there are a lot of different kinds of people there. I go there for a number of reasons, but it is always an invaluable experience to see how theology continues to live in ways you can't study in a book. The way sermons that are preached get interpreted by people—people who don't care at all whether something is correct traditionally, or from what authoritative source someone is drawing from when they're saying things. No, that's not on the table, but the words are still having an effect in how people form their ethical relationships. It's an honor for me to continue to be a part of that, but also to observe it, because I can't help but observe it.

The opportunity here at HDS to do both on-the-ground work and academic work is something not everybody has. You could go somewhere and get a really good academic education, and you can go somewhere else and work in a church, but HDS brings them together really well.

Finally, I want to ask specifically about teaching. What are your goals in the classroom, and what have you found useful in achieving them?

MS: I love teaching, and I always loved teaching. It's frustrating the extent to which you have so many other things to do. I also get the sense that you could be a middle-of-the-road teacher and, if you're publishing good stuff, your career's going to be better than if you were an excellent teacher and not publishing or publishing bad stuff. On some level, I wish I could have adequate time to be the best possible teacher there is, because that's really, in the end, what I care about.

I used to ask my old advisor all these questions. I wanted to know the meaning of theology, or how theology can be useful to the world. I was constantly worried about what every academic is worried about: how many people

are going to read my book? A few other people who are in my exact field. It's even unlikely that they'll assign in it classes—though don't tell publishers that. If you're teaching a class on Calvin, there are so many secondary sources, what are the chances they're going to pick mine to assign along with the readings? He said to me, "I always said that, on my tombstone, I would want printed my name, father, husband, teacher. Because teacher, in the end, is really what it's about." When you think about it, it's not just that teaching is a joy. You also get a whole bunch of people in your classroom who might not read your book, but they will take your class. You end up with hundreds and hundreds—maybe a thousand if you're in the field long enough—of people who you've been able to impact in some way, even if only five people read your book.

Teaching is really where it's at—I really believe that, and that's why teaching is important to me. At the same time, it's true that there's a real symbiotic relationship between research and teaching. Your teaching stays vital if you stay vital, and the way you stay vital is by reading stuff that's coming out in the present because your work needs to address that as well. There's a whole system of incentives that do work, provided you have enough time in your day to make it all happen.

Regarding my teaching goals: I want people to read the canonical sources I teach and come away being glad that they read them, having developed an appreciation as well as a critical lens through which to think about these texts' efficacy in the present and future. I recognize that on some level I'm forwarding the tradition of reading a small number of white men, and that there are problems connected to that. But I want my students to understand that we don't only read them because they were on top of the power pyramid. That was a huge factor in getting their name out there, to be sure, but we read them also because their ideas were, in some cases, interesting and good, and in every case influential. It's the influence that we need to understand in the end, even if we don't like the fact that we have to keep reading these same people. If we want to understand the world we need to understand their influence. I want my students to have a kind of critical lens through which to see how these ideas have lived on, and then also be open to taking them, and having them live on in positive ways, insofar as there is positive stuff to carry forward. I want people to think with what they're reading, and about how language, and the organization of language and communities, affects the way we think and the way communities are formed, and bounded, and fight with each other. All of that is embedded in reading theology.

CONTRIBUTORS

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