Resplendent Poverty: Mysticism, Mission, and Slavery in the Capuchin-Franciscan Atlantic

by

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated in loving memory to my friend TL Michael Auman, capuchin (1946-2023).

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Abstract

"Resplendent Poverty: Mysticism, Mission, and Slavery in the Capuchin-Franciscan Atlantic" argues that Franciscan spiritual and mystical texts offer and transmit a theological anthropology that provides and interpretive key to understand the surprising ways in which Capuchin-Franciscan missionaries intervened as historical actors. It uses this interpretive key to examine a case where two missionary friars called for an end to slavery and for enslaved people to receive reparations in late seventeenth century Cuba. The dissertation makes extensive use of psychoanalysis as a domain of theory that can help scholars better appreciate religious experience.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Impasse: The Limits of Genealogy in the Franciscan Family Tree

If Franciscanism, as the *religio* that claimed the legacy of Francis of Assisi, its twelfth-century founder, ongoingly fractured into various branches throughout its 800-year-long history, it seems important to recognize that such ruptures may have occurred along lines other those of strict genealogical descent involving the transmission of specific traits and adaptations according to circumstances. Rather, a whole ethos structured Franciscans' attempted returns to a fundamental situation inaugurated in Francis of Assisi's life trajectory. Splintering from the Franciscan Observants in the early sixteenth century, Capuchins exemplified one such reform, albeit with a distinctly early modern flavor. Three coordinates for this Franciscan ethos, central to such reforms, as we will soon see, should be rehearsed briefly at the outset—even as they will be developed and refined, given more detail and "on-the-ground" importance in Franciscan spirituality and missions in the chapters to come. Importantly, they should also be contrasted from more dominant assessments of Catholic approaches.

Each of the three coordinates to follow pertains to the entrance of the divine into material creation, and, I argue, they are crucial to consider alongside later historical examples involving Franciscan spirituality, mysticism, and missionization. It also seems important to state at the outset that, even though each of these coordinates could be read to comprise a kind of cataphatic theological discourse (i.e. something that can be said, using language, about God), I am more interested in reading such statements along the lines of evocation and equivocation in order to better understand the subjective-experiential and social effects they could produce. (This is why this

dissertation moves from a discussion of hagiography and mystical texts to a detailed consideration of a specific Franciscan response to African-Atlantic enslavement.)

Here are the three coordinates that I think are crucial in considerations of Franciscanism:

First, there is a Franciscan appreciation for God's creation, which could be thought to emphasize God's assessment of creation in Genesis: "it was (very) good." An alternative Catholic origin story of the account of cosmogenesis in Genesis could center original sin and the expulsion from the garden. Unlike theologies that would eschew the material and sensuous, in favor of a differentiated "sacred," Franciscan spirituality sought a return to the material world *as* very good

Second, and related, there is an emphasis on the *humble* entrance of God into a human material body in the person of Jesus, conceived of as a self-emptying and divine lowering, undertaken because God loved creation. This Christology would find an important scriptural basis in Paul's Epistle to the Philippians, which describes Christ as humbling himself and taking on the form of a slave.[1] In this second coordinate or moment, the nativity of Jesus is given particular emphasis and it is metonymically linked to the crucifixion (via the wood of the crib and the wood of the cross). Jesus's commission of apostles is also significant insofar as it emphasized poverty and itinerancy, and, indeed, various passages of the gospels related to the commission of the apostles were cited in Francis's Rule of 1221, which was not the version of the rule that would eventually receive papal approval (this earlier rule is sometimes known as the "*Regula non bullata*"). Other theologies could (and have) emphasized the sinfulness of humanity and a divine need for

[1] "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil 2:5-11, KJV).

recompense, centering the atonement of the cross as a sacrifice and the final triumph of God in the resurrection.

Third, there is the poverty and humility of Francis as an *alter Christus* ("another Christ"), as the founder, father, and even the mother who introduced a new way of life. While certain elements of his life are explored at length in chapter one to make an argument around conversion, here it is noteworthy that the moment we could consider Francis's "transfiguration"—the ecstatic reception of the stigmatic wounds of Jesus—is, via the wounds, more aligned with the crucifixion than with Jesus's resurrection body or his transfiguration body, which are both crucially important for monastic and Orthodox forms of Christian spirituality. Francis's conversion—also leading to a kind of apotheosis—involves the resplendence of poverty (to draw upon Capuchin language situated and cited below), the persistence of poverty and woundedness *within* glorification, rather than glorification as a final triumph over poverty and woundedness.

Since Franciscan theologians were within the Catholic Church, a part of its discursive community, it is important to mention that what makes Franciscans unique is largely a question of subtle emphases, but ones which, in some instances, made a decisive difference in their Franciscan assessment of questions of conversion, idolatry, and slavery, among others. (For instance, while Bonaventure did rely on aspects of Anselm's atonement theology—the idea that Jesus of Nazareth's violent death comprised as a compensatory sacrifice to God that atoned for humankind's sins—Bonaventure's use of this theology tells us more about the genealogy and prevalence of atonement as a specific theological concept, in a particular time period, than it does about the inflections Franciscans might have brought to a particular concept *qua* Franciscans.) Nevertheless, I argue that these uniquely Franciscan coordinates—problematic or paradoxical as they might be—structured Franciscans' ongoing mystical and missionary returns to their fundamental ethos, and that they helped to fuel occasional reforms, of which the Capuchin reform, inaugurated in the early sixteenth-

century was a crucial one. And, insofar as they troubled strict separations between the sacred and the profane, they were a strange form of return—elevating the oft-considered profane to the level of the sacred (related points around sacramentality and sacrilege will be discussed throughout this dissertation, but they become a key focus in Chapter Four).

As such, some appreciation of such coordinates can help us to read certain textual moments that might otherwise leave scholarly readers scratching their heads. As we will see, I suspect that they also informed the sometimes-surprising ways that Capuchins related to social institutions like Atlantic slavery. In this way, with more development and careful consideration, they offer an important interpretive key for reading Franciscan texts.

Splits in groups can be caused by a variety of impulses. The cause of what was at stake in the series of splits undertaken by Franciscan reformers was and is perennially the return to the primitive Franciscan style of life (*modus vivendi*) encapsulated in poverty. To consider the possible effects of this return in the Franciscan mission fields, what seems crucial is to first introduce the contours of this *experience* of poverty as well as the ever-present threat that its experience and effects could be lost in its codification or enshrinement as an *ideal*.

From the perspective of the Franciscan sources considered here, if they can be productively read in a psychoanalytic vein, this dissertation will argue that, at least occasionally, Franciscanism supported friars realizing themselves in a place that psychoanalysis would talk about as one of *castration*. Despite its valences anatomical, biological, or based in animal husbandry, as constitutive loss, castration, explored in a Freudian-Lacanian key, can become a site either for defensive compromise and resentment, which produce various kinds of difficulties heard and spoken in the psychoanalytic clinic or as a possible site for creativity, construction, and bricolage amid the remains of shattered ideals and in the absence of any reliable guarantee. In this way, castration provides a powerful resource for the consideration of religious conversion experiences, an argument I develop

in relation to the early hagiographical descriptions of Francis of Assisi's conversion in Chapter One. It also makes for fundamentally flimsy institutional foundations, necessitating the occasional renewal of itinerating quests that, for Franciscans, often upheld, circled, or built upon poverty, and wounds too (see chapters one and two), as the stuff of fundamental lack. In considering the preoccupations of Franciscan textual sources, the resonance of Franciscan poverty to a psychoanalytic conception of lack seemed to me to make a generative dialogue possible between the two traditions, allowing them to amplify each other. (More will be said about the use of psychoanalysis in this dissertation below, and in the conclusion.)

In its renewals—and in its beginning, itself crafted as a renewal of the poor apostolic itinerancy introduced in the gospels—the Franciscan way of life sought to establish possibilities for *ethical* relations to constitutive loss since Franciscans considered such losses to present opportunities for self-emptying (the self-emptying, or *kenosis*, referred to in St. Paul's above-cited Letter to the Philippians), going so far as to further elaborate a theology which took its *starting point* as the poverty and humility of God—rather than God's glory or grandeur—who, took material form in the historical person and body of Jesus or in the humble forms of the everyday nutritive substances like bread and wine of eucharist, arguably among others (like different entities in material creation).

All of this was in line with Catholic theological viewpoints, in general. However, the Franciscan specificity can be found in the central emphasis Franciscans placed on the *humility* of these forms. When Francis staged the first live nativity scene at Christmas, he emphasized God as an infant born into poverty among livestock. When Francis's follower Clare of Assisi advised her follower Agnes of Prague to follow a method of prayer wherein the cross would be looked at as a mirror, God was emphasized as a man who died a violent death, as it was in Francis of Assisi's

stigmatic wounds.[2] As in Francis's live nativity scene, the Capuchins emphasized that even the implements required for the celebration of mass should be poor. The Capuchin rule of 1536 stipulates that the minimum implements necessary for the celebration of mass should be kept in a locked chest (rather than in a sacristy), and they should only include, for instance, "two small chalices, one made of tin and the other with only the cup of silver," that "the candlesticks shall be of wood," and that "everything must be neat and clean."[3] The spiritual values that informed these practices are clearly, even if paradoxically, stated: "in everything we use in holy poverty is seen resplendent." In this way, the point of these practices was not that God's glory and grandeur would disappear but, rather, that humble forms would themselves be exalted with a kind of grandeur.

This dissertation will argue that this Franciscan "*religio*" or spirituality, as a theology theorized and (at least sometimes) lived, offers powerful affordances for the interpretation of specific historical instances that occurred in the Franciscan mission field when friars came into contact with African slavery and made unique arguments against it, in the case of Épiphane de Moirans and Francisco José de Jaca, two Capuchin Franciscan missionaries who argued for an end to slavery and reparations in the late seventeenth century. What was at stake in lived, material practices was a kind of *askesis* (etymologically associated with training or exercise), that aimed at nothing less than a conversion of the friar's affects, desire, and sensorium, all continuously reconfigured in what friars talked about as the "flame of divine love." (As such, it was a question of conversion, the Franciscan coordinates for which will be explored in Chapter One and Chapter Two.) It is not difficult to see how an emphasis in poverty, ascesis, and itinerancy, in their own rights and elaborated in these ways, could open unpredictable contact zones for the aleatory, leading to any number of "firsts," if

[2] Clare of Assisi, "The Fourth Letter to Agnes of Prague (1253)" in *The Lady: Clare of Assisi, Early Documents*, ed. Regis Armstrong (New York: New City Press, 2006): 54-58.
[3] *The Capuchin Constitutions of 1536*, Translated by Paul Hanbridge (Rome: Collegio San Lorenzo da Brindisi, 2007), 140.

contrasted with a way of life or plan for conversion that imagined conformity with a verifiable ideal or a measurable goal as an outcome. I will argue later (Chapter Four) that the uniquely Franciscan components of this sensuous ascesis could help us understand Épiphane de Moirans's description of a scene involving the death of an enslaved woman in the process of giving birth to twins.

As a sixteenth-century reform of Franciscanism, the Capuchins were, in many ways, emblematic of the reformist impulses undertaken in a variety of Catholic congregations in the medieval and early modern periods and even in the present day.[4] The mythical coordinates for their particular reform were undertaken as a purported "return" to the primal Franciscan emphasis on poverty, life lived *sine proprio* (without property), a hard-fought topic in the century after Francis of Assisi's death which led to the primal split between the Order of Friars Minor (OFMs) and the Order of Friars Minor Conventual (OFM Conv.).[5] Most of the Franciscan reforms throughout history have not happened with the ideal of modernizing or updating an institution. By contrast, they have tended to focus on a return to some primary fundamental feature that an existing (i.e. parent) institution had lost. Perhaps better, we could think about the parent institution as the scene upon which a loss is staged in the return to the primitive feature, mirroring Francis's reform insofar as it came to view the monastic position as the scene of a loss (i.e. monasticism or whatever embodiment of Franciscanism that was targeted for reform had become lax or wealthy). In this schema, again and again, reformist Franciscans would posit the lost object as one that Francis had deployed the troubadour's language of courtly love to name: "Lady poverty." In this sense of poverty as it was "espoused" by Franciscan reforms, in emulation of the founder, lack itself was

[4] One could think of numerous examples like the reform of the Benedictines and the creation of the Cistercian Order in Cîteaux in the Eleventh Century or Teresa of Avila's reform of the Carmelites in the Sixteenth Century. Or, in modern times, we could think of the widespread reforms of religious congregations after the Second Vatican Council, when congregations were asked to revise their constitutions according to their original charisms—not to mention of those reforms taking place today, though, as some vowed religious seek to return to wearing full habits and Latin liturgies, it seems unclear whether they aim at a reform based in originary medieval ideals or seek to return to an American Catholicism of the 1950s.

[5] See Giorgio Agamben, *The Highest Poverty: Monastic Rules and Form-of-Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).

figured as a perhaps-mythical lost object: the thing that used to make things work, but which had exited the scene. Paradoxically, this installs a gaping hole in the central place of a primary lost object—a theme whose history I will trace in reformist- and Capuchin-Franciscan mysticism in Chapter Two.

The reason why Franciscans' reformist impulses matter pertains to an impasse that I faced in undertaking the research for this dissertation. A vast majority of the erudite articles on the history of early modern Franciscan spirituality, including how it related to other contemporaneous spiritualities, were composed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by scholars who were also friars or monastics. Clerical authors might, for instance, seek to answer a question about who Francisco de Osuna's major influences were, to cleave out what differentiated Franciscan recollection methods and *alumbradismo*, or to explore the Augustinian threads in Bonaventure, etc.[6] This significant scholarly work, even if confined to rather niche areas within church history or historical theology, sought to *genealogize* concepts tracing them across spiritual and theological domains of influence, including those associated with Franciscanism. These sources were immensely valuable, especially insofar as they attempted to trace direct and indirect lines of transmission—albeit always at a discursive or conceptual level—but one of the pitfalls was that this left such studies locked within a particular genre of conceptual production—i.e. spiritual reading, prayer manuals, or spiritually edifying works, for instance. In this sense, impasses began to emerge. On the one hand, there is an intellectual historical reduction of an almost-totalizing religious *formation* to a genre or to a discourse. Signifying repetitions can be traced genealogically through, and, in turn, designate a body of texts, and, thus, an outside of the body of texts, as well. Because I approached such secondary source texts wanting to better understand whether or if Franciscan spirituality could provide an

[6] For instance, Henri Brémond's magisterial eleven-volume *Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux en France depuis la fin des guerres de religion jusqu'à nos jours.*

interpretive key for reading friars' missionary texts, the enclosure of genre, in which missionary texts were located outside allowed me to better understand how texts were quarantined. Putting my analytic thumb on the scale, on the side of transmission and formation, rather than genealogy or discourse, helped me to locate resonances that could help us understand the difference a uniquely Franciscan mystical-missionary ethos could have made with respect to social phenomena like African-Atlantic slavery.

A theological treatise calling for the eradication of slavery and for reparations introduced by a Capuchin in 17th century Cuba falls outside the genre because the friar does not, despite many other citations he provides, overtly refer to recognizably Franciscan ideals and principles. His citational references do not explicitly point in the direction of this literature, and, because he wrote the text as a defense of his position prepared for church hierarchs, rather than for his Capuchin confrères, it would not have made sense for them to do so. Nevertheless, when we consider the production of the text in terms of the friar's own history and impulses and read his argumentation, citations, and the general thrust of his argument, I argue that a better appreciation of Franciscan spirituality and theology—both as theorized about and as lived—can help us arrive at a clearer appreciation of what catalyzed his argument. In this way, the novelty of his argument—as a call for an end to the African slave trade and for the payment of reparations in the late 17th century—is perhaps of less interest than what a close reading of the text reveals about the possibility that spiritual experience could find a place of social inscription that could disrupt the machinations of the social link. In this way, what the friar called for is of less importance to me that what pushed him to call for it. What I aim to argue is that there is a way in which formation undertaken in a Capuchin-Franciscan key, prepared the way for a radical assessment of slavery insofar as it aimed to inculcate the friar in a poor, humble, minoritarian position, which allowed the friar to see what other clerics could not and insofar as Franciscan spirituality trained friars' perceptual capacities and sensoria

toward a particular relation to the divine in the world. Resplendent poverty seems to encapsulate all of that.

Beyond the question of genre, such an approach also runs the possible risk of missing the cultural *function* of the text as a component in a broader style of life: in a rhythm of life encapsulated in an *horarium* (for instance), in gesture, and in other aesthetic features. The function of texts in ongoing Franciscan religious formation or Franciscan conversion, should be considered from what we can glean from Franciscans' style of life, and not the other way around. For instance, there was an early and reformist Franciscan distrust of friars becoming too educated or intellectually accomplished, despite notable early exceptions. As another example, friars departed from the traditional monastic practice of the divine office (which, until the Fourth Lateran Council, involved a variety of books and musical notations so the office could be sung), in favor of the use of the breviary, for clerics, and the provision of a simple office of Our Fathers for lay friars to pray at particular times of the day. In the stipulation of the early rule that clerics *could* possess a breviary, the concern was directed more at friars' possession of books than it was about how they observed the divine office, which, certainly for clerics, would have been presumed. Despite the extreme variability of these features in the long practice of Franciscan styles of life, they nevertheless begin to sketch out some coordinates through which to consider the functions and uses of texts within (a) spatio-temporally variable Franciscan style(s) of life. In this way, the immense benefits of the elaboration of an intellectual historical genealogy run the risk of sidelining the question of a style of life—a problem of *habitus*, in a way, though I will also seek to trouble this frame. The necessary and valuable intellectual historical work on Franciscan spirituality runs the risk of reducing a religious, even subjective, *formation* to a genre or to discourse.

It proved analytically necessary for me to find a way to elaborate key coordinates of the Franciscan *modus vivendi*, by reading texts anthropologically and psychoanalytically. By reading

Franciscan texts anthropologically I mean with attention to the text as a cultural artifact with a given domain of use, a function, a culturally-designated status, and the like. Importantly, though, by reading Franciscan texts anthropologically I also mean *as* texts of philosophical-theological anthropology—texts with a theory of major questions related to the human condition like the questions related to suffering; desire; subjective change/conversion; and meaning and communication, to name a few. In the case of many of the texts discussed here, they contain a whole philosophical-theological anthropology insofar as they aim to answer questions about, for instance, the possibilities, limits, and affordances of human beings' relations to each other and to other beings (minerals, plants, animals, preternatural entities like angels and demons, saints, Jesus, the persons of the Trinity, etc.). By reading psychoanalytically, I mean with "floating attention" priming one's ears for repeated and polyvalent signifiers and novelty at the level of language as well as to censorship, repression, and/or erasure in a way that aims to continuously work from the standpoint of evocation.[7] This would be a way of locating and grounding Franciscan spiritual texts and missionary texts on the same stage: that of an identifiable, even if semi-fluid, Franciscan *modus vivendi*, on the basis of which we could begin to look for commonalities and divergences.[8]

1.2 Entrée: Thinking and Living in Franciscan, Franciscanism as a Dialect

A grounding elaboration of the Franciscan *modus vivendi*, I wanted to know if Franciscanism held the force of a dialect—if an exploration of its grammatical principles and idiosyncratic formations could help guide and structure inter-Franciscan dialogue and debate. And, beyond all of

[7] Given the legacy of psychohistory and psychobiography as the deployment of specific psychoanalytic concepts (like Oedipus) to explain (away) socio-historical phenomena, I find it important to clarify that this is not what I am after. A sustained reflection on the upshots of psychoanalysis for religious studies is offered in the conclusion.
[8] Dana Bultman, "Winds, Heart, and Heat in Premodern Nahua Conceptions of 'Soul', *Colonial Latin American Review*, no. 27:3 (January 2019): 296-315.

this, I wanted to know whether there was a way to assess the degree of force of Franciscan spiritual experience that went beyond the production of a genealogy based on an assessment of ideals, on the one hand, or to phenomenology, on the other.

This ambition encountered at least two difficulties: the first practical and the second methodological. First, due to the primacy of their *modus vivendi*, Franciscan friars, and Capuchin-Franciscans especially, tended to be little interested—especially in comparison to monastic institutions, Vatican bureaucratic machines like the Propaganda Fide, and, perhaps most especially the Society of Jesus—in the meticulous documentation, publication, and circulation of their own histories. In this regard, archival documentation was considerably less available and organized despite the significance of their missionary activity.

Second, because of how Christianity oozes meaning, to paraphrase psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, genealogical references run into their own impasses.[9] Along with this point, we could think of Bonaventure's associative freewheeling, as we will see in the chapters to follow. The point is that a dense piling on of ever-increasing (imaginary) points of connection can help to prevent or to thwart the distillation of a symbolic structure. In the chapters to come, I try to pay attention to—and to some extent, I also participate in—a tracking of an imaginary process of meaning-making, but, at the same time, attention to specific words used, slips, shifts in language, repetition, etc., allow us to begin to locate the symbolic logics in play. The symbolic tends to cut through imaginary discourse. In Lacan's well-known tripartite distinction between the imaginary, symbolic, and the real, the imaginary is the world of semblance and surface appearances, the symbolic refers to an underlying structure or logic that is separate from a speaker's intended meaning (a parapraxis in a clinical context, for instance), and the real refers to a domain beyond language, which would be connected to the aesthetic and to primordial trauma. My sense is that thinking in these domains could prove

[9] Jacques Lacan, *The Triumph of Religion: Preceded by Discourse to Catholics* (New York: Polity, 2015).

useful for the scholarly consideration of religious experience in a number of ways, and I will say more about this in the conclusion.

To provide an example related to how genealogy can comprise a limit to scholarly consideration, while it is correct to say that the Patristic mystical author known as Pseudo-Dionysius was an important reference for the monumental scholastic Franciscan theologian Bonaventure of Bagnoregio (Capuchins' theological master and whose work provides a constant reference in body chapter), a tracing of genealogical influences does little to establish particular deployments of specific concepts. An assessment of the broader thrust of the signifying network that Bonaventure patches together could end up shedding more light on friars' motivations, if we are willing to consider Franciscanism as a *modus vivendi*, rather than as a discourse. For instance, the anti-slavery friar upon which chapters four and five investigate never explicitly cites Bonaventure. Nevertheless, my wager and argument is that if we fail to recognize the centrality of Bonaventure for the early modern Capuchins in theological training, in liturgical use, and in the process of formation (i.e. becoming a friar), then we will lose a potentially generative interpretive key for understanding the text itself.

1.3 Key: Capuchin Franciscan *Modus Vivendi*—Conversion, Slavery, and Freedom

What were the implications of the Capuchin-Franciscan *modus vivendi*—a life based in the resplendence of poverty and the upholding of minority as a privileged site for encounter with God—in an early modern context marked by increasing epistemic anxieties around the encounter with cultural and religious others and with emergent forms of subjugation like African-Atlantic Slavery?

On the one hand, it could be suggested that, if friars regarded the poor, humble, and minoritarian as the specialized context for conversion inaugurated in an encounter with the divine,

then why would they argue for an end to enslavement? In this sense, since slavery aligns with the social-cultural creation of a minoritarian class (as the condition of leprosy—recognized via legal rituals—made one a minor in Francis of Assisi's era) the designation of this category could be taken as a benefit insofar as it named a social designation toward which friars could descend in the quest for their salvation. If Franciscan life were simply a project of auto-conversion—that is, focused on the salvation of friars themselves—the status of slavery as a legal-social institution could remain uncomplicated for Franciscans. (And, indeed, various forms of slavery have been accepted or tolerated by many Franciscans throughout the congregation's history. My own interest is in inquiring into the symbolic coordinates that could help us understand what made a forceful critique imaginable in at least some instances.)

This dissertation aims to show several problems with the position designated in the last paragraph. First, in emphasizing the *resplendence* of poverty, Capuchins-Franciscans, like other reformist and like early Franciscans, exalted the status of people and objects associated with poverty or minority—or, even, simple materiality as in the example of wooden ritual implements discussed above—through a number of ritual, social, legal, and other acts. For example, Francis kissing the leper (an act considered in Chapter One) would have clearly violated social rules, norms, and customs. In Chapter Three and Chapter Four, I argue that Épiphane de Moirans, in his own acts of preaching and writing, aimed to demonstrate the sanctity of enslaved Africans' desires. These examples, among others, aim to demonstrate a Franciscan drawing together of opposites like auto- and hetero -conversion, action and contemplation, mysticism and missionization.

Second, the examples just mentioned, among others to be considered in the following body chapters, go to show that even Franciscans' arts of converting themselves were undertaken in *relation* to other entities. This aspect of conversion in and through relation become increasingly clear in the expositions of Bonaventure, present in each body chapter, as well as in expositions of Francsico de

Osuna, and other significant reformist Franciscan spiritual teachers in Chapter Two. A Franciscan sense of auto-conversion (formation, conversion of the self) cannot be conceived as an act of isolated asceticism, but, rather, is undertaken in acts of relation toward persons and entities associated with poverty and minoritarian status. It is through precisely these acts, in so far as they involve relation, that hetero-conversion (seeking to convert others, in mission, for instance) could also be thought to take place. (Its perhaps a striking sidenote that even Francis of Assisi's Rule for Hermitages, envisions a living situation where three friars would live together in a hermitage, rather than one friar living alone.)[10]

Third, I argue that, because of these modes of relating, Franciscans cultivated *modus vivendi* called existing modes of social relating into question—at least, it could in some instances. For example, it is surprising that, in the composition of his Early Rule, composed during the Fifth Crusade in 1221—Francis of Assisi provides two briefly-stated possibilities for friars who sought to go on mission in lands ruled by Muslims:

> As for the brothers who go, they can live spiritually among the Saracens and nonbelievers in two ways. One way is not to engage in arguments or disputes but to be subject *to every human creature for God's sake* and to acknowledge that they are Christians.[11]

Friars who live among Muslims in Muslim lands should not quarrel but "to be subject to every creature." In this sense, the appropriate relation of the friar to others is supposed to be one of subjection, implying a humbling (if not humiliation of the self) and a reverencing of the other. The second possibility stated is that the friars acknowledge that they themselves are Christians. Perhaps counter-intuitively the passage of the *Regula non bullata* that speaks of friars who go to mission among Muslims, there is no explicit mention of converting Muslims to Christianity.

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[10] Francis of Assisi, "A Rule for Hermitages," in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, The Saint,* ed. and trans. Regis Armstrong (New York: New City Press, 1999).
[11] Francis of Assisi, "The Earlier Rule (The Rule without a Papal Seal) (1209/10-1221)," in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, The Saint,* ed. and trans. Regis Armstrong (New York: New City Press, 1999), 74.

Even more striking, the second possibility seems to retroactively clarify that friars who sought to go to Muslim lands in the first mode (i.e. being subject to Muslim rulers) might not even overtly reference their own Christianity.

Given these three points I define a Capuchin-Franciscan modus vivendi as a style of life that seeks reverent and minoritarian relational engagement with persons and entities associated with poverty. For better or worse, the Franciscan assumption, confirmed in several examples that this dissertation explores, is that these relational acts of conversion had the capacity to revise existing rules, norms, and values. After tracing a number of coordinates to introduce major Franciscan symbolic coordinates based on the hagiography of Francis of Assisi (Chapter Two) and through discussion of several texts that I deem "myssionary" texts (Chapter Three), I engage in some contextualization and close reading of one instance where Franciscan symbolic coordinates were a powerful resource that could fuel a critique of African slavery and elicit a call for enslaved Africans to receive reparations (Chapter Four and Chapter Five). It is worth mentioning here that in Épiphane de Moirans's critique of slavery the explicit calls for conversion are primarily geared toward Christian colonists living in Cuba and to the Christian rulers who permitted the institution of slavery. In this sense, the failure of Christians to relate appropriately to the impoverished and the minor—indeed, the act of enslaving or tolerance of enslavement—put the relations through which salvation could be achieved, for Christians, in dire risk.

1.4 Chapter Summaries

In my second chapter, "The Founder's Sinthome: Francis of Assisi's Perfect Jouissance," I explore the hagiography of Francis of Assisi's ongoing conversion, inquiring into its specific

symptomatic manifestations and sketching out what would come to be *transmitted* to the Franciscan order at large. I argue that medieval hagiographers cast Francis's conversion as an affective titration of pleasure and unpleasure, achieved in part through the saint's relation to material objects. Closely related to questions of slavery and freedom, I argue that Francis's conversion can be understood in terms of surrender or "passability"—a kind of allowing oneself to be spoken-through or worked-through in such a way that can produce effects—rather than activity or passivity, domination or submission.[12] Understanding Francis's conversion via Franciscan sources is crucial to understanding the myth and the ideal as a lens through which later Franciscans would debate about their style of life and the features that comprised it. However, an exploration of the logic of Francis's acts and symptoms pushes beyond this, opening the way for a scholarly appreciation of the enigmatic thing pushing in Francis that he was able to transmit to contemporary and later followers. In this sense, the chapter attempts to re-engage material in such a way that thinks *in* Franciscan—and *with* psychoanalysis—insofar as desire comprises a central category for both experiences.[13] The conclusion of this chapter spells out how a psychoanalytic notion of transmission could be beneficial for theorizations of subjective transformation or conversion in religious studies, offering a different vantage point from conceptual trends that aim to achieve this via constructivist or phenomenological approaches.

In Chapter Three, "Signs of Conversion: Setting the Stage for the Missionary's Desire," I elaborate a Franciscan semiotics that was crucially at stake in the early modern reformist spirituality of the Franciscan order, reconstructing this semiotics through an introduction to spiritual texts by

[12] I draw upon Jean-François Lyotard's passability (*passabilité*) to theorize Franciscan conversion as a domain that necessarily troubles notions of activity and passivity.
[13] I say "experiences" rather than traditions or discourses. As elaborated about "thinking in Franciscan" involves a "living in Franciscan," a question of a style of life or of a sort of analysis someone can have. Similarly, I consider psychoanalysis to primarily be an experience someone can have, rather than a discourse, a hermeneutic, a discipline, etc., though, of course, it can be (and has been considered) all of those things. The stakes of this use of psychoanalysis are implicit throughout, but will not be explicitly delineated until the conclusion, which aims to develop the place of psychoanalysis in religious studies.

key Franciscan thinkers and close readings. Here, Francisco de Osuna's encoding, in his *Sexta Parte del Abecedario Espiritual* of spiritual truths into various material objects (blood, eagle, water, etc.), underscores key Franciscan notions like desire, conversion, and incarnation — notions that can be traced in a variety of Franciscan spiritual authors of the period and which underscore the uniqueness of the Franciscan approach in opposition to other theological trends like Thomism or the spirituality of the Society of Jesus. In arguing for a Franciscan semiotics and in pointing to salient features of early modern reformist Franciscan spirituality, this chapter provides a spiritual interpretive key, derived from Franciscan text, through which missionary texts might be read in a way that considers the religious formation of their authors.

Chapter Three concludes with a brief "Threshold" which aims to clarify the relation between Chapter Four and Chapter Five, both of which discuss the same case, though in different ways. I hope that this brief methodological statement, after the groundwork provided in Chapter Two and Chapter Three has been laid, will help to show how I conceive of Franciscanism, as discourse and as a symbolic that structures signifying coordinates, provides a resource to understand the anti-slavery argument that Chapter Four and Chapter Five aim to explore, *as* an argument made possible by Franciscanism. As such, it is an argument that can best be read after some of those symbolic coordinates have been engaged. Furthermore, a methodological difference in tone and mode of argumentation between the two chapters stages this.

In Chapter Four, "Capuchin Charisma and the Law—A Life and Death Critique of Atlantic Slavery," I begin to introduce a case involving the activities of two Capuchin-Franciscan friars: Épiphane de Moirans and Francisco José de Jaca, who ministered in Cuba in the 1680s, paying particular attention to Épiphane de Moirans's *Servi liberi deu naturalis mancipiorum libertatis iusta defensio*. The friars contended that enslaved Africans should be set free, and that they should receive reparations from those who held them, an argument that led both to their excommunication and

subsequent vindication when the Vatican eventually endorsed their position in 1686. After providing an account of the twists and turns of the two friars' lives and of the case that resulted from their activities, in Chapter Four, I delve into an episode where Épiphane de Moirans attempted to minister to an enslaved woman in the process of a difficult childbirth, in Chapter Four. A close reading of this scene and the language Épiphane used demonstrates his argument that slavery is a form of sacrilege because it entails inappropriate use of objects. (Franciscan disputes around "use" and prior legal delineations of sacrilege demonstrate how Épiphane both uses and reinvents these concepts.)

As Chapters Four and Chapter Five differ in the methodology employed and in the tone of argumentation, some idiosyncrasies of my own style of writing and argumentation are worth reflecting upon before preceding to the body chapters of the dissertation. First, each of the chapters were written at a different point in time. I have tried to create ample points of contact between them, though, in some ways, each of them could be read as a standalone argument. Second, my writing tends toward association, crowding, and, occasionally, toward poesis. For better or worse, and despite the considerable work this might invite a careful reader to engage, if they wanted to, I do consider this to be symptomatic of a transmission from having engaged the texts that I am writing about—especially the ones that would be considered spiritual or mystical. In their densely crowding associations and in their deployment of language, in countless directions, to evoke something beyond it, these texts were written to *convert* the reader, that is—they work on the reader, trying to help something pass through the reader, even if, at the same time, they set some readers to work. I have often wondered if, in some way, they set up a kind of limit to what Lacan called "university discourse," making them tricky research objects for scholars to handle, since their aim is at subjective consciousness itself. Still, I am reticent to trust a way of writing about them other than the ways I have tried to engage them here, and I could not manage to find a way to do so myself. Third,

and related, my footnotes—especially in chapters two, three, and five—are frequently on the longer side, providing ample pathways for future lines of writerly pursuit, theoretical consideration, and antho-historical excavation.

Chapter 2 The Founder's Sinthome: Francis of Assisi's Perfect Jouissance

> Ask grace, not learning; desire, not understanding; the groaning of prayer, not the diligence of reading; the Bridegroom, not the teacher; God, not man; darkness, not clarity; not light, but the **fire that wholly inflames** [*ignem totaliter inflammantem*] and carries [*transferentem*] one unto God through transporting unctions and consuming affections [*ardentissimis affectionibus*] – Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, *Itinerarium Mentis ad Deum* ([1259] 1978). [14]

> We know now, more concretely than every [sic] before, what goods men and women of various classes were supposed to find pleasurable, which of these were denied them, which allowed, and how the inequalities in the distribution of goods affected the actions of these men and women. We learn nothing, however, of the historical effects of the fact that men and women often act to avoid pleasure, to *shun* these goods – Joan Copjec, *Read My Desire: Lacan against the Historicists* ([1994] 2015, 68).

> An affect in the soul is a sign. *[P]assio in anima est signum* – John Duns Scotus, *The Examined Report of the Paris Lecture I-A, Vol 2* (2008).

2.1 Introduction—Francis: Face(s) of God

What is transmitted in conversion? What precisely does a convert "catch"? My interest in these anthropological questions flows from an historical interest in early modern Capuchin-Franciscan missionization and conversion. In this period, one identified as so crucial for a making of the "modern self," missionaries, associated more often than not with colonial conquest and enslavement, travelled to the Americas and to Africa with various goals.[15] Many wanted to find their

[14] In the passages quoted here and below from Bonaventure's *Itinterarium Mentis in Deum*, I refer to Ewert Cousins' translation. Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, "The Soul's Journey into God" in *Bonaventure: The Soul;s Journey into God, The Tree of Life, the Life of Saint Francis,* trans. Ewert Cousin (New York: Paulist Press, 1978). The original Latin text can be found at http://clt.brepolis.net.proxy.lib.umich.edu/llta/pages/Toc.aspx?ctx=1662893. Throughout all below quoted texts, bolding is my own, and I insert original Latin in brackets where I find it resonant or useful.

[15] Moshe Sluhovsky, *Becoming a New Self: Practices of Belief in Early Modern* Catholicism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018); Charkes Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).

own salvation, sometimes through martyrdom, or to bring Catholic sacraments to non-Christians, whom they often took to be idolaters or infidels.

For Franciscan missionaries, the conversion of Francis of Assisi became a paradigm for conversion more generally, in the process of becoming a vowed member of what was commonly called the Franciscan "religion." The development of the saint's hagiography, along with ongoing splinters and ideological debates in the orders that he founded or that claimed his legacy later, suggest that Francis's patrimony was shattered and diffused quite early, giving rise to multiple Francises with "spectral" textual traces.[16] If even the early sources on Francis of Assisi's life present the researcher with a many-faceted saint, so too do contemporary claims that point to him as an emblem of pacifism, inter-religious dialogue, ecology, strict asceticism or Catholic "orthodoxy." As with many saints, Francis's legacy is contested. Attracting countless imaginations spanning almost eight centuries, it is also fraught with contemporary ideological struggles and laden with accumulated moral weight. Perhaps the quip popularly ascribed to the American Catholic anarchist Dorothy Day summed up the crisis of confinement at work in canonization nicely: "Don't call me a saint. I don't want to be dismissed that easily."

In my larger project, my working hypothesis is that conversion was just as much at stake when friars sought to convert others, whether in Europe or abroad, as when they sought to convert themselves. I thus consider conversion of self and conversion of others as linked processes. This historically and theoretically grounded essay explores the paradigm of Francis of Assisi's conversion itself, as reported in his own writings, in the early hagiography about him, and as theorized by his early followers. In staging an encounter between Franciscan theories of conversion and contemporary theoretical output, it also seeks to use the paradigm of Francis's conversion to

[16] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of Debt, The Work of Mourning, and The New International* (New York: Routledge, 2006).

complicate more recent assessments of conversion phenomena. What was transmitted to those who became Franciscans, and what, in turn, did they attempt to transmit to those they sought to convert? Unlike other groups, what was communicated and contracted in conversion was a symptom—a knotted relation emphasizing the desirous, material, and affective, rather than something merely based in the apprehension of knowledge, the reformulation of language, and the learned virtuosity of performance. For Franciscans, as we will soon see, conversion was theorized as such, but to understand the value of such an assessment, we must first turn briefly to more recent accounts of conversion to understand what Franciscanism might have to offer them.

Early theorists of conversion like William James, A.D. Knock, and Mircea Eliade, each in their own ways, promoted explanatory frameworks for conversion and religious experience, focusing upon its eruptive and rupturing dimensions, which gave rise to a new religious identities and states.[17] More recent attempts to theorize conversion phenomena, though, have drawn upon social constructivist repertories, based largely in a Foucaultian sense of self-making.

In her emblematic use of such an approach, Saba Mahmood's influential *Politics of Piety*, supplemented a Foucaultian politics of self-making with Aristotelian conceptions of *habitus* to show how Egyptian members of the women's piety movement honed their "desires [to] act spontaneously in accord with pious Islamic conventions."[18] While the body was crucial in her account, she emphasized its role as a "medium for rather than a sign of the self."[19] Mahmood's work epitomizes the migration of analytical trends away from a focus on conversion as instantaneous rupture and

[17] William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1922); A.D. Knock, *Conversion* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998); Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1963).
[18] Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011) 121-122
[19] Mahmood, 166.

toward an account of individuals incrementally honing their selves through practice, performance, and self-making.

Though this shift has been analytically fruitful, it has also made it difficult to understand how the body of the convert is registered and how pleasure and unpleasure complexly relate in the conversion process. My proposition is that, despite all that has been gained in such accounts, questions of desire, pleasure, and unpleasure, all central in the account of Francis of Assisi's conversion, have been sidelined in the reigning accounts of conversion and subjectivity. I also consider this position to have longstanding resonance and impact in Franciscan theorizing itself that is also in need of further explication.

In his *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* (i.e. "*The Soul's Journey (in)to God*"), the Franciscan theologian Bonaventure of Bagnoregio (1221-1274) emphasized the importance of desire, affect, and an "excess of contemplation" ("*excessu contemplationis*"), rather than words ("*quam verbo*") in the ongoing work of conversion. Drawing upon Francis of Assisi's experience of receiving the stigmata, Bonaventure pointed to Francis as an "example of perfect contemplation" ("*exemplum perfectae contemplationis*"). Francis's "passage into God" ("*in Deum transiit*") took place through action, and then through excessive or ecstatic contemplation, rather than through thought.[20]

While conversion was rooted in experiences that set the soul on a pathway toward God, for Bonaventure, the return was ongoing and slow. Like Christ – understood as the incarnation of God in a material form – the material objects of human circumstances comprised "a ladder" for the soul's return to God, not distractions to be eschewed. Franciscans offered a view of salvation that was powered by desire, ongoing, and dependent on establishing relations to objects in the world.

[20] See also Laure Solignac's discussion Bonaventure's symbolic theology, which, perhaps counterintuitively, involves a "use of the sensible." Laure Solignac, "De La La Théologie symbolique comme bon usage du sensible chez saint Bonaventure," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 95 (2011): 413-428.

It is notable that Bonaventure's description of Francis's transfiguration and stigmatization on Monte Alverna was discussed as an example for other Christians. For Bonaventure, Francis's stigmatization was not merely a *sign*. Nor was it only a symbolic stamping of Francis's body as conformed to that of the crucified Christ. It was also a *sacrament*.[21] In his discussion of creatures' relation to the divine likeness, Bonaventure discussed the categories of sign, symbol, and sacrament directly. While he eschewed nothing of the medieval notion of a book of creation – the idea that animals and other worldly entities *represented* spiritual values and divine attributes – Bonaventure argued that these entities were also much more than representations or signs. They were also *true sacraments* and ladders back to God ("*non solum rationem signi secundum nomen commune, verum etiam Sacramenti*").

Like generations of Franciscans that followed him, Bonaventure, who was born just a few years after Francis's death, had been stamped by the legacy of Francis of Assisi's conversion. Like other friars, he composed two lives of St. Francis as well as a liturgical text commemorating his legacy. Taken together, these became the authoritative texts on Francis's life within the Franciscan order. Following Bonaventure's lead, this article explores Francis's conversion in terms of a limited series of intense and discrete irruptions or flashes that structured ongoing relations and realignments with objects like the leper (his blood, pus, withered flesh, marginal location, and abject clothing),

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[21] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari much later referred to this as a "facialization" of Francis's body. Deleuze and Guattari write that faces "are not basically individual; they define zones of frequency or probability, delimit a field that neutralizes in advance any expressions or connections amenable to the appropriate significations." In relation to Giotto's depiction of Francis's stigmatization they write that "the crucified Christ-turned-kite-machine sends the stigmata to Saint Francis by rays; the stigmata effect the facialization of the body of the saint, in the image of the body of Christ, but the rays carrying the stigmata to the saint are also the strings Francis uses to pull the diving kite." Of course, Deleuze and Guattari put forward a forceful ethical enjoinder to dismantle the face as a call to dismantle racism (pointing out that "[r]acism operates [not through exclusion, but] by the determination of degrees of deviance in relation to the White-Man face"), and they envisioned colonial Christianization as a project of facialization (or inclusion that simultaneously maintained degrees of deviation). Here, I use Francis's stigmatization to raise the possibility of another trajectory for conversion – as a de-facialization, what Deleuze and Guattari would call a dismantling of the face, Francis's stigmatization enacts not a clear symbolic stamping but a murky marriage of sanctity and shame, joy and unpleasure, forestalling conversion as unfinished business. I go on later develop this claim in relation to the hagiographical representation of Francis's side wound as vaginal. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987): 168, 178.

cloth, Francis's own body, fire, snow, and ice.[22] These objects were related to and sometimes converted in order to sustain the heat of Francis's spirit and to prevent "lukewarmness" from setting in, an idea I will develop later as "thermal qualia." Each of these objects speak to powerful persistences throughout Francis's conversion. They also suggest ongoing and unfinished realignments between pleasure and unpleasure in his conversion process.

Tracing these objects and the affects they created and sustained shows the limitations of constructivist modes of analysis in understanding the conversion process. Constructivists have had difficulty elaborating how displeasure, pain, and suffering can be enjoyed. The epigraph by Joan Copjec raises this problem when it asks what sense we can make of individuals shunning pleasurable goods. In psychoanalysis, unpleasure (what Freud called "*Unlust*") has captured the ways in which the repetitive persistence of psychic symptoms is tied to complex mediations of pleasure. I seize upon the admittedly complex term jouissance, which was continuously theorized and redefined by Jacques Lacan in the course of his career, to point to the co-occurrence of excessive pleasure/unpleasure and because it resonates with Francis's own term—"perfect joy".[23] As such,

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[22] Eliade, 97. I borrow the term "irruption" from the controversial theorist and historian of religions, Mircea Eliade, who used the term to describe an eruption or emergence of the sacred into the profane world. Eliade understood creation precisely in this sense of irruption as "accomplished by a surplus of ontological substance." While I use the term irruption (often alongside "flashes") to describe moments of temporal rupture in the conversion process, Eliade's understanding of creation as an irruption is more consistent with Franciscan understandings of materiality, which attempt to push beyond representation.

[23] While unpleasure (*Unlust*) appears early in Freud's work, often in association with repression of ideas that cause the experience of unpleasure in the subject (in the *Interpretation of Dreams* and in his *Studies on Hysteria*), *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* goes the furthest in exploring the complicities between pleasure and unpleasure, and becomes a key point of departure for later psychoanalytic theorists like Jacques Lacan. See also Freud's essay, "A Child Is Being Beaten," in which Freud described the pleasure neurotic patients took in fantasies of punishment. For Lacan, the term *jouissance* captured trajectories of excess beyond the pleasure principle, especially in *Seminar VII*, *Seminar X*, and *Seminar XVII*. A terminological slippage has occurred between "jouissance" and "perversion" in some recent psychoanalytic work engaged with similar questions. See also, Jacques-Alain Miller's (2019) charting of the trajectory of the concept of jouissance in Jacques Lacan's work. Sigmund Freud, *Interpretation of Dreams,* 1899; Sigmund Freud, *Studies on Hysteria*, 1895; Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 1920; Sigmund Freud, "A child is Being Beaten," 1919; Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Volume VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1986); Avgi Saketopoulou, "To Suffer Pleasure," in *Studies in Gender and Sexuality* 15 (2014): 254-268; Tim Dean, "The Frozen Countenance of the Perversions," *Parallax* 14, no. 2 (2008): 93-114; Tim Dean, "Uses of Perversity: Commentray on Saketopoulou's 'To Suffer Pleasure,'" *Studies in Gender and Sexuality* 15 (2014): 269-277; Jacques-Alain Miller, Paradigms of Jouissance (London: Psychoanalytical Notebooks, 2019).

jouissance, both as a concept and an experience, is joined to the problem of materiality in the use of material objects for subjective transformation. At the same time, it also points to the limits of representation critiqued in Franciscan semiotics and to the limits of the constructivist account of the subject. I center pleasure and unpleasure in my analysis not only to elaborate a conceptual critique of constructivist interpretive procedures. I also do so because I think that the early sources on Francis's conversion, like early Franciscan theology itself, took desire as a key starting point. As we will see, the ambiguity of pleasure and unpleasure seems to be a very Franciscan question. Reading the sources along these lines restages how scholars are equipped to think about conversion. Beyond the momentary, discrete, and identitarian, conversion invites interpretation as a relational, affective, and repetitive phenomenon.

(This theme will be developed in the discussion of early modern Franciscan spirituality and mysticism to follow in the next chapter, and it provides a basis to understand the Capuchin intervention on slavery considered in chapters three and four.)

Inspired by how the Franciscan tradition emphasized conversion as a materially-rooted and affective process, I develop the theme of conversion in the historical material on Francis of Assisi's conversion. I also do so in a conceptual way that might be of broader use in religious studies. Psychoanalysis attunes me to historical sources by encouraging attention to repetitions and idiosyncratic resonances. I see this as a valuable alternative to subjecting texts to discourse analysis in a constructivist mode. However fruitful such a method has been for historians, one of its downsides was that it has filtered texts through broader constellations (what the researcher already knows), rather than in attending repetitions that sit on the surface of a text. For example, while we now know much about the prevalence of the medieval idea of a "book of creation," we know little about the pervasive textual presence of cloth and nudity in the early hagiography of Francis.

Of course, the historical sources composed about Francis in the years and decades after his death had their own histories of compilation, their own interests, and sat within broader social and discursive constellations. Some, like those authored by Thomas of Celano, were written at the request of church hierarchs to paint a picture of Francis for his canonization. Sources like these drew upon the "oral histories" of those who knew Francis directly or who had heard stories about him. Still, texts like the major and minor legends of Bonaventure were interested in telling Francis's story to the Franciscan order itself. While sources like "The Little Flowers of St Francis," were composed much later, they came to exercise powerful force on how Francis was imagined at large – in wondrous encounters with animals, for example – even though many of their stories lacked precedent in the earlier hagiography.

I draw narratives from Francis's own writings, often recorded by his secretary and companion Brother Leo, as Francis was likely only barely literate, as well as those written within a few decades after his death. In recapitulating life events or describing their significance, whether from Francis's own accounts or from sets of sources perhaps too easily lumped together as hagiography, I can only be as clear as possible about the sources from which accounts are drawn. This is to say that, while it is far from my point to locate an historical Francis, I do seek to underscore concerns around conversion, affect, and materiality, and to insist that these concerns, pervade both the writings attributed to Francis and those authored by his hagiographers. An idiosyncratic crux of Franciscanism emerges from the questions, ambiguities, and inconsistencies at work in the founder's conversion – something like a symptom of conversion that could attract, and be contracted by, generations of followers.

While other scholars have focused on Francis's relationship to animals, I take my cue from Bonaventure's theology by finding in relations to material objects more fruitful ground for thinking about realignments between pleasure and unpleasure in the process of Christian conversion. Aspects

of Francis's conversion like his experience of the transformation of his own body into an object provide helpful entanglements through which to theorize conversion and religious transformation more generally. Here, conversion appears more as a repetitive and desirous process of ongoing displacement, which can be undertaken through reconfigurations of relations to material objects, than as a simple laying claim to a religious identity. Not a re-signification of the self, but a crucible that forges the kind of person who could become so multifaceted and so variously claimed.

2.2 Flashes of Conversion: Nudity and the Leper

> After [blessed] Francis had escaped the **inhuman persecution of his father** [*immanitatem paternae persecutionis evaserat*], it happened that one day this zealot of the new law [*ipse novae legis zelator*] was walking along **half-naked** [*seminudus*] in a forest, sing the praises of the Lord in French, when he suddenly *fell among robbers*. When they asked him gruffly who in the world he was, he responded prophetically without fear: 'I am the herald of the great King! What is that to you?' But they indignantly **whipped** the servant of God, threw him into a **snow-filled** ditch [*in foveam nivibus plenam*], and insulted the future shepherd of the Lord's flock saying, 'Lie there, stupid herald of God!' When the brigands departed, he jumped out of the ditch joyfully, and more energetically sang praises to the Creator of all.
>
> When he finally arrived at a monastery, this fellow who had been **used to wearing expensive clothing** was wearing only a ragged shirt. Not surprisingly, since he was **neither regarded nor even known there**, and in want of food, he was rudely sent to the kitchen. After several days, when no one mercifully took note of his **nakedness** [*nuditatem*], he was obliged by necessity alone to leave. [….]
>
> After he left that monastery, the little poor man of Jesus Christ came to the city named Gubbio where he sought out an old friend who, **for the sake of friendship, covered his nakedness** [*nuditatem*] **with a short tunic**.
>
> After this, humbly holding himself in low esteem and now not caring that he was despised by others, he moved to the **lepers**. He served them devotedly by humbly washing their sores, not even shrinking from wiping away the pus. Previously, such things were so disgusting to him [*Antea tamen huiusmodi in tantum despexerat*] that he used to hold his nose, not only when he saw lepers themselves nearby, but even their homes at a distance. But when he was **still wearing secular clothes**, the Lord had visited him with his grace, where a certain leper happened to meet him. As usual, he was horrified by the sight, but doing violence to himself, he conquered himself, and straightaway went up and kissed him [*vim tamen sibimet faciens vicit seipsum, et constanter accedens osculatus est illum*]. From then on, he **fervently glowed** [*ferventius inardescens*] with contempt of self, and began to wage constant war against himself until it was granted him from above to win perfect victory over himself [*ad sui contemptum ferventius inardescens, bella sibi ipsi continua*

> *coepit ingerere, donec desuper ei daretur perfectam de se victoriam obtinere*]. Therefore, as he himself later testified, he showed mercy to the lepers whom he was unable even to look at while he was living in sin. [24]

In this passage, Francis of Assisi's monumental conversion is said to have begun in relation to the persecution of his father, the ambivalence of monasticism, the oscillation of his own body between nudity and clothing, the whips of bandits, a ditch full of snow, and a leper.[25] It disrupts a chronological conversion narrative in its injection of backward and forward temporal movements, inserting phrases like, "when he was still wearing secular clothes" or "from then on." Rather than conversion as a clear-cut narrative of progress, then, the passage provides a dense crystallization of Francis of Assisi's conversion in terms of encounters with material objects. As we will see, these elements persisted throughout Francis's as he sought to recapture "fervent glowing" amidst spiritual ditches of acedia, temptation, and lukewarmness.

Composed by one of the earliest chroniclers of Francis's life, the passage from *The Life of Saint Francis of Assisi by Julian of Speyer* echoes the story of Francis's encounter with a leper as one of at least two paradigmatic moments of the saint's conversion. This encounter is marked by a temporal jump in the narrative: ("when he was still wearing secular clothes"). The details of the story differ across accounts: in some versions, the leper disappears, suggesting that the man Francis came across was really Christ in a leper's guise. Elsewhere, Francis dismounts his horse to meet the man.

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[24] Julian of Speyer, *The Life of Saint Francis by Julian of Speyer*, ed. and trans. Regis Armstrong (New York: New City Press, 1999): 367-377. I cite Regis Armstrong's three-volume collection, *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, as the authoritative and critical collection and translation of the early writings by and about Francis of Assisi in English. Where I think Latin words or phrases will provide clarity or resonance, I insert the corresponding Latin, which can be found at www.franciscantradition.org, in brackets.

[25] The attention of Jacques Derrida and other theorists to the difference between nudity and nakedness is worth noting. Derrida writes, "There is no nudity 'in nature.' There is only the sentiment, the affect, the (conscious or unconscious) experience of existing in nakedness." Indeed, Julian's passage suggests the significance of other's lack of regard for Francis's nudity. It is never in question that Francis's lack of clothing should be regarded. Jacques Derrida, "The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)," *Critical Inquiry* 29 no. 2 (2002): 374.

And, still in other versions, Francis gives the man a coin and a kiss.[26] Across all of the accounts, the stories provide an account of a man who embarked, somewhat suddenly, on a passage of intense change. The saint being mounted on a horse, in some versions, suggests a parity with the paradigmatic example of Saint Paul's conversion, when he was blinded and knocked off his horse.[27] A converted Francis chose to live among and to care for lepers, who had been cast out of civil and religious society. ("Cast out" here is not metaphorical. The condition of leprosy, in Francis's time, was acknowledged with a public funeral undertaken in a church, and lepers were forced to ring bells to announce their presence if ever they approached others.[28])

As excerpted here, Julian's account also gestured to another scene in Francis's life that had been recounted in the immediately preceding chapter. This episode too condensed a particularly intense flash of conversion. Before his conversion, Francis loved fine clothing. After his conversion, he threw all of the cloth out of his father's shop, giving the goods to the poor of Assisi. Furious, the father, Pietro di Bernadone, had Francis locked up, shackled in the family's home, punishing Francis for giving away his cloth. However, when his father left for a business trip, Francis's mother, Pica, released him. When Pietro returned to find that his son had been unbound he had him dragged before Guido, the bishop of Assisi, asking him to rule on the case and asking Francis to return what he had stolen. Francis said that henceforth he would have no father but God. This echoed Jesus's enjoinder as related in Matthew's Gospel: "And call no *man* your father upon the earth: for one is

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[26] Compare "The Legend of the Tree Companions" with Thomas of Celano's "The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul." The major difference between them is that, in the first, the leper does not disappear after receiving the coin and being kissed by Francis. In the second one, likely composed later, he does. "The Legend of the Three Companions," in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, The Founder,* ed and trans. Regis Armstrong (New York: New York City Press, 2000), 74; Thomas of Celano, "The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul," in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, The Founder,* ed and trans. Regis Armstrong (New York: New York City Press, 2000), 248-249.

[27] "The Legend of the Three Companions," 74; Thomas of Celano, 248-249.

[28] Arnaldo Fortini was the two-time mayor of Assisi, and thus had access to many archives there. See his large biography on Francis of Assisi and his description of the funeral services held for lepers in Francis's day. Arnold Fortini, *Francis of Assisi*, trans. by Helen Moak (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 210-211. See also the account of the leper in the opening pages of Michel Foucault's *History of Madness*. Michel Foucault, *History of Madness* (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2013).

your Father, which is in heaven."[29] From there, he renounced his family, and returning what was left of Pietro's cloth and money, stripped naked, and moved to the outskirts of Assisi, where the lepers lived.

Francis's rejection of his father was preceded by a rejection of fine clothes and a rejection of his father's cloth. We could say that this rejection of the father's cloth, as an extension of his father's person, prefigured his spurning of Pietro himself.[30] Whereas fine clothes had given Francis pleasure earlier in life, now nakedness and rags were sought after. Eventually, he put on a patched tunic, securing it with a belt made of rope. In the quasi-theological terms of Henri Bergson, Francis's rejection of his father is seen as a passage beyond types of love defined by their difference in terms of *degree* – that is, the breadth and number of people this emotion extends to (like love of family or love of nation) – to another kind of love, which differs from these in terms of *kind* (love of humanity).[31] Moments of intensity, these "flashes" of conversion were occasioned by a nudity that encapsulated Francis's rejection of his father. At the same time, nudity also afforded intensified sensations of exposure to whips or ice on bare skin. Julian tells us that these moments related to the onset of Francis's "fervent glowing" (*ferventius inardescens*) or catching flame, one I will later discuss in

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[29] Matt. 23:10 KJV; "The Legend of the Three Companions," 80. The sources tell us that Francis renounced Pietro publicly by saying, that from now on he wished to say "'Our Father who art in heaven' and not 'My father Pietro di Bernadone.'"

[30] Here, I am thinking along the lines of Alfred Gell in *Art and Agency*. Gell's account involves theories of how a person can become extended through objects, which come to act as "secondary agents." Such an approach, I think, could help us to read Francis's disposal of his father's cloth as pre-figuring the public denunciation of his father. Consider, in particular, Gell's discussion of "'Things' as Social Agents," where he explores the examples of Cambodian landmines as an extension of Pol Pot and the example of a little girl's relation to her doll. While Gell compares these examples, it might be appropriate to say that, here, object-relations theory could help us to better grapple with the serious differences between them. In relation to the girl and her doll, the girl comes to see the doll as something like an other, while it would be difficult to see landmines in the same vein. Still, Gell's point about objects' capacities to act as "secondary agents" or "prostheses" – not of themselves, but through an interpretive process of abduction – stands. Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

[31] Henri Bergson, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1986): 39. The passage in Bergson comes in a lengthy discussion of emotion in relation to morality. Bergson goes on to write: "The first imply a choice, therefore an exclusion; they may act as incentives to strife, the do not exclude hatred. The latter is all love. The former alight directly on an object which attracts them. The latter does not yield to the attraction of its object; it has not aimed at this object; it has shot beyond and reached humanity only by passing through humanity."

terms of thermal qualia, which it was conversion's task to sustain. In large part, the hagiography of the saint suggests that Francis sustained the glow of spiritual heat through material relations.

Figure 1. In Giotto di Bondone's fresco, "San Francesco rinuncia ai beni terreni" (1295-1299), Francis of Assisi publicly removes his clothes, strips naked and renounces his father and his goods before Guido, the bishop of Assisi.

In Francis of Assisi's own writings and in the accounts of his earliest hagiographers, these two scenes in the saint's story – the embrace of the leper and the public rejection of the father and his inheritance – have been cast as paramount moments in Francis's life and as major points of his conversion. Each of these moments has been selected to demonstrate a discrete and complete turn from what had come before to a new life. This life would involve new kin. In the place of the father, the lepers, other friars, elements, and creatures would be called "Brother" or "Sister" (i.e. "Brother Sun," "Sister Moon," etc.). It would entail new modes of dress as fine clothes were left behind in favor of nakedness and rags. Francis would seek and encourage new modes of exchange as working and begging for food would be favored and encouraged as money and inheritance were forbidden.

Indeed, the sources frequently use Francis's conversion as a milestone to provide the reader with temporal orientation (i.e. "sixteen years after his conversion"). Like Saul of Tarsus being struck from his horse by a great light or the more contemporary converts of William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, Francis's conversion was depicted here as an experience that enacted radical change and which took place as a climactic event. James associates such narrations of conversion with what he called the "self-surrender type," a species of conversion that involved what others have

theorized as the aleatory, miraculous, and intense.[32] Time condenses and compacts into event. Changes are, at least relatively, sudden and unexpected.[33]

Not only is the converted Francis represented as radically changed, but the filth and pus of the leper, hitherto regarded as abject and disgusting, was converted into an object that occasioned pleasure. In his "Testament," likely composed in fragments over the days when he was dying in 1226, Francis began his final statement by discussing the role of lepers in his conversion. He noted a shift from his affective response (felt in soul and body) to the sight of the leper. What was bitter had been turned into (*conversum*) sweetness:

> The Lord gave me, Brother Francis, thus to begin doing penance in this way: for when I was in sin, it seemed too bitter for me to see lepers. And the Lord Himself led me among them and *I showed mercy to them.* And when I left them, **what has seemed bitter to me was turned into sweetness of soul and body** [*id quod videbatur mihi amarum, conversum fuit mihi in dulcedinem animi et corporis*]. And afterwards I delayed a little and left the world.[34]

So too objects that had previously occasioned pleasure, like money or luxurious cloth, became abject.

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[32] James, *Varieties, 208*. For a discussion of intensity that holds interest for the topic of conversion, see Deleuze, for example in his discussion of Alain Roger's *Le Misogyne*, where he discusses intensity in relation to epiphany (not in terms of "passion, or the sudden revelation of objective contemplation," nor in terms of "action, or the crafted form of subjective experimentation," but in a kind of epiphany where a "person undergoes this change not to become a transcend entity, a god or goddess, but to become an Event, a multiplicity of events each folded in the other, an event of the order of love." Gilles Delueze, *Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews 1975-1995*, ed. Davide Lapoujade trans. Ames Hodges and Mike Taormina (New York: Semiotext(e), 2007). On the aleatory, see Louis Althusser's late work on aleatory materialism, which he conceives as the sudden and unexpected "swerve" of the encounter, irreducible to law, necessity, or contingency. It should not be lost on us that Althusser's theorization of the aleatory came after his own mental break, which involved the strangulation and killing of his wife Hélène in 1980. Deemed unfit to stand trial, Althusser was remanded to a mental hospital for three years and subsequently lived mostly in seclusion until his death. Louis Althusser, "The Underground Current of the Materialism of the Encounter," in *Philosophy of the Encounter Later Writings, 1978-1987* (New York: Verso, 2006). On the miraculous, consider Georges Bataille's definition, "the *impossible coming true*, in the *reign of a moment*." Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share: Volumes II and III* (New York: Zone Books, 1993): 211.

[33] Such an experience of sudden conversion, condensed in time, can also be a collective one, as in Joel Robbins account of conversion as "rapid cultural change" – that is, the embrace of a new cultural system wholesale – among Urapmins in Papua New Guinea. Joel Robbins, *Becoming Sinners: Christianity and Moral Torment in Papua New Guinea Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

[34] Francis of Assisi "The Testament," in *Francis of Assisi: Early documents, The Saint,* ed. and trans. Regis Armstrong (New York, New City Press, 1999): 124.

Conversion involves the conversion of objects, passages both sudden and aleatory. But, as we will see, the lore on Francis suggests his difficulty in keeping the patched tunic on. Nudity persisted in intense moments of temptation and transformation. So too, throwing out Pietro's fine cloth would not comprise the last instance of Francis feeling its brush on his skin. As Diane Austin-Broos put it, "conversion is a form of passage, a 'turning from and to' that is neither syncretism nor absolute breech."[35] The passage from fine cloth to nudity, however, smacks of the surface symbolism of simple inversion.

Francis's relation to lepers, whose clothing Francis took up after his conversion, suggests an unfolding process of relation to an object-now-become-subject and instantiated. Lepers had long been associated as figures who represented both sanctity, as in the Lukan example of Lazarus, and, as we have seen, as figures of exclusion, death, and disgust. For Francis's chroniclers, though, the leper was not merely an object representation of a general abstract type (a *sign*), but a unique and irreducible event or irruption (a *sacrament*, in Bonaventure's surprising formulation, or, put otherwise, that which is what it signifies, despite all the odds). Indeed, Deleuze and Guattari followed the Franciscan theologian John Duns Scotus (c. 1266-1308) in referring to such instantiations – entities that Francis referred to as Brother ____, Sister ____ – in terms of *haecceitas* (utterly unique specificity or, literally, "thisness").[36]

Of these two objects – cloth and the leper – associated with conversion as a flash, it is the presence of the leper that is more telling. Still, all of these elements persisted in relations of repetition throughout Francis's life as he sought to sustain the "fervent glow" he experienced in his initial flashes of conversion and in the nudity that attended them. As well as a sudden conversion of

[35] Diane Austin Broos, "The Anthropology of Conversion: an Introduction," in *The Anthropology of Religious Conversion,* ed. Andrew Bucker and Stephen D. Glazier (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2003)
[36] Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*, 261.

an object like the leper, conversion entailed ongoing shifts in relation to objects, and the affects such objects help to sustain.

2.3 Bitter sweet: Repression, Affect, and Converting Objects

As seen in the above excerpt from Francis's "Testament," the saint described a conversion of his sense experience associated with lepers from that which "seemed bitter" (*videbatur amarum*) to that which was felt as "sweetness of soul and body" (*dulcedinem animi et corporis*). If, Julian captured the effect of initial and intense moments of Francis's conversion in terms of a "fervent glow," Francis himself captured the impact of his relation to the leper within idioms that described the "conversion" from that which was "bitter" (*amarum*) and unpleasurable to that which was sweet (*dulcedinem*) and pleasurable. How to give an account of the way in which objects that previously caused "unpleasure," disgust, or discomfort – the leper's pus, rags and nakedness – came to be desired as pleasurable in the accounts of Francis of Assisi or of what seemed bitter being converted into sweetness?

We might say that the *amarum* attached to the object of the leper was a precondition for the expansion of Francis's love (*amare*, in the Latin infinitive present) beyond its prior localization in his father's home, wearing his father's cloth. The bitterness attached to the object of the leper was not a misunderstanding of the object, but, rather, that which allowed for Francis to experience pleasure when he put himself proximate to it in relations of healing ("washing their sores" or "wiping away the pus" in Julian) and reparation. Kissing the leper led to the onset of Francis's fervent glow.[37]

[37] The work of Melanie Klein and D.W. Winnicott could prove to be of some value here. After Klein had developed theories about object relations – which focused on how babies relate to the Mother's breast in terms of love (desired object), hate (maligned object), destruction (the object to be torn apart and destroyed), and healing/reparation (the object drawn back together and repaired) – Donald Winnicott expanded upon Klein's theories to develop notions of the object's "use." For Winnicott, the object was irreducible to a "bundle of [psychic] projections." "[T]he baby creates the

While it may be an open question whether Francis related to the leper as a prop, a new kind of object formerly associated with bitterness and now associated with sweetness, or as a relation to another subject proper, either interpretation would suggest that Francis's conversion was not an individual experience without social ramifications. Rather, in Francis's conversion, material and affective relations were part-and-parcel of an ongoing project of transformation through which external objects were ongoingly useful.[38] In turn, the experience of conversion as unfinished business, and the affects attached to it, were not without social impact – the establishment or reinstantiation of a new law. The onset of Francis's fervent glow is thus related to his status as "this zealot of the new law" ("*ipse novae legis zelator*").

If Francis's relations to material objects involved ongoing affective shifts, displacement, and play, a clearer understanding repression could prove useful to understanding conversion's affective repetitiveness – the relentless resurfacing of objects after their renunciation. And yet, such an analysis must take place beyond the realm of social constructivist interpretive leanings. Psychoanalysis maintains that such processes of change in relation to objects can involve, but are

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object [i.e. the breast, the mother, etc.], but the object was [already] there waiting to be created and to become a cathected object." The subject experiences the object as having its own existence and recognizes it as an entity, and s/he tries to destroy it. However, some objects survive and persist. Winnicott writes: A new feature thus arrives in the theory of object-relating. The subject says to the object: 'I destroyed you', and the object is there to receive the communication. From now on the subject says: 'Hullo object!' 'I destroyed you!' 'I love you!' 'You have value for me because of your survival of my destruction of you!' 'While I am loving you I am all the time destroying you in (unconscious) *fantasy*.' […] The subject can now use the object that has survived." Whatever the extent to which anthropologists and historians might be led to embrace or dismiss psychoanalytic theories of object relations and object use, it is clear that in the conversions that have been described here, new and complex feelings emerge in relationship to particular objects, and objects that exist in the shared reality of our real world take on new significances, ones that may not be entirely reducible to meaning-making. Melanie Klein, "Love, Guilt and Reparation," in *Love Guilt and Reparations and Other Works* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1975); Donald Winnicott, "The Use of an Object and Relating Through Identifications," in *Playing and Reality* (New York: Routledge, 1989): 120-121.

[38] There are other valuable theoretical accounts of objects, which cannot be fully rehearsed here, such as those of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*. While the definition of Latour and his followers seems to differ markedly from the object-relations of Klein and Winnicott, this line of thinking objects as agents, hybrids, and the like has gone a long way toward theorizing, reworking, and (sometimes) unravelling clear subject-object distinctions. The object-oriented ontology of Timothy Morton and the new materialism of Jane Bennett have also developed the role of objects and agents. Many of these accounts are prefigured by Alfred Gell in *Art and Agency*. I hue closer to Gell as he is among a few who seriously discuss affects in relation to objects. Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); Timothy Morton, *Realist Magic: Objects, Ontology, Causality* (London: Open Humanities Press, 2013); Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

not the direct effect of, a psychic mechanism called repression, defined as the banishment of ideas to the realm of the unconscious.[39] In his *History of Sexuality, Vol 1*, Michel Foucault ([1976] 1990, 82-83) characterized this mechanism of repression, which psychoanalysis describes as something a subject can do with ideas (or something done with ideas through which a subject emerges), as something the subject can do with drives or affects:

> [W]hat distinguishes the analysis made in terms of the *repression of instincts* from that made in terms of the *law of desire* is clearly the way in which they each conceive of the nature and dynamics of the drives, not the way in which they conceive of power.[40]

By positing that instincts and drives, not concepts, are the objects of repression, Foucault missed the ways in which "the phenomenal identity of affects" becomes "indeterminate [under repression] because an unpleasure can be desired as pleasure […]." This language is borrowed from Gayatri Spivak, who addresses Foucault's assertion that repression "is wholly inadequate to the analysis of the mechanisms and effects of power that it is so pervasively used to characterize today."[41] For Spivak, Foucault misses Freud "radically reinscribing the relation between desire and 'interest'." If Francis's writings and the hagiographical accounts are to be believed, then desire, not interest, was at stake. Such a theoretical elaboration seems closer to what Franciscans talked about when they emphasized the role of desire, in the case of Bonaventure, or Francis's "fervent glow"

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[39] I do not seize upon psychoanalytic theory in order to psychoanalyze Francis. My analysis of his conversion cannot fully account for the specific content of his object choices (i.e. why the leper and his pus, etc.), but I do find in psychoanalytic theory some methods up to the task of determining how unpleasure can be seized upon as pleasure, how objects structure affect, and how affects make use of objects in relations of desire in processes of religious conversion.
[40] Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality Vol. 1: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990): 82-83. Foucault continues: "They both rely on a common representation of power which, depending on the use made of it and the position it is accorded with respect to desire, leads to contrary results: either to the promise of a 'liberation,' if power is seen as having only an external hold on desire, or, if it is constitutive of desire itself, to the affirmation: you are always already trapped."
[41] Gayatri Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a history of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999): 254; Michel Foucault, *Michel Foucault, Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings: 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980): 92.

and need to combat lukewarmness, in the case of the hagiography of Francis, even though many of the events attached to these affective states correspond to experiences of intense physical pain, as we will see.

If we look beyond the above-described flashes of conversion in Francis of Assisi's life, then we can see this process of repression and the affective play of pleasure/unpleasure that it involved in relation to objects as a constantly unfolding and ongoing process – that is, one that is not only confinable to particular events involving sudden change. Following Judith Butler's recent assertion in an interview that, in writing *Gender Trouble*, she "needed to pay more attention to how the primary experience of the body is registered," I would like to consider Francis's ongoing relationship to his own body as an object, one he often referred to as "Brother Ass," as emblematic of conversion as an ongoing and interminable project that involves relations of objects and affects.[42]

Francis's hagiographers depict him as experiencing these shifting objective and affective relations more in his body than in the conceptual realm of the representational, or, to paraphrase Bonaventure, more at the level of desire than at the level of understanding. As Francis repressed concepts attached to his life prior to the intense flashes of his initial conversion (no longer calling Pietro his father, wearing fine clothes, avoiding lepers, etc.) affects like pain and disgust persisted, oftentimes in relations (affinity or disaffinity, disgust, fear, etc.) to many of the same material objects that have already been elaborated. His body was a crucial medium upon which to use material objects in desirous attempts to sustain conversion's affects.

[42] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990). Cristan Williams, Interview with Judith Butler, "Judith Butler Addresses TERFs and the Work of Sheila Jeffreys and Alice Raymon," *The TERFs*, May 1, 2014. http://theterfs.com/2014/05/01/judith-butler-addresses-terfs-and-the-work-of-sheila-jeffreys-and-janice-raymond/#menu-secondary-mobile

2.4 Sister Pain: Sustaining Conversion's Fervent Glow

Francis, according to Bonaventure, referred to his own body as "Brother Ass," suggesting its slowness, humility, and the necessity of its subjugation for his conversion.[43] In choosing to address his body this way, and in the way he talked to materials connected with physical pain (i.e. "Brother Fire), or even to the phenomena of death itself (as "Sister Bodily Death"), the saint personified various elements involved in the pain and pleasure of his conversion process. This habit of speech is most pronounced in Francis's "Canticle of the Creatures" an ode to what Francis perhaps saw as sibling entities and elements to "become" with, in Deleuzian terms.[44] By labeling these things as brothers or sisters, Francis's relation to these objects cannot be exhausted by semiotic analytical tools. Without a doubt, calling a fire "Brother Fire" or one's body "Brother Ass" involved a certain linguistic capacity, and perhaps the use of metaphor. But the terms of address also captured a play of pleasure and unpleasure at work in Francis's attempt to speak his relational experience with each entity, to draw his experience into language.

Here semiotic analysis points beyond itself. Francis's address of the fire as "Brother Fire," involved the linguistic identification of a specific instance of a general element. But, it also defined his relation to that specific entity in the idiom of siblinghood, suggesting give-or-take horizontality as well as complex, ongoing, and intimate relation. Francis's language itself, thus, suggested relation to a specific, personified entity ("Brother Fire" or "this fire"), rather than the imposition of a an undifferentiated sign onto a general entity ("fire" or "the fire").

The accounts of Francis's final years and death provide a picture of a body in pain – completely emaciated and "worn out" by disease and penance: "[H]is flesh was already all

[43] Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, "The Major Legend of Saint Francis," in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, The Founder*, ed. and trans. Regis Armstrong (New York: New City Press, 2000): 564
[44] Francis of Assisi, 113-114; Deleuze and Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus*. On becoming with, see also Sarah Ahmed on "Dances with wolves." Sarah Ahmed, *Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

consumed, as if only skin clung to his bones. But when he was tortured by harsh bodily suffering, he called his tribulations not by the name of 'pains' but of 'sisters.'"[45] At the end of his life, Francis was entirely blind and had scars on his face from a prior attempt – in accordance with the medical treatment for cataracts in his time – to cauterize his eyes with a hot iron. During this occasion too, Francis had directly addressed the fire the surgeon had lit to heat the cauterization iron as "Brother Fire." Addressing the flames directly, he said, "'for a long time I have loved you and I still love you for the love of that Lord who created you. I pray our Creator who made you, to temper your heat now, so that I may bear it.'"[46]

Here, Francis's language drew beyond the descriptive and representational to a prayerful and performative demand. In the case of Brother Fire, Francis requested that his heat be tempered as the cauterization irons were being heated to remove the saint's cataracts. Some acceptance of the pain that fire and metal on eyes must cause and the hope that Brother Fire's pain might be tempered were at work in this Brother Francis-Brother Fire relation. So too was the possibility of a future sight recovered. His limbs were stiff and he could barely walk. The sources also tell us that he had stigmata wounds in his hands, feet, and side, and early hagiographers drew explicit parallels between the depleted state of his body and indexing his conformity to the crucified body of Christ. Francis was indeed a sign of Christ, but he was also a sacrament of Christ, as the Franciscan sources frequently refer to him another Christ (*alter Christus*).

In Bonaventure's "Major Legend of Saint Francis," the physical description of the appearance of Francis's stigmata wounds after his death continues an ongoing play between damaged flesh and beauty:

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[45] Bonaventure, "The Major," 641).

[46] "The Assisi Compilation," in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, The Founder*, ed. and trans. Regis Armstrong (New York: New City Press, 2000): 190; *compare* Thomas of Celano, "The Remembrance," 354-355.

> In his blessed hands and feet could be seen the nails that had been marvelously fashioned by divine power out of his flesh, and thus **embedded in the flesh**. From whatever point they were pressed, simultaneously, as if by a continuous and tough tendon, they **pulsed** at the opposite end. [….] The nails were **black as iron**; the **wound in his side was red**, and because it was drawn into a kind of circle by the contraction of the flesh looked like a most **beautiful rose**. [….] The **nails appeared black in his shining skin**, and the wound in his side was **red like a rose in springtime** so that it is no wonder the onlookers were amazed and overjoyed at the sight of such varied and miraculous **beauty**[47]

The stigmata wounds are described as dark fleshy protrusions coming from the wounds that appear like nails, but also note that, after his death, his body had gone from its ugliness to beauty, a change partially indexed, in almost all the sources, by a change in skin color.[48] The description of the wound in his side, which Bonaventure describes as "like a rose," and which Thomas of Celano writes had often stained his "tunic and undergarments" with blood was compared to the wound of Christ on the cross, which gave birth to the church.[49] In reading these accounts, it is difficult not to think about the vaginal resonances of Francis's side wound as a source of blood and fecundity.[50]

According to Thomas of Celano, Francis's interpretation of a dream he had about a "small black hen" prompted him to associate himself with a mother hen ("I am the hen"), casting himself in a maternal/animal relation to his followers.[51] In "A Rule for Hermitages," Francis suggested that

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[47] Bonaventure, "The Major," 645-646.

[48] See also "A Letter on the Passing of Saint Francis Attributed to Elias of Assisi." On the issue of nails formed from fleshy protrusions, compare with Gananath Obeyesekere's account of how women mystics in Sri Lanka experience their matted hair as a flesh-like protrusion. Gananath Obeyesekere, *Medusa's Hair: an Esaay on Personal Symbols and Religious Experience* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); "A Letter on the Passing of Saint Francis Attributed to Elias of Assisi," in *Francis of Assisi, Early Documents, The Founder,* ed. and trans, Regis Armstrong (New York: New City, 2000): 490

[49] Bonaventure, "The Major," 633; Thomas of Celano, "The Treatise, on the Miracles of Saint Francis by Thomas of Celano," in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, The Founder*, ed. and trans. Regis Armstrong (New York: New City Press, 403).

[50] Though I am not aware of specific analyses considering the vaginal aspects of Francis's side wound, sources on the vaginal resonances of Christ's wounds in medieval Catholic spirituality abound. See, for example, Karma Lochrie's "Mystical Acts, Queer Tendencies" in *Constructing Medieval Sexuality*, eds. Karma Lochrie, Peggy McCracken, and James Aldred Schultz, 180-200 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997): 189-193.

[51] Thomas of Celano, "The Treatise,"; see also Catherine Mooney, "Franics of Assisi as a Mother, Father, and Androgynous Figure," in *Boswell Thesis: Essays on Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, ed. Mathew Kuefler, 301-332 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

friars should take turns being mothers for one another.[52] When Francis finally died, he asked to be stripped of his habit and laid on the dust, modestly covering his right side wound with his left hand, and thus he died nude as his conversion had begun, when he publicly stripped before Bishop Guido and denounced Pietro di Bernadone. The prioritization of the side wound's covering, for the sake of modesty, is curious, since Francis was otherwise completely nude, perhaps further underscoring its vaginal resonance.

In the time leading up to his death, however, Francis is said to have asked the brothers to write to his wealthy friend, Lady Jacoba dei Settesoli to bring him some cloth for a new tunic.[53] Arnold Davidson has astutely tangled with important ways in which early representations – especially pictorial, but also textual – depicted Francis's stigmata as a new kind of bodily miracle and included argumentation about things like Francis's proximity to Christ, the importance of prayer over study, the question of the objective or subjective cause of the stigmata, etc. However, the vaginal gloss of the stigmata (the side wound, especially) leads me to add that this event describes a twist in subjectification brought about through the objectification of the self. Not an apotheosis, then, but a murky marriage of miracle with shame and pain as an excess of pleasure. Not identification, confirmation, and knowledge of self, but the intensification of a gnawing feeling that conversion is interminable business, potentially involving pressing questions of sexual or even of human/animal difference. In the experience of Francis receiving the stigmata, excessive affects filled the gap of unknowing.[54] We suspect that his followers inherited the symptom of this excessive affect associated with Francis's sexual ambiguity, when Francis's follower, Clare of Assisi, had a vision of

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[52] Francis of Assisi, "A Rule for Hermitages," in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, The Saint,* ed. and trans. Regis Armstrong (New York: New City Press, 1999)

[53] "The Assisi Compilation."

[54] As Davidson also points out, "The Little Flowers," a late hagiography of Francis, follows Bonaventurian leads in using language of "extreme ardor and the flame of divine love" to describe what Francis felt in his contemplative reception of the stigmata on Monte Alverna. Arnold Davidson, "Miracles of Bodily Transformation or How St. Francis Received the Stigmata," Introduction trans. Maggie Fitz-Morkin, *Critical Inquiry* 335 (3) (2009): 477.

Figure 2. Fra Gentile da Fabriano, Francis receiving the stigmata (c. 1419). The trickiness of the genre was how to show a full view of both the Christ/seraphim and Francis in the frame, and to make the rays move from the same corresponding body parts (Christ/seraph's left hand-Francis's left hand etc., and not Christ/seraph's left hand-Francis's right hand, etc.), without making the rays too jumbled – such that Francis will be depicted to the viewer as another Christ. The image thus implies a Christ/seraph-Francis-viewer relation, with Francis standing in between Christ/seraph and the viewer, as a repetition of Christ rather than merely depicting a relation between Francis and Christ as a closed mirror and allowing the viewer to look on this transference of pleasure/unpleasure as a voyeur. (This is aligned with Georges Didi-Huberman's (2007) notion of the open image.) The experience was clearly one of ambivalence for Francis – "He greatly rejoiced at the gracious look the Seraph gave him, but the fact that it was fixed to the cross terrified him"[1]

the saint breastfeeding her, for instance.[55] In this sense, Francis's conversion pertained to a psychic

marks, at once enigmatic, affective, and related to objects, that could be transferred to his followers.

Figure 3. In same, close-up of the side wound, uncannily vaginal. The objects of cloth and skin persist in this exposing split.[1]

While the state of Francis's body was semiotically endowed by his followers with religious significance – especially when they compared Francis's body with the body of the crucified Christ – Franciscan medical historians, upon examining Francis's remains, have also raised questions about whether he suffered from leprosy. This diagnosis would reconcile several physical descriptions in the early sources as well as the material traces left on his skeletal remains. Given his ongoing and close physical proximity to lepers, this would not be surprising. In Francis's request to be lain nude on the ground as he died, we might detect a complicity with the leper's shame. In any event, the depleted state of Francis's body and the ways he referred to it, establish a relation between unpleasure, (as pain, depletion, bitterness, and discomfort) and pleasure (as fecundity and sweetness). A complex

[55] See Marco Bartoli, "Analisi storica e interpretazione psicanalitica di una visione di S. Chiara d'Assisi." In *Archivum Franciscanum Historicum* 73, no. 4 (1980): 449-472.

spiritual, psychic, and social economy involving the conversion of objects, the affects involved in their use, and the ability to transfer/exchange merit gained by sustaining such affects stoked a fervent glow.

Tracking the convert's relations to objects, in accord with the semiotic suggestions of his own speech, forces us into the analytical domain of traffic between pleasure and unpleasure (indexed by the leper), rather than in simple, straight-up, surface reversals and inversions (from fine clothing to nudity). Merely attending to the use of objects in such surface reversals only succeeds in providing interpretive fig leaves for deeper affective mechanisms, but, according to the saint's hagiographers, repeating such reversals through the objects associated with them did not yield the pleasure with which it was associated at conversion's initial, disturbing irruption. Attention to the materials of conversion must prompt a deeper dive into transformation's affective working-through, rather than becoming interpretively caught up at the level of representation.

One additional story pertaining to Francis's sexual desires, seen as temptation, demonstrates yet another trajectory for the role of pain and personification of objects in Francis's ongoing conversion process. In "The Remembrance of the Desire of A Soul" Thomas of Celano recounts that Francis was staying alone in a hermitage when the devil came to tempt him, saying that ""There is no sinner in the world whom the Lord will not forgive if he is converted. But if anyone kills himself by hard penance, for all eternity he will find no mercy.""[56] By saying this, the devil suggested to Francis that conversion was always a future possibility through which past sin could be undone, but that suicidal penance could not be forgiven.

Celano recounts that Francis recognized the devil's suggestion as a temptation that he would relapse from the heat of conversion and become "lukewarm." The devil turned to tempt Francis through lust, in response to which Francis "took off his clothes and lashed himself furiously with

[56] Thomas of Celano, "The Remembrance," 562.

the cord, saying: 'Come on, Brother Ass, that's the way you should stay under the whip! The tunic belongs to religion: no stealing allowed! If you want to leave [religious life], leave!'" Despite these efforts, Francis's lust was unabated. This time, the ritual of taking off clothing failed to sustain a fervent glow by extending or recapturing the initial flashes of his conversion, initially experienced when Francis stripped nude in Assisi's square. Interaction with the material objects I have emphasized in Julian's account (a ditch of snow, whipping, insults) failed to achieve the same affects as in the past. Finally, Francis threw himself nude into the snow and made several snow people, addressing them as his wife, children, and servants, telling himself that he would have to take care of all of them and buy them clothes. This new and artistic crafting, still resonant with old experience of snow, seemed to have provided a desired, pleasurable, and satisfying effect. After this, "the devil went away in confusion, and the saint returned to his cell praising God."[57]

The devil's confusion was perhaps not misplaced. Francis's unleashing of a barrage of signs and affects sustained a flame of desire beyond understanding, perhaps even his own, but certainly that of the devil. Here, Francis symbolized to himself the degree-based kinship relations he had rejected at the time of his initial conversion, albeit in a way that repositioned his conception of self from the side of inheritance to the side of paternal provision. The thermal dynamics of this ritual – in opposition to the initial, inverting flash of stripping down before Pietro, Bishop Guido, and others – show the ongoing vigilance at work in conversion as involving a sort of love determined not by inclusion and exclusion, but by kind (in Bergson's above-mentioned language, love defined in terms of degree vs. kind).

Francis's conversion, in fact, continued long after the two paramount moments that came to define it as a discrete event, especially the rejection of his father. He dealt with what he thought of as temptations through certain ways of relating to objects around him and through experiments in

[57] Thomas of Celano, "The Remembrance," 324-325.

seeing what kinds of affects they could occasion. His own body – Brother Ass – was one of the most important objects in this drama. In Francis's temptation to lust, he took off his clothes, beat himself vigorously, and created some little sculptures of a family made out of snow. It seems difficult to dismiss such a story as the clear and self-apparent renunciation of pleasure in favor of unpleasure, or to subjugate such an experience to one that is primarily about meaning-making. The devil left confused.

A play between clothing and nudity is also, as we have seen, very frequent, long after Francis publicly stripped for the first time. A dying Francis asked his friend Lady Jacoba to bring him some cloth, and later asked to be laid naked in the dust to die, modestly covering his side wound, with its uncanny vaginal resonances. Francis, in the story of temptation recounted above, experienced his religious habit as that which did not belong to him, something stolen, and threw himself unclothed into the snow. It is too easy to recount such experiences as the infliction of pain and the seeking of unpleasure. After all, if Celano's account is to be believed, Francis, experiencing lust, did what many people experiencing lust do: he took off his clothes and sought physical intensity. Even as cloth persisted, it was not always all that it was cracked up to be. Simple inversions of object relations before and after the conversion event could not sustain the heat of Francis's fervent glow. Rather, it was to be stoked through continuous, ongoing, and sometimes confusing displacements.

2.5 From Sign to Sacrament: Conversion's Thermal Qualia

An argument that attempts to analyze Francis's actions solely from the perspective of the discursive affordances of his time cannot account for his ongoing conversion.[58] As one example,

[58] David Salter argues provocatively that Francis of Assisi is no patron saint of ecology, because people in his time had no such similar concept. While I follow his basic argument, I have disagreements about the wide array of sources he glosses as "hagiography," and in his lack of engaging with almost any of Francis's own writings. Additionally, if Salter

David Salter has argued that Francis's own relationship to his body as "Brother Ass" resonates strongly with broader medieval Christian trends that nature and its creatures should be overcome and dominated. For Salter, Francis culled metaphors from creation as if from "a book" in order to express his vision of Christian ethics. Salter's emphasis upon the representational does not allow us to analyze the crucial and mediated plays between pleasure and unpleasure that emerge from a closer reading of the early Franciscan sources. A better-developed semiotic analysis would observe that Francis's address of entities (as "Brother ___," "Sister ____") works against a system of *appellation* (Adam and Eve naming, and thus dominating, animals in creation) to which Salter would like to subject it.[59]

Francis's relation to his body as "Brother Ass" was no mere use of metaphor culled from creation in order to communicate an ethical vision to others. Indeed, Francis often encouraged his followers not to follow his example as regarded penitential practice. Rather, "Brother Ass" encapsulated, for Francis, a complex relationship to a specific body (his body, *this* body), which was depleted, bloody, blind and possibly leprous, but also desirous. Finally, a consideration of Francis's relation to the world as a "book of creation," would have to take into account Bonaventure's retheorization of this concept along the lines of the sacramental. Though Bonaventure did not

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correctly argues that the application of ecology to Francis of Assisi is presentist, it remains to be seen how seeing Francis as one who read creation like a book is not. Here, the notion of reading books is not sufficiently situated in medieval situation, and is certainly at stake in the Franciscan tradition to such an extent that it cannot be elaborated here. David Salter, *Holy and the Noble Beasts: Encounters with Animals in Early Modern Literature* (Suffolk; Boydell and Brewer, 2001).

[59] Jacques Derrida's essay on being seen naked by his cat is instructive here. Derrida follows Michel de Montaigne to emphasize a relation with "this cat," not "the cat" (what he calls the "*animot*," or animal-word, the concept of the animal, in general). This view holds many resonances with the work of the thirteenth century scholastic theologian Duns Scotus, especially in his views on *haecceitas* ("thisness") and in conceptions of the individual, particular "instance." This need not be given too much analytical hold on our interpretation. As I have tried to show, Francis's language in itself – "Brother ___", "Sister __" – works against a system of appellation that scholars might like to impose upon it. Duns Scotus's theology, and its resonance with much more contemporary instantiations, came from somewhere. One of these sources was Francis of Assisi's life and actions as recorded and interpreted by his early hagiographers. Derrida picks up Michel de Montaigne's lovely statement, "When I play with my cat, who knows if I am not a pastime to her more than she is to me." Jacques Derrida, "The Animal Therefore I Am (More to Follow)," *Critical Inquiry* 29(2) (2002): 369-419; Michel de Montaigne, "Apology for Raymond Sebond," in *Michel de Montaigne: The Complete Works,* trans. Donald M. Fame (New York: Everyman's Library, 2003): 401.

dismiss the idea of a book of creation outright, he did argue that for Francis and those in his tradition, it had to be much more. As we have seen, for Bonaventure, creatures were not mere *signs* (*"signi"*), but also *true sacraments* (*"verum Sacramenti"*).

Other semiotic trajectories might go further in helping us to understand how conversion can involve enjoyment of the unpleasurable. In the stories of Francis's ongoing conversion recounted above, objects from different domains became related in terms of *qualia* involving temperature. This relation facilitated shifts in pleasure and unpleasure for Francis as a converting subject. The contact of cold snow and ice on bare skin was used to try to hold the heat of Francis's lust at bay. At the same time, the saint worked with these objects of snow, ice, and his body to preserve the heat of his soul's ardor, and to prevent himself from becoming "lukewarm." If the little fake family Francis constructed out of lumps of snow had been real, Francis, as the father, would need to clothe them if they were not to freeze to death. Francis also yearned that "Brother Fire's" heat would mercifully be tempered as his flames surrounded the surgeon's cauterization irons. Cloth and nakedness too enter Francis's thermal constellation along with its other attendant objects, playing out long after the climax of Francis's initial conversion. They are in play when Francis's naked body was lain on the ground to die or when he imagined icicles and blood dripping from his habit after a guardian had locked him out of a friary. This latter instance comes from Francis's definition of "perfect joy," with which this article will conclude.[60]

In *Fame of the Gawa*, Nancy Munn argued that Gawan conceptions of value and its transformation in qualia like speed/slowness, lightness/heaviness, and shininess/dullness did not simply involve logical oppositions, but questions of how subjects took up and played with objects'

[60] Temperature could have a much broader trajectory in scholarship of religion and the sacred, including beyond Judeo-Christian trajectories. In particular, I am thinking of the associations of hot and cold to particular spirits or groups of spirits in Haitian Vodou and Yoruba traditions as well as the practical work of heating and cooling that pervade ritual in some African and West African traditions. Here, a broader project might paraphrase Michael Taussig to ask "What temperature is the sacred?" Micheal Taussig, What Color is the Sacred (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2009).

qualia as sensory affordances.[61] The heat and chill Francis felt on his body and made use of through objects were, in Munn's terms, "embodied qualities that are part of a given intersubjective spacetime (the 'more comprehensive whole') whose positive or negative values they signify."[62] The value such objects take on in their use, engagement, and relation is part of an ethical framework through which the subject congeals. Qualia could thus be one useful way of describing the convert seeking unpleasure as pleasure through material objects. In this sense, conversion would be understood as an exercise in value transformation through which the converting-subject works on the self. However, the scale and extent to which a "more comprehensive whole" can be elaborated might still be an issue for closer scrutiny. As a "pioneer of morality," to use Bergson's phrase, we should be open to the unique inflections of qualia Francis may have offered to the broader Christian medieval scene, rather than relying on what we already think we know about medieval devotion to understand and interpret Francis's conversion.[63]

What to make of Francis's engagement of pain in terms of the experience of his depleted body, his use of penitential practices, and the extreme thermal qualia of objects he sometimes used to work on it? Eschewing the over-emphasis on the symbolic in past anthropological studies of ritual, Talal Asad drew upon Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, to posit that medieval juridical practices of torture and the ordeal posited a rational relation of pain to truth.[64] If we have seen in Foucault an inability to grapple with the question of what it means to desire unpleasure *as* pleasure, such as an

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[61] Alaina Lemon's summarization of Munn's conception of qualia, and the extension of it to questions about how people come to sense the social (or not) is helpful:

> One lesson that Nancy Munn taught us in Fame of Gawa (1986) is that people formulate judgments about social values – e.g. 'selfishness' vs. 'generosity' – not only through structural oppositions ('us' vs. 'them'), but also through affordances of sense data, which they project across multiple domains of social activity. 'Shininess', for example, could carry one far across the waves, to places and people that many Gawans never saw

Alaina Lemon, "Touching the Gap: Social Qualia and Cold War Contact," in Anthropology Theory 13 (1/2) (2013): 67.

[62] Nancy Munn, Fame of the Gawa: A Symbolic Study of Value Transformation in a Massim (Papua New Guinea) Society (Durham: Duke University Press, 1986): 17.

[63] Bergson, 40.

[64] Talal Asad, "Notes on Body Pain, and Truth in Medieval Christian Ritual," *Economy & Society* 12(3) (1983): 287-327.

understanding of the repression mechanism would allow, Asad's description of medieval juridical practices is unable to consider the question of the judge's own pleasure in inflicting pain upon others. Asad's account is subject to an assumption that truth-*cum*-knowledge was at issue in legal rituals in the first place. Along these lines, Joan Copjec has leveled a Lacanian account of the gaze against Foucault's panoptic one:

> When you encounter the gaze of the Other, you meet not a seeing eye but a blind one. The gaze is not clear or penetrating, not filled with knowledge or recognition; it is clouded over and turned back on itself, absorbed in its own enjoyment. The horrible truth […] is that the gaze does not see you. So, if you are looking for confirmation of the truth of your being or the clarity of your vision, you are on your own; the gaze of the Other is not confirming; it will not validate you. [65].

Francis's conversion and the relations to bodily pain it involved were never secured by the gaze of an Other who saw him and defined the truth of his salvation. Such a final judgement would have involved the completion of his conversion process. Toward the end of his life, Francis had repeatedly tried to put himself under the obedience of other Franciscan superiors, but they could never bring themselves to fully exercise authority over him.[66] In this sense, having an Other who saw him and judged his truth was a fantasy Francis had tried to enact, without ever quite being successful. In "Notes on Body Pain and Truth in Medieval Christian Ritual" Asad associated knowledge with truth, a conflation that Foucault's later definition of spirituality might have helped him to avoid. In Foucault's 1981-1982 lectures, "The Hermeneutics of the Subject," he provisionally defined spirituality as:

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[65] Joan Copjec, *Read My Desire: Lacan against the Historicists* (New York: Verso, 1994): 36.

[66] Compare two accounts from "The Assisi Compilation." The first idealizes Francis as resigning from office over the order and discusses his desire always to be obedient to another elected brother. The second tells of a time he thought he did something wrong, and confessing his fault to a superior, told him to assign him a particular penance, to which the superior is reported to have responded, "do as you wish." The source carries with it a gloss that the superior did not approve of the penance Francis imagined, but would not want to get in his way. "The Assisi Compilation," 124-125 and 166-167, respectively.

> the search, practice, and experience through which the subject carries out the necessary transformations on himself in order to have access to the truth. We will call 'spirituality' then the set of these researches, practices, and experiences, which may be purifications, ascetic exercises, renunciations, conversions of looking, modifications of existence, etc. which are *not for knowledge but for the subject, for the subject's very being, the price to be paid for access to the truth*.[67]

The subject works on himself in relation to truth in such a way that knowledge falls out.

Part of what Francis of Assisi's conversion offers the medieval scene, then, is not the representational sign or a specific codification of knowledge, but a conversion of the sign into a sacrament that can be related to and experienced in the truth of the subject – a desire stoked through continuous material and affective work, and one irreducible to understanding, to paraphrase Bonaventure.

2.6 Francis of Assisi's Perfect Jouissance

Francis himself offered his own account of what "perfect joy" was. A fragment recounted Francis asking Brother Leo, his companion and sometimes scribe, to record a scenario the saint had imagined. Francis envisioned a messenger coming to bring him news about other friars in the order. He imagined that messenger might have said "all the Masters of Paris have entered the [Franciscan] Order," or that kings and bishops have entered the order, or that all the non-believers had been converted to Christianity, or that Francis himself would cure the sick and perform miracles. Francis said that each of these scenarios is not perfect joy. Instead, he asked Brother Leo to write the following:

> I return from Perugia and arrive here in the dead of night. It's winter time, muddy, and so cold that **icicles** have formed on the edges of my **habit** and keep **striking my legs**

[67] Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1981-1982* (New York: Picador, 2005): xxiii. *emphasis mine.*

> **and blood flows from such wounds** [*quod dondoli aquae frigidae congelatae fiunt ad extremitates tunicae et percutiunt semper crura, et sanguis emanat ex vulneribus talibus*]. Freezing, covered with mud and ice [*Et totus in luto et frigore et glacie*], I come to the gate and, after I've knocked and called for some time, a brother comes and asks: '**Who are you?**' 'Brother Francis,' I answer. 'Go away!' he says. 'This is not a decent hour to be wandering about! You may not come in!' When I insist, he replies: 'Go away! You are simple and stupid! Don't come back to us again! There are many of us here like you – we don't need you!' I stand again at the door and say: 'For the love of God, take me in tonight!' And he replies: 'I will not! Go to the Crosiers' place and ask there!'
>
> I tell you this: if I had patience and did not become upset, true **joy** [*vera Laetitia*], as well as true virtue and the salvation of my soul, would consist in this.[68]

Francis's vision of perfect joy, then, was to be realized in a position cold, bleeding, unwelcome, and unknown. The pleasure of joy was that which persisted along such a state.

Pleasure and unpleasure were bound together in Francis's conversion – one, unpleasure, secured the other, pleasure. Unpleasure was the only way for Francis to feel that joy was true. Conversion unfolded in relation to various objects like his body (depleted, broken, bloody); the qualia of elements like fire and ice, heat and chill in specific instantiations ("Brother Fire," *this* fire); and other objects like cloth, snowmen, or cauterization irons. From this perspective, Francis's conversion was not able to be limited to a moment of profession (the rejection of his father), but took place also in relations with objects and the affects they were capable of sustaining. Pleasure and unpleasure, in relation to religious transformation and conversion, cannot be easily determined by us analysts or taken as givens, rather, they are bound together in perfect jouissance, a joy irreducible to pleasure-seeking. At the same time, the pleasure/unpleasure relation cannot be dismissed out of hand, as predominant social constructivist frames have asked us to do.

Francis of Assisi's conversion was an episode that became paradigmatic for the whole Franciscan movement, stamping it with a sense of conversion as an ongoing journey (what the

[68] "True and Perfect Joy," in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, The Saint*, ed. and trans. Regis Armstrong (New York: New City Press, 1999): 166.

Franciscan theologian Bonaventure referred to as an *itinerarium* or pathway, in his *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*.) In the flash of Francis's conversion, discrete and intense moments of rupture like meeting the leper on the road or in his public rejection of his father the cloth merchant, set the stage for Francis's continued grappling with conversion throughout his life. As relations between pleasure and unpleasure had changed, they were not completely resolved. An initial, powerful flash was ongoingly recovered and worked through. Spiritual heat was sought after in the cultivation of a fervent glow capable of combatting lukewarmness. This lack of resolution can be detected in objects through which Francis sought to recover and sustain the affects of his initial fervor, with varying degrees of success.

For Francis, conversion was a powerful irruption that opened the possibilities for relation to objects in all their specificity. In Bonaventure's terms, those objects were not merely signs, but also sacraments. Rather than providing a meaningful orientation, material objects afforded Francis occasions for affective disorientation that stoked the fervent glow of his conversion. The early instances of Francis's conversion comprised the motor and raw material for ongoing journeying, itinerancy, and passage. Whether or not Francis's conversion entailed real relations with material objects used to achieve affective states of conversion or whether they point to a Franciscan "semiotic ideology" of what relations could be, Francis's own testimony and the early hagiographical and theological output that seized upon his life, paint a picture of conversion wherein pleasure and unpleasure are knotted together, undone, and ongoingly reworked in an experience Francis summarized as "perfect joy."[69]

[69] Webb Keane, *Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter*, (Los Angeles and Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007): 18, and following.

2.7 The Founder's *Sinsthome*: Francis's Joy and Moses's Anger

> How did one single man come to stamp his people with its definite character and determine its fate for millennia to come?[70]

According to Lacanian psychoanalysis, jouissance is never complete, but always involves an irreducible element of lack. In this sense, what is the upshot of reading Francis's perfect joy along the psychoanalytically-inflected line of a perfect jouissance, or, in what would a perfect jouissance consist, on what would it insist? Three things strike me about Francis's text on perfect joy:

First, it is a transmission spoken to an Other—brother Leo, the scribe—for possible conveyance to a group of followers, by this time grown large. In this sense, Francis takes a risk of speaking something of his intimate experience to an Other who inscribes it for posterity. (I am reminded of Lacan's assertion that the analyst takes up a role of the "secretary to the insane."[71]) I read Francis's speech to brother Leo along the lines of what psychoanalyst and philosopher Willy Apollon refers to as the "structure of the address."[72] A subject risks speech to an Other who is barred (i.e. ~~Other~~), and the non-response or enigmatic response of the ~~Other~~ opens up a field for the welcoming of something new. Insofar as it mobilizes jouissance as the Thing at work in the subject, it gives rise shifts that can be heard in future speech about dream, symptom, or bungled action that came as a response to the enigmatic (non)response of the ~~Other~~.

Though the structure of the address aims to elaborate a provisional metapsychology for something that happens in a clinical psychoanalytic setting, in considering this specific historical transmission to a community of followers made via writing, my sense, in considering this specific textual trace, is that jouissance would be mobilized on the side of the community of followers in

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[70] Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism,* trans. Katherine Jones (New York: Random House, 1939): 239.
[71] Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Vol III: The Psychoses*, trans. Russell Grigg (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1997).
[72] For a discussion of Willy Apollon's concept of the structure of the address, see Tracy McNulty, *Wrestling with the Angel: Experiments in Symbolic Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014): 56, 68, 78.

Franciscans' hallucinations and visions, dreams, slips, bungled actions, and styles of life, rather than in Francis himself. (In Francis's own history, we have already seen instances of such returns.) Some of these followers, each faced with their own social contexts, circumstances, and subjective proclivities, could, in turn, find a place to address what was working in them to another. (This is what I consider in each of the subsequent chapters, which explore novelty among some early modern Franciscans with respect to the fields of mysticism and Atlantic slavery.)

Second, Francis eschewed any socially determined coordinates for the success of his large and quickly-growing group of followers. Having friars who were academically accomplished or elevated in the hierarchy would not be sufficient; perfect joy, as his evidence, sits on the side of the affective and subjective. At the same time, neither do various feats and trials comprise a theater of ascetical accomplishment which could become a privileged rubric for the recognition of sanctity, on the part of some collective. Here, the conditions of suffering are merely part of the surrounds or the backdrop for the affect that they attend—a joy that is perfected in its solidity and non-variation. In this passage every attribute through which Franciscanism would be recognizable, every characteristic that would cohere the Franciscan *religio*, as such, is put into the mouth of the negligent friar of Francis's fantasy—itinerancy ("wandering about"), poverty ("simple and stupid"). Salvation and virtue are located beyond these specific characteristics, somewhere affective between willful action (virtue) and grace (salvation).

Third, I read the "perfect" in Francis's "perfect joy" as pertaining to a two-fold inclusion of lack within Francis's jouissance, and this inclusion of lack takes jouissance beyond itself into the field of desire via the inclusion of a lack associated with castration. (Desire, in this sense, should not be understood in terms of object-seeking—in an object that would be thought to be able to plug the hole of lack—but, rather, as a question of motor force and cause. In Franciscanism, poverty and itinerancy stoke these flames.) Beyond the joy/jouissance that persisted alongside Francis's fantasy

of the friar's dismissal at the gate, there is what I take to be the enjoyment of speech itself in the structure of the address to Leo, the ~~Other~~ who writes and does not respond. The enfolding of lack within jouissance moves to a field of desire as that which remains after having been purged and tested. In volume VII of Lacan's *Seminar: Ethics*, Lacan suggested that the only difference between the analyst and the analysand is that the analyst's desire was a "experienced desire."[73] Franciscan trajectories for the purgative—in the longstanding stages of ascent for the spiritual life outlined by Pseudo-Dionysius, from the purgative to the illuminative to the unitive—will be elaborated in chapter two.

In Francis's speech he circled, through evocation and equivocation (in his consideration of the things that would not count as perfect joy, for instance), the playful, stupid, wandering joy that stands as his subjective signature as a mark transmitted to his followers and which is embedded in each of the hagiographical moments considered in this chapter. This joy is Francis's *sinthome* and his mark as a holy (and leprously/stigmatically holey) man—*saint homme,* Francis the broken troubadour, *alter Christus*, and God's fool. In volume XXIII of Lacan's *Seminar: The Sinthome*, he drew upon an older term for symptom: *sinthome* (also punning on the *saint homme*, the holy man) as a fourth term added to his longstanding notion of the three orders—the imaginary, the symbolic, and the real. In his exploration of the author James Joyce and of different kinds of knots, *sinthome* comprises a fourth term that holds the other three together, and, as such, stands as a support for the subject as a kind of invention or construction.

While a *sinthome* involves a kind of individual invention or idiosyncrasy, it can have enigmatic effects insofar as attempts are made to transmit it within a social bond. This has been considered by scholars and psychoanalysts in relation to Freud writing about Moses. In Joan Copjec's chapter,

[73] "What the analyst has to give, unlike the partner in the act of love, is something that even the most beautiful bride in the world, cannot outmatch, that is to say, what he has. And what he has is nothing other than his desire, like that of the analysand, whit the difference that it is an experienced desire" (Lacan 1986 [1959-1960], 300).

"Moses the Egyptian and the Big Black Mammy of the Antebellum South: Freud (with Kara Walker) on Race and History," she reads Freud and Walker to explore the question of what can constitute a people as a group aside from any particular designable attribute or characteristic of identity:

> In the Hebrew translation of *Totem and Taboo*, for example (this book being a forerunner to *Moses and Monotheism*) Freud pointedly asks himself, 'What is there left to you that is Jewish?' after admitting his ignorance of Hebrew, his lack of religious conviction, and his detachment from Jewish nationalist ideals, that is, after admitting the absence from himself of what are traditionally considered the salient aspects of Jewish identity.[74]

For Copjec, thinking with psychoanalysis, the assumption of the modern subject as founded upon a *tabula rasa* is disingenuous. She draws attention to the limit, assumed *a priori*, upon which coherence of a group could be established. After every trace, attribute, and characteristic associated with a particular group were wiped away, she postulates that nevertheless something would remain as limit. She summarizes the modernist position thus: "[d]espite its self-presentation, erasure encounters its *limit* when it reaches the empty page or blank slate, not evidence that the process has been fully accomplished."[75] This limit of the empty page or blank slate is a framing device that holds intact an historical account that is endlessly processual. In this way, a social constructivist historicist approach to the subject founds itself upon an *a priori* act of faith in the possibility of arriving at the blank page, an unexamined repression of what would constitute an "outside" of history. The group, subject to the characteristics designated as constitutive by an observer, is founded upon the backdrop of an "empty support—an uninflected, neutral humanity," and this is precisely the disavowal that Freud takes aim at in his insistence upon an original Egyptian Moses, postulated through careful tracking of scriptural traces.[76]

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[74] Joan Copjec, "Moses the Egyptian and the Big Black Mammy of the Antebellum South: Freud (with Kara Walker) on Race and History," in *Imagine There's No Woman: Ethics and Sublimation* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002), 81-107: 92.
[75] Copjec, "Moses," 93.
[76] Copjec, "Moses," 93.

Freud follows the line that nothing should be repressed, and, in some way, his attention to scriptural traces leading him to a doubling down on his assertion that the Moses of the Jewish tradition, is, in fact, a composite figure drawing upon an Egyptian Moses and another Moses, a Midianite priest, takes the modernist search for the empty page to its limit. However, Copjec considers Lacan to go beyond this in his introduction of the real. Where the social constructivist finds an empty page, Lacanian analysis finds an irremovable stain or a hard kernel that cannot be extricated—a traumatic and unspeakable real:

> One must be careful not to mistake the indivisible and invincible remainder of the process of erasure—this 'hard kernel' Lacan would come to call the real—for some essence of transcendental a priori that manages to escape the contingent process of history. [….] The fact is that the real is what guarantees that nothing escapes history.[77]

In a detour through Deleuze's reading of Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, Copjec comes to the point of asserting that the Lacanian real is that which is impossible to negate or to remove: "that which, in language or the symbolic, negates the possibility of any metadimension, any metalanguage"—"a rigid kernel at the heart of the symbolic, that forces signifiers to split off from and return around itself."[78] Distinct from the empty page or the black slate, then, the real is conceived of not as "an inert void [or] a stark limit," but, rather, as that which is "teeming with emptiness, as a swarming void."[79]

And, so, what is the real transmitted by Moses to the Jewish people? In Tracy McNulty's article, "The Untreatable: The Freudian Act and Its Legacy," she argues—again, reading Freud on Moses—that Moses's anger was his "object" or his "signature in the social link," in other words, "what drives him as a subject."[80] Furthermore, the point is not that Moses simply had "a human trait—one that shows Moses to be a man, and not a myth," but, rather, the very "trait by which

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[77] Copjec, "Moses," 93.
[78] Copjec, "Moses," 95.
[79] Copjec, "Moses," 96.
[80] Tracy McNulty, "The Untreatable: The Freudian Act and Its Legacy," *Crisis & Critique* 6:1 (April 2019): 226-251: 242, *page numbers cited in-text hereafter.*

Freud claims to distinguish the Egyptian Moses from the Midianite priest of the same name, who he finds to be singularly lacking in the qualities needed for a grand undertaking."[81] McNulty speculates that it is this angry Moses that the Jewish symbolic is "ultimately unable to absorb and must therefore repress." What is at stake in McNulty's account is an idiosyncratic mark of the subject, a signature, about which the subject often knows little to nothing that nevertheless (to return to Copjec's provocation) transmits or stamps a stain of the real powerful enough to constitute a group.

In considering Francis's account of a joy that would appear alongside coldness, blood, and expulsion, I cannot help but think about the parallels between Franciscan spirituality and psychoanalysis (both as domains primarily concerned with a kind of experience, but also as a domains of theory in dialogue with those experiences). The conception of a passage from jouissance to an experienced or tested desire that, via purgation, yields a transmissible object sounds, in some ways, like an account of conversion.[82] At the same time, I am struck by how psychoanalytic elaboration of the real, not as a mere blank page or a void, but as a kind of teeming emptiness or a swarming void aligns with what Capuchin-Franciscans would later refer to in their rule as a kind of resplendent poverty. As Bonaventure's emphasis on the goodness of creation rubs up against broader accounts that stress the centrality of the pervasiveness of sin or the creation as the field of the representational, from the texts on Francis's life, one gets a sense for a joy kindled by icicles and a love that arises amid the shimmer of worms and bloody wounds. It now remains to be seen what such a transmission afforded Francis's later followers in the mystical and missionary itinerating.

[81] McNulty, "Untreatable," 242.
[82] The theme of transmission recurs in Chapter Five.

Chapter 3 Myssionization: A Franciscan Semiotics for Desire in Conversion

3.1 Introduction

If Francis of Assisi, as introduced in the first chapter, encapsulated a paradigmatic converting-subject in his ascetical and masochistic use of material objects and in the desirous affects those modes of relating sought to enkindle, the early modern period raised decidedly new problems and controversies for the trajectory of the converting-subject and its desire.[83]

Europeans' gradual discoveries of "new worlds" gave rise to anxieties and crises both epistemic and theological, which have been extensively discussed.[84] Yet, these discoveries also entailed crises of the sensible, as they materialized new sites for desires of all kinds, supported through a wide range of horrifying and enchanting representations that circulated in travel literature.[85] This chapter aims to explore how the pride of place ascribed to desire by Bonaventure fared in newly broadened geographic (missionary) and subjective (mystical) terrains, fraught with

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[83] For instance, Moshe Sluhovsky has astutely tracked the "epistemic anxieties" (to use Ann Laura Stoler's term) and controversies around divine and demonic inspiration that proliferated in the rise of techniques of discernment in the early modern period. Sluhovsky does not attend to possible correlations between the rise of Catholic anxieties that circulated around spiritual practice and the anxieties connected to European contacts with "new" cultures and environments. More often, early modern Catholic anxieties around spiritual practice were related to the Protestant reformation and the Catholic reformation. Moshe Sluhovsky, *Believe Not Every Spirit: Possession, Mysticism, and Discernment in Early Modern Catholicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007). Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

[84] See, for instance, Pamela H. Smit and Paula Findlen, *Merchants and Marvels: Commerce, Science, and Art in Early Modern Europe* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

[85] Evonne Levy and Kenneth Mills (Eds.), *Lexikon of the Hispanic Baroque* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013), draw together innovative commentators on the developments between early modern Spain and the early modern Latin America on a wide variety of topics. Relating anxieties about race and space, Levy and Mills write: "While some of the inherited anxieties about monstrous races inhabiting unknown parts of the world would be quelled, a distinctly form-driven disquiet about mixing (of peoples, of religious ideas and practices, of dress, of cultural traits) and a seeking after pure forms remained, a discourse not dissimilar to the debates over the mixing of the architectural orders" (6). One of this chapter's aims is to trace the effects of a Franciscan semiotic renunciation of attachment to pure forms, arguing that this renunciation had ethical effects that can begin to be traced. Evonne Levy and Kenneth Mills (Eds.), *Lexikon of the Hispanic Baroque* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013).

anxiety and pregnant with anticipatory curiosity and exploration. First, though, we must consider under what discursive and representational (i.e. imaginary) conditions these two experiential domains were joined, anthropologically and historically, and, as such, how they can be considered as linked, in analysis. Such deep exploration of often overlooked early modern Franciscan reformist lifeworlds and cosmovisions—which I even want to oppose here to what might be called rule-worlds—will be necessary in beginning to understand the freshness of the claims some Capuchin-Franciscans made about slavery, to be explored in the two following chapters.

A Franciscan elaboration of the converting-subject and the turns it took in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, will have to be reconstructed by following the specific pathways in which desire moved as well as the ongoingly developing means and technologies through which early modern Franciscans sought to support it. This will also allow us to better understand the mystical *and* missionary, contemplative *and* active, impulses that led to the Capuchin reform as a hybrid form of vowed religious life, and what was known in the medieval period as the "Franciscan religion" or the Franciscan "way of life" (*modus vivendi*).[86] Following Franciscans' leads in emphasizing desire as

[86] A wide variety of sources can be consulted to think about the question of the statuses of the active life (*vita activa*) and the contemplative life (*vita contemplativa*), the latter of which the Greek philosophers considered to be the supreme form of life. In medieval scholastic theology, where the Greek superiority of the contemplative was frequently repeated, Bonaventure pushed the category of contemplation beyond past conceptions of it as an activity of intellectual speculation, as we have already seen in chapter one. Compare, for instance, Bonaventure's insistence on the excess of contemplation, beyond intellection, with Juan Carlos Flores's discussion of contemplation as intellectual activity, in his consideration of Henry of Ghent: "The Roots of Love of Wisdom: Henry of Ghent on Platonic and Aristotelian Forms," in *Philosophy and Theology in the Long Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2011): 623-640.

See also Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), where Arendt disaggregates the activities of labor, work, and action, within the *vita activa*. For our purposes, action is the most crucial category, because it has the capacity to inflect social relationships and discourse, and not necessarily from a self-conscious perspective. It is through action, Arendt argues, that people come to know and disclose something about themselves.

Here, we are perhaps not far from the psychoanalytic conception of an unconscious act. Theorized by Freud in notions of slips and bungled action, Lacan elevated the status of the unconscious act to an ethical act for which the subject could take responsibility. See Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Volume VII, The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1986), among many other coordinates in his work. Slavoj Žižek continues to develop a notion of the act along these lines, writing that "an act accomplishes what, within a given symbolic universe, appears to be 'impossible,' yet it changes its conditions so that it creates retroactively the conditions of its own possibility." Slavoj Žižek, "Class Struggle or Postmodernism? Yes please!" in *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the*

central to their project allows us to see how both missionaries and mystics were engaged in similar kinds of attempts to establish and work within a space for desire. For this reason, I will collapse together friars engaged in mystical and missionary projects as *myssionaries*.

The goal of myssionaries—mystics and missionaries, both—was to elaborate and effect, in themselves and others, a subjective experience of a *savoir* (a knowledge of truth—irreducible to familiarity or know-how) about desire.[87] The mystical and the missionary, the contemplative (usually construed as passive) and the active, were collapsed into one mode of life that later reformist Franciscan mystical theorists coined terms like "super-essential" (Harphius) or "super-eminent" (Benet de Canfield) to describe. In their deployment of these terms to convey what they considered to be the apex of a spiritual way of life, they built upon the medieval scaffolding of Bonaventure who pointed to a potentiality within the Franciscan *modus vivendi* that he associated with the "seraphic"—a term he closely related to desire.

For Bonaventure, the Franciscan *modus vivendi* was both a hybrid of active or contemplative containers in which vowed religious life had been formerly limited, and it provided some individuals within it to reach the seraphic heights that Bonaventure ascribed to Francis.[88] Rather than defining

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Left, eds. Judith Butler, Ernest Laclau, Slavoj Žižek [New York: Verso, 2000]: 121). See, also, Tracy McNulty, "The Untreatable."

In drawing attention to these recent, psychoanalytic trajectories for "the act" within psychoanalysis, my point is that psychoanalytic theorists have developed "the act" along the lines of something that is uniquely connected to a subject in his/her/their particularity and which has the capacity to introduce something new into the social structure, revising the limits of the possible. In their insistence on merging the contemplative and the active into a hybrid form of life, and in their insistence on the possible effects of the ecstatic or seraphic way of life, Franciscans saw similar possibilities.

[87] Savoir is developed as a key concept in psychoanalysis, as it has been developed by Willy Apollon, Danielle Bergeron, and Lucie Cantin in the psychoanalytic treatment of psychosis being elaborated in the École freudienne du Québec. "[S]avoir is a knowledge that is utterly particular to the subject, irreducible to the level of information, concerning the particularities of the subject's relation to jouissance" Robert Hughes and Kareen Ror Malone, "Introduction: The Dialectic of Theory and Clinic," in *After Lacan: Clinical Practice and the Subject of the Unconscious*, eds. Robert Hughes and Kareen Ror Malone (Albany: SUNY, 2002), 31.

[88] Here, I draw upon Bonaventure's *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, an unfinished series of talks that Bonaventure delivered between Easter and Pentecost in 1273, which reflects both a final synthesis of his thinking before his death and a defense of the mendicant movement, delivered in a pedagogical mode. Bonaventure distinguishes three orders of contemplation—supplication, speculation, and elevation (*sursumactivum*). The order of supplication is connected to monastics who receive property from donors, for whom they pray, in turn. The order of speculation is the order of "preachers and minors" (i.e. Franciscans), the order of those who spend time in contemplation, who engage in learning

their way of life as either active or contemplative, as will be clear from the works I trace here, the Franciscan innovation was to propose a life premised upon a kind of alienated desire, accessible as that which remains after an encounter with lack orchestrated by the practice of a life in poverty, both spiritual and material.[89] This hybridity of the contemplative and active was particularly emphasized in the Capuchin reforms of the early sixteenth century, which sought to rekindle the energetic intensity and itinerating hybridity of early Franciscans' fervor.

To return to and to deepen our exploration of the question of *modus vivendi*, as raised in the introduction, Giorgio Agamben has argued that a key aspect of the medieval Franciscan innovation was to elevate—and, in a way, obliterate or circumscribe—prior notions of a *rule* of life in favor of a

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and preaching. The last order consists of those who "spend time (*vacantium*) with God according to the way of elevation (*sursumactivum*), namely the ecstatic or excessive (*ecstaticum seu excessivum*)," and Bonaventure postulates that "the appearance of the Seraph to blessed Francis, which was expressed and impressed, showed [...] that [the Seraphic] order ought to apply to [Francis], but he would still come to this [seraphic order] by way of tribulations. And in this appearance were great mysteries" (661). Bonaventure makes explicit that the seraphic way or elevation or excess, was a potentiality that could be realized within Franciscanism, but also outside of it, among lay people, etc. It is also worth noting that Bonaventure's juxtaposition of impressed and expressed, in the mention of Francis's stigmatization in encounter with the Seraph, will be returned to below, in the section on Francisco de Osuna. Bonaventure, *Conferences on the Six Days of Creation*, ed. and trans. Jay M. Hammond (Franciscan Institute Publications, 2018). For Bonaventure's understanding of the necessity of subjective, affective, and contemplative reading in the crafting of the *vir spiritualis* (spiritual man), as developed in the *Collationes in Hexaemeron* and for a discussion of how "the technique of contemplation forms a subjectivity of desire" (125), see Jay M. Hammond, "Contemplation and the Formation of *Vir spiritualis* in Bonaventure's *Collationes in Hexaemeron*," in *Franciscans at Prayer*, ed. Timothy Johnson (Boston and Leiden: Brill, 2007): 123-265.

[89] See the discussion of castration and poverty in the Introduction, pg. 4.

Bonaventure's *Itinerarium* provides a coordinate for this alienated desire in its citation of St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians (2:20), paralleling Paul's experience with that of Francis. Whereas, within the context of the Letter to the Galatians, Paul is concerned with death to the law and life through grace, Bonaventure reads the passage in terms of love, desire, and flesh:

> There is no other path / but through the most burning love of the Crucified / that so transformed the caught-up-into-third-heaven Paul / into Christ / that he would say: / *With Christ I am nailed to the Cross; / I live now not I, but he lives in me, / Christ,* who captivated Francis's mind so completely / that his mind was visible in his flesh / as, for two years before his death, / he carried in his body the passion's most sacred wounds (7).
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> *Via autem non est / nisi per ardentissimum amorem Crucifixi, / qui adeo Paulum* ad tertium caelum raptum *transformavit in Christum*, / *ut diceret*: / Christo confixus sum cruci, / vivo autem, iam non ego; vivit vero in me Christus; / *qui etiam adeo mentem Francisci absorbuit, / quod mens in carne patuit, / dum sacratissima passionis stigmata in corpore suo / ante mortem per biennium deportavit* (6).

Regis Armstrong, *Into God: Itinerarium Mentis in Deum / A Guide for the Mind into God* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2020).

way of life (*modus vivendi*).[90] For Agamben, even if Franciscans accepted the constraint of a rule prescribed by the church, the emphasis of early Franciscan medievals like Bonaventure and Ubertino of Casale, among others, on a distinction between the *regula* (the rule), esteemed so highly by the monastics, on the one hand, and *modus vivendi* and *forma vitae*, on the other, cleaved open an innovative distinction of law from life. This move emphasized the subjective and harder-to-name aspects of experience as the basis for a special kind of knowledge—what I maintain later, in below discussions of mystical theology, as a *savoir* closely connected to desire. (It also provides a valuable analytic prism through which to consider Franciscans' ways of assessing slavery in chapters to come.)

For early modern Franciscan reformers, like the Capuchins, the twinning hybridity of the contemplative and active, the mystical and ministerial in a *modus vivendi*, associated with a zealously renewed poverty and itinerancy, *was* the ethos, charism, and *raison d'être* for the reform. (And this rather than any *kind* of activity, in particular—i.e. managing hospitals, operating schools, etc.) If the resplendent poverty of spirit and life were to be joined in a way of living, how could such experiences be represented in discourse and which discourses could sustain such myssionary quests? Put in more psychoanalytic terms: what could constitute a myssionary discourse that might not be a(n imaginary) semblance?[91]

Franciscan practices connected to an emphasis on desire premised around the centrality of poverty/lack, were buttressed by what Webb Keane has called a semiotic ideology, albeit (of course) one subject to processes of repetition, elaboration, and revision. In expanding on the notion of language ideology, elaborated by Judith Irvine as "a system of ideas" about "social and linguistic relationships," Keane seeks to expand this concept in his deployment of "semiotic ideology," to

[90] Giorgio Agamben, *The Highest Poverty: Monastic Rules and Form-of-Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013).
[91] Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Vol. XVIII: On a Discourse that Might Not Be a Semblance* (London: Karnac, 2002).

include ideas about what can be done with material objects, "in contexts where the role of language is not necessarily definitive."[92] In writing that "[i]t is a matter of semiotic ideology whether speakers even consider words to be radically distinct from things in the first place," we have a way to consider, for instance, what is at stake in Bonaventure's insistence that entities in creation are not merely signs, but also sacraments. Furthermore, a semiotic ideology exists in dynamic relation with a representational economy where "changes in one domain can have consequences for others."[93]

Given the wide variety of representations upon which Franciscans could draw to support particular spiritual and ministerial practices within their *modus vivendi*—simultaneously lived, theorized, and fought over within and outside the communities that claimed the name "Franciscan"—what specific signifiers did Franciscans seize upon to convey their experience, attitudes, and desires? Furthermore, what was their ideology of the semiotic network in which they inserted them (open or closed, for instance) and in which they traced their connections? While these questions are abstract, philosophical, and, indeed, theological, they require some attention if we are to understand anything about how Franciscan practices and ideals of spiritual life were reflected (or not) in their ministries, in the missions, for instance.

In Franciscans' semiotic ideologies—their ideals about what signifiers and materials could do—the centrality of poverty and lack structured the pathways for the excessive experiences and desires that some of them faced, which, in turn, could be subjected to the enabling constraints symbolic inscription in a way that had significant social effects. As the two subsequent chapters aim to demonstrate, intellectual history reaches a point of failure in its capacity to account for a seventeenth century Capuchin-Franciscan argument against slavery and in favor of reparations. What must be grasped to understand such novel arguments are the representational economies and

[92] Keane, *Christian Moderns,* 18. Keane cites Judith Irvine, "When Talk Isn't Cheap: Language and Political Economy," *American Ethnologist* 16:2 (May 1989): 248-267.
[93] Keane, *Christian Moderns*, 19.

semiotic ideologies that structured Franciscan experience in such a way that something new could be brought into symbolic inscription. It is a kind of thinking in Franciscan that is necessary.

In what follows, I trace Franciscan trajectories for the symbolic and for the signifier within the spiritual life of conversion through Bonaventure, Harphius, Francisco de Osuna, and Benoît de Canfield, and Joseph de Paris, arguing for a uniquely Franciscan coherence within that trajectory. Unsurprisingly, by now, that Franciscan coherence is based on the central motifs of lack/poverty, desire, and a sophisticated development of the sacramentality of material objects and of signifiers. Tracing these themes through mystical literature becomes the foundation for my analysis of the missionary anti-slavery argument to follow in the two following chapters.

3.2 Bonaventure: Theology from the Symbolic to the Mystical and Back

In posing the central importance of the symbolic, Bonaventure (1221-1274), as resuscitated and deployed in the spirituality of early modern Franciscans, offers a crucial thread for thinking the desire of conversion along the lines of the entwinement of self and other, in what we might call autoconversion and heteroconversion. This is to say that conversion was both a project to which friars were supposed to be committed themselves, in mysticism and in their process of novitiate formation, as it was also a project they sought to instantiate in others, in missionization, preaching, questing, and through the simple witness of living their *modus vivendi*.[94]

[94] Questing is the term used for begging alms, a hallmark of the Capuchins, in particular. At stake in questing is also the quest, motivated by the object-cause of desire, a motivated question. In a psychoanalytic vein, I think about questing as having a resonance with the French *demander*—the demand made by the analysand at the outset of an analysis—both an asking for and asking about. In an analysis, the analyst supports the subject's quest by supporting the subject's desire, a desire premised on lack, rather than in fulfilling his/her/their demand. This was at stake in the last chapter, in Francis's fantasy of being left out of the friary in the cold. Lack can be taken to constitute a support for the desirous quest of conversion.

Whereas regular Franciscans seized upon the sophisticated medieval scholastic John Duns Scotus as a theological ancestor, for early modern reformist Franciscans (like the Capuchins), it was Bonaventure, simpler and more openly associative in his exposition, who was adopted as the true Franciscan spiritual master.[95] As in the last chapter, we return to Bonaventure's *Itinerarium* as a framing guide, though now with the goal of understanding the imposition of the symbolic in his framework, which structures a place for possible desire.

In the *Itinerarium*, Bonaventure proliferated examples in multiples of three. Thinking and toggling the difference between three and two, he drew upon Francis's signature excessive encounter with the seraph in his stigmatization. Bonaventure allegorized the six wings of the seraph as an image that encapsulates three multiplied by two. Bonaventure conceives of the spiritual quest as a three-day journey into the wilderness (referring to Exodus 3:18); illuminated by three moments of dusk, dawn, and noon; conceives of things as threefold (matter, creative intelligence, and eternal art); and defines the triple substance of Christ as corporeal, spiritual, and divine.[96] (The latter claim modifies the longstanding credal emphasis on the dual nature of Christ as human and God, without contesting it directly.) Bonaventure wrote that just as progress is conceived as threefold, along these lines, so too does the mind or soul have three principal components—animality/sensuality, spirit, and mind. "The first looks at [material] things outside itself, / hence it is called 'physicality' or 'perceptibility'; / The second [looks] within and into itself, / hence it is called 'spirit'; / the third

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[95] Christopher M. Cullen, *Bonaventure* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006): 22.

[96] Armstrong, *Into God*, 19/18:

> This [suggests] the path of three days in the wilderness. / This, the threefold light of a single day: / the first like evening, the second morning, and the third noon. / This, the threefold bringing into being of things, / that is, in matter, in understanding, in timeless art, / as it was said: *Let it be made; He made it;* and *it was made.* / *This also takes into consideration the threefold substance in Christ, / who is our ladder: bodily, spiritual and divine.*
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> *Haec est igitur* via trium dierum in solitudine / *haec est triplex illuminatio unius diei, / et prima est sicut vespera, secunda sicut mane, tertia sicut meridies; / haec respicit triplicem rerum existentiam*, / *scilicet in materia, in intelligencia, et in arte aeterna, / secundum quam dictum est:* fiat, fecit, et factum est; / *haec etiam respicit triplicem substantiam in Christo*, / *qui est scala nostra*, *scilicet corporalem, spiritualem, et divinam.*

above itself, and hence it is called 'mind.'"[97] (In terms of the mind/soul, the gaze is crucially at stake here in Bonaventure, as it is elsewhere in Franciscan spirituality. The cofounder of Franciscanism, Clare of Assisi, among others, enjoined her followers to *look* upon the crucified in prayer and she discussed the cross as a mirror.)[98]

How does Bonaventure get from these threefold distinctions to the six wings of the seraph? Here, there is a return of Christ's duality, in terms of temporality (alpha and omega) and the duality at work in a mirror make a decisive cut, doubling the triangle. We see God as though *through* a mirror and *in* a mirror, Bonaventure writes, signaling more that the devotee's picture of God will be partially mired, obscured, and disjointed rather than appearing as a narcissistic reflection of the self or as a pure, crystalline representation of material reality, as contemporary habits of thinking about the technology of the mirror might lead us to assume.[99] In this sense, the mirror entails the lack of some kind of pure image.

What Bonaventure's multiplication of the three gazes/dispositions/orientations by the two-ness (in and through) of the mirror inaugurates is a dynamic position of the symbolic, which allows the introduction of desire premised upon and haunted by poverty and lack as Bonaventure's central

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[97] Armstrong, *Into God*, 19/18:

> *Secundum hunc triplicem* progressum / mens *nostra tres habet aspectus principales. / Unus est ad corporalia exteriora, / secundum quem vocatur animalitas seu sensualitas: / alius intra se et in se, secundum quem* dicitur / spiritus*; / tertius supra se, secundum quem dicitur mens.*

[98] Clare structures her fourth letter to her spiritual daughter, Agnes of Prague, on the motif of Christ as a poor and humble mirror. Clare of Assisi, "The Fourth Letter to Agnes of Prague (1253)" in *The Lady: Clare of Assisi, Early Documents*, ed. Regis Armstrong (New York: New City Press, 2006): 54-58. In his commentary on Clare's writings, in the introduction and in footnotes throughout his text, Armstrong discusses Clare's use of the mirror motif extensively.

[99] For instance, Nancy M. Frelick writes, "In the Christian Middle Ages, the mirror generally stands as the idea for indirect knowledge of the divine, for the Pauline idea of mediation of knowledge through faith, and for signs *per speculum in aenigmate*" (4), suggesting that the mirror is not merely a technology for crystalline reflection of the self or of reality, but, rather, as the site for the emergence of something indirect and enigmatic. Noting that mirrors prior to the sixteenth century were made either of brass or of a greenish dark glass (21), Debora Shugar has explored the mirror's medieval and early modern literary significance, not as a site for the reflection of the person standing before the mirror, but, rather, as the site through which to view the reflection of an exemplary figure. Nancy Frelick, "Introduction," in *The Mirror in Medieval and Early Modern Culture: Specular Reflections*, ed. Nancy Frelick (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 1-29. Debora Shugar, "The 'I' of the Beholder: Renaissance Mirrors and the Reflective Mind" in *Renaissance Culture and the Everyday*, eds. Patricia Fumerton and Simon Hunt (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 21-41.

grounding problematic, in the *Itinerarium* and beyond.[100] This was as true in the Franciscan elaboration of its *modus vivendi* as it was in the Franciscan semiotic ideologies upon which early modern Franciscans seized. An emphasis on poverty, humility, and lack authorized Bonaventure's effusive sermonizing, laden with metaphor, association, and seemingly inexhaustible points of connection between signifiers.

In his rendition of this symbolic, Bonaventure reaches beyond—and, it must be added, not without some difficulty that seems palpable in the text—the conventional relations between the sign/signifier and the signified. The soul is invited to "gaze upon God in [His] imprints [*vestigiis*-also "vestiges"] / as if they were the two wings [of the Seraph] falling about its feet." As imprints or vestiges, entities in the created world comprise "shadows, echoes, sketches, / impressions, likenesses, and displays" that "lead the spirit of one contemplating or tasting into the timeless God." Bonaventure writes of these impressions/vestiges precisely as signs, arguing that this world of the perceptible can lead the soul back to the imperceptible things of God, "as through signs to what signs signify." Here, it must be said, we are squarely in the field of the Platonic and in the field of the Book of Creation (but also in the field of Peircean indexicality). Bonaventure struggles to push beyond it, in an inscribed moment of hesitation: "They [these creaturely impressions/vestiges that are signs] are, I say, exemplary, or rather exemplifications." In this "or rather" ("*vel potius*"), there is a

[100] Of course, this was not unique to Franciscanism, but provides a trace of Bonaventure's use of Plato, sometimes via his other major influencers like Augustine and Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. It is worth noting that, in Plato's *Symposium*, Eros (desire) is the son of the union of Penia (poverty and lack) with Poros (resourcefulness and expediency), the son of Metis (invention). In her book, *The Decision of Desire*, psychoanalyst Silvia Lippi, citing *The Symposium*, writes of this in a way that resonates strikingly with the Franciscan vision of desire: "Because he comes from his mother, Penia, Eros is neither beautiful nor delicate [...]: 'He is in fact hard and rough, without shoes for his feet or a roof over his head. He is always sleeping on the bare ground, ... want is his constant companion." Silvia Lippi, *The Decision of Desire* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020). The parallel with preferred Capuchin habits of living in the world—appearing rough, shoeless, and sleeping on the ground, is quite striking.

Bonaventure's extensive use of the simile of a "celestial ladder," also from Plato's *Symposium* and central in Pseudo-Dionysius, also received extensive play in the organizing framework for his *Itinerarium* and in his elaboration of the role of Franciscans in relation to the broader church in his *Hexaemeron*.

textual moment of doubt that discloses precisely where Bonaventure is pushing without completely rupturing a world divided between the sign/signifier and the signified.[101]

Bonaventure writes that "The created beings of this [perceptible] world signify / *the invisible things of God*, / partly because God is / the Wellspring, Exemplar, and summit of every creature, / and every effect is a sign of its Wellspring, / and an example of its Exemplar." In this sense, Bonaventure reveals what a Franciscan semiotic economy is pushing toward—the incarnation or drop of the divine itself (as poverty/lack in Christ's passion) into the signifying chain, the incarnate Word (*Verbum incarnatum*). And it is precisely at this part of Bonaventure's argument in the *Itinerarium* where, as I have already indicated, Bonaventure pushes beyond the understanding of the creaturely impressions/vestiges as "not only as a sign in the ordinary sense but also as a [true] sacrament." In a certain resonance with Bonaventure's "not signs but true sacraments," John Duns Scotus's insistence on *haecceitas* (also introduced in the last chapter) and on the univocity of being—the notion that word and thing, existence and essence were inseparable—overtly elaborated a Franciscan semiotic ideology.[102]

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[101] The ways in which the tension between sign and signifier and what a given semiotic ideology conceives of as the possible modes of relation between sign and signifier is going to come back in Chapter Five's close reading of Épiphane de Moirans description of his encounter with an enslaved woman dying in the process of a difficult birth. Along with psychoanalysis, I think we can use Bonaventure to conceptualize a kind of transmission that would be distinct from indexicality, on the one hand, or telepathy, on the other. (See pg. 171.)

[102] Against the ontological and combining insistence with existence, Lacan uses the conceptual term ex-sistence to designate that the existence of the subject is determined by the insistence of the signifying chain. In a footnote to Lacan's "Seminar on the 'Purloined Letter'" his translation of Lacan's *Écrits*, Bruce Fink provides a useful genealogy of the term, for the aims of this chapter: "Lacan uses a term here, ex-sistence, which was first introduced into French in translations of Heideggar's work (e.g. *Being and Time*), as a translation for the Greek *ekstasis* and the German *Ekstase*. The root meaning of the term in Greek is standing outside of or standing apart from something. In Greek, it was generally used for the 'removal' or 'displacement' of something, but it also came to be applied to states of mind which we would now call 'ecstatic.' [...] Lacan uses it to talk about 'an existence which stands apart from,' which insists as it were from the outside, to talk about something not included on the inside, something which, rather than being intimate, is 'extimate'" (767). In a psychoanalytic discussion, Joan Copjec draws upon Scotus's realism to explore a non-numerical unity, in terms of sexual difference (32). Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Co., 2006) *and* Joan Copjec, "The Sexual Compact," *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities 17*, no. 2 (June 2012): 31-48.

As we saw in the last chapter, Francis of Assisi elevated poverty and lack to the status of a virtue, continuously attempting—even if never quite successfully—to inscribe its experience within the realm of the symbolic (the emphasis on poverty in the various rules of the order, for instance). This was the central problem of mystical theology as it was considered, deployed, and used in the period under consideration: how to subject numinous experience to representation in a symbolic form.[103] Bonaventure makes this connection explicit when he talks about "symbolic theology" as a "practice of the sensible" taught by Christ, drawing upon the eighth-century Syrian monk Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite's discussion of symbolic theology as the attribution of "sensible metonymies to the divine."[104] Laure Solignac clarifies that

> this practice of the sensible [symbolic theology] does not consist in the projection of a structure of theological significations on a neutered and inert world, [but that] symbolic theology was, in reality, applied to the very structure of the world as creature—that is to say, as the resemblance of God—and since such a structure is made perfectly intelligible and sensible only in Christ, it must return, at last, to the nature of his magisterium.[105]

Solignac's reading of Bonaventure posits the symbolic theology whose origin he attributes to Christ (in his status as Logos: the incarnate Word, the living Word) as a dynamic function, rather than one of patent, exhaustive symbolization. Bonaventure's symbolic theology, as a practice of the sensible, is but one step on a path toward mystical theology, which could be understood as excessive and desirous hallucination—a space in which the subject catches a

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[103] In *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational*, Rudolf Otto develops the category of the numinous as an irreducible, *sui generis* mental state that "while it admits to being discussed, it cannot be strictly defined" (7). As such, Otto's category of the numinous encapsulates the problem of mystical theology—that of subjecting unspeakable experience to representation. See, also, Tracy McNulty's consideration of a similar dynamic in Teresa of Avila being commanded by her spiritual director to submit the experience of jouissance operating in her body to writing. Rudolph Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factore in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relational* (Scotts Valley: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017); Tracy McNulty, *Wrestling with the Angel.*

[104] Boanventure cited in Laure Solignac, "De la théologie symbolique comme bon usage du sensible chez saint Bonaventure," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 95 (2011): 414-415.

[105] "*Or cette pratique du sensible ne consiste pas à projeter une structure de significations théologiques sur une monde neutre et inerte: la théologie symbolique s'appuie en réalité sur la structure même du monde comme créature, c'est-a-dire ressemblance de Dieu, et puisqu'une telle structure n'est rendue parfaitement intelligible et sensible que dans le Christ, il faudra revenir en dernier lieu sur la nature de son magistère.*" Laure Solignac, "De la théologie symbolique comme bon usage du sensible chez saint Bonaventure," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 95 (2011): 414-415.

fleeting, disruptive, and more-direct glimpse of that which the mirror obscures.[106] For Bonaventure, the sensible was not to be eschewed, but, rather, it was to be taken up as the beginning of the pathway toward an, often enigmatic, encounter with God. Merely using rational cogitation, relying on the dualistic division of the sign and the signified was both insufficient and tantamount to the betrayal of creation, in a misapprehension of its true status. Like Christ, friars, angels, and creatures ascend and descend that ladder from the world of sensible experience, to the unnamable space of desire, and back again (for instance, when they attempt to subject what is encountered in that space of desire to forms like writing or preaching).[107]

What I am trying to underline and track are the ways in which poverty or lack, as the central animating force of the Franciscan movement, informed both an elaboration of a *modus*

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[106] In the *Itinerarium*, we see precisely that Bonaventure is pushing the category of *contemplatio* past its definitional collapse with intellectual activity in classical philosophy, and, consequently, past how it was often used in contemporaneous scholastic output. At select moments in the *Itinerarium*, contemplation signifies not intellectual activity, but, precisely, the exhaustion and excess of intellectual activity in silent rapture. Intellection reaches a point where it hits a wall. What I call the converting subject and Bonaventure calls the mind/soul, goes beyond this. To compare this with other contemporaneous uses of the category of contemplation, see Juan Carlos Flores's discussion of contemplation in Henry of Ghent, where it seems clear that Henry of Ghent considers contemplation primarily as an intellectual activity. Flores, "The Roots." In contemporary psychoanalytic theory, we could think about recent works that point to the subjective importance of spaces of excessive overwhelm. See, for instance, Avgi Saketopoulou, "The Draw to Overwhelm: Consent, Risk, and the Retranslation of Enigma," in *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 67, no. 1 (March 2019): 133-167.

[107] The writerly interpretation and engagement of such domains of human experience has important stakes, both anthropological and ethical. Will the historical interpreter reduce extreme experiences to the realm of social construction or that of discourse? Or explain them away with appeals to the now all-but definitive status of the bio-medical organism—that psychedelic fungus was the *true* cause of the happenings at Salem, for instance? This question bears on what anthropology can bring to history in terms of its methodological tools to consider human experience. Perhaps even more pressingly, though, as researchers operate in a contemporary world that seems to increasingly involve the experience of desirous hallucinations (hearing voices, for instance) and extreme states of overwhelm, as well as attempts by upholders of reason to relegate such experiences to the realm of the unreal and the irrational, we should think about what it might mean for researchers to make themselves complicit in the relegation of what the subject knows about their own experience. Last, and crucial to the point of this chapter, we should also think about how this might stand to get in the way of our understanding of pressing historical instances, like those involved in the history of colonization, where the opposition between the missionary as the rational, agentive purveyor of knowledge and the colonial other, irrational and to-be-converted, continues to haunt interpretation. For all the productive and revelatory inquiry into colonized lifeworlds and cosmovisions, such studies do not unsettle the patent oppositions involved in historical interpretation. Two recent works I have found useful for thinking about these questions include Bret Fimiani, *Psychosis and Extreme States: An Ethic for Treatment* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021) and Stefania Pandolfo, *Knot of the Soul: Madness, Psychoanalysis, Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018).

vivendi that aimed to surpass contemplative/active binaries, allowing for a space of what was called the seraphic, superessential, or supereminent life lived out in a kind of alienated desire. This *modus vivendi*—in its key practice of poverty and in the subsidiary ministerial endeavors organized around it, like missionization—was grounded in a mystical, Franciscan-inflected semiotic ideology which held both that words and signifiers inevitably fail, organized as they are around lack, and that a proliferation of signifiers and the creation of connections between them could support the interminable quest of the converting subject in subjecting their excessive experiences to the symbolic. (With respect to William James's assertion that mysticism is ineffable, it is worth noting, that the mystics manage to say quite a lot about their excessive experiences, sometimes asserting the ineffability of such experiences all the while![108]) As in the last chapter, the Franciscan move from signs to sacraments, and from words to materially inscribed flesh were upheld in friars' theorization in a way that radically opposed the primacy of the rational, in favor of the subjective, affective, and experiential.[109]

Why did Bonaventure's symbolic theology matter to the fields simultaneously invented and discovered by myssionaries that this chapter will explore?[110] Myssionaries dealt with an experience of

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[108] James, *Varieties*.

[109] In her consideration of the trajectory of Francisco de Osuna's mystical writings in New Spain in Nahuatl contact zones, Dana Bultman also makes this point. Bultman, "Winds, Heart, and Heat."

[110] I collapse discovery and invention, with a nod to Lacan's comparison of Freud's invention/discovery of the unconscious with Little Hans' invention/discovery of his erections. Jacques Lacan, "Geneva Lecture on the Symptom," trans. Russell Grigg, *Analysis* 1 [1989]: 8-26.

A similar model could be applied to the invention/discovery of New Worlds and to the invention/discovery of a mystical space of desire. Each of these entail a simultaneous moment of discovery and invention, casting doubt on the difference between that which intrudes upon the subject and the subject's act. This crucial moment opens up the possibility, for the subject, of taking responsibility for that which it did not consciously choose, expanding a notion of agency as self-conscious action. Such complicated notions of agency, effaced or disavowed in many modern notions of agency, including legal ones, received supporters among the proponents of different early modern spiritual movements and psychoanalysis as a modern movement, alike. Jean-François Lyotard's notion of passability (*passabilité*) opens up a similar space of analysis, beyond the reduction of the subject to one who is either active or passive/contemplative, but one who allows oneself to be overtaken. Lytoard writes that "passivity is opposed to activity, but not passability." Jean-François Lyotard, *The Inhuman* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 116. Paul C. Johnson aims to track just such deployments of religious-like agency in *Automatic Religion: Nearhuman Agents of Brazil and France* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021).

the sensible that did not fit squarely within the representational economies they had hitherto known, ones which would have purportedly offered the possibility of its complete capture and reduction.[111] Instead, myssionaries, produced and proliferated an incredibly broad variety of attempts to describe the space of desire in language. Spiritual manuals and travel narratives, both, aimed to transmit and convey, through text and images, something about the space of desire that could get the desires of the reader going, not unlike myssionary friars engaged in a simple and affective mode of preaching, as a maneuver that could instantiate the converting-subject. Simply put, in Bonaventure's freewheeling, imaginative, and associative thinking about all these threes and twos, the road is paved for an inquiry into Franciscan semiotic game between language and purportedly unsayable desire that sets conversion's desirous motor humming.

What follows, then, is a continuation of the Franciscan history of desire in conversion, a description of myssionaries' (necessarily failed) attempts to subject their itinerating in these new worlds and other scenes to language. From Bonaventure, we move to Harphius's impactful elaboration of the mystical other scene in his *De theologia mystica* to the Franciscan semiotics Francisco de Osuna was attempting to construct in his *abecedarios espirituales* and via Benoît de Canfield and Joseph de Paris. What this pathway allows us to do is to begin to link the "mystical

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[111] William Hanks's study of Franciscan missions among the Maya emphasizes precisely how Franciscan missionaries aimed to reduce (*reducir*) Mayan space, individuals, and language into a spatial-symbolic-linguistic grid consistent with their norms:

> The *reducción* was the centerpiece of early missionary practice. I want to underscore that the term designates a bringing to order, and that it had three quite distinct objects: built space, everyday social practice, and language. Each of these three implied a different kind of intervention, but all were guided by the same telos: the conversion of the Indios into Christians, living in *policía cristiana* and speaking a language apt as a medium of Catholic practice. In this telos, language was pivotal, both as an object to be analyzed and altered and as an instrument with which to analyze and alter other aspects of Indian life (4-5).

While Hanks's account of the reducing activities of Franciscan regulars with respect to Mayan communities is convincing, the ways in which Franciscan semiotic ideologies and accounts of conversion and spiritual progress were connected with such activities of colonization (or disavowed by them) is not sufficiently explored. Williams F. Hanks, *Converting Words: Maya in the Age of the Cross* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2010).

invasions" crossing from the Flemish mystics, into sixteenth-century Spain, and seventeenth-century France, with the invasions (mystical and otherwise) at stake in New World colonization.

3.3 Harphius: The *Savoir* of Desire

From the Flemish late medieval to the Spanish and, then, the French early modern, a drift of myssionary authors elaborated forms of mysticism in which desire was central and decisive. Groups and movements glossed under signifiers like "*alumbrados*," "*illuminées*," "Quietists," etc. emphasized the practice of passive contemplative silence as the backdrop for the emergence of internalized spaces of encounter and, eventually, union with God. The signifiers with which such groups were labeled reflected the emergence of new spaces for spiritual experience and for the inscription of desire for women and laypeople.[112] At various points, movements were labeled and, in turn, treated with either direct repression or sterilizing appropriation. While this elaboration took place in different forms and various ways across different religious congregations, and, indeed, alongside or even outside of them, an abstract affective form of Franciscan mysticism seized upon a Pseudo-Dionysian-inflected Bonaventure as a resource. It points to one trajectory developing within the broader milieu of early modern Christian spirituality.

Hendrik Herp's (c. 1400-1477)— or Harphius's—*De theologia mystica* demonstrated a synthesis of Franciscan Bonaventurian mysticism and the eroticized, apophatic Flemish mysticism of

[112] On groups like *alumbrados*, see Marcel Bataillon's seminal *Érasme et l'Espagne* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1998). More recently, Jessica Fowler has traced the elaboration of the complex concept of *alumbradismo* from Spain to New Spain in the course of the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries, beginning with its formulation in Toledo in the 1520s-1530s. See, for instance, Jessica Fowler, "Assembling Alumbradismo: The Formulation of an Heretical Construct," in *After Conversion: Iberia and the Emergence of Modernity*, ed. Mercedes García-Arenal (Boston: Brill, 2016), 251-282. It is worth noting that these groups were not necessarily constituted as such, but only designated through the course of institutional trial and accusation, through the elaboration of *alumbradismo* as a heresy.

Jan van Ruusbroec.[113] Harphius had taken the habit of the Franciscans of the Observance, on a pilgrimage to Rome in 1450, and he served in several Franciscan leadership posts thereafter, as guardian for several convents in the Low Countries and as the Provincial Minister for the Franciscan Province of Cologne.[114] Leadership positions, travel, and writing created a wide net of influence, with his writing being translated into several languages and exercising decisive influence on the surging up of passive mystical spirituality in Spain and, eventually, in France. In the Capuchin province of Paris, Harphius was staple reading among novices for decades for his synthesis of Bonaventure and the Flemish mysticism of Ruusbroec, including when Joseph de Paris (to be discussed below) was novice master at Meudon (1604-1605), despite considerable debate about the status of Flemish mysticism in the Capuchin order at large.[115]

Théologie mystique offers a starting point for tracking how Franciscan myssionaries' *erotologies*—writings of desire—were developed in the period, to the extent that what was at stake for myssionary writers like Harphius was precisely a praxis of desire that could be subjected to inscription, speech,

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[113] On Ruusbroec, see Bernard McGinn, "The Significance of Ruusbroec's Mystical Theology," *Louvain Studies* 31 (2006): 19-41. For the history of Harphius's life in the context of his writing, mysticism, and the debates that surrounded his spirituality, see William Short, "Hendrik Herp: *The Mirror of Perfection* or *Directory of Contemplatives*" Franciscan Studies 64 (2006): 407-433; Sophi Houdard, *Les invasions mystiques: Spiritualités, hétérodoxies et censures au début de l'époque moderne* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2008); Henri Bremond, *Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux en France* (Lancaster: Wentworth Press, 2018).

[114] Prior to the Capuchin Reform, the Franciscan First Order movement was split between the "Observants," who aspired to follow the Rule established by Francis of Assisi and the "Conventuals," who followed the rule established for lay people. In the fifteenth century, the desires for stricter adherence that led, eventually, to the Capuchin reform were espoused by several figures discussed in this chapter – like Harphius and Francisco de Osuna.

[115] Père Joseph, "Instruction du Père Maître aux novices," in *Introduction à la vie spirituelle par une facile méthode d'oraison* (Paris: Chez Jean Foüet, 1626). Additionally, Père Joseph recommends the *Canticle of Canticles*; the *Gospel of St. John*; all of St. Paul; Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite ("sainct Denys"), especially his *Theologia mystica* and *De Divinis Nominibus* (On the Divine Names); the *Confessions* and the *Soliloquies* of St. Augustine; and St. Bernard's *Sermons on the Canticle of Canticles*. Among the modern authors, he lists the Flemish mystical writers Harphius, Ruusbroec, and Louis de Blois (Blosius), the "Chronique of sainct François" (surely Bonaventure's), and the Augustinian scholastic theologian Hugh of St. Victor and, his protégé, Richard of St. Victor, who were both important influences on Bonaventure. For our purposes, what we can glean from this list of recommended reading is the centrality of the *Canticle of Canticles* as a key reference point for thinking about the spiritual life and the emphasis Père Joseph placed on novices reading the works that Bonaventure read and used. This list also demonstrates the importance of Flemish mysticism for early seventeenth-century French Capuchins, and the attempt to conceive of a spiritual life as a kind of synthesis or erotic mysticism and a deeply rooted Franciscanism, whose formalization in Bonaventure's oeuvre is indebted to Augustine and his followers. See also Dom J. Huijben (OSB), "Aux sources de la spiritualité française du XVIIe siècle" *Supplément à "La Vie Spirituelle"* (1931): 17-46, which gestures toward Capuchin debates about the status of Flemish mysticism in the period.

discourse, knowledge—a logos of desire difficult to speak.[116] This erotological writing provides insight into how Franciscans conceptualized experiences of conversion, in themselves, and, as we will soon see, in those they sought to convert in their missions—a link we can decisively track through the metaphorical condensation and the sliding metonymic displacement of signifiers through which myssionaries inscribed conversion.

For Harphius, the category of desire—closely correlated with will (*volonté*) and the powers (*puissances*) of the soul—is central and conversion is described as amorous. Harphius proposed an amorous union where there is nothing between God and the powers of the soul.[117] Here desire is thought of as that which emerges when one becomes dead to oneself: the animating remainder for conversion after a series of mortifications. In this way, external senses are thus to be made subject to "internal powers" (*puissances interieures*).[118] It is from this point of departure that Harphius goes on to elaborate various facets of the active life, the contemplative life, and, finally, what he coins as the supereminent (*sur-éminente*) life.[119] This last form of life is presented as the effect of a kind of death or taking one's last breath in God in an experience of "jouissance-love."[120] For Franciscans and psychoanalysts alike, this death or last breath cannot be correlated with the orgasm (jouissance-love) as a kind of final end of or limit to desire, but rather as more connected to a kind of lacking and

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[116] I draw "erotology" from Jacques Lacan's *Seminar X: Anxiety:*

> I haven't taken the dogmatic path of prefacing what I have to say to you about anxiety with a comprehensive theory of affects. Why not? Because we aren't psychologists here, we're psychoanalysts.
>
> I'm not developing a psycho-logy for you, a disquisition on the unreal reality that is called the psyche, but a disquisition on a praxis that warrants a name, *erotology*. It's a question of desire" (14-15).
>
> Jacques Lacan, *Anxiety: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Vol. X* (New York: Polity, 2014): 14-15.

[117] "amoreuse union, sans aucun moyen entre Dieu, & les puissances de nostre ame" (491). Henry Harphius, *Théologie mystique*. (Paris: Charles Chastellain, 1616): 491. (*N.B. The date of publication in the first French edition is incorrectly printed as M. CD. XVII. It should be M. DC. XVI.)*

[118] "estre subjects aux puissances interieures." Harphius, *Théologie mystique*, 491. We are not far here from what psychoanalysis upholds as the drives, irreducible to biological instincts.

[119] Though the coinage belongs to Harphius, its indebtedness to Bonaventure's notion of the seraphic life, as a third alternative to the active and the contemplative, could be explored further. This super eminent life will be further developed by Benoît Canfield.

[120] "*nous mourons, ou expirons* en Dieu par amour iouïssant." Harphius, *Théologie mystique*, 574.

passive animation.[121] Understanding Franciscan fantasies of the "end" of conversion, then, requires a more careful consideration of a Franciscan theory of the body—such as the ones Harphius developed in his *Théologie mystique* or which were considered in the last chapter vis-à-vis Francis—as that which is subject to desirous drives which can be allowed to emerge through processes of mortification. (All of the authors discussed in this chapter were Pseudo-Dionysian in their discussion of progress in the spiritual life traversing the purgative, illuminative, and the unitive stages; likely a mark of Bonaventure's influence.)

From the start of *Théologie mystique*, Harphius begins with a kind of carving up of the human body into eroticized parts and activities of relation as a drawing into metaphor for the relations of the persons of the Trinity and with a theorization of God's debasement (*abbaissement*) into a human form. Drawing from the *Song of Songs* and from the *Psalms*, Harphius begins with the kisses of the mouth and with the breasts of the spouse as a metaphor for how those separate from vice can come to knowledge through kissing – "*ſçavoir par le baiser*." In this sense a kind of knowledge, a certainty, is linked to subjective experience which is, by its nature, difficult to put into words. (The representative condensation of the kiss between the lover and the beloved, drawn from the biblical erotic poetry of the *Canticle of Canticles*, metaphorizes the spiritual life—a staple trope in Christian mystical literature.) Now to the metonymic slide of the signifier, which can be observed in the French translation.

In Harphius's Trinity, the Father is the kissing (baisant), the Son is the kissed (le baisé), and the Holy Spirit the essence of the kiss (*le baiser* – kissingness). The metaphor of God kissing (*baiser*)

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[121] Jacques Lacan talks about mysticism in this vein, not as "a question of cum," but, rather, as a question of ex-sistence—something insists in the mystic-subject, beyond social identity and beyond the signifier, that grounds her very existence—and in terms of feminine jouissance:

> What was attempted at the end of the last century, in Freud's time, what all sorts of decent souls around Charcot and others were trying to do, was to reduce mysticism to questions of cum. If you look closely, that's not it at all. Doesn't this jouissance one experiences and yet knows nothing about put us on the path of ex-sistence? And why not interpret one face of the Other, the God face, as based on feminine jouissance?

Encore: On Feminine Sexuality, the Limits of Love and Knowledge: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, vol XX (London: W.W. Norton & Co., 1999): 76-77.

the human in God's lowering or debasement (*abbaissement*) into human form implies a heightening or accrual of "dignity to human nature" (*accruë la dignité de la nature humaine*), in itself. Here, in the slide of the signifier from *baiser* to *abbaissement*, could be read as a myssionary contestation of the relation between cause and effect, active and contemplative/passive—that the convert is one not who makes self-conscious choice, but is, rather, seen as one capable of being caught up in the effects of an object that propels. The converted is fantasized as one who able to be subject to internal powers and drives, enjoying a union with God without an object in between.[122]

What is sure is that God's kissing humanity, like God's debasement into human form, fortifies a Franciscan understanding of the status of the human as dignified, in itself, because of the effects of God's love of creation which leads to a lowering of God's self. In this sense then, God as the omnipotent center of action, the first mover, is put under considerable theological question in the sense that God, like the body, is carved up into different parts with different functions and in the sense that God is propelled and moved to debasement through the action of an object produced in the interrelation between the different parts—namely, love. (It does not seem possible to extricate the effects of this myssionary savoir from consideration of questions that will come later, around the Franciscan consideration of the status of the enslaved person, for instance. In any event, such a view of human nature as the one Harphius is elaborating makes abundantly clear that the dignity of a human being could not be exclusively reducible to the legal effects of a sacramental procedure like baptism through which they were frequently considered in church law.)

And so, in Harphius's mystical theology, a whole network desirous relations—what Deleuze and Guattari would call a "desiring-machine"—gets set humming.[123] The friar begins to speculate

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[122] It should not be lost on us that this slide of the signifier, identifiable in the French translation, emerges well after a historical juncture in which the term *baiser*, when used as a verb, began to take on the vulgar equivalent of "to fuck" or "to screw," its first known literary use being in the libertine erotic poetry of François Maynard.

[123] In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari begin with a chapter on "desiring machines," where the authors write:

about the effects, for the converting-subject, of combining contact between different body parts through the kiss. These effects, three "affections or advancements and profits" Harphius names as three kinds of kisses—a mouth-to-foot kiss, a mouth-to-hand kiss, and a mouth-to-mouth kiss. The first, kissing the feet of the husband, is connected to the beginnings of conversion, and it involves the seeking and attainment of pardon. The second, the kissing of the hands of the husband is given to those who are profiting or progressing and it involves the actions of grace. The third, while rarely experienced, the kissing the mouth of the spouse, involves the effusion of divine love.[124] At each of these stages the soul would receive a certain kind of new *savoir*, which Harphius glosses in terms of effects like knowing the beauty of continence ("sçavoir la beauté de continence"), though it seems clear that what is being aimed at beyond the description is some kind of transformational subjective effect. What the three kisses open up to, then, is an affective savoir which erupts in the converting subject and which is irreducible to pre-existing knowledge which could be proffered by an Other. Given the enabling constraints of representational economy and the symbolic, what is needed, rather, is for the subject to use the Other's language to convey something about their experience. Harphius's writing expands the possible trajectory for the itinerary of the subject of conversion at the same time as the use of metaphor and metonymy leave something concealed for discovery in experience. It is worth noting that, following Bonaventure, who, as we have seen, deploys *contemplatio* as a kind of excess of desire (in contrast his contemporaries who used it to describe a process of

> Desiring-machines are binary machines, obeying a binary law or set of rules governing associations: one machine is always coupled with another. The productive synthesis, the production of production, is inherently connective in nature: "and ..." "and then ..." This is because there is always a flow-producing machine, and another machine connected to it that interrupts or draws off part of this flow (the breast-the mouth). And because the first machine is in turn connected to another whose flow it interrupts or partially drains off, the binary series is linear in every direction. Desire constantly couples continuous flows and partial objects that are by nature fragmentary and fragmented.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, Vol. I* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983): 5

[124] Harphius, *Théologie Mystique*, 8.

rational cogitation), Harphius's savoir through kissing installs a kind of subjective certainty related to lack at the pinnacle, to which other forms of reasoning must be subservient.

Even considering a small portion of the foundations of Harphius's text, we should pause to carefully consider the implications of his points of departure upon the historical context in which it was put forward. As mentioned above, spiritual techniques of discernment through which experiences like demonic or divine possession could be verified by (often-clerical) expert others proliferated in early modern spirituality. So, too, did a variety of juridical mechanisms that sought to maintain and uphold orthodoxy, in inquisitions and in the use of various indexes of forbidden texts. What I aim to isolate is that, following the letter of Harphius's argument, in the early chapters of his *Théologie mystique*, there is an assertion that a savoir could be attained by the subject based on affective experience. Of course, my argument was not that Harphius's aim was to render all processes and institutions of verification obsolete. Rather, what it achieved, perhaps much more radical, in a way, is to leave social structures intact but impotent, evacuated of their powers of verification to the extent that the, for the myssionary, the affective savoir of the subject was the primary issue.

Harphius's argument, then, plays a role in opening up an internal space of and for desire that is in play in the ongoing process of conversion—an ongoing development whose implications for people with less access to official, social, cultural knowledge would be powerful.[125]

[125] In the sense I have discussed it here, Harphius deserves some role as a progenitor in the later genealogy traced by Charly Coleman, who argues, in *The Virtues of Abandon: An Anti-Individualist History of the French Enlightenment* that the French Revolution might just as well have been rooted in popular impulses for self-sacrifice and debasement, rather than in the ideology of the individual or the autonomous, rights-bearing subject of elite Enlightenment philosophy. Coleman asserts that mystics and other anti-individualists had at least as much to offer to revolutionary impulses. Though the sources I engage in this chapter are chronologically prior to Coleman's the material under consideration by Coleman, it shares his interests, to the extent that the experience of the subject of conversion and the affectively-produced *savoir* under consideration in myssionary literature is one that would involve an unraveling of the autonomous, rights-bearing subject of consent. Charly Coleman, *The Virtues of Abandon: An Anti-Individualist History of the French Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014).

3.4 Francisco de Osuna: Following the Signifying Chain to the Letter in the Body

Harphius's *Théologie mystique* was a text with "trickle down" effects. Widely translated, its integration of a Flemish affective mysticism with a Bonaventurian Franciscanism put Franciscan reformist spiritual masters to work on their own texts, geared toward retreat masters, spiritual directors, preachers, vowed religious, etc. Of these, Francisco de Osuna (1492-1540) was perhaps one of the more widely known since his work went on to significantly inform the mystical journeying of Carmelite spiritual master Teresa of Avila.

As Jessica Boon has emphasized in her study of Spanish Franciscan recollection (*recognimiento*), which carefully considers the works of Bernardino de Laredo, Franciscan proponents of recollection continued to encourage and practice meditation on the passion and suffering of Christ, even for those who had reached the higher stages of recollection and contemplation—a more passive, cognitively empty meditative practice.[126] Rather than fading away, visualizing the gore of the passion maintained its place alongside the self-emptying process of recollection. Boon's discussion of passion mysticism tends to emphasize Bernardino's medical approach, involving a meditation and visualization of the passion in all its visceral anatomical detail. At the same time, recollection's promoters' continued advocacy of passion mysticism, allowed their spirituality to be considered as remaining Christocentric through the higher stages of the soul's ascent, thus rendering it more orthodox and less liable to censorship than the lofty conceptions of mystical union advocated by those glossed as *alumbrados*. (Benoît de Canfield's *Rule of Perfection*, considered below, eventually came under censure for precisely this reason—seeming to leave Christ out of the picture in its description of the higher stages of the soul's ascent.) Boon writes:

> Laredo's medical approach to recollection mysticism elucidates for his readers that the transformation of the soul into God first occurs by means of a cognitive transformation of the soul into the tortured Christ. Once the soul transforms itself into its God by discovering the

[126] Jessica A. Boon, *The Mystical Science of the Soul: Medieval Cognition in Bernardino de Laredo's Recollection Method* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012).

> identity with the wounded Christ at the center of the soul, the final stage of recollection aids the divinized soul in conforming to its bleeding center.[127]

It was not simply to avoid censorship that passion meditation was advocated alongside more passive spiritual practices. Rather, I argue, the installation of the passion—and, in particular, for Francisco de Osuna, the five wounds of Christ—enclosed poverty and lack, as a central mystery connected to desire, within the domains of a Franciscan theory of the sign and a Franciscan theory of spiritual progress. It is important to note that, following Eryximachus's speech in *The Symposium*, "medicine is the science of the erotics of bodies," a thread I cannot help but think Boon's conceptual deployment of the medical might risk overlooking, at times.[128]

As described in the introduction to this dissertation, there is a Franciscan tendency to install poverty, lack, and suffering at the center of a chain or web of signifiers in such a way that allows it to sustain ongoing process of the network's signifying function—in its creation of association between seemingly divergent signifiers. The permutations within the Franciscan representational economy, in the ongoing extension and revision of this signifying network, can be seen in the *abecedarios espirituales* of Francsico de Osuna. What we have seen Franciscans say about language can be observed here—in Bonaventure's "not signs but sacraments," and in Scotus's univocity of being. At the same time, Francisco's elaboration of recollection advocated a passive, subjective space for desire to emerge. Involving not only the creation of mnemic devices which could help laypeople to associate a wide variety of objects (elements, animals, etc.) with values connected to spiritual advancement (consistent with the semiotic ideology at stake in the book of creation, which Bonaventure tried to surpass), Francisco's *abecedarios* also developed a uniquely Franciscan semiotics along Bonaventurian lines of sign and sacrament. I refer to Francisco's *Sexto Parte del Abecedario Espiritual* to explore the

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[127] Boon, 24-25.

[128] Cited in Jacques Lacan, *Transference: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Vol VIII*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: Polity, 2015 [1991]: 71. In Christopher Gill's translation, the line reads: "'Medicine, in essence, is knowledge of the forms of bodily love" (19). Plato, *The Symposium,* trans. Christopher Gill (New York: Penguin, 1999): 19/186d.

development of a Franciscan semiotic ideology designed to buttress the myssionary quests of the subject.[129] In this particular *abecedario*, the figuration of lack embodied in the *llagas de Cristo* (the wounds of Christ) took center stage.

Beyond the consideration of this text as emblematic of practices of recollection, it illustrates a step in how a Franciscan "semiotic ideology" can provide the filling out of a symbolic structure to support desire – an account of the power of the sign with respect to the desire and the body (rather than the organism) of the subject. While others, like Boon, have seized astutely on Franciscan advocates of *recogimiento* to discuss mystical union as a cognitive and embodied practice, I turn to Francisco to think about an implicit theory of the sign/signifier embedded within it.

I see the analytical upshot as threefold. First, I emphasize the centrality of lack, represented in the *llagas de Cristo*, across domains informed by representational economies—spiritual progress on the one hand and signifying elaboration, on the other. Second, the conflation of the body—subjective, desirous, and carved up by signs, as introduced in the above discussion of Harphius—must not be conflated with the measurable and observable organism postulated by contemporary bioscience.[130] Though this distinction will have clearer effects when we consider the theoretical foundations for Franciscan arguments against slavery presented in chapters three and four, here the letters of the body and the symbolic carving up of the body are central to understanding what, for Franciscans, "a body can do."[131] Third, the signifying function authorized by Francisco's text itself,

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[129] Francisco de Osuna, *Sexta Parte del Abecedario Espiritual* (1554). John Carter Brown Library.

[130] In chapter five, we will see the ways in which this semiotic ideology of the body versus the observable organism makes for a radical difference between Épiphane de Moirans's encounter with an enslaved woman dying in childbirth. It seems crucial to the elaboration of a uniquely Franciscan critique of slavery, which entails a positive evaluation of the body itself, even as suffering and carved up as it might be. This Franciscan assessment of the body became one crucial foundation for a Franciscan antislavery ethics, in contrast from other contemporaneous religious critiques of slavery.

[131] I am paraphrasing Gilles Deleuze: "Spinoza offers philosophers a new model: the body. He proposes to establish the body as model: 'We do not know what the body can do...' This declaration of ignorance is provocation. We speak of consciousness and its decrees, of the will and its effects, of the thousand ways of moving the body, of dominating the body and the passions—but *we do not even know what a body can do*." Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (San Francisco: City Lights, 1988 [1970]): 17. Here, Deleuze cites the third book of Spinoza's *Ethics*:

which involves the establishment of an open-ended network of signifiers which oozes meaning at every turn—must be attended to. This third aspect is not unrelated to Dana Bultman's discussion of correspondences between Franciscan and Nahua concepts of "soul" in terms of "wind," "heart," and "heat"—upon which she draws extensively from Francisco.[132] In all of this, I want to trace Francisco's signifying chain back to the five bleeding wounds placed at its center to show Francisco's text can be said to represent, in both the experience of Franciscan spirituality and the experience of psychoanalysis, the emergence of a letter in the body precisely at the point of the signifying chain's point of exhaustion. As discussed in the introduction, following Emmanuel Falque, the Franciscan mode can be distinguished from others—the Dominican, in this instance—in its laying out the "'language of the flesh' in the experience of the Song of Songs or in the stigmata" rather than "the flesh of language," as the Dominicans might have it, in their emphasis on preaching and intellection.[133]

While the body of the text of Francisco's *Sexta Parte del Abecedario Espiritual* offers a series of reflections around practices of recollection, nowhere in this text is a table of contents listing the chapters in serial order to be found. Instead, the tables at the beginning and at the end of the work list scriptural references, with headers listing different books of the Bible and an alphabetical list of topics ranging where material objects and elements are listed alongside abstract concepts. For instance, entries for the A's begin ABISMO (abyss), ADMIRACION (admiration), AGUA (water),

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> For indeed, no one has yet determined what the body can do, that is, experience has not yet taught anyone what the body can do from the laws of Nature alone, insofar as Nature is only considered to be a corporeal, and what the body can do only if it is determined by the mind. For no one has yet come to know the structure of the body so accurately that he could explain all its functions—not to mention that many things are observed int he lower animals which far surpass human ingenuity, and that sleepwalkers do a great many things in their sleep which they would not dare to awake. This shows well enough that the body itself, simply from the laws of its own nature, can do many things which its mind wonders at.

Benedict de Spinoza, *Ethics* (New York: Penguin, 1996 [1677]): 71-72 / III, 2, scholium.

[132] Bultman, "Winds, Heart, and Heat."

[133] Emmanuel Falque says, "Where one of the modes (the Franciscan) lays out the 'language of the flesh' in the experience of the *Song of Songs* or in the stigmata [...], the other (the Dominican) refers to 'the flesh of language,' precisely in the act of preaching, for instance in St. Dominic's conversion of the Cathar innkeeper." Emmanuel Falque and Laure Solignac, "Thinking in Franciscan: Part One," trans. Stephen E. Lewis, *Logos* 21:4 (Fall 2018): 33.

AGUILA (eagle), AFFECTOS (affects), ALTAR (altar), AMOR Y AMAR (love and loving), ANIMAS Y ANIMA (souls and soul), ARBOL (tree), and ARTE MEMORITIVA (the art of memory), etc.

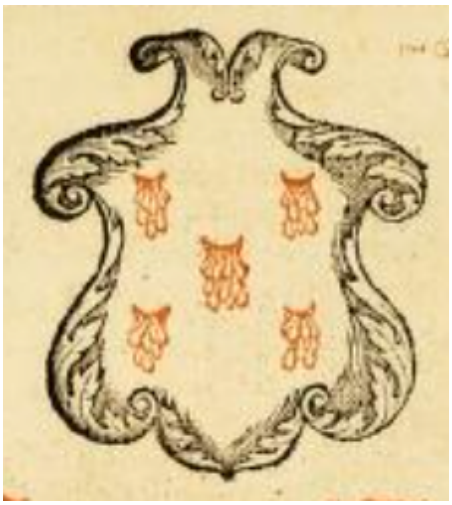

Figure 4. Emblem printed on the frontispiece of Francisco de Osuna's Sexta Parte del Abecedario Espiritual showing the five wounds of Christ.

The central motif deployed in Francisco's *Sexta Parte del Abecedario Espiritual* is that of the *llagas de Cristo*, the wounds of Christ. On the frontispiece of the text, these wounds are depicted within a medallion, edges resembling the vegetal or carved stone, the shape loosely resembling a human body. The symmetry of the medallion and the curl of its edges (especially at the top) make it appear like a body evenly split open, sliced in half, unfurled, though the designation of the five wounds, depicted as curved lines with an abundance of drops beneath them—colored in red ink, and basically identical, though the central heart wound appears slightly larger—seem more like something stamped or imposed on a surface. The curls on the side and bottom seem more reminiscent to a scroll of rolled up paper. As such, the image presents a paradox.

I think about this image related to Lacan's coinage of ex-sistence, raised earlier. Along these lines, Lacan also spoke of the extimate, elaborated as, "something strange to me, although it is at the

heart of me, something that on the level of the unconscious only a representation can represent."[134] In combining exteriority and intimacy, the internal and the external, in these ways, Lacan also uses the image of the Mobius strip—the strip of paper given a half fold and the ends connected together—to illustrate the circuits in which the subject of desire continuously circles the lack.[135]

The paradox of the image between the symmetrically unfolded and the flat surface onto which a stamp could be transposed creates a similar tension between the interior and the exterior. Whereas wounds typically designate a hole that links and distinguishes the "inside" and "outside," the image meant to illustrate the five wounds in Francisco's frontispieces deploy, instead, a body unfurled and opened up, concealing five internal wound-holes. Using Francisco's table of topics, I will argue that this image should be read as a Mobius strip-like formation which troubles relations between interiority and exteriority both with respect to the domain of signification and in the domain of spiritual practice. I illustrate this point in a detailed reading of the *Sexta Parte del Abecedario Espiritual*'s table of topics, which to demonstrate the placement and function of the wounds of Christ within a broader signifying chain. The five wounds as the Thing which Francisco installs at the heart of the signifying chain constitute an important point of disclosure for the impactful lack the subject confronts at its heart.

In this alphabetical table of topics and subheadings in the *Sexta Parte del Abecedario Espiritual*, Francisco begins to name the elements of a signifying chain that both cut and structure the narrative of the body of his text. They cut the text to the extent that each subheading lists a different chapter and page beneath the same topic, and they structure it by creating a network of correspondences between different segments of the body text, establishing a signifying chain that underwrites the text's narrative flow. Within this chain, the wounds of Christ take on the role of a first signifier

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[134] Lacan, *Ethics*, 71.
[135] See, among many other coordinates in Lacan's work, lesson X. Jacques Lacan, "On a Lack that is Irreducible to the Signifier," *Anxiety: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Vol X* (New York: Polity, 2014 [2004]): 131-146.

(what Lacan called a master signifier, or S1) structuring the relations between many of the other signifiers. As in a psychoanalysis, a researcher can follow the flow of signifiers forward from S1 or trace other signifiers (S2, S3....) back to S1, and this will have the effect of helping us to understand, not only the meanings ascribed to individual signifiers, but the structural relations in which they are organized. While, of course, many spiritual writers other than Franciscans also wrote about the "wounds of Christ," this method has the advantage of demonstrating how and why Franciscans organized them within a broader structure of other signifiers, which, in Francisco's case included material objects, elements, animals, and abstract concepts.

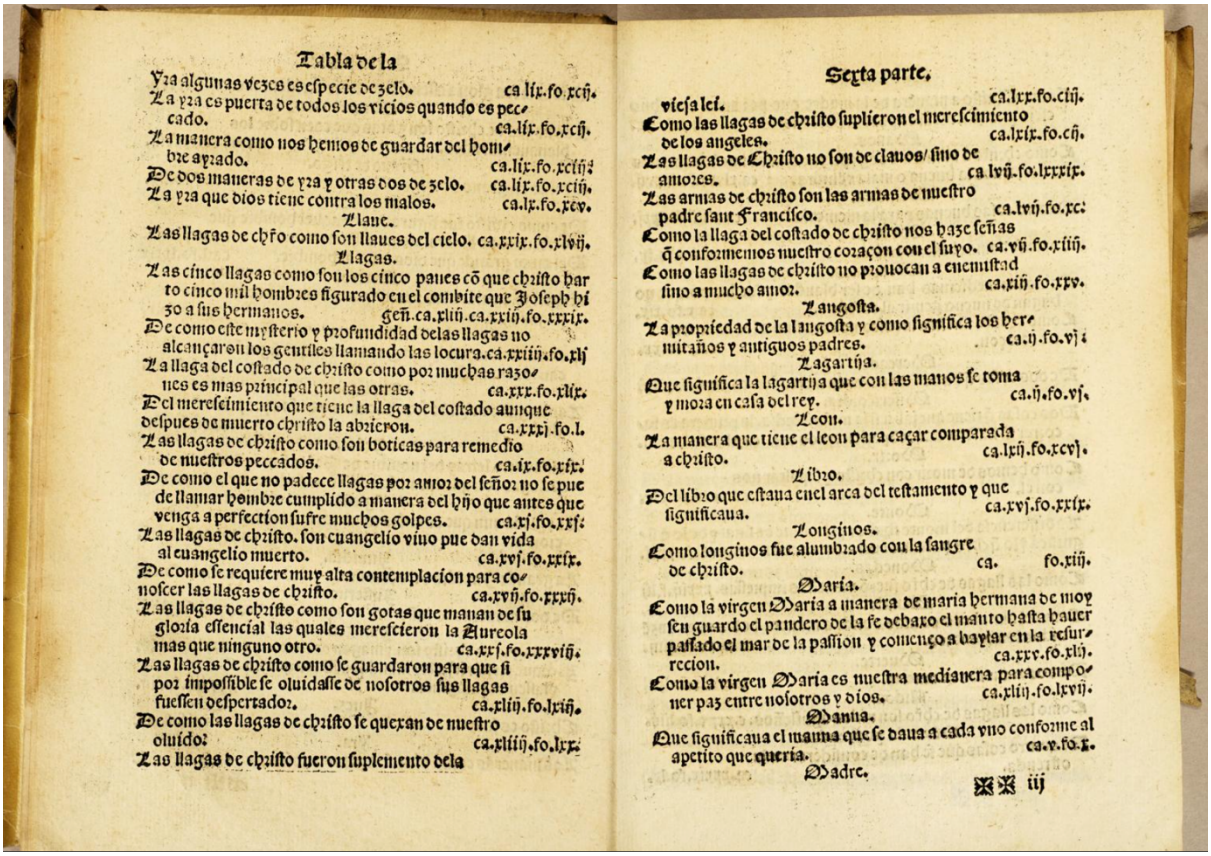

Tabla de la

Yra algunas vezes es especie de zelo. ca lix.fo.xcij.
La yra es puerta de todos los vicios quando es pecado. ca.lix.fo.xcij.
La manera como nos hemos de guardar del hombre ayrado. ca.lix.fo.xcij.
De dos maneras de yra y otras dos de zelo. ca.lix.fo.xcij.
La yra que dios tiene contra los malos. ca.lx.fo.xcv.

Llaue.

Las llagas de chfo como son llaues del cielo. ca.xxix.fo.xlvij.

Llagas.

Las cinco llagas como son los cinco panes cõ que christo harto cinco mil hombres figurado en el combite que Joseph hizo a sus hermanos. gen.ca.xlij.ca.xxij.fo.xxxix.
De como este mysterio y profundidad delas llagas no alcançaron los gentiles llamando las locura.ca.xxiij.fo.xlj
La llaga del costado de christo como por muchas razones es mas principal que las otras. ca.xxx.fo.xlix.
Del merescimiento que tiene la llaga del costado aunque despues de muerto christo la abrieron. ca.xxxj.fo.l.
Las llagas de christo como son boticas para remedio de nuestros peccados. ca.ix.fo.xix.
De como el que no padece llagas por amor del señor no se puede llamar hombre cumplido a manera del hijo que antes que venga a perfection sufre muchos golpes. ca.xj.fo.xxj.
Las llagas de christo. son euangelio vino pue dan vida al euangelio muerto. ca.xvj.fo.xxix.
De como se requiere muy alta contemplacion para conoscer las llagas de christo. ca.xvij.fo.xxxij.
Las llagas de christo como son gotas que manan de su gloria essencial las quales merescieron la Aureola mas que ninguno otro. ca.xxj.fo.xxxviij.
Las llagas de christo como se guardaron para que si por imposible se oluidasse de nosotros sus llagas fuessen despertador. ca.xlij.fo.lxij.
De como las llagas de christo se quexan de nuestro oluido: ca.xliij.fo.lxx.
Las llagas de christo fueron suplemento dela

Sexta parte.

vieja ley. ca.lxx.fo.cij.
Como las llagas de christo suplieron el merescimiento de los angeles. ca.lxix.fo.cij.
Las llagas de Christo no son de clauos/ sino de amores. ca lvij.fo.lxxxix.
Las armas de christo son las armas de nuestro padre sant Francisco. ca.lvij.fo.xc.
Como la llaga del costado de christo nos haze señas q̃ conformemos nuestro coraçon con el suyo. ca.vij.fo.xlij.
Como las llagas de christo no prouocan a enemistad sino a mucho amor. ca.xlij.fo.xxv.

Langosta.

La propriedad de la langosta y como significa los hermitaños y antiguos padres. ca.ij.fo.vj.

Lagartija.

Que significa la lagartija que con las manos se toma y moja en casa del rey. ca.j.fo.vj.

Leon.

La manera que tiene el leon para caçar comparada a christo. ca.lxij.fo.xcvj.

Libro.

Del libro que estaua enel arca del testamento y que significaua. ca.xvj.fo.xxix.

Longinos.

Como longinos fue alumbrado con la sangre de christo. ca. fo.xij.

Maria.

Como la virgen Maria a manera de maria hermana de moysen guardo el pandero de la fe debaxo el manto hasta hauer passado el mar de la passion y començó a baylar en la resurrecion. ca.xxv.fo.xlj.
Como la virgen Maria es nuestra medianera para componer paz entre nosotros y dios. ca.xlij.fo.lxvij.

Manna.

Que significaua el manna que se daua a cada vno conforme al apetito que queria. ca.v.fo.x.

Madre.

Figure 5. From Franciso de Osuna's table of topics.

Among the 114 topics listed in the table, the entry for LLAGAS (wounds) contains by far the most subheadings, and the wounds are explicitly mentioned in 32 of the 114 topics.[136] We could envision a word web in which LLAGAS is placed centrally (S1). Beyond this, in a second tier, we would list the 32 words the explicitly refer to LLAGAS in their subheadings (S2). There would be additional tiers (S3...).

For simplicity, AGUA and its subheading ("*Del misterio que significa el agua y* ***sangre*** *que salio del costado de christo*") provides an excellent example to show the workings of the signifying chain. On the level of the meaning of the subheading, which points to the blood and water that flowed from Christ's side, the connection to the wounds of Christ, seems clear enough, on the level of meaning. However, if we restrain ourselves to following the signifying chain, we can follow a different thread. The only other word in the subheading that receives its own topical entry is *sangre*. There are no topic entries for *misterio*, *salir*, *costado*, or *Christo*. The subheading for SANGRE is "que significa de sangrar christo su **coraçon** para que nosotros desangremos el nuestro por **amor** del." In this subheading, **coraçon** and **amor** both have topic entries. We could follow the chain either way. If we follow the route of **amor**, we are referred straight back to the wounds as the first signifier. The second subheading for AMOR y AMAR is "Como vosostros por amor nos devemos ayuntar con christo. para offrescer sus **llagas**." If we follow the signifying chain from **coraçon**, the pathway is more circuitous, via peccadores to PECCADO y PECCADORES to HOMBRE to AMOR y AMAR and back to LLAGAS.

The analytic upshot for following this pathway of the signifier, rather than satisfying ourselves with a seemingly comparable meaning (as in considering "*salio del costado de christo*" as close

[136] The 32 words that overtly mention llagas de Christo in the subheadings are: ABISMO, AGUILA, AMOR y AMAR, CANALES, CONSUELO, FE, FUENTE, GLORIA, BOTAS, HERIZO, JACINTOS, JESUS, IMAGEN, LLAVE, MONEDAS, NIDOS, OFFRENDA y OFFRENDAS, OLVIDO, PALOMA, PADERNAL, ROSAS, SABIDURÍA y SABIOS, SENO, SEÑAS, SEÑUELO, SORTIJAS, TILDES, VANDERAS, VENGANÇA, VIRGINES, VICTORIA, XPO, AND ZELOS.

enough to "*llagas de Christo*") is that it produces a second signifier (S2), which provides a way back to the first—AMOR y AMAR (love and loving). Otherwise, the function of AMOR y AMAR (S2) within the chain would remain obfuscated, leaving material and bodily objects (blood, water, wounds) sealed off from the spiritual values that structure them (love). As such, following the signifying chain, on its own terms, provides a method for examining how relations between signifiers are structured and correlated, drawing attention to how they are linked. In this instance, while, of course, many spiritual authors affiliated with different congregations and spiritual movements have talked about the wounds of Christ, they have not done so in the uniquely Franciscan way Francisco is doing so by placing them in the position of S1 and linking them to love as S2. (Other Catholic theological and spiritual traditions might more directly link them to signifiers like expiation, atonement, weight, sin, sorrow, etc.)

Furthermore, if we accept the legitimacy of the metonymic slide of the signifier, more correspondences within the signifying web become possible to track. We could posit a relation between ***llaga****s* and ***llaga****n* in the second subheading under PECCADO y PECCADORES ("*Los peccadores otra vez* ***llaga****n a Christo*"). In allowing this, this *llagan* (as a kind of repetition or variant of S1) could also refer us back to *llagas* (S1). If this seems too far-fetched, it is worth nothing that the single subheading for **LLAV**E is "Las **llaga**s de Chr[ist]o como son **llave**s del cielo," which should at least raise a question about a deliberate play of the signifier at this phonemic level within the text itself. The signifying chain begins to appear both through tracing the repetitions of the same word and through tracing the relations between words that have a certain phonetic resonance, even if they have different meanings.

Drawing upon Francisco and psychoanalysis, we can even go further, along the lines of the letter. Francisco, like some psychoanalysts, posit a direct, literal relation between the letter and the body. In a passage that might be easily dismissed or overlooked, he asserts that the five letters of the

name JESUS denote the five wounds of Christ ("En las cinco letras del nombre de Jesus son notadas los cinco llagas con que cura n[osot]ras enfermidades.") For Francisco, the wounds of Christ are, at once, letters in the name, and, at the same time, similar to what psychoanalysts call "letters in the body," that is,

> any segment, mark, or unit of that capture [the capture of the organism by the signifier that creates a body] as an indefinable parcel of the body: a border, an opening, the outline of a hole, a stroke, or even a gesture or a glance as a referential mark and the like.... As inscription of a lost jouissance, the letter doesn't take precedence over the language which caused the trauma and which gives the letter its consistency. [...] It becomes linked to the hole the signifier surrounds, and traces a path [*itinerarium*?], on the edge of the organism in the symptom, for the death drive where jouissance returns to challenge the effects of the Law. The 'letter' acts as an edge outside the signifier toward the exteriority of jouissance as real (109-110).[137]

This letter of the body constitutes something at the heart of things which only a representation can represent, albeit inadequately. For Francisco, the relevant representation here is that of the five wounds, which aims to transmit something to the converting subject about the apex of conversion's quest in the traumatic, wounding, and desirous encounter for which Francis's stigmatizing meeting with the Seraph stands as the premier model. As letters of both name and body, the wounds return us to the abstract "body" of the emblem from the frontispiece. The transmissibility of conversion, for Francisco, is established in these letters, which can map onto various bodies. One subheading for LLAGAS reads "las armas de Christo son las armas de nuestro padre sant Francisco." A symptom connected with, and at the same time irreducible to, the names that comprise the signifying chain, a wound stamps the arm of Christ and the arm of Francis, rendering them equivalent, through the symptomatic mobilization of a letter in the body, beyond name, in the event of stigmatization. As seen in the emblem, the wounds, like letters, are transposable.

[137] Willy Apollon, "The Letter of the Body," in *After Lacan*, eds. and trans. Robert Hughes and Kareen Ror Malone (Albany: SUNY, 2002): 103-115.

The wounds, Francisco informs, are both signs (SEÑAS) and breast (SENO)—"[L] as llagas de Christo son señas de experiencía" and "[L]as llagas de Christo son seno." As letters in the body, the wounds constitute signs of the kinds of subjective experience that matter in the spiritual quest and, in their connection to the breast (the wound in Christ's breast, among others), are connected to various scriptural themes—the words of hope Job carried in his breast, the place of the secret in reference to Solomon, etc. The wound in the side of Christ, is said by Francisco to carry all of these significations.

Francisco describes Christ as like a mother who gave birth to humanity and who raised humanity in the opening of his breast in his passion, nourishing it with an inexhaustible flow of milk.[138] (We will return shortly to this question of flow.) However, the Franciscan specificity and flavor of his argumentation, in the chapter on Christ's wounds as breast, is perhaps most present in the extensive discussion of Christ carrying Lazarus to the breast of Abraham in paradise before Christ's own wounds had been "opened." This seemed to have been something of a theological puzzle. How was it that Lazarus could be delivered to Abraham's breast in paradise before the opening of the opening of Christ's wounds, including the wound on his breast? Francisco drew attention to the words of Christ on the cross, addressed to the good thief, about drinking wine in paradise, and in his discussion of the cross as a vineyard. Strikingly, what is implied, is that, because his own body was full of wounds, Lazarus bore the signs of devotion to Christ's wounds, the sweetness of which could even be recognized by the dogs who came to lick them consolingly.[139] Lazarus's entrance into paradise was prefigured in his wounds and brought to maturity in Christ's passion, *aprés-coup*, if you will. Francisco's tracking of the scriptural slide of the signifier dogs from

[138] "Cristo es como madre verdadera que tiene leche para todo lo que pare." Francisco de Osuna, *Sexta Parte del Abecedario*, ca XXXVI, fo 57.

[139] In a strikingly Franciscan take on this, the dogs are not taken to represent the "unclean" of the Mosaic Law, but as ones capable of participating in devotion to the wounds of Christ. More on Franciscans and dogs in the epilogue.

the story of Lazarus to Christ's figurations of Canaanites and Gentiles as dogs, leads him to emphasize precisely that the latter had access to salvation by approaching Christ through his wounds.[140]

As both sign and as breast, then, the wounds figure poverty/lack in all its salvific plentitude and potential to found process of signification. Francisco's representation of the Thing confronted in the traumatic encounter, beyond intellection, at a particular height in the spiritual journey, establishes a cluster of inexhaustible bleeding wounds at the heart of the subject—both transposable, impressed signs and, on the one hand, and holes, opened up, secretly concealed within the caverns of the subject's abstract body, on the other. As such, these wounds posit a hole within another hole that sustains conversion's desirous motor and assures itinerating's ceaselessness. Sign chained within signs and a hole within another hole. For Franciscan myssionaries, to paraphrase Clifford Geertz, we can perhaps say that it's holes all the way down.

3.5 Benoît de Canfield and Joseph de Paris: Desire's Flows

The lives and works of Benoît de Canfield (William Fitch, 1562-1610) and his protégé, the infamous Joseph de Paris (François Le Clerc du Tremblay, 1577-1638), show the developments of this trajectory as mystical trends made their way into France ushering in the golden age of French mysticism in the seventeenth century. They also point to a few possible specific links between mystical autoconversion and missionary heteroconversion. Before turning to the argument of this section, I begin with a brief biographical sketch about each of them to begin to demonstrate these links.

[140] It is easy to see how the effects of such ways of thinking could have differential effects in the mission field. My point, for now, is simply to posit this way of thinking about the wounds as a frame of reference for myssionary activities.

The Englishman William Fitch entered the Capuchin novitiate at Saint-Honoré in Paris in 1584, after converting to Catholicism, taking the name Benêt, though he would also be known by the name Benoît, since Benêt designates foolishness and simple-mindedness.[141] After studying theology at the Capuchin *studium* in Venice from 1588-1592, he would go on to have a significant career in the Province of Paris, where he occupied the positions of novice master at Orleans, served as guardian, and also as a Definitor in the Capuchin province of Paris. His career would also extend beyond this, to the extent that his spiritual writings, especially *La Règle de Perfection*, which had been circulating in manuscript since, at least, 1593, inaugurated the Golden Age of French mysticism.

In 1599, French Capuchins were embroiled in a complex context of linked controversies. The controversy surrounding the public theater of the exorcism of Marthe Brossier, in which several Capuchins had been involved, pitted them against members of Parlement. In the end, the legitimacy of the supposed possession was widely deemed fraudulent. At the same time, and not unrelated to the religious tensions at stake in the theater of Brossier's possession, several Capuchins also fueled the flames of rising opposition to the Edict of Nantes, which Henri IV had adopted, but which Parlement had not yet formalized.[142] In these circumstances, given his involvement in the Brossier affair and connections with members of the Catholic League, it became expedient for Benoît to leave Paris.[143] He left as a missionary to his native country, though, upon arrival, in habit and with breviary, he was immediately jailed, rightfully suspected of being a Catholic priest, when he and a companion stopped at a prison, mistakenly thinking it to be an inn. It was during this time that he wrote *Le*

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[141] I refer to him throughout as Benoît, though he is referred to by both names in the literature. The resonance of the name Benêt with the ideal of simple-mindedness carries a particular resonance in the Franciscan tradition with the ideal of Francis being known as God's fool.

[142] For a discussion of the relationship of Benoît and the Capuchins with the Catholic League in this period, see Megan C. Armstrong, *The Politics of Piety: Franciscan Preachers During the Wars of Religion, 1560-1600* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2004): 168.

[143] On Brossier, the Capuchins, and the political climate, see, for instance Sarah Ferber, *Demonic Possession and Exorcism in Early Modern France* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 47-49. On Benoît leaving Paris, precisely in the midst of these circumstances, see Kent Emery (ed. and trans.) *Renaissance Dialectic and Renaissance Piety: Benet of Canfield's Rule of Perfection*, (Binghamton: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1987): 9.

Chevalier chrestien, a spiritual text and an "allegorical dialogue between a pagan and a Christian knight."[144] Benoît returned to France in 1602/1603 after the intervention of Henri IV on his behalf, where he continued activities of preaching and spiritual direction until his death in 1611.[145] Even if a decidedly unsuccessful missionary, the itinerating spiritual and geographical itinerating necessitated in Benoît's autoconversion, and his purported desire to return to England to convert his countrymen demonstrate the convergence of a mystical and missionary impulse within his life history.

* * *

My argument in this section is continues to follow the development of the Franciscan threads of desire in conversion, of which Benoît de Canfield's *Regle de perfection / Rule of Perfection* perhaps constitutes a crowning synthesis. The *Rule*'s thesis, which initially circulated in manuscript form before being published in various editions, both in French and English—is, on its face, rather simple. Benoît insisted that for progress in the spiritual life one thing was absolutely necessary and must be obeyed by the devout soul at all times. That is, *one must follow the will of God*. Benoît then illustrates how the subject who follows this rule will progress through various spiritual stages (the active life, the contemplative life, and the supereminent life), establishing the three-part the structure of his text in an echo of Bonaventure's account of the soul's progress through the purgative, illuminative, and the unitive ways.

However, if one goes to this text, learns its thesis, and then looks for answers about *how* to follow the will of God (which seems like a natural follow up question), the reader will quickly end up perplexed. I insist that the progression at stake in this text complicates and abstracts the will of God,

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[144] Kent Emery, "Another Book, Another Manner: Benet of Canfield's *Chevalier Chrestien*," *Mystics Quarterly* 16(2) (N.D.): 83-92.

[145] In addition to Emery's sketch of Benoît's life in *Renaissance Dialectic*, 12-21, see Father Cuthbert, *The Capuchins: A Contribution to the History of the Counter-Reformation, Vol I* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1928); Jacques Brousse, *La Vie, conversion, et conversation miraculeuse du révérend père Benoist de Canfield Anglois* (Paris: 1621); Henri Brémond, *Histoire littéraire du sentiment religieux en France depuis la fin des guerres de religion jusqu'a nos jours: L'Invasion mystique, Vol. II* (Paris: Bloud et Gay, 1916), 135-192; Optat de Veghel, *Benoît de Canfield: Sa vie, sa doctrine, et son influence* (Rome: Institutum Historicum Ord. Fr. Min. Cap., 1949).

carving it up into the categories external, internal, and essential, rendering it, in the end unknowable. In the end, it appears as precisely that into which the soul is collapsed into. Whereas other authors, like Ignatius of Loyola in *The Spiritual Exercises*, promulgated a detailed system of spiritual development and discernment, Benoît, Zen-like, leads the reader down a river and out to sea, into deep, still water, no coastline in sight.[146] Even if the text is called *The Rule*, what is at stake in its content is more akin to a mode.

In the first part of the text, on the active life, Benoît prescribes obedience to the law and taking up the will of God, rather than one's own pleasure or intention. For instance, in prayer, satisfaction and consolation should not be sought, but rather, prayer should be undertaken with the intention of seeking the will of God alone. Conformity to the law is consistent with what Benoît calls the "external will of God." Were Benoît's instruction to end with the first part, the text would amount to little more than the encouragement of obsessional conformity with the law, and the spiritual text could be taken to stand as a support and buttress for authoritarianism. The second part of the text turns its attention to a focus on the contemplative life, where Benoît's attention shifts

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[146] Benoît de Canfield, "Rule of Perfection," edited and translated by Kent Emery, in *Renaissance Dialectic and Renaissance Piety: Benet of Canfield's Rule of Perfection* (Binghamton: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1987), 98.

> [T]he will of God is a spiritual sea, on which each one may sail according to the capability of his vessel. Thus the skiffs of weak beginning souls set forth in the harbor on the shallow waters of the exterior will; the barks of the advanced hoist the sail and launch into the depths of the interior will; and the powerful ships of the perfect, having lost all sight of land, embark upon the high sea of the essential will. [para] And as the will of God is like the sea, so the darkness of our self-will is like the earth; and as one who is in the midst of the land does not see the sea at all, so one who is in the midst of dark self-will does not see this heavenly ocean at all. The more the land is spacious wherein one finds himself, the more he is distant from seeing the sea; likewise the greater self-will is, the more one is distant from seeing the will of God. Where the sea spreads over the land, one sees nothing but the sea; where the divine will overcomes the self-will, there is nothing but the divine. To the measure that the sea overflows the land, the land disappears and the sea is seen in its place; similarly, when the will of God submerges self-will, the latter vanishes to give place to the former. If there were no land at all, there would be nothing but sea; and if we did not have any darkness of self-will, we should see nothing but the will of God. Finally, as one who is on the high sea does not see the land at all, neither does one who has withdrawn into the depths of this will see darkness, but in all things, in all times and places he sees this heavenly light, the shining star, and radiant sun as will be shown in the third part.

from the external will of God, evident in the law, to the interior will of God. In writing on the difference between the interior and the exterior will, Benoît writes:

> The difference between interior and exterior will is that the exterior takes its light from without, and the interior from within. The first is known by exterior things, such as the commandments of God, of the Church, of a superior, and by customs, etc. The one is seen in the creature, and the other in the Creator himself. The one is covered by shadows of corporeal things or by their images [read: Bonaventure's vestiges/imprints], and the other is wholly uncovered and seen in spirit and truth. The one has accidental things in it, but the other is nearly all essential. The one consists of the rind and pith, that is, of the exterior and interior, the other of the interior only.[147]

Similar to the above discussion of the function of the law in Harphius, where the law is kept in place but rendered unimportant, through the path of sense and the law, the soul arrives at a different, contemplative state where will, pleasure, and satisfaction return to the soul, though now they are displaced onto God. Through the effects of grace, the soul receives illumination in its contemplation. The last stage, focused on the essential will of God, collapses the will of God with God's essence ("the essential will of God is God himself") in what Benoît coins the supereminent life.[148] I have paralleled this with Bonaventure's seraphic life, as situated both beyond the active and the contemplative and as a hybridization of them both. In this sense, "the will of God is God himself," and "God has no composition."[149]

It is in this third part of the text that a Franciscan understanding of desire as alienated finally receives its clearest elaboration. Benoît maintains that the "excessive surging of desires and fervors in the soul" constitutes a subtle fault for the myssionary's spiritual itinerating. This active surging of desires works against a kind of passivity that will hinder the soul's "fullness, or full accomplishment and deification by their complete entry, absorption, and death in God."[150] Benoît likens this to a comparison between "two bodies of water, one of which is seething, raging, noisy, and yet shallow,

[147] Benoît, *Rule of Perfection*, 156.
[148] Benoît, *Rule of Perfection,* 176.
[149] Benoît, *Rule of Perfection,* 177.
[150] Benoît, *Rule of Perfection,* 185.

the other of which is gentle, silent, still, and yet very deep."[151] In terms of desire, rather than annihilation, Benoît prefers, like Deleuze and Guattari, to speak of "flows:"

> This flowing of burning desires into God is a transforming of working love into enjoying love, and it is the final repose and perfect fulfillment of desires in God, in whom the desire is swallowed up and changed into possession
> *Two things in this word 'flowing.'* This word 'flowing' contains two things, namely death and life, or rather loss and gain. For inasmuch as the fervor flows outside the soul, it is extinguished and dies, it vanishes and is lost; but inasmuch as it is made in God, it continues to grow and lives more than ever. Therefore I do not say 'annihilation,' as if they were made nothing in God, but a flowing into God, since they are preserved in him. Also, I do not say a preservation of desires, but a flowing, in order to show that they are felt no more in the soul because they are made subtle, and because of God's lively and sweet working within her, which thus changes the desires into the thing desired.[152]

And here, where the "cause changes to effect," and where "[t]he desire of the vision, possession, and enjoyment *of* God" changes to "the very vision, possession, and enjoyment *in* God," Benoît turns back to the very language of the *Canticle of Canticles* that we have already seen in Harphius and in Francisco, the flows of milk and honey, the mutual possession of lover and beloved, and the one who has "changed her acts into the [very] thing for which they acted, and her desires into the thing desired."[153]

We are now in the field of a profoundly alienated desire, related to what Lacanian psychoanalysis calls the "object-cause of desire" or the "objet a." Evoking the language of possession alongside the double possession of the lover and the beloved, at the very moment where desire is fulfilled, it also vanishes, appearing empty in what we might call the soul's evacuation. The evacuation of what? Of every signifier that would make it provide it with an identity separable from God. The flow of desire collapsed into lack as object-cause, or as cause and effect, in Benoît's language. All that remains is a kind of passive enjoyment. If this seems abstract, that's because it is.

[151] Benoît, *Rule of Perfection,* 185.
[152] Benoît, *Rule of Perfection,* 188.
[153] Benoît, *Rule of Perfection,* 188.

In Benoît's account, the soul remains in this state, but not suspended in it. Rather, as we have discussed in terms of the Franciscan ascent and descent, and the formal constraint of the symbolic as a possible site for the introduction of something new, Benoît conceives of the subject living in the supereminent returns to the activities of the active life and the contemplative life without departing from the supereminent life. Benoît writes that "the spiritual person, having arrived at this supereminent life, ought never to descend or return to the first two lives, but rather should practice them perfectly in the last [supereminent] life without ever leaving it," thus, in this way, "making the active life contemplative."[154] He further clarifies, curiously, that he does so by "*remarking* [*remarquant*, in the French] the place where, and time when, and the manner in which he must work."[155] At the level of meaning, it seems like a reading of this "remarking" in terms of a literal "marking again" rather than a "noticing" could be read as an inscription of the alienated desire, crucially at stake in the supereminent life, into the symbolic social sphere.

The possible ethical implications and trajectories for the kind of subject Benoît advocates in the supereminent life seem, at times, to leave much room for speculation and perhaps even concern. In one way, this is why the radical unknowability of the will of God seems so essential as a buttress against the kind of subject who purports to know the will of God as a matter of content through a detailed, rational process of discernment—a Jesuit, say. On the other hand, the fact that Benoît fractures the will of God into the external, the internal, and the essential is, in some ways, implicit in that this fracture can only be observed in the text as a whole. The eventual achievement of the merger of the soul with God and in the collapse of God's will with God's essence is subtle and abstract, a zone of the "all and nothing," and, in my reading, of ex-sistence, too. Indeed, such ethical

[154] Benoit, *Rule of Perfection,* 227.
[155] Benoit, *Rule of Perfection,* 227.

doubts about the dubious specter of a soul that has been merged with God and knows God's will, haunts the scene, especially in the field of the missions.

Indeed, Benoît's protégé, Joseph de Paris, has been taken up as an image of such a threat. Joseph de Paris, the Baron de Maffliers, was attracted to the Capuchins by Benoît, and his spiritual works demonstrate the influence of Benoît's teaching. Author of several spiritual works, Joseph's *Introduction à la vie spirituelle par une facile méthode d'oraison* provided an accessible guide to progress in the spiritual life, largely unfolding in ways already discussed.

Joseph's *Exercises spirituelles des religieuses Benedictines de la congregation de Nostre Dame du Calvaire*, however, comprised a set of spiritual exercises given to the Filles du Calvaire as part of Joseph's reform of the community into Benedictine-Franciscan hybrid. It included a section of spiritual exercises that the nuns were to pray daily.[156] These exercises demonstrate the links between autoconversion and heteroconversion in Joseph's vision of expanding conversion to Catholicism, one which began with the one praying, but which also expanded out to various parts of the world.

The exercises are separated into twelve *billets*, which each begin in the same way: "Jesus, Redeemer of the world, prostrate in spirit and in body, I beg you by the merit of your precious blood shed on Calvary" and which, after this opening, include some other element of Christ's passion, fragmenting Christ's body and the events of the passion (see chart below).[157] The next section, the petition, reads "for the assistance of your holy Church in all the world, and notably for the recovery of holy places, and to lead to heaven all the souls that are on earth and in purgatory, and especially all those that are in [names of various countries]." The sequence of places begin in Jerusalem, thus

[156] The latter was composed as part of the reform of the Filles de Calvaire, a congregation which, in its reform, in which Joseph was instrumental, reflected a fascinating hybrid of Benedictine and Franciscan modes of spirituality. Joseph's reform of this congregation was connected to his extensive efforts to missionize Poitu.
[157] "Jesus Redempteur du monde, prosternée d'esprit et de corps, / Je vous supplie par la merite de vostre precieux sang épandu en Calvaire & à l'honneur de..." Joseph de Paris, *Exercises spirituelles des religieuses Benedictines de la congregation de Nostre Dame du Calvaire* (Paris: l'Imprimerie de Edme Martin, 1671).

construing it as the center, and they gradually expand "outward." After this, there is a section of "general intercession," addressed to Mary, St. Anne, several apostles, John the Baptist, and Mary Magdalene, followed by a section of special intercession from saints connected to the particular country being interceded for and "all the men saints and woman saints from these countries."

Table 1. This table shows the differentiation of elements in the prayers which interrupt the standardized pieces of the formula

Body part / Event of Passion	**Region**	**Special Intercession**
The sacred wound of your holy side (*la sacrée playe de vostre saint costé*)	Syria, Palestine, Jerusalem, and the holy places, and all the peoples of Greece	of St. Andrew the apostle, St. Luke, St. Timothy, St. John Chrysostom, an all the saints of these countries
your sacred body crucified (*vostre sacré corps crucifié*)	France, Italy, and Spain	For France – of St. Michael, St. Denis, St. Genevieve, St. Louis, and all the saints ("*Saints et Saintes*") of France For Italy – of St. Peter, St. Paul, St. Charles, St. Benedict, St. Francis, St. Cecile, St. Agnes, St. Agatha, St. Lucie, and all the saints of that province For Spain – of St. James the apostle, St. Lawrence, St.Vincent, St. Dominic, St. Teresa, and all the saints of Spain
your sacred head crowned with thorns (*vostre sacré chef couronné d'épines*)	Germany, Switzerland, and the Netherlands	of the martyrs, St.Bruno, St. Mechtilde, St. Gertrude, and all the saints from these countries
the sacred wound of your right hand (*la sacrée playe de vostre main droit*)	England, Scotland, and Ireland	of St. Patrick, St. Thomas of Canterbury, the eleven thousand virgins, and all the saints of these countries
the sacred wound of your left hand (*la sacrée playe de vostre main gauche*)	Poland, Sweden, and Denmark	of all the holy virgins, St. Stanislaus, St. Bridget, and all the saints of these countries
the sacred wounds of your holy feet (*des sacrées playes de vos saints pieds*)	Hungary and neighboring countries	of St. Martin, St. Jerome, St. Elizabeth Queen of Hungary, and all the other saints of these countries

the wounds of your holy face (*des blessures de vostre sainte face*)	Moscow and the two Tartaries	of St. Nicholas, all the holy monks and anchorites, and the saints of these countries
your lips watered with gall (*vos levres abreuvées de fiel*)	Asia, in general	of St. Peter, St. Paul, St. John the Evangelist, St. Polycarp, St. Ignatius martyr, St. Nicholas, St. Thecla, St. Euphemia, and all the saints of these countries
your holy shoulders that bore the cross (*vos saintes épaules chargées de la croix*)	Persia, Armenia, and neighboring countries	of St. Simon, St. Jude, the forty martyrs, and all the saints of these countries
your holy flagellation (*vostre sainte flagellation*)	Africa, among others, Egypt, Ethiopia, Morocco, and Guinea	of St. Anthony, St. Athanasius, St. Augustine, St. Catherine martyr, St. Mary of Egypt, and all the saints of these countries
your sacred sweat in the Garden of olives (*vostre sacré sueur au jardin des Olives*)	America, among others, Canada	of St. Gabriel and all the angels, and all the saints of these countries
your sacred tomb and glorious resurrection (*vostre sacrée sepulture & glorieuse resurrection*)	China, the Kingdom of Mogor, the West and East Indies, and undiscovered countries	of St. Thomas the Apostle, all the prophets and confessors, St. Francis Xavier, and all the saints of heaven.

It could be easy for the researcher to gloss over this text, in general, and this lesson, in particular, relegating it to yet another curio of early modern piety. However, if we carefully consider the form and its differentiated elements, it reveals a variety of correspondences and mappings that join the autoconversion of the one praying (the Fille du Calvaire, in this place) with heteroconversion as an outward-facing project. Christ's body and the events of his passion, as we have already seen in several of the texts discussed in this chapter is fragmented into pieces and instances, beginning with the sacred wound in the side. This piece of Christ's body is mapped onto a spatial-spiritual epicenter of Jerusalem and neighboring holy places. In this sense, the body, like the world, is carved up by the symbolic function of the signifier (names for body parts and country names).

In the structure of the prayer, the one praying addresses Christ, appealing to the merits of his blood and the honor of a part of his body. The "object" of the prayer, brought to Christ, is comprised of souls, both living and dead (in purgatory) who are said to reside in a place. The one praying then aligns herself with saints (in heaven) who were from or otherwise somehow associated with that particular place. These prayers, in their structure and formulation are tied to a whole corporeal-spatial-spiritual mapping that establishes sets of signifying correspondences, based in premises about what prayer (a particular activity that sometimes involves the use of language) can do. At the same time, it serves the function of solidifying an intention and an ideology, on the part of one praying, that could help to facilitate her everyday activity, if she is living, say, as a Fille de Calvaire at the convent in Poitu, a site designated by Joseph de Paris, in his role as Prefect of Missions, as a particular site for missionization. An openness to some form of martyrdom and a thinking of the far-away, such as Benoît exhibited in his botched mission to England, receive ideological support in these correspondences established in the prayer. For the one praying, the parts of Christ's body index some renunciation of will, in favor of an alienated desire. In this sense, there is a way in which the influence of more abstract conceptual elaborations of mystical progress can also be observed in pious devotional forms. This fragmentation of body, world, and the representational economy makes possible the imaginary of a kind of universalizing correspondence, reworked in signifying permutations.

In closing this section, it is important to note that, aside from being a spiritual author, Joseph was better known as the spiritual and political advisor of Cardinal Richelieu, and his legacy has become the infamous model of the political shadow operative, the original *éminence grise*, an informal title which combines the honorific of a cardinal (for which Joseph had been nominated by Louis

XIII in 1635, though the Pope refused the nomination) and the grey habit of the Capuchin reform.[158] The passage from autoconversion to heteroconversion opens up questions around the ethical stakes related to the effects brought by the subject of alienated desire in terms of what s/he will inscribe in the symbolic. Joseph was appointed as the Prefect of the Missions, which meant that he came to coordinate between the Vatican's Propaganda Fide and the missions supported by the French Crown. As such, he is one predominant Franciscan actor who links mystical pursuits considered in this chapter with missionary activity. At the same time, he also raises the question of whether mystical journeying leads toward particular kinds of acts. Insofar as he would largely come to be judged as a dubious actor, at least from presentist vantage points, his inclusion here should raise a bit of skepticism about the connection of mystical pursuits to a pre-conceived "good" or "bad." This is important as we transition to an exploration of Épiphane de Moirans, in the next chapter, who raised significant challenges to the enslavement of Africans in the Americas.

[158] On Joseph de Paris, see: René Richard, *Vie du P. Joseph, Le Clerc du Tremblay, Capucin, nommé au cardinalat* (Paris: 1704) and Sylvie Taussig, *Richelieu* (Paris: Gallimard, 2017).

Figure 6. The 1873 oil painting by Jean-Léon Gérome, "Éminence grise" depicted the Capuchin devotee of Benoît de Canfield and second-in-command to Cardinal Richelieu, Père Joseph de Paris in the palace of his master. Dressed in the Capuchin habit (essentially rough scraps), visiting supplicants, including aristocrats, bishops, and a cardinal, can be seen to bow down to him in their finery. Père Joseph's gaze fixed on a book, a spiritual one, perhaps, he was otherwise occupied. Despite the late nineteenth century creation of the painting, it seems to encapsulate something of the passive, supereminently aloof life valorized in Benoît's *Rule*. Like Gérome's painting, Aldous Huxley's literary biography of Joseph, entitled *Grey Eminence*, emphasized the paradox of the Capuchin political operative who was both a mystic and a ruthless wielder of power on the battlefield in the midst of the Thirty Years War. The painting and the biography, both, attest to the longstanding hold of the paradoxical figure of Père Joseph's on cultural-historical imaginaries.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have traced a thread of Bonaventurian-inflected Franciscan mysticism, which emphasizes the affective and the excessive, through Harphius, Francisco de Osuna, and Benoît de Canfield. While my discussion of this thread demonstrates points of alignment with other scholars of Franciscan spirituality, demonstrating its indebtedness to their readings and citing them throughout, my discussion also differs from some other discussions of Franciscan spirituality in its emphasis on the centrality of the symbolic. I have demonstrated some of the ways in which

Franciscan theories of spiritual progress, scholars might tend to think about in terms of autoconversion (how Franciscans sought to convert themselves), were grounded in a semiotic ideology attuned to poverty/lack as the motor force of desire. At the same time that I have employed theory to inform a reading of particular Franciscan texts—for instance, in the way I employed Lacanian theories of the signifying chain to read Francisco de Osuna's *Sexta parte del abecedario espiritual*—I have also insisted that Franciscans themselves both employed and theorized a semiotic ideology in their elaboration of their *modus vivendi*, one which aimed to transcend the containers of the active and the contemplative, particularly for those who "reached" the impossible heights of the seraphic, excessive way first theorized by Bonaventure.

For Franciscans—from Bonaventure in his expansion of the definition of contemplation and beyond—I have shown that the possibility of reaching these heights was represented in the subject's encounter with a point of failure in the signifying chain, in Francisco's figuration of the wounds of Christ as S1, for instance. At this point of failure and traumatic encounter, the symptomatic mobilization of the letters in the body can yield a kind of ideal Franciscan converting-subject founded on a kind of unbeing (what Lacan, at one point, called *désêtre* as the designation for the end of an analysis) or alienated desire premised on a traumatic and excessive encounter that arrives alongside the failure in the signifying chain.[159] Poverty/lack both aim to create the circumstances of this possible encounter and are upheld in Franciscan representations that put it at the center, concealing bleeding wound-holes inside the hole of an abstract emblem, a kind of "double

[159] Reading Freud's case of the Wolf Man, Tracy McNulty points out that the clinic of the dream and the clinic of the signifier reached a certain point of failure or exhaustion. It was precisely at this point in the analysis that the symptom of constipation presented itself. As McNulty puts it:

> In the 'Wolf Man' case, the subject 'speaks' from the bowel, where his position is 'pinpointed' by the constipation that literalizes his position in the fantasy. [para] Inviting the bowel to 'join in on the conversation' goes well beyond claiming that 'a signifier is a body as much as a letter.' It supposes the exhaustion of the signifying chain, the lack internal to the chain inasmuch as it abuts—but cannot inscribe—the Real (103).

Tracy McNulty, "Desuturing Desire: The Work of the Letter in the Miller-Leclaire Debate," in *Concept and Form, Vol. II: Interviews and Essays on the* Cahiers pour l'Analyse, eds. Peter Hallward and Knox Paden (London: Verso, 2012), 89-104.

possession" that also comprises a kind of double negation.[160] This creates a possible foundation for the ethical subject capable of symbolic inscription. In any event, if my reading of these texts seems to implicitly challenge, or to at least complicate, the historiographical pitting of Franciscan spirituality as a positive theology against the mystical *via negative* and apophatic theology, then that would be quite right.[161]

Beyond this, I have begun to show how this theorization and practice of autoconversion begins to connect to Franciscan understandings of heteroconversion in the missions. My coinage of myssionization aims to insist that it is crucial to read specific historical instances that unfolded within Capuchin-Franciscan missions alongside and against the ideals and ideologies that can be traced through Franciscan spiritual and theological corpus.

While the last two chapters have argued, each in their own ways, that Franciscan theorizations of their own spirituality held out a space for the introduction of something new into symbolic life—drawing upon psychoanalysis as a productive point of contemporary engagement on this question—we have not yet seen an instance where this unfolded among Capuchin-Franciscans in their missions. In focusing on the figure of Épiphane de Moirans, the last two body chapters of this dissertation will argue that the late seventeenth century call of these two Capuchin-Franciscans for an end to slavery and for enslaved people to receive reparations reflected just such an instance.

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[160] The term "double possession" (*doblada possession*) is Francisco's, used in the chapter I discussed on the wounds as breast in a section which discusses the double possession of the lover and the beloved in the *Canticle of Canticles*.
[161] See Amy Hollywood's historiographically rigorous and theoretically rich discussion of the medieval Franciscan mystic Angela of Foligno, along the lines of Georges Bataille's *Atheological Summa* in *Sensible Ecstasy: Mysticism, Sexual Difference, and the Demands of History* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2002): 60-87. Angela's Franciscan *via negativa* is particularly palpable in her autobiographical *Book*. For a translation with excellent introductory discussion, see Paul Lachance (trans. and ed.), *Angela of Foligno: Complete Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993).

3.7 Threshold

In chapters four and five of this dissertation, I turn attention from medieval and early modern Franciscan philosophical anthropology, theology, and spirituality, and mysticism—cosmovision, in short—to a particular instance of Capuchin-Franciscan missionary activity in the New World. I focus on a theological-legal controversy initiated by two Capuchin-Franciscan missionaries, who called, in their writing and in preaching, for the enslaved people to be freed and for them to receive backpay for their labor. I do this in two different, but, I hope, complementary ways.

Chapter Three provides an overview of the case and of *Servi liberi deu naturalis mancipiorum libertatis iusta defensio* (henceforth *Servi liberi*), the text composed by one of the friars, Épiphane de Moirans, a Frenchman. My mode of writing here is micro-historical, at times, involving a more narrative ordering, exposition, contextualization and presentation of material related to one specific case. By way of contrast and complement, Chapter Four engages in a close reading of a rare moment in the *Servi liberi* where Épiphane writes a somewhat lengthy first-person account of an event he witnessed. I read this text closely, associating and interpreting around it to see what might be gleaned if it is installed as a kind of node within a broader symbolic web of coordinates connected to what I have introduced in chapters 1 and 2 along the lines of Franciscan cosmovision or "thinking in Franciscan." Though both chapters involve descriptions of texts and events, the narrative of chapter three unfolds in more a traditional historical-narrative vein and the contribution of chapter four is of a more of an anti-disciplinary anthrohistorical and associative nature.[162] Some repetition between the two chapters—the citation of some of some of the same passages in *Servi liberi*, for instance—should help to demonstrate the contrasting stakes and effects of the different writerly-interpretive methodologies deployed.

[162] On Antho-History as an anti-discipline, see Edward Murphy, William Cohen, Chandra D. Bhimull, Fernando Coronil, Monica Eileen Patterson, and Julie Skurki (eds.) *Anthrohistory: Unsettling Knowledge, Questioning Discipline* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011).

It is worth noting, by now, that to the extent we could refer to Franciscanism as a discourse, it is an associatively open and permeable one, even if it is, at the same time, grounded in certain major coordinates or nodes (poverty and minority, among others), which I have attempted to explore in the first two chapters. (As has already been argued in Chapter Two, there's a way in which Francisco de Osuna's *abecedarios* illustrate a kind of Franciscan capaciousness, as metonymic and affective chains link and extend with surprising and, perhaps, interminable variety.[163]) Indeed, the openness and permeability of Franciscanism, both as a discourse and as comprised by the dynamic sets of institutional actors and relations, informally branded under the sign "Franciscan," contributes to the durability of the signifier "Franciscan," across time, even amid various institutional ruptures. The very name Francis—a name-of-the-father?—the one whom Franciscans commonly call(ed) by the title "our Seraphic Father," is as effaced in the official names of the order that he founded, the Ordo Fratrum Minorum (the order of little/lesser/minor brothers/friars) as was a kind of effacement of Francis's self-proclaimed maternal femininity, effaced and betrayed insofar as its signifying representations sought to domesticate it under an institutional sign.[164] Trace the genealogy as far back as you can, through any signifying chain, and what one finds, rather than a point of

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[163] See Chapter Three, pp. 86-97.

[164] On Francis's self-proclaimed maternity, see Chapter Two, pages 43-44. The association of the "Seraphic," in its connection to woundedness seems an important qualification to "Father." For better or worse, I am working here with a psychoanalytic distinction of the "masculine" and the "feminine," which, cleaving these terms away from associations with the "male" and the "female," discusses the masculine as a domain of ethics, signification, and inscription for the feminine as that in each subject, which is censored and out-of-language (*see* Lucie Cantin, "L'espace de la masculinité: l'exigence de l'acte au lieu d'un questionnement sure l'être," Savoir: psychanalyse et analyse culturelle 5, nos 1-2 (September 2000): 125-157).

Jacques Lacan develops a concept of the "Name-of-the-Father" at several points throughout his teaching. Most notable to my deployment are the concluding lesson of The Seminar, Vol. XI on Anxiety and the "Introduction on the Seminar to the Names-of-the-Father," of which only one session took place, due what Lacan called his "excommunication" from the International Psychoanalytic Association. At the conclusion of Seminar X, Lacan writes: "Contrary to what the religious myth states, the father is not a *causa sui* but a subject who has gone far enough into the realization of his desire to be able to integrate it back into its cause, whatever that may be, back into what is irreducible in the function of the [object] *a*" (337). In the course of this volume of the seminar, the *object a* is introduced as the object of anxiety, a corrective to Freud's assertion that anxiety was without an object. As the unspeakable object-cause of desire, which lacks an image, the objet a is associate with the real and with the feminine. I contend that this concept could be helpful in the anthrohistorical consideration of the religious subject, and I return to this in the conclusion. Jacques Lacan, *Anxiety;* and Jacques Lacan, "Introduction to the Names-of-the-Father Seminar," in *Television: A Challenge to the Psychoanalytic Establishment*, ed. Joan Copjec (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Co., 1990), 81-95.

origin, is an open wound. The real kicker here (more on kicking to come) is that this wound cannot be said to belong to the would-be father, and still less to his name, but is the deferred/differed repetition of the wound of an Other, Christ crucified—and, as such, an Other bared (nude) and barred. (I will return to the questions evoked here more systematically in the conclusion.)

Discourses that have been associated with the name Franciscanism, in different times and places, pick up a kind of salience as certain signifiers and concepts become more densely proximate within a given sampling of the discourse, and as they become believable by others who carry some relation to Franciscan as a name. They become less salient in others. Whereas Chapter Three provides a narrative that unfolds in a purported context based in institutional configurations, relations, and mechanisms—a chain of events; Chapter Four deconstructs a narrative/fantasy based on the signifying relations that could have made it possible—for Épiphane as friar and as author, a subjective Event. As such, I analyze Épiphane's account of his experience as a Franciscan Event, salient in the dense resonance of its signification, to see if it sheds any light on the question of his novel argumentation.

Through the inclusion and exercise of these two modes of telling, the narrative-historical (perhaps aligned with the psychoanalytic idea of imaginary) and the associative-interpretive (proceeding more along the lines of the exploration of specific signifiers as they might elucidate symbolic coordinates), I aim to demonstrate two things. First, I want to see if the inclusion of both modes of telling can help us to locate the contours of a (Real) limit to genealogical or social constructivist methods of answering the question "Where did Épiphane's argument come from?" In this way, chapter three ends with a kind of failure to answer this question of origins for an argument that undoubtedly appears as novel in its context—that enslaved Africans should be freed and receive reparations as backpay for labor.

Second, and related to this, I would also like to avoid the presentist/romanticist conscription of Épiphane as a forward-thinking agent of modernity, following David Scott, or as a thinker and actor "ahead of his time."[165] I do this through the associative consideration of his first-person vignette, in which I track the author's deployment of Franciscan coordinates—whether intentional or unintentional, on Épiphane's part, and, indeed, even to the point of risking my own authorial imposition of them—to consider and to explore how Franciscan spirituality could be brought to bear in material relations. Considering his vignette as like a dream or a fantasy, I would like even to defer the question of whether it happened in "reality," as irrelevant to the work at hand. I am analytically more interested in attending to Épiphane's argument to the extent that, through difference and repetition, it extends Franciscanism in its attunement to the woundedness of the ~~Other~~: the question of an enslaved woman's participation in the life of Christ. Against potential alternative emplotments within narrative imaginaries of "the colonial," "the missionary," etc., the analytic upshot of elevating Épiphane's narrative encounter with an enslaved woman and subjecting it to analysis and deconstruction, reading it through a Franciscan symbolic matrix is to demonstrate how a converted and cultivated perceptual sensorium, facilitated by some of the contemplative Franciscan ways of being and knowing described earlier, could constrain Épiphane, as friar and subject, opening up space for certain hitherto *unreceivable* acts, such as his writing, whose true novelty the reader would now be better positioned to assess and to appreciate.[166] Unlike other abolitionist authors, I suspect that this had little to do with empathy or the performance of empathy.

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[165] See David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).
[166] In psychoanalysis, the question of the receivable relates to what can be received, heard, or understood within a given set of social-cultural rules, norms, and values, and, within what Willy Apollon calls the "cultural montage of the sexual" or what Gayle Rubin has called the "sex/gender system." Insofar as psychoanalysis focuses on what is repressed—or, better, what is censored—it aims to open up a space for that which would be deemed inadmissible within a given social link. Acts, in addition to dreams, slips, and symptoms point to this unreceivable Thing, which might be spoken about through evocation or through equivocation, or thought kinds of poesis, aesthetics, etc. *On the sex/gender system, see* Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex," in Ellen Lewin, *Feminist Anthropology: A Reader.* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2006), 87-106. *On the cultural montage of the sexual's censorship "of desire in a civilization" and*

its organization "around and against the stakes of feminine jouissance" (11), see Willy Apollon, "The Subject of the Quest," *Penumbr(a)* 2, no. 1 (2022): 1-14. *On the question of censorship and the aims of psychoanalysis, as I am developing them in this note, see* Willy Apollon, "The Limit: A Fundamental Question for the Subject in Human Experience," trans. Daniel Wilson, *Konturen* 3, no. 1 (December 2010): 103-118; Willy Apollon, "The Untreatable," trans. Steven Miller, *Umbr(a): Incurable*, no. 1 (2006): 23-39; Tracy McNulty, "The Untreatable"; Lucie Cantin, "The Drive: The Untreatable Quest for Desire," trans. Tracy McNulty, *d i f f e r e n c e s: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 28, no. 1 (2017): 24-45.

Chapter 4 Capuchin Charism and the Law—A Life and Death Critique of Atlantic Slavery (1678-1686)

4.1 Introduction: *The Friar and the Canoe*

French colonial documents give us a picture of the Capuchin friar Épiphane de Moirans mounted in a canoe piloted by twenty Carib Indians en route to Saint Vincent from Martinique in 1679.[167] Even though Charles Blénac, the governor of Martinique, wanted him to go to Grenada, Épiphane defied the governor's wishes, purportedly in order to minister to and (indeed) convert those Carib Indians who had not yet been reached by earlier missionaries. This picture of the canoe-mounted friar as sandal-clad, unwashed, with an untrimmed beard—the telltale signs of the Capuchin Franciscans – resonates with the lore of many Capuchin missionaries. Higher clergy and those among metropolitan administrators who were more evangelically-minded, generally respected friars for their willingness to travel to the farthest peripheries and to seek out the most difficult circumstances. Working under desperate conditions offered friars opportunities to win over the hardest, most outlying converts or, perhaps more likely, to achieve their own salvation through what they thought to be the virtue of self-sacrifice.

Épiphanes's canoe trip is said to have ended badly. His navigators turned on him and cast his body into the sea, or so a letter from Governor Blénac would have us believe. We know that the tale is as astonishing and sensational as it is utterly false, for Épiphane showed up in colonial records – this time Spanish ones – again in 1682. Was his death somehow faked – an alibi that enabled him

[167] Charles Blénac, *18 November 1679*, ANOM COL C^{8A} 2 F° 206, available at http://anom.archivesnationales.culture.gouv.fr/ark:/61561/zn401auutuj. See also, Bernard David, *Le clergé: Dictionnaire biographique de la Martinique (1635-1848)* (Fort-de-France: Société d'histoire de la Martinique, 1984), 85.

to move unhindered into Spanish territory with neither French colonial or Capuchin religious superiors inquiring after him? Did it allow him to make a desired break from local colonial and religious superiors – some space to maneuver according to his own values or preferences? Or, did Blénac cook the story up himself, unable to account for Épiphane's disappearance and not wanting to be held responsible by the metropolitan officials for his consistently poor relations with missionaries.[168] Then again, maybe Blénac knew Épiphane would disappear and made up the story of his death as an excuse to round up Carib men. The question of where the story of Épiphane's death comes from and the possible interests that might have precipitated the invention of such a tale may never be answerable.[169]

Nevertheless, this false story contains a certain element of truth. As sensational as it seems to us, it was probably thinkable to those who read it. Capuchins were known for disappearing among indigenous people, and the fact that a friar would be traveling in such a way, though it might have been seen as odd, fit nicely with the Capuchins' behavior, which turned the odd and extreme into one of the key tactics for religious life and ministry. Pacifique de Provins, an earlier seventeenth century Capuchin, who was known for his work in Persia, also asked to be left with Caribs on a particular island and was never seen or heard from – at least not by the French – again.[170] His story, like that of Épiphane, demonstrates the Capuchins' remarkable global reach and missionary commitment. Like many of the early Capuchin-Franciscan missionaries in the Americas, Épiphane de Moirans led an inordinately colorful life. Sometime after the faked or misreported "death," Épiphane was arrested in Venezuela by Spanish authorities, accused of being a French spy.

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168 André Baudrit, "Charles de Courbon: Comte de Blénac," *Mémoires de la Société d'Histoire de la Martinique* 2 (1967).
169 In the introduction to his critical translation of Moirans' work, Robert Lapierre asserts that the rumor of Moirans' "death" came from the black people living on the island of Saint Vincent, who were, at this time, cooperating with the French to dispossess indigenous people from the lands they occupied. However, the author does not cite a primary source for this assertion. Robert Lapierre, introduction to "La Liberté des esclaves ou Défense juridique de la liberté naturelle des esclaves," in *Mémoires de la société d'histoire de la Martinique* 6 (1995): 13.
170 Bernard Grunberg and Benoît Roux, *Missionaires capucins et carmes aux Antilles* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2013).

Above and beyond all of these dramatic and fascinating episodes, Épiphane's most remarkable accomplishment was to call for the abolition of slavery and the remuneration of all enslaved people for their stolen labor. (The latter of these claims does indeed resemble contemporary calls for reparations.[171]) Moreover, this precocious anti-slavery argument eventually found support – even if it was qualified and hesitant – in the highest quarters of church power. Épiphane's story might be seen as the prophetic, outlying, and anomalous critique generated by one eccentric friar. On the other hand, it also provides a glimpse of a much larger Atlantic network of friars and laypeople who were thinking about ways to challenge the system of Atlantic slavery as early as the 17th century. The focus upon Épiphane as an anomaly or exception has tended to preclude systematic attention to the various facets of his legal and theological argumentation, raised in a text he composed while under house arrest in 1682 entitled *Servi liberi deu naturalis mancipiorum libertatis iusta defensio* (henceforth *Servi liberi*). Épiphane de Moirans' life and work have been portrayed as so exceptional that it has become difficult to contextualize and situate them within their own milieu. This process has tended to depict Épiphane as a prophet, an almost ahistorical figure who mediates divine revelation, rather than as a careful, critical thinker with a systematic view of the world. Seen from this perspective, Épiphane considered the controversy of Atlantic slavery, made crucial interventions about it, and imagined possible futures and choices for those people – both free and enslaved – who were caught in what he saw as slavery's proliferating web of sin and death. Exposition and analysis on the part of *Servi Liberi*'s legal and theological argumentation casts Moir Épiphane's life and work in a markedly different light by calling attention to systematic argumentation of the text as well as the possible epistemic, discursive, material, and sensuous conditions for its production. Considering Épiphane's life and text side-by-side allows us to have a

[171] For example, see Louis Sala-Molins, *Esclavage réparation: Les lumières des capuchins et les lueurs des pharisiens* (Paris: Lignes, 2014).

more complete, less sensationalistic, appreciation for this complex and striking figure. Épiphane's critique can be distinguished from then-hegemonic Catholic discussions of slavery and can be situated – not as a predecessor or bridge to Enlightenment philosophizing about slavery and freedom – but rather within a developed, but "minor," Franciscan theological literature.

4.2 Épiphane de Moirans' New World Beginnings

Épiphane de Moirans, who was born in France and a member of the Capuchin province of Burgundy, finally reached the Capuchins' mission in Martinique in 1677, after more than two years of failed departures. Earlier attempts to sail to the New World had been thwarted by Dutch and Portuguese military and political incursions. After having granted their petition for approval to join the foreign missions, Francis de Marneville – the provincial minister of Normandy and prefect for the missions in the French Antilles and French Guiana – sent Épiphane and a companion to the Capuchins' missions in Guiana in 1674 under the authority of the Capuchin minister general and the Propaganda Fide (Council for the Propagation of the Faith).[172] Moir Épiphane ans seems to have finally arrived in Martinique in 1678. Missionary friars there were under the auspices of the mission of the provinces of Normandy and Brittany. When Charles Blénac, the governor of Martinique, advised him to go to Grenada, he declined, preferring to minister instead on the island of Saint Vincent and eventually working his way to Venezuela in order to minister to indigenous people there.[173]

In 1679 Épiphane was taken captive by the Spanish in Venezuela, with the approval of the local Capuchin superior, for having ventured into Spanish territory without the necessary

[172] John M. Lenhart, "Capuchin Champions of Negro Emancipation in Cuba (1681-1685)," *Franciscan Studies* 6 (1946): 195; David, *Le clergé: Dictionnaire*, 85.
[173] Blénac, *18 November 1679*. David, *Le Clergé: Dictionnaire biographique*, 85.

permissions.[174] As he puts it in the prologue to his *Servi liberi deu naturalis mancipiorum libertatis iusta defensio* (henceforth *Servi liberi*), "I was wounded by wrongs and assailed by taunts, false testimonies, calumnies, insults, and excommunications without cause and without jurisdiction; and I was burdened juridically without due process of the law."[175] These would become almost life-long complaints for Épiphane. While working among the Indians, Épiphane had begun to warn planters and slave owners, as his "brothers in Christ," of the atrocities they were committing against enslaved Africans and of the danger this caused their souls. Spanish officials charged him with being a French spy (among other things), and deported him to Havana, where he was to await transportation back to Europe. The fact that all of this took place before his arrival in Havana demonstrated a consistent anti-authoritarian impulse, one that would escalate all the more in Cuba.

Épiphane's explanation as to why he remained in Havana so long was a rather curious one. He said that a squadron was taking him from the port in Havana back to Spain. After the ship left the port it returned back, at which point, he disembarked, and he tells us in *Servi liberi* that, at this point, he was "summoned and taken to a deserted place" in order to "live in solitude."[176] Exactly who summoned him and took him to the deserted place is not clear. What is clear is that while in Cuba, Épiphane remained at a small hermitage called Ermita de la Inmaculada Concepción de María y del Santo Cristo del Potosí, and, eventually, his confrère José de Jaca joined him there. Jaca, also a Capuchin, had been removed from the friary in Havana for causing the ire of the colonial elite by preaching against slavery. Initially, he had enjoyed the support and encouragement of other vowed

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[174] In the prologue to his *Servi liberi*, Moirans disusses the unjust manner in which he was taken from among the Indians by the Spanish *before* he arrived in Havana. Épiphane de Moirans, *A Just Defense of the Natural Freedom of Slaves: All Slaves Should Be Free (1682) – A Critical Edition and Translation of Servi liberi seu naturalis mancipiorum libertatis iusta defensio*, trans. and ed. Edward R Sunshine (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2007): 9-11 (4). N.B. Henceforth, *Servi Liberi*, and page numbers provided are for this edition, though I parenthetically not the original manuscript's page numbers. Lenhart, "Capuchin Champions," 198.

[175] Moirans, *Servi liberi*, 9-11 (4).

[176] Moirans, *Servi liberi*, 11 (5).

religious and clerics in Havana, but, eventually, the planters had become angry at his preaching and complained to officials.[177] Jaca's religious superiors evidently obliged the officials by expelling him from the city.[178] He sought solitude with Épiphane on the outskirts.

The hermitage, Santo Cristo del Potosí, built in earlier in the seventeenth century and still standing today, is located approximately 5 kilometers to the east of Havana in Guanabacoa, an area that held many plantations which depended on the labor of enslaved people.[179] As Épiphane supposedly awaited safe passage in that hermitage, he and Jaca seem to have been much more active than what the solitary life usually associated with the hermitage would suggest. The friars began an itinerant mission in the surrounding plantations, as Guillaume Aubert suggests.[180] At this point, Épiphane joined Jaca's cause in earnest, one he describes himself being morally compelled to do based on his experience of witnessing the trade in enslaved peoples and of living among the poor outside Havana.[181] The two friars began refusing confessional absolution to those who held slaves (and the wives of men who held slaves).

If Épiphane and Jaca began an itinerant mission out of Santo Cristo del Potosí what exactly might such ministerial activity have entailed? Clearly planters and their wives were among those they sought to "convert" by encouraging them to free their slaves for the sake of their souls, but we might engage in some informed speculation about the extent to which the friars ministered to (or tried to minister to) enslaved people. Despite the highly structured argumentation of Épiphane's

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[177] I use the term "religious" here in its less common usage, as a noun defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as "a person bound by monastic vows." Technically, in Catholic legal and theological discourse, the word "religious," used as a noun, designates men and women who have particular vows and are juridically connected to a larger community, though their vows need not necessarily be monastic ones (i.e. friars – like Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinians, etc. – are not technically "monks," and their vows are not monastic).
[178] Moirans, *Servi liberi*, 11 (5).
[179] The neighborhood of Guanabacoa maintains, even today, a strong Afro-Cuban identity.
[180] Guillaume Aubert, "'To Establish One Law and Definite Rules:' Race, Religion, and Transatlantic Origins of the Louisiana Code Noir" in *Louisiana: Crossroads of the Atlantic World*, ed. Cecile Vidal (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 29.
[181] Moirans, *Servi Liberi*, 11 (5).

text, the friar also discussed or alluded to several of his own experiences with enslaved people. Épiphane made clear that his work was not only an ideological critique of slavery, but, also a text that emerged from his own direct experiences with enslaved people. As he put in the first line of *Servi liberi*,

> I have seen, heard, tested, and confirmed by experience the wrongs done to slaves and the practice of injustices, oppressions, cruelties, inhumanities, and impieties of such a great number and enormity that barbarians or Scythians – not to mention Christians or religious – would be stunned to know or hear a part of what I have seen with my own eyes, heard with my own ears, and touched with my own hands in the West Indies, on the islands of America, and in regions of the mainland continent from the Spanish and French who are Christians and Catholics.[182]

The theme of direct experience that Épiphane emphasized from the very beginning of *Servi liberi* also peppered his argumentation. For example, when he talked about Spaniards who threw out elderly slaves because they were too old to work he says, "This is what slaves who were very old and sick or afflicted with incurable diseases told me: 'My master kicked me out; he threw me out of my home.'"[183] Such statements might be seen as rhetorical flourishes that could have more to do with the construction of the authorial ethos of the eyewitness, as we see in countless 17th and 18th century travel narratives.[184] Yet, such statements might also be read as reflecting Épiphane's unique ministerial experiences, many of which might have been drawn from his experiences among planters and enslaved people in the Spanish colonies. If this was the case, then the time he and Jaca spent in

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[182] "Visis, audis, probatis, experientia compertis factis erga mancipia iniuriis, iniustitiis, oppressionibus, crudelitatibus, inhumanitatibus, exercitis et impietatibus tot ac tantis ut stuperet barbarus aut Scytha ne dicam Christianus vel audiret ex parte quae vidi oculis meis, auribus meis audivi, et contractavi manibus in Indiis occidentalibus, in insulis Americae, et regionibus terrae continentis, ab Hispanis et Francis Christianis et Catholicis […]" Moirans, *Servi liberi*, 7 (3).
[183] "Dicebant mihi servi decrepitiet infirmi aut morbo laborantes insanabili, 'Mi amo me botó, me echó de casa.'" Moirans, *Servi liberi*, 47-49 (21).
[184] For other travel narratives composed by clerics that rely on crafting the authorial ethos of the eyewitness, see two well-known and colorful accounts by French Dominican missionaries in the Caribbean: Jean-Baptiste Labat, *Nouveau voyage aux isles de l'Amerique* (Paris: Pierre-François Giffart,1722), and Jean-Baptiste Du Tertre, *Histoire generale des isles de S. Christophe, de la Guadeloupe, de la Martinique, et autres dans l'Amerique* (Paris: Chez Jacques Langlois, 1654). Both authors go to lengths to stress that they witnessed or experienced things that they could not have seen, and they insert themselves into narratives they came across secondhand.

Guanabacoa might have been less about contemplative withdrawal than it was about a uniquely Capuchin combination of energetic ministry and solitary contemplation.

Figure 7. "Ermita de la Inmaculada Concepción de María y del Santo Cristo del Potosí" Photographs from the 1920's of the hermitage where Épiphane and Francisco José lived in 1681, before both of them were recalled to Havana under censure and house arrest. It was constructed in the seventeenth century.[1]

When Spanish colonial authorities began to receive planters' complaints about the two friars, they reacted quickly. In early Fall of 1681, the vicar general of the diocese ordered the friars to return to a monastery in Havana called the Hospital de San Juan de Dios.[185] Instead, the friars stayed on in Guanabacoa for several months, preaching against slavery, denying confessional absolution to the wives of slaveholders, and perhaps ministering to enslaved people. They repeatedly refused "calls to cease their activities at once and return to Havana."[186] Eventually, they were arrested by authorities and forcibly returned to Havana. Instead of recanting, the two friars chose to escalate their campaign, arguing that, as apostolic missionaries, their obedience was not to the local diocese, but instead to the Capuchin general minister and the Propaganda Fide in Rome.[187]

[185] José Tomás López Garcia, ed. and trans. "Expediente del proceso seguido a fr. Francisco Jose de Jaca ofm cap. Y fr. Epifanio de Moirans ofm cap." in *Dos Defensores de los Esclavos Negros en el Siglo XVI (Francisco José de Jaca y Epifanio de Moirans)* (Maracaibo: Biblioteca Corpozulia, 1982).
[186] Aubert, "'To Establish One Law," 29.
[187] See Moirans' and Jaca's response in Garcia, "Expediente del proceso," 321-325.

Furthermore, the friars stated that by excommunicating apostolic missionaries, over whom he did not have authority, Don Francisco de Soto, the diocesan Vicar, had in effect excommunicated himself ("Latae sententiae"). In support of their claim, they cited a papal bull promulgated by Sixtus IV in 1476.[188] This was one of the argumentative maneuvers that reveal Épiphane's skill and training as a canon lawyer. The friars awaited a response from Spanish officials and those of the Roman Curia.

4.3 Épiphane de Moirans' *Servi libri*

In the winter of 1681-1682, still imprisoned in a Havana monastery called Hospital de San Juan de Dios, Épiphane began work on his *Servi liberi*. Épiphane had apparently received extensive training in the theological tradition of Thomas Aquinas, the giant of medieval theology (whom he cited often), as well as that of the fourth century theologian and church father Augustine. Despite the undoubted influence of these hegemonic and indomitable theological figures in Épiphane's education, he would certainly have had exposure to other Franciscan theologies as well. Through the works of Bonaventure, perhaps Duns Scotus, the lives of Franciscan saints and figures, and through the careful attention to Franciscan values and charisms that the Capuchins held in high esteem, Épiphane would also have been immersed in Franciscan theological approaches.[189]

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[188] Missionaries under the direct authority of Propaganda Fide were known as apostolic missionaries – as Moirans makes quite clear in his work – and they were, ideally, directly beholden to Rome instead of local bishops, as well as to the superiors of their own religious communities. It is nonetheless easy to imagine the various conflicts of interest and power plays that such an institutional structure would allow. Though missionaries could always appeal to higher authorities overseas, such appeals would take time, providing time and space for local diocesan officials to maneuver and exercise their own authority.

[189] González also explains that Épiphane was highly trained in his critical introduction to the documents of the Spanish colonial case file. Miguel Anxo Pena Gonález, "Epifanio de Moirans: Exponent singular de la práctica aniesclavista," in *Siervos libres: Una Propuesta antiesclavista a finales del siglo XVII*, ed. and trans. Miguel Anxo Pena González (Madrid: Consejo Superior de investigaciones científicas, 2007), xxxi. For a concise discussion of Augustine's ambivalence on slavery, see Peter Iver Kaufman's chapter, which suggests that "perhaps [Augustine] thought slavery, as much as corruption, was as ieradicable as the lust to dominate. Slavery joined corruption, domination, and the fascination with the garish or gaudy as symptoms of the sin within everyone." Peter Iver Kaufman, "Augustine's Dystopia," in *Augustine's City of God: A*

Despite an anti-intellectual current that pervaded the Capuchin tradition, Épiphane came into religious life at a time when seventeenth century French Capuchins were in the midst of what Fabienne Henryot has called the "golden age" of Capuchin textual production, a period which lasted for most of the seventeenth century, trailing off in the early- to mid-eighteenth century.[190] Traditionally, the Capuchins sought a return to the ideals of the early Franciscan order, which disdained the ownership of any property, including – perhaps most especially – books.[191] As the order expanded out from Italy, friars in in France were seriously engaged in theological and intellectual debates of the day, even as the order maintained an ongoing emphasis on its charism[192] – close proximity to poor people in their everyday lives, rigorous penitential and contemplative practices, and the performance of "sensuous" models of preaching that attracted and appealed to laypeople.[193] As his work demonstrated, Épiphane received training in theology and canon law that made him exceptionally well-educated, even by the standards of other clerics or of other Capuchins who came from provinces based outside France.

Critical Guide, ed. James Wetzel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 65-66. John Duns Scotus, a medieval Franciscan theologian, took a much more restrictive view on slavery than many of his medieval contemporaries did. I would be tempted here to make a connection between Épiphane, Scotus, and a Franciscan tradition of argumentation about slavery, but I have not yet found firm evidence that Épiphane would have been trained in Scotus' theology. John Duns Scotus, *On the Will and Morality*, ed. and trans. Allan B. Wolter (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1986), 114-123, 325-330.

190 Fabienne Henryot, "Les capucins et l'écriture aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles d'après la Bibliotheca de Bernard de Bologne," *Études franciscaines* (2011): 111-143.

191 Vain and useless books, so harmful to the 'spirit,' are prohibited. Christ is the book of life. The brothers could carry with them one small spiritual book. In community, they read the Gospels, the Rule and Testament [of Francis of Assisi], the sacred scriptures and commentary of the holy doctors [of the church], the life of Francis and his companions […].

Paul Hanbridge (ed. and trans.), "Introduction," in *The Capuchin Constitutions of 1536: A New Translation in English* (Rome: Collegio San Lorenzo da Brindisi, 2007): xvi-xvii. Also see Hanbridge's discussion of Capuchin preaching, which emphasized bare-bones oration, drawn directly from scripture – a mode of preaching that appealed to common people and disdained eloquence. Capuchin adversaries accused such a style as being too "Lutheran." Hanbridge, *Capuchin Constitutions*, xii-xiii.

192 "Charism" is a theological term that describes the mission and values of a given religious community or order, the spiritual crux that drives their unique work. For example, some religious communities might describe their charism as teaching or missionary work. The Capuchin Franciscan charism is often explained as emphasizing poverty, contemplation, preaching, and community life. Another way to think about a charism is as the face (*visage*) of the community. Hanbridge, *Capuchin Constitutions*, xv.

193 Bernard Dompnier, "Pastorale de la peur et pastorale de la séduction: La Méthode de conversion des missionaires capuchins," in *La conversion au XVII siècle*, 257-281 (Paris: Centre Méridional de Rencontres sur le XVIIe Siècle, 1983), 267-271.

Furthermore, the training Épiphane received was not only an intellectual formation, but an institutionalized set of practices that aimed at nothing less than changing a person with normal desires into a friar. In considering his life and text, the extent to which his novitiate impacted his own disposition toward himself and others should not be underestimated. During their novitiate year, Capuchin novices underwent an intense training revolving around practices that aimed to rearrange their desires, thoughts, and modes of bodily comportment. One of Moirans' contemporaries, the famous Capuchin preacher Yves de Paris, wrote of the novitiate by comparing it to a newborn's encounter with the world. The Capuchin novitiate was meant as an entrance point into a new spiritual life – one Yves de Paris described both in terms of "love" and "light," on the one hand, and "violence" on the other. Novices were supposed to practice steadfast penitential practices, to publicly confess their sins to the community, and to undergo frequent public reprimands. Yet, they were supposed to enjoy all of this with the greatest acceptance and happiness, deriving spiritual pleasure through that which "the world" considered undesirable, unfortunate, or humiliating.[194] Novices learned to guard their eyes from that which was considered frivolous and indulgent, and, especially, to guard their gaze from women.

In Yves de Paris' work, violence against the will was a remedy that facilitated the eventual rebirth of the novice as a competent and vowed friar. At the end of the novitiate year, novices became friars by taking vows and signing a contract stating that they owned no property. Sometime before signing this contract, they were to give away any property they had to poor people.[195] This process of "formation," both in Yves de Paris' likely idealized representation of it and in its lived

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194 Les jeusnes, les disciplines, les confessions, les reprimendes publiques, sont tousiours moindres qu'ils ne le desirent; chacun se considere plus malade que les autres, de vanité, de negligence, de mille defauts qui ont besoin de remedes plus violents.
Yves de Paris, *Instructions religieuses tirées des Annales et Chroniques de l'Ordre de saint François* (Paris: n.p., 1662), 51 cited in Bernard Dompnier, *Enquête au pays des frères des anges: Les Capucins de la province de Lyon aux XVII^e et XVIII^e siècles* (Saint-Etienne: Université de Saint-Etienne, 1993), 101. For more on Capuchin novitiates in France in the 17th and 18th centuries, see Dompnier's excellent discussion of the novitiate year Chapter 3 – "L'Initiation et l'engagement."

195 Dompnier, *Frères des anges*, 111-116.

Capuchin practices, demonstrates that Moirans' novitiate formation, if it were effective, would have radically restructured his consciousness, senses, and bodily comportment. Moirans' life and text provide a picture of someone willing to undergo, and indeed to derive some pleasure from, the greatest of difficulties. The violent process of Capuchin novitiate formation and the kinds of reinterpretation of desire and pleasure it was supposed to instill in friars explains how such a person as Épiphane was made through specific religious practices. Furthermore, it is not difficult to see how such practices might have provided friars with a subversive disposition toward authority. If punishments were supposed to have been enjoyed, perhaps Épiphane was energized and revitalized by his imprisonment, taking the restrictions on his ministry as a time to joyfully think-through and scribble away at his critique.

The text Épiphane wrote was originally composed in Latin and handwritten on parchment. It never seems to have been published in print contemporaneously, and there is little evidence as to whether or how it circulated after its composition. Attached to the Spanish colonial case file, the document was composed for the express purpose of defending the friars' cause before Spanish colonial and ecclesiastical officials.[196] Épiphane discussed his own purposes for composing the manuscript in a three-fold way. He claimed to have written it because it was an error to conceal wisdom amidst evil and lies; because Africans were no longer being brought to Christianity, but rather were being made "into twice the children of hell that they are" by the slave trade; and, finally, in order to warn Christian rulers of the impending doom that their actions would bring down upon them.[197] The original document is in the Archivo General de Indias in Seville as part of the case file on de Épiphane and Francisco José. The Latin composition of the text suggests that Épiphane intended other clerics and churchmen – perhaps those who would judge the proceedings brought

[196] García, "Expediente del proceso," 319.
[197] Moirans, *Servi liberi*, 15-19 (7-9).

against him – as his primary audience. His engagement with the work of other Iberian theologians also suggests that his intended audience was comprised of well-educated and intellectually astute clerics and theologians.

The text was composed of a prologue and thirteen chapters. The prologue began with Épiphane's own experience, describing in some detail the events that led him to his current position. Here, he described the things that influenced him to work against Atlantic slavery such as meeting Francisco José, collaborating with him, and, finally, being persecuted alongside him as important.[198] The crucial first chapter addressed the current situation of New World slavery, and it argued that slavery evidences the effects of sin and death in the world. Chapters two through five discussed slavery in terms of natural law, divine positive law, human positive law, and the law of nations, respectively – each of which required careful exposition on Épiphane's part in order to develop or refute the claims of other theologians. Chapters six through eleven review and refuted the arguments of Iberian theologians who had argued in favor of the enslavement of African people. Chapters thirteen and fourteen demanded the remuneration of all enslaved people for their labor upon their release, an argument that has been claimed recently as an early argument for reparations.[199]

In the beginning of the text, Épiphane offered a summary of the text's five conclusions, which demonstrated the surprising and uncompromising clarity of his position. It seems apt to reproduce these points here in full:

1. No one may buy or sell any of the African slaves that are commonly called Blacks.
2. Everyone who owns some of them must set them free under pain of eternal damnation.
3. In setting slaves free, slave-masters must make restitution to them for their labors and pay them compensation in full.

[198] Moirans, *Servi libri*, 11-13 (5).
[199] Sala-Molins, *Esclavage reparation*.

4. Blacks living on properties in the Indies and working in the family operations called *sucreries* by the French and *ingenios* by the Spanish should, by divine natural law, run away and look for localities [*alternatively*, "go and seek places"] to take care of their own eternal salvation.
5. Because of the wrongs done to blacks transferred from their own lands and shipped off to the Indies, Christian rulers will flee from their own lands and lose them. Bishops and clergy will migrate from their homelands and cross the seas as refugees. Christians will become captives and slaves.[200]

As these points make clear, Épiphane's position against slavery was a steadfast and unyielding one, and it reflected something new in Catholic intellectual thought on the issue of slavery. Épiphane was probably the first to suggest in writing that slaves should run away from plantations and that the institution of Atlantic slavery would lead to the demise and exile of the sovereigns and ecclesiastical officials of slaveholding empires.

To the extent that Épiphane's careful construction of a argument against the trade in enslaved people departed from earlier Catholic works on the issue, such as Bartolmé de las Casas' *Account of the Destruction of the Indies* or Alonso de Sandoval's *Treatise on Slavery*, seeing Épiphane's text as a unique event seems quite correct. De las Casas offered a scathing account of Spanish colonial practices of torture and abuse, not a carefully crafted legal argument. De Sandoval composed a treatise encouraging his Jesuit confrères to join in the evangelization of enslaved Africans, not a critique of the institution of slavery itself. From this perspective, Épiphane de Moirans' text reflected something new in Catholic legal, theological, and intellectual thought on slavery. Épiphane and Francisco José de Jaca's arguments were also anomalous because they occur quite early. Most

[200] "1. Nemo potest emere aut vendere ullum ex mancipiis Affricae Nigris communiter nuncupatis. 2. Omnes que possident quaedam ex illis tenentur manumittere sub paena damnationis aeternae. 3. Tenentur domini eorum manumittendo restituere eis labores eorum et solvere pretium. 4. Tenentur Nigri morantes in locis Indiarum laborantes in rebus familiaribus dictis a Gallis sucreries et ab Hispanis *ingenios*, divino iure naturali, abire et petere loca in quibus curent de salute sua aeterna. 5. Propter iniuriam Nigrorum translatorum de suis terris et asportatorum ad Indias, principes Christiani fugient a suis et perdent eas, migrabuntque ab eis episcopi et clerici, et transfretabunt fugitivi; captivique et servi fient Christiani." Moirans, *Servi Libri*, 4-5 (2).

scholars have treated Enlightenment thinkers as foundational for the end of Atlantic slavery.[201] Yet, Épiphane's argument borrowed heavily upon Christian scripture, Aristotle, and Aquinas, even if, at times, it used these sources toward ends to which they were not usually put. Additionally, it is likely that other Franciscan sources as well as a whole set of Franciscan practices, contributed to the composition of his work. Nevertheless, Épiphane's critique came from somewhere, it fits into a particular discursive context, and it was "thinkable" to those who read it. In this regard, *Servi liberi* provides readers with a rare glimpse into a less-hegemonic, "minor" world of Catholic thinking on slavery – one that did not fit easily into either the earlier and hegemonic theological contributions on the issue, nor the Enlightenment thoughts about human freedom that were just barely on the horizon.

Épiphane de Moirans' training was undoubtedly based, in large part, on the theology and tightly wound argumentative and rhetorical style of Thomas of Aquinas. *Servi liberi*, then, can be read as a systematic, almost mechanical, and carefully orchestrated theological-legal argument in that mode. Like Aquinas, the text worked its way from the most abstract and general categories into the most distinct ones. In the text, theology and law were categories – somewhat intermixed and somewhat distinct – that reflected and refracted critically upon one another. An exposition of chapters two through five in light of the important chapter one illustrates the general argumentative and rhetorical structure of Moirans' approach.

Chapter One, entitled "The Just Defense of the Natural Freedom of Slaves: From the End, the Beginning," argued that slavery was the effect of greed, sin, death, and discord in the world.

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[201] David Brion Davis' discussion on Catholic intellectual thought on slavery in the early modern period exemplifies this trend. David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966). On the other hand, Robin Blackburn challenges the view that anti-slavery began with the Enlightenment, suggesting that the "roots of primitive abolitionism undoubtedly reach back to the Middle Ages," and that they had much to do with "popular aversion to becoming a slave." Robin Blackburn, "The Origins of Anti-Slavery," in *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery* (New York: Verso, 1988): 36.

This was the broadest level of argumentation, and one that ran throughout the Catholic theological tradition on slavery. Yet, where Augustine and Aquinas viewed this fact as an unfortunate reality, generally admitting that enslaved or indentured individuals should submit to hierarchy and authority, Épiphane takes a very different tack, apparently advocating that slaves flee from their position. Épiphane assumed that slavery is the effect of a kind of "original sin" of greed and war; the original "kidnappings, robberies, and cruelties" brought about by initial greed became out of control, allowing practices associated with slavery to become more public, accepted, and commonplace.[202] As he put it, "whoever is in error in the beginning goes astray a hundred times in the end."[203]

Épiphane's offers twelve points in order to support this thesis:

1. The original greed of Europeans caused Africans to turn on one another, selling their kin into slavery.[204]
2. Europeans grabbed whatever Africans they could through "force or deceit."[205]
3. European greed caused merchants to fill their ships beyond capacity with slaves, causing terrible conditions in passage.[206]
4. Priests baptized slaves en masse without any kind of instruction or records.[207]
5. Slaves were sold without scruple into the validity of their titles, and they are sold to non-Christians.[208]
6. After slaves were sent away to work in sugar plantations, there were no opportunities for instruction, and seldom opportunities for sacramental participation.[209]
7. Enslaved women were obligated to procreate outside of marriage.[210]
8. When enslaved men became instructed in the Christian faith, they were often not allowed to marry.[211]
9. Masters of enslaved people did not observe any code of law in their treatment of slaves.[212]
10. Elderly enslaved people were thrown out to die when they can no longer work.[213]
11. Enslaved people were overworked and punished severely.[214]

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[202] Moirans, *Servi liberi*, 31-33 (14-15)
[203] Moirans, *Servi liberi*, 31.
[204] Moirans, *Servi liberi*, 33 (15).
[205] Moirans, *Servi liberi*, 33-35 (16).
[206] Moirans, *Servi liberi*, 35 (16).
[207] Moirans, *Servi liberi*, 35-37 (16-17).
[208] Moirans, *Servi liberi*, 37-39 (17-18).
[209] Moirans, *Servi liberi*, 39-41 (18).
[210] Moirans, *Servi liberi*, 41-43 (18-19).
[211] Moirans, *Servi liberi*, 43-45 (19-20).
[212] Moirans, *Servi liberi*, 45-47 (20-21).
[213] Moirans, *Servi liberi*, 47-49 (21-22).
[214] Moirans, *Servi liberi*, 49-51 (22-23).

12. People with black skin who did not carry papers were automatically assumed to be slaves and taken into the possession of whoever found them.[215]

These twelve points reveal the tightly-wound argumentative structure of *Servi liberi* along several distinct organizational categories. First of all, they proceeded from what Épiphane considered to be the most general, original, and causal, to the most specific, eventual, and final in order to show how initial error proliferated, leading to eventual multiplicities of sin and death in the end. Épiphane also organized his twelve points as a procession that ran down through the different hierarchies of law – from natural law (explicitly associated with points 1-3), to divine positive law (points 4-8), to human positive law (points 9-12). The next four chapters were then structured according to this neat division of different realms of law.

Natural law was considered to be a permanent and universal category. In the second chapter, entitled "Black African Slavery Contradicts the Order of Nature," Épiphane argued that all human beings were naturally free by virtue of their creation (not just by their baptism).[216] This reasoning was argued from a scriptural point of view.[217] Épiphane argued that Africans were born naturally free, and that enslavement was against natural law, in part because it imposed a kind of "civil death," which overshadowed the freedom that natural law was supposed to assure.[218] None of the lower categories of law could contradict natural law.

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[215] Moirans, *Servi liberi*, 53 (23).
[216] Moirans, *Servi Liberi*, 81 (34)
[217] Philosophically speaking, the problem with the category of natural law is that it has no textual referent. Because of this lack of any legal text, divine positive law – normally considered law as revealed by God and recorded in scripture (though other modes of revelation might also be thought to exist) – is assumed to be consistent with whatever is present at the level of natural law. Even as God imposes additional moral codes on humankind through revealed law, theologians thought that evaluative rubrics for right behavior could be determined through the scripture. The complex overlap between natural law and divine positive law as revelation disclosed in scripture makes the categorical division difficult to grasp. All of this is to say that, when Épiphane discusses natural law, he emphasizes that which he thinks is posited as universal (i.e. *prior to* divine revalation of law) in the scripture. Human freedom is thus his first presupposition. Épiphane himself wrangles with these distinctions (Moirans, *Servi liberi*, 111 [46]).
[218] Moirans, *Servi liberi*, 89 (37)

Divine positive law referred to the more-specific category of laws disclosed by divine revelation. Épiphane took up this category in the third chapter, entitled "Black African Slavery Contradicts Divine Positive Law." Humans acted in violation of divine positive law when they treated others differently from the way they would have like to be treated. As Épiphane put it: "[T]here is no nation in the whole world that would wish to be transferred from its native soil, carried off to other unknown regions, and made slaves."[219] Furthermore, in this section, Épiphane argued at length to disprove pro-slavery arguments derived from scripture. As but one example, *Servi liberi* addressed popular arguments about the "curse of Ham" in several ways. Épiphane insisted that Africans were not the descendants of Ham, nor were Africans ever slaves to the Israelites. Furthermore, Épiphane played devil's advocate by provocatively suggesting that even if readers disagreed with his proposition that Africans could not have been Ham's descendants, it did not logically follow that Christians took over the place of the Israelites. Rather, Épiphane speculated that perhaps the Africans had taken on the place of the Israelites by citing the passage of Psalms that said that Ethiopians will come to the God of Israel.[220]

Épiphane also dealt with the "law of nations" at length. In the fourth chapter, entitled "Black Slavery Contradicts the Law of Nations" Épiphane began by citing Thomas Aquinas, who had said that the law of nations is a category of law that almost all nations made use of, and that it regarded issues related to sovereignty and war.[221] Within the law of nations, in the tradition of just war theory, enslavement mercifully offered the vanquished an alternative to death, should the sovereign wish to bestow such an alternative.[222] This situation does not apply to African captives because they were not captives of war, let alone just war. Épiphane moved to prove that wars were

[219] Moirans, *Servi liberi*, 115 (48).
[220] Moirans, *Servi liberi*, 129 (53).
[221] Moirans, *Servi liberi*, 147 (60).
[222] Moirans, *Servi Liberi*, 151 (61).

not just because the conditions were not met and that "slaves [were] not captured justly, but rather abducted."[223] The friar shows how the situation of "brigandage and plunder" in Africa met none of Thomas Aquinas' conditions for just war – (1) authority for declaring war and the impossibility of a higher authority's mediation; (2) just cause; and (3) right intention. Épiphane argued that many of the Africans did not have sufficiently well developed Republics, and that neither just cause nor right intention existed. Even those who said they capture Africans to convert them out of "zeal for the faith" were betrayed by their actions, which were clearly based in profit and greed.[224] The enslavement of Africans did not meet any of the necessary preconditions for just war.

Moirans' systematic exposition of his position demonstrates that he drew upon the Catholic legal, theological, and intellectual tradition in order to show all the ways in which slavery could not be permitted. In this regard, Moirans' legal argumentation was not an altogether new development in Catholic thought, nor should it be read as a clear departure from past legal and theological presuppositions. On the contrary, *Servi liberi* drew from every available legal and theological authority (of scripture, then-hegemonic theologies like those of Aquinas and Augustine, church council proclamations, papal decisions, etc.) to drive a crushing critique of Atlantic slavery. Nevertheless, locating the systematic structure of Moirans' exposition and rhetoric allows us to locate flourishes that "stick out" from his mechanical argumentation. *Servi liberi* does not only deal with abstract legal categories and intellectual debates. Here and there experiences and prophesies smuggled their way into Épiphane's text.

Épiphane occasionally punctuated his text with his own experiences of talking to and interacting with colonial officials, merchants, and enslaved people. In doing so, the friar painted a picture of himself as a man engaged with the world around him, even with all its sin and the visible

[223] Moirans, Servi Liberi, 155 (63).
[224] Moirans, *Servi Liberi*, 169 (68).

effects of sin – most especially, death and enslavement. In his reliance upon his own experience as a site of discernment and in his desire to associate with people who occupy all different kinds of positions of authority and power, Épiphane brought a Franciscan emphasis on embodied discernment – not reasoning alone – to bear on his argumentation. For illustration, I will draw upon one episode, an episode that becomes the object of the next chapter's sustained meditation.

Épiphane invoked a striking scene of the death of an enslaved woman during childbirth, and the dispute among clerics about her last rights. The example came in the chapter on divine positive law, at a moment when Épiphane was discussing the way in which enslaved people were treated like animals, who – when they are no longer of "temporal utility" – were discarded, without care for their bodies or souls. A woman, pregnant with twins, was going to give birth, but it became clear that her health was failing. Her masters were unwilling to send for the surgeon themselves. Someone, who Épiphane identified as an associate, went to send for a surgeon to surgically deliver the twins. When a local pastor arrived with communion, Épiphane asked the surgeon who had heard the woman's confession, and the surgeon replied others gathered had said it was the Capuchin Father (i.e. they simply assumed that Épiphane had already heard it). Épiphane had not heard her confession, and he was indignant that other priests had not even inquired about it. Épiphane quickly heard her confession and offered absolution, so that communion could be administered. He suggested that the other priests were careless and negligent because they did not offer confession to her before. There was a sense that the woman's life and those of her children could have been saved – physically and spiritually – if others who had temporal or spiritual authority bothered to care.[225]

This story came as a rupture in the text – a break with its general tenor of abstract, legal argumentation. Épiphane's text suddenly became populated with masters, priests, surgeons,

[225] Moirans, *Servi liberi*, 123-127 (51-52).

enslaved people, and infants. While it was meant to illustrate Épiphane's point that masters stop caring for the bodies and souls of enslaved people if their health was failing, it also provided us with some information about Épiphane de Moirans' ministry and what he thought about the role of experience in his text. The fact that others in the story assumed that Épiphane had already heard the woman's confession perhaps suggests that others saw him as regularly ministering to slaves. In most of the text, until the very end, we get the sense that he was with the woman and the surgeon; he only joined the other clergy at the end of his story to rebuke them for their carelessness. Then he left them. This was one of the places in *Servi liberi* where Épiphane offered a particular construction of himself as "at the edges" of clerical or juridical power, only intervening as a last resort, and usually in the company of non-clerics doing non-clerical things. And, indeed, was one of the things the Capuchins were known for – a sort of peripheral relation to established civil or ecclesiastical power. While I have offered a brief introduction and contextualization of the fragment here, my return to it in the next chapter employing a different methodology and reading the text more associatively along the lines of some of the concepts introduced in the earlier parts of this dissertation enables us to see how the Capuchin-Franciscan symbolic was brought to bear in Épiphane's intervention and his inclusion of the fragment in the text.

In his recollection of the story, Épiphane de Moirans emphasized that the lives of other people were at stake and that the question of slavery was not merely a legal or philosophical one (though, as we will soon see, I would like to read the passage as surpassing the stakes of a sort of proto-liberal humanism, the kind of ideology central to nineteenth century abolitionist narratives for instance). His own depiction of himself must be understood in terms of a Capuchin-Franciscan emphasis that stresses embodied, sensuous, and charismatic ministry as well as close proximity to

normal people in their everyday lives.[226] Yet, the friar also constructed himself as a prophet, intervening in a world overshadowed by a multiplicity of sin and death. At times, he did not spare his audience an apocalyptic assessment of what was to come. Moirans' endowed his text with everyday experiences including snippets of conversations he had with colonial governors and traders, and his interaction with various kinds of people. He also strengthened it with careful, systematic legal argumentation and doomsday prophesies. While stories depicting Épiphane's everyday experiences among enslaved people, colonial officials, and planters by no means dominated *Servi liberi*, his appeal to them does mark a departure from earlier Catholic thought on slavery, and perhaps a latent Capuchin anti-intellectual bent. The abstract posturing of earlier theologians, while it was certainly engaged and indeed drove most of Moirans' text, took on a new twist by being powerfully combined with embodied, sensuous, everyday experience – a signature Capuchin move.

4.4 An Atlantic World in Rome

In a series of juridical twists and turns, Épiphane de Moirans and Francisco José de Jaca were extradited from Cuba to Spain in 1682. They continued to spend time under house arrest in friaries at Cadiz and Seville, and – finding little success – they eventually (somehow) made their way to Rome to appeal to the Propaganda Fide.[227] What exactly they were appealing and bringing to Rome is a complicated question. On the one hand, both of the friars had been put under censure, and perhaps "excommunicated." In Cuba, as we have seen, their ministries were restricted, but their

[226] Dompnier, "Pastorale de la peur et pastorale de la séduction," 267-271. Though Dompnier focuses on missions within France proper, missionary friars used similar modes of sensuous rhetoric, as can be seen in the example of Capuchin friars in the Christian Kingdom of Kongo; Hanbridge, *Capuchin Constitutions*, xii-xiii. The Capuchin movement was – in large part – built upon this unique approach to "bare bones" preaching that resonated with laypeople. See Fromont's description of a Capuchin friar's construction of a reaper figure at a festival in 1700. Cécile Fromont, *The Art of Conversion: Christian Visual Culture in the Kingdom of Kongo* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 182-183.

[227] José Tomás López Garcia, ed. and trans. "Documento 5: Actas y Cartas: Archivo de la Sagrada Congregación de Propaganda Fide – Acta de anno 1685" in *Dos Defensores de los Esclavos Negros en el Siglo XVI (Francisco José de Jaca y Epifanio de Moirans)* (Maracaibo: Biblioteca Corpozulia, 1982), 357-371.

so-called excommunication seems to have been done in a very haphazard and non-juridical way. Notwithstanding the censure, both of the friars had brought forth legal and theological arguments about the nature of slavery. In a sense, this argument – and whether those in authority would deem it orthodox or heretical – seems to have become a determining factor for the adjudication on the friars' own ecclesiastical statuses.

As Richard Gray has shown, at the very same time, cardinals of the Propaganda Fide in Rome heard a petition from Lourenço da Silva, a Brazilian member and patron of a lay confraternity, citing a precedent that slavery had already been outlawed by the church and that current abuses were in excess of church law. A year later, four Capuchins submitted a long memoranda to Rome to which Épiphane de Moirans and Jose de Jaca's names were affixed.[228] The Propaganda Fide heard their arguments, but decided to write to Capuchin missionaries in the Christian Kingdom of Kongo for verification of statements made about the capture and abduction of Africans. Eventually, friars in Kongo confirmed the statements their confrères had brought in the memoranda. At this time, cardinals at Propaganda Fide sent the request to the Holy Office, and Lourenço da Silva – again, according to Gray – seems to have been behind yet another memoranda that came in 1686. This inclined Cardinal Cibo of the Propaganda Fide to again inquire to the Holy Office about the Capuchin memoranda. On 20 March 1686, the Holy Office replied that it agreed with all of the Capuchins' propositions, and demanded that Spanish and Portuguese clergy comply. Unfortunately, there was no directive for the papal nuncios to take actions vis-à-vis the Crown.[229]

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[228] Gray suggests that the presence of Épiphane de Moirans and Francisco de Jaca's names on the memoranda rendered the legal maneuver potentially risky, as neither of them enjoyed good ecclesiastical standing at the time. It seems possible to assume, on the other hand, that the friars were making an attempt to regain their good standing through the memoranda, even as they secured official approval of their argumentation. In past statements, they had always appealed to their status as "apostolic missionaries" under the auspices of the Propaganda Fide, so it seems a bit unlikely that the Propaganda Fide would have been totally dismissive of them. Richard Gray, "Papacy and the Atlantic Slave Trade," *Past and Present* 115 (1987): 62.

[229] Gray, "Papacy and the Slave Trade," 63-66, 67.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored how Épiphane de Moirans' unique life and textual production emerged out of an encounter between his own vision of the world as a Capuchin; the material circumstances he witnessed and deplored; his encounters with the individuals living in those circumstances; and the legal mechanisms at his disposal to challenge them. The friar was both an astute intellectual critic as well as an individual close to many of the people and events he describes. Moirans' life and the argumentation of *Servi Liberi* offer insights into the multiplicity of potential Catholic opinions about the institution of Atlantic slavery, both at the level of formal unity and of informal, trans-Atlantic discussion.

The collaborative composition of the final memoranda that the Holy Office approved in March of 1686 – one which reflected the collective efforts of Capuchin friars and lay people flung across three continents – suggests that Catholic positions against slavery were indeed thinkable, if not commonplace, at this time. Little details from the lives of both Épiphane de Moirans and Francisco José de Jaca, like the success Francisco José's preaching against slavery enjoyed among communities of vowed religious in Havana before his censure, lends further support to the durability, if not the popularity of a Catholic anti-slavery position emerging from various corners of the Atlantic World.[230] Reconsidered from this point of view, Moirans' and Jaca's case might be viewed neither as the exception nor the rule to Catholic intellectual positions on slavery. Rather, the friars' lives and arguments speak to the variability of possible thoughts on slavery flowing throughout the Catholic Atlantic. Re-reading Moirans' history and text, not as an anomalous or

[230] Francisco José de Jaca, "Resolución sobre la libertad de los negros y sus originarios en el estado de paganos y después yas cristianos," in *Dos defensores de los esclavos negros en el siglo XVII*, ed. Miguel Ánxo Peña González (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2007), 123-175.

exceptional tale, but rather from the perspective of the Capuchin charisms and dispositions that framed his world enables us to track seventeenth century Catholic intellectual engagement on the question of slavery, not as uniform, but as multiple, heterogeneous, and plural.

The Capuchin traits of peripheral and ambivalent modes of relating to intellectual trends and authority, a penchant for sensuous and embodied modes of ministry, and a tendency toward prophetic intervention, make Moirans' history and text – which might at first seem odd and out of place – begin to make sense. From the friar in the canoe to the censured Capuchin bringing a memoranda to curial cardinals, we begin to get a picture of a community's charism – its visage – and a picture of another Catholic Atlantic. However, with this overview and summarization of Épiphane's case and writing, including some contextualization within a particular telling of church history and Capuchin history, it remains to be seen what a closer associative consideration of the specific signifying repetitions, shifts, slips, and fantasies embedded within the text might disclose. I turn to such a reading in the following chapter, which takes one textual instance—Épiphane's above-mentioned encounter with an enslaved woman in the process of childbirth—as the foundation for its meditation.

Chapter 5 A Dead Mother: Sacraments, Servitude, Sacrilege and the Excess of the Law

> XII. The children who will be born of marriage between slaves will be slaves and will belong to the master of the women slaves, and not to those of their husband, if the husband and the wife have different masters.
>
> XIII. We wish that if a slave husband has married a free woman, the children, both male and girls, will follow the condition of their mother and be free like her, in spite of the servitude of their father; and that if the father is free and the mother enslaved, the children will be slaves the same.
>
> XIV. Masters are held to put into Holy Ground in cemeteries so designated [as will] their baptized slaves; and those who die without having received baptism will be buried at night in some field near the place where they died.
>
> -- *Code noir* (1685)[231]
>
> Sanctify unto me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, *both* of man and of beast: it *is* mine. And Moses said unto the people, Remember this day, in which ye came out from Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the LORD brought you out from this *place*: there shall no leavened bread be eaten.
>
> -- Exodus 13: 2-3, *King James Bible*[232]

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 I – Slavery and Sacrilege

In its exposition of the Seventh Commandment forbidding stealing, the *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, promulgated in 1566, asserted that

[231] "XII. Les enfants qui naîtront des mariages entre esclaves seront esclaves et appartiendront aux maîtres des femmes esclaves et non à ceux de leurs maris, si le mari et la femme ont des maîtres différents. XIII. Voulons que, si le mari esclave a épousé une femme libre, les enfants, tant mâles que filles, suivent la condition de leur mère et soient libres comme elle, nonobstant la servitude de leur père, et que, si le père est libre et la mère esclave, les enfants soient esclaves pareillement. XIV. Les maîtres seront tenus de faire enterrer en terre sainte, dans les cimetières destinés à cet effet, leurs esclaves baptisés. Et, à l'égard de ceux qui mourront sans avoir reçu le baptême, ils seront enterrés la nuit dans quelque champ voisin du lieu où ils seront décédés." *Le Code Noir ou recueil des reglements rendus jusqu'a present* (Paris: Prault, 1767), translated by John Garrigus. https://s3.wp.wsu.edu/uploads/sites/1205/2016/02/code-noir.pdf

[232] Ex. 12: 2-3 KJV.

> The unjust possession and use of what belongs to another are expressed under different names. [T]o enslave and appropriate [*in servitutem abducitur*] the freeman or servant of another is called 'man-stealing' [*plagiatum*]; to steal any thing sacred is called a 'sacrilege;' a crime the most enormous and sinful of all, yet so common in our days, that what piety and wisdom had appropriated to the divine worship, to the support of the ministers of religion, and to the use of the poor, is employed in satisfying the cravings of individual avarice, and converted [*convertantur*] into a means of ministering to the worst passions.[233]

Two types of stealing were related in juxtaposition – the stealing of a free or enslaved person and the stealing of a sacred thing [*sacra res*] – on the one hand, the act of kidnapping and, on the other, that of sacrilege. At stake too was the *conversion* of the *use* of sacred things into objects of private desires and pernicious pleasures [*libidines*].

The coincidence of kidnapping and sacrilege occurred just as well in Alfonso X of Castile's *Siete Partidas* (1252-1284), considered foundational for the accumulating Laws of the Indies and thus also for the regulation of New World slavery. The focus of the first partida relates entirely to the medieval church, and, in it, Title XVIII is devoted to the legal and theological problem of sacrilege, understood as the stealing or misuse of religious objects or persons. Among other abuses and misuses of sacred things and persons that comprised sacrilege, the slave taking refuge in a church, perhaps from his master, himself took on a protected status by lodging within and thus relating to a sacred thing: a church. The law outlines the fine that should be imposed on a master who forcibly removes his slave from a church or injures him there.[234] The master who dishonored a church by taking a slave from it must pay back the church for the dishonor.

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[233] Marking the work of reform and lay evangelization initiated by the council's fathers in their sessions from 1545-1563, the catechism derived from the proceedings of the Council of Trent was originally intended to guide priests in the instruction and care of souls. A similar catechism intending to replace the Tridentine one was not published until 1992. The Latin reads, "[P]lagiatum vocant, si homo liber, vel servus alienus in servitutem abducitur. Si vero sacra res eripitur, nominator sacrigium: quod facinus maxime nefarium ac scelestum adeo in mores inductum est, ut bona, quæ necessario & sacrorum cultui, & ecclesie ministris, et pauperum usui, pie, ac sapienter fuerant attributa, in privatas cupiditates perniciosaque libidines convertantur." Catechismus ex Decreto Concilii Tridentini, ad Parochos (Rome: N.P., 1574): 444. English version cited from *The Catechism of the Council of Trent*, Translated by J. Donovan (Baltimore: Fielding Lucas, Jr., N.D.), 293.

[234] Robert I. Burns. *Las Siete Partidas: Family, Commerce, and the Sea: The Medieval Church: The World of Clerics and Laymen (Vol. 1)* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), Partida One, Title XVIII, Law IX.

The juxtaposition of slavery and sacrilege elaborated in both accounts is a taxonomic and moral elaboration of different kinds of sin or crime, as well as a connection of the use of things in order to secure a new affective or legal state for the person – in the sense of a sacred thing misused in sacrilege a concession to private desire or pernicious pleasure on the part of its user, or in the case of a slave taking refuge in a church, safety from pursuers and even his or her slaveowners through affiliation with and containment sought in a sacred space. What were the linkages between slavery and sacrilege along the lines of these different registers – the linguistic, material, and affective – as they operated between different and ostensibly separate, but related, domains like the economic, the theological, and the legal?

This interplay, between slavery and sacrilege, the person erroneously abducted as property and the stolen or misused sacred thing is crucial in Épiphane de Moirans' *Servi Liberi seu naturalis mancipiorum libertatis iusta defensio* (1682, henceforth *Seri liberi*), to which this chapter returns.[235] As we saw in the last chapter, arguing from Havana where he had been excommunicated and put under house arrest for calling for an end to slavery, along with a Capuchin collaborator Francisco José de Jaca, Épiphane composed a treatise arguing that enslaved Africans should be set free and that they should receive reparations for past labor. In the cause of its both sophisticated and messy legal and theological argument, Épiphane's text reflected something completely new on the Atlantic scene. To understand the force of his argument, as of the resonances and repetitions operating on the surface of Épiphane's language, we have delve more deeply within, to its undergirding Capuchin-Franciscan theology as it was understood and mobilized in the seventeenth century.[236] Whereas the preceding

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[235] *A Just Defense of the Natural Freedom of Slaves: All Slaves Should Be Free (1682) – A Critical Edition and Translation of Servi liberi seu naturalis mancipiorum libertatis iusta defensio*, trans. and ed. Edward R Sunshine (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2007). N.B. Henceforth, *Servi liberi*, and page numbers provided are for this edition, though I parenthetically note the original manuscript's page numbers.

[236] On the Moirans-Jaca Controversy, see Robert Lapierre, introduction to "La Liberté."; Lenhart, "Capuchin Champions"; David, *Le clergé*, 85; Gray, "Papacy"; *Dos defensores de los esclavos negros en el siglo XVII*, ed. Miguel Ánxo Peña González (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2007), 123-175; José Tomás López Garcia, ed. and

chapter summarized the case and the text, this chapter engages in a more associative and interpretive work, attempting to associatively explore some of the Franciscan symbolic coordinates for the text, via a particular scene that transmitted something enigmatic and traumatic to Épiphane.

A discrete passage, already mentioned in the last chapter, surrounding the trauma of a dying woman and her unborn twins in *Servi liberi*, at first glance, appears to stand as a rupture in Épiphane's text. Yet, at the same time, I suggest that it can be read as a crystallization of the argument of the entire text. While much of *Servi liberi* effaces the friar's own direct experiences in favor of second-hand knowledge about the process of enslavement in Africa and in favor of entanglements legal and theological, this passage recounts a deep trauma in concrete terms. The insertion of such an account in a theological treatise on slavery had no precedent amid theological and economic treatises on slavery composed in the period, including those with whose authors Épiphane engaged directly, such as Diego de Avendaño or Luis de Molina. Its insertion stands as a signature of the kinds of things that should "get to count" in the Franciscan order of creation, wherein everything in creation ought to return to God – slowly, making their ways back by various *itineraria* or pathways – and it shows decisively how slavery (as sacrilege) obstructed such returns. This chapter aims to demonstrate that key aspects of the Franciscan cosmovision like the centrality of desire or ways of conceiving the sacramental, introduced earlier in this dissertation, in chapters one and two, will prove decisive for reading the *Servi liberi*. As the last chapter explored the some of the discourse and historical contexts in which Épiphane was involved, this chapter explores how

trans., "Expediente del proceso seguido a fr. Francisco Jose de Jaca ofm cap. Y fr. Epifanio de Moirans ofm cap," in *Dos Defensores de los Esclavos Negros en el Siglo XVI (Francisco José de Jaca y Epifanio de Moirans)* (Maracaibo: Biblioteca Corpozulia, 1982).

Épiphane wrote not just to provide the reader with knowledge but to affect the reader, to cause lasting change in the shock of realization.[237]

In contesting the cleavage between the public and private, the inner and the outer, by making the desire of the two unborn infants legible – desires first concealed in the darkness of their mother's womb, a space which then became their tomb – Épiphane ascribed to the infants a desire that worked in concert with the law and ought to have been facilitated by it. The missionary's attempt to distribute that desire to the reader through a text was intended with no less a goal than to provide a reader with a realization – more as an affective shock than a reasonable deduction – that slavery was a sacrilege, a disruptive detour thwarting desire for a creation desiring to return to God. As a rupture inscribed into *Servi liberi*'s theological, legal, and largely abstract argumentative fabric, I separate this passage into its three strands, seizing upon its difficult-to-interpret cords, writing about and around it to introduce the concerns that permeate *Servi liberi*, and to locate the affective "knots" in which its writing was entangled. As such, what I offer is interpretation.

Épiphane's textual operation drew upon a longstanding juxtaposition between slavery and sacrilege and sought a more explicit connection. To do so, he employed specifically Franciscan representational tools, and used language, and used language to evoke and affect, as we will soon see. This chapter oscillates between Épiphane's own account, those of legal texts considered foundational to the practice of New World slavery, as well as other domains theological and spiritual, to explore how the friar considered slavery sacrilege. It also explores what we might understand as three economies – a sacramental economy of grace, a "necropolitical" economy of

[237] Again, psychoanalysis is helpful for thinking this difference between discourse and context, on the one hand, and unconscious transmission, on the other. Its conception of unconscious transmission, for instance, has been increasingly taken up in Black studies and Afro-pessimism to think about how trauma is unconsciously transmitted. See, McNulty, "Untreatable," 227-251; Copjec, "Moses," 81-107; Calvin Warren, "Black Transmission: Toward a Hieroglyph-Analysis," *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 34, no. 3 (2023): 69-78.

slavery encoded in law, and a "representational economy" through which signs (such as those of the text) are made legible.[238]

The subjugation of persons and the profanation of sacred things, connect to realities within a broader medieval and early modern period – one in which religion was continuously legislated at least as continuously as law was ritualized. These entwined processes were expressed in law and practice, and in the elaboration of codes, the practice of their enforcement, and in the adjudication of infractions. The imposition of the law took on the appearance of setting limits and boundaries around desire and around the libido, rendering them private, and restricting the uses these forces could make of "objects" such as persons or sacred things falsely seized as property, in favor of a communal good rendered public. And, yet, as Colin Dayan has argued, the law of slavery, and upheld in the *Code Noir* or Black Code, was a law of permissiveness and one that secured the normality of excess.[239]

Franciscanism had resources that disrupt these relations between desire and the law, and which I believe allowed for Épiphane's intervention. The Franciscan account of desire and the law differs decisively from the codes mentioned above. This had an impact on definitions of person and elaborations of conversion as a being's return to God, the centrality of desire for the Franciscan tradition, in turn, had an impact in possible Franciscan engagements of the law. We see the high stakes of the abstract process of Franciscan theologizing in Épiphane's condemnation of slavery as sacrilege. We also see the experience of a missionary desperate to unblock the most significant barriers to conversion in his day.

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[238] "Representational economy" is taken from Webb Keane, "Semiotics and the Social Analysis of Material Things," *Language and Communication* 23 (2003): 409-425, 410 and "necropolitical" from Achille Membe, "Necropolitics," Public Culture 15, no. 1 (2003): 11-40. Both terms are defined and developed at greater length below.
[239] Colin (Joan) Dayan, "Codes of Law and Bodies of Color," *New Literary History* 26, no. 2 (Spring 1995), 283-308: 286.

5.1.2 II – Conversion, Constellations, and the Franciscan Representational Economy

While early modern Capuchin-Franciscans relatively frequently held surprising and divergent attitudes toward African slavery, *Servi liberi* must be read in a different way from a modern reader.[240] Specifically, to understand where such divergent attitudes on slavery could have originated, such texts must be read not only in terms of modern semiotic operations, but in terms of the semiotic rules of engagement in which they originated.

The links between sacrilege and slavery can be examined and interpreted through theological and legal *constellations* – that is to say, not just on the scale of discourse, but on that where the linguistic, material, and affective interrelate.[241] In his elaboration of a concept of "representational economy," Webb Keane has argued for "dynamic interconnections among different modes of signification at play within a particular historical and social formation," suggesting, for example, that "how people handle and value material goods may be implicated in how they use and interpret words, and vice versa."[242] This seems to be true in the case of the Franciscans, who focused both on the simplicity of speech and its affective impact, from the earliest days of the order, and, at the same time, had a positive view of the engagement with material things as they could be used to secure the affects of conversion, but, at the same time, eschewed ownership or possession of things.

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[240] See, for example, Carlo Toso, "I Cappuccini e il problema della schiavitù in Africa," *Estratto da Italia Francescana: Rivisti Internazionale di Cultura* 1, no. 2, 1993.

[241] I draw the term constellation from Gilles Deleuze's *Difference and Repetition*: "Repetition is this emission of singularities, always with an echo or resonance which makes each the double of the other, or each constellation the redistribution of another." Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995): 201; Deleuze and Félix Guattari also use the term in *A Thousand Plateaus*, where it frequently occurs alongside assemblage (*agencement*) and is contrasted from direct discourse: "Direct discourse is a detached fragment of a mass and is born of the dismemberment of the collective assemblage; but the collective assemblage is always like the murmur from which I take my proper name, the constellation of voices, concordant or not, from which I draw my voice. I always depend on a molecular assemblage of enunciation that is not given in my conscious mind, any more than it depends solely on my apparent social determination, which combine many heterogenous regimes of signs. Speaking in tongues." Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateau*s, 93.

[242] Keane, "Semiotics," 410.

Speech, in preaching, should have been kept simple, so as to maximize affective impact on listeners. Material objects in creation were to be appreciated as not only signs, but as sacraments that resembled the Creator in the way a child resembles a parent.[243] If ownership was problematic, it was because it complicated such appreciation and such a simple ethical relation. An aesthetics of "simplicity," both in relation to speech and as a disposition toward material objects, was thus given ethical force and enjoined to secure maximum affective gains, which indexed progression in ongoing processes of conversion. We can here supplement the Franciscan scholastic John Duns Scotus's assertion, mentioned in Chapter One, that "affects are signs," by adding that they are indexical signs, in the sense of C.S. Peirce, for whom the indexical sign refers to another sign that is taken as its cause.[244] (I will continue to develop the index throughout this chapter, associatively tracing symbolic and metonymic chains, even to the point of reaching toward an elaboration of transmission that might help us to analyze in a place where the index fails.)[245]

Like the Franciscan debates on how material things should be engaged, debates which were also central later in the Capuchin reform, the themes of sacrilege and enslavement pertained to questions of the "right use" of objects.[246] If liturgical objects could be stolen or misused, people could be wrongly captured – including through what Épiphane referred to as "captured through trickery and deceit," with regard to the capture of Africans – or wrongly held. As we will see,

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[243] Laure Solignac, *La voie de la resemblance: Itinéraire dans la pensée de saint Bonaventure* (Paris: Hermann, 2014).
[244] John Duns Scotus, *The* Examined. For Peirce, "[a]n index is a sign which would, at once, lose the character which makes it a sign if its object were removed, but would not lose that character if there were not interpretant. Such, for instance, is the piece of mould with a bullet-hole in it as a sign of a shot; for without the shot there would have been no hole; but there is a hole there, whether anybody has the sense to attribute it to a shot or not." Charles S. Peirce, *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, edited by Justus Buchler (Dover, 1986): 104.
[245] See pp. 173-175.
[246] The Capuchin reform of the sixteenth century, in some ways, echoed earlier reform efforts among groups known as Spirituals, in the beginnings of the order, and, later, among those known as the observants. Debates on questions of poverty led to ongoing fracturing throughout the history of the order as friars debated questions about how the value of poverty should have been lived. Central to these debates were questions of "use," at work in distinctions like "usus fructus," a term which has longstanding significance in property law. On the Spirituals, see David Burr, *The Spirituals: From Protest to Persecution in the Century after Saint Francis* (State College: Penn State University Press, 2003). On the question of Franciscans and use, in relation to living sine proprio (without property), see Giorgio Agamben, *The Highest Poverty*.

slaveholders' consideration of black people as animals, and according treatment of them as such points to a failure of correct discernment or *divinatio* (a failure to apprehend the *dignity* of the person and the *desires* that animated them) as well as to an ethical failure of establishing right relations with God, through the objects and beings of creation.[247] The juxtaposition of sacrilege and slavery also pertained to distinctions between subject and object as well as the question of what a person is, as we will increasingly see as this chapter progresses. Was there something specific in what might be called the Franciscan representational economy that led friars to consider slavery as involving mistaken interpretations of identity and value? I suggest that, to the extent there was, it can be found in the Franciscan theorization of conversion as the soul's return to God, a return that could be undertaken through various pathways.

Recent scholarly attention to the semiotic anthropology of religious conversion has been devoted to primarily shifts in religious identification, practice, self-interpretation, self-cultivation and ways of speaking.[248] However, appreciating the medieval and early modern uses for the term conversion leads us to consider conversion as potentially describing broader processes, where language, things, affects, and people could all be described as being converted.[249] Indeed, the

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[247] In *The Order of Things* (*Les Mots et les choses*), Michel Foucault insisted upon the importance of understanding pre-modern forms of relation between words and material objects. Part of this process – at stake, for example, in medical knowledge and magic, among other domains – was the deciphering and divining of the inner secrets material objects held. If Foucault's account of pre-modern representational operations, which he asserts began to wrap-up in the beginning of the seventeenth century, are to be believed, perhaps the Christian notion of "discernment" provides an unexplored bridge between Foucault's assertion that, whereas, pre-modern knowledge rested upon resemblances, modern knowledge was founded upon the proliferation of new theories of signification. For the importance of discernment in the early modern period. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage, 1994). On discernment in the early modern period, see Sluhovsky, *Believe Not Every Spirit.*

[248] As only a few examples, see Diana Austin-Broos, *Jamaica Genesis: Religion and the Politics of Moral Orders* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997); Webb Keane, "From Fetishism to Sincerity: On Agency, the Speaking Subject, and their Historicity in the Context of Religious Conversion," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 39 (1997): 674-693; Birgit Meyer, *Translating the Devil: Religion and Modernity among the Ewe in Ghana* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1999); Susan Harding, "Convicted by the Holy Spirit: The Rhetoric of Fundamental Baptist Conversion," *American Ethologist* 14, no. 1 (1987): 167-181; Joel Robbins, "Can There Be Conversion without Cultural Change?" *Mission Studies* 34, no 1. (2017): 29-52.

[249] Hanks, *Converting Words.* In William Hanks' account of Franciscan Regular missionaries in New Spain, *Converting Words: Maya in the Age of the Cross*, he argues that Maya language and social life was *reducido.* Mayan language, towns, and Indians were all reordered by Franciscan missionaries as part of conversion, here understood as a social process. Hanks'

opening passage from the Tridentine catechism makes use of such a broader notion of conversion in its description of the conversion of the use of sacred things to satisfy affective ends. As we have seen already, in the testament of Francis of Assisi, a text which bore particular importance to the Capuchin reform, the founder described the conversion of affects in relation to the sight of the leper: "what was bitter was converted [*conversum*] to sweetness."[250] Furthermore, for seventeenth century Capuchins, as Chapter Three demonstrated, conversion was at stake in several kinds of religious transformation, which should be brought into the same frame if we are to understand the significance Capuchin myssionary activity in the seventeenth century. Conversion could be used to describe a Catholic becoming more devout and closer to God, an individual in the process of joining vowed religious life, the sacramental initiation of a non-Catholic to Catholicism, etc. In all of these examples, the general idea was about an individual's drawing closer to God.

This broader sense of conversion is in play of Bonaventure of Bagnoregio's (1221-1274) understanding both of the soul's return to God and in what we might call his sacramental semiotics. As the Capuchins' theological patron, Bonaventure treated the categories of sign, symbol, and sacrament directly in his discussion of creatures in relation to the divine likeness in his *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* as well as throughout his work.[251] Not eschewing anything of the medieval notion of a book of creation (the idea that animals and other worldly entities *represented* spiritual values and divine attributes), Bonaventure argued that these entities were much more than representations or

work is well-supplemented by that of Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra who argues that Franciscan missionaries to New Spain sought to separate Indians (bipolarly deemed to be pure or under the sovereignty of the devil) from tainted Spanish colonial influence. Given that, just as Capuchins had espoused Bonaventure as a theological patron, the regulars embraced John Duns Scotus, it would be interesting to see whether any Scotistic notions of ontology – like *haecceitas*, the "thisness" of a specific individual entity, or, what Paul Manning described as "real distinctions without qualitative difference" played any role in the friars' crafting of their mission terrains. Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra. *Puritan Conquistadors: Iberianizing the Atlantic, 1550-1700* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006). Paul Manning, *Semiotics of Drink and Drinking*, (London : Continuum, 2012). The term was later harped on by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* and also used employed by C.S. Peirce. See Jeffrey DiLeo, "Peirce's Haecceitism," Transactions of the C.S. Peirce Society 27(1): 1991, 79-109.

[250] Fracis of Assisi, "The Testament." The Latin edition can be found at www.franciscantradition.org.

[251] Bonaventure, "The Soul's Journey."

signs – they were also *true sacraments* and ladders back to God ("*non solum rationem signi secundum nomen commune, verum etiam Sacramenti*"). The converting soul had to begin to undertake an unending exploration of "resemblances" in the material objects of creation in order to enter into right relationships with those materials (people, animals, and things) and, through engagement with them, with God. And, for Franciscans, like Épiphane, I believe it was precisely such a failure – at once apprehensive and relational – that was at stake both in sacrilege and in slavery. Thus, attempting to follow Bonaventure's lead, I read Épiphane's passage "to the letter," in a way that attempts to attend both to its signs (ciphers for meaning), as well as to begin the interminable interpretive work of pointing beyond the sign to symbolic resemblances, and sacramental resonances (joining the word, the thing, and the affective). Épiphane's perhaps curious assertion that slavery was sacrilege can only be understood by attending to these broader constellations, which can be seen to be at work in a fragment of his text – one somehow set apart and disjointed with the rest of Servi liberi.

5.1.3 III – Slave Law and the Law of Desire

A number of foundational legal codes purportedly "governed" the treatment of enslaved Africans by their New World masters. From Alfonso X of Castile's massive *Siete Partidas* (1252-1284), of which we have already seen a fragment, to Louis XIV's *Code noir* (1686), legal texts were considered to have set precedent on New World slavery have been examined by scholars either as abstract and foundational legal "discourses," or to prove that such codes had little effect in actual historical practice, by describing particular instances where they seem to have been circumvented or ignored. It has not often been noted, however, that such legal codes adjudicated at least as much upon religious practice, especially in the ways in which they drew distinctions about sacramental

procedure. Such codes provide an added glimpse of the longstanding and undertheorized juxtaposition of sacraments and sacrilege with slavery.

Before the *Code noir* was a law about slavery, it was a law about religion. From its very opening articles, it is a legal text – that is, a text of governance: "[W]e [Louis XIV] owe equally our attention to all the peoples that Divine Providence has put under our obedience." But it is one that makes claims to establish right religious practice. The commands that Jews be evicted (Article I); that slaves be "baptized and instructed in the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman religion" (Article II); that public exercises of other religions be forbidden (Article III); that non-Catholics could not hold slaves (Article IV); that subjects of "the so-called reformed religion" not "disturb or prevent our other subjects, even their slaves from the free exercise of the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman religion, on pain of exemplary punishment" (Article V), among others, both foreshadowed the revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1598) that would be undertaken in the Edict of Fontainebleu (22 October 1685). The *Code noir* also drew upon Nantes' proto-secularist cleaving of religion into public and private domains that could be imagined as separate. As considered above, this division between public and private is decisive, both in understanding the anthropological status of the legal text and in considering its implementation and its impact on real-world material relations.

At the same time, the *Code noir*'s contradictory concerns over marriage, concubinage, and paternity, marked not only "epistemic anxieties" over the various forms of sexual liaisons, the status of offspring as free or enslaved, and the validity of non-Catholic marriage rites, but marked one attempt to consolidate the strong initiative of the Council of Trent to normalize marriages for lay people.[252] Central to all of these anxieties too was the attempt to maintain, at the very least, the appearance of the Catholic slaveholder's incontestable status as master – master of who could or could not marry, who could be manumitted or held in bondage, who could be punished and

[252] I borrow the term "epistemic anxieties" from Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain.*

provided for. In a context considered to involve kinship disruption, unexpected deaths of European offspring, and low European reproduction rates, shoring up the symbolic and economic potency of the master, increasingly perceived as weak and flaccid, was a central objective of colonial governance. Relying on the sacramental economy of Roman Catholic marriage was one way to ensure control, to ensure the master's lines of inheritance as they were increasingly perceived to be under threat.[253] As we will see, for Épiphane as well as for other Capuchins, the regularization of marital status was a major goal across mission terrains, however – beyond the assertion that the Capuchins were simply bringing the Tridentine reforms to bear on the missions – it was also a fulcrum that could be used in the critique of slavery.[254] As we will see, for Franciscans, mastery was problematic in the order of creation because it thwarted the desirous returns of creation to God.

As the *Code noir* sought to respond to New World anxieties about kinship, inheritance, and the position of the master by shoring up the Catholic marriage as a legal ritual in France's overseas

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[253] See Vincent Brown, *The Reaper's Garden* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010); Diana Patton "Maternal struggles and the politics of childlessness under pronatalist Caribbean slavery," *Slavery & Abolition* 38, no. 2 (2017): 1-21; Jennifer Moran, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004.

[254] Another case is described in passing by Rebecca Scott in her "María Coleta and the Capuchin Friar: Slavery, Salvation, and the Adjudication of Status," *William & Mary Quarterly* 76, no. 4 (2019): 727-762. Scott shows that one Capuchin Fray Félix took the deathbed confession of an enslaved woman that initiated the beginnings of a freedom suit. In passing, Scott informs that the same Fray Félix had already created controversy in Louisiana by openly criticizing the fact that slaveholders were not allowing their slaves Catholic marriages. John K. Thornton has asserted that the Capuchins were agents of bringing the Tridentine reform into the missions in Kongo, and he has asserted that this was particularly true in friars' regularization of marriages in their missions there. John K. Thornton, "Kongo and the Counter Reformation," *Social Sciences and Missions* 26 (2013): 40-58. While I agree that Capuchins frequently took up measures that aligned with the reforms taken up at Trent, I think we should be careful in interpreting Capuchins as mere agents of the conciliar agenda. John W. O'Malley's assertion, though made in relation to Jesuits, should encourage our analysis of Capuchins as well:

> Not all the characteristics we associate with 'Tridentine Catholicism' find verification in the Society of Jesus. More specifically, despite the involvement of a few leading Jesuits in the Council of Trent and the unquestioned support of the Council by the Society, the Jesuits as a body had significantly different ways of meeting the generically common goals they shared with the Council. In other words, we must not take the decrees of Trent and their direct implementation as indicative of all that happened in Catholicism, nor, for all the impact the Council had on the Society, must we view the Jesuits primarily as agents of the agenda of the Council. They had an agenda of their own (17).

So too for Capuchins. John W. O'Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

colonies, it mirrored the Council of Trent's earlier anxiety, which can be read in the preamble to the decrees of its penultimate session in November 1563:

> [The sacrament of matrimony] is to be numbered amongst the sacraments of the new law; against which, impious men of this age raging [*insanientes*], have not only had false notions touching this venerable sacrament, but, introducing according to their wont, under the pretext of the Gospel, a carnal liberty, they have by word and writing asserted, not without great injury to the faithful of Christ, many things alien from the sentiment of the Catholic Church, and from the usage approved of since the times of the apostles; the holy and universal Synod wishing to meet the rashness of these men, has thought it proper, lest their pernicious contagion may draw more after it, that the more remarkable heresies and errors of the above-named schismatics be exterminated, by decreeing against the said heretics and their errors the following anathemas […].[255]

As in the later *Code noir*, the sacraments were the field upon which the boundaries of belonging and difference – that is, questions of kinship – were negotiated, and the definition of correct sacramental participation was used as a fulcrum in elaborations of similitude and difference, as what Foucault would call an act of power and knowledge.[256]

Other scholarship has pointed to how sacramental operations allowed enslaved people to initiate claims of belonging on various scales and in different domains (legal, religious, etc.).[257] Thus, it is possible to see sacrilege and slavery as, at least, analogous practices along the lines of inclusion/exclusion, and even as linked domains where what was done in one area (what was inscribed in a baptismal register, for instance) could have effects on another (perhaps in a freedom suit). If sacrilege and slavery comprised analogous and juxtaposed domains, we still know little about their specific connections, or, more specifically, what a textual operation, such as the connecting and

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[255] *The Council of Trent: The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Œcumenical Council of Trent*, edited and translated by J. Waterworth (London: Dolman, 1848).
[256] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*. On an interesting conceptual reflection on the modes of filiation and inclusion inculcated in Christianity, as related to economic and political processes, see Gil Anidjar's interesting *Blood: A Critique of Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).
[257] As examples, see Adrianna Chira, "Uneasy Intimacies: Race, Family, and Property in Santiago de Cuba, 1803-1868" (PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 2016); Rebecca Scott and Jean M. Hébrard, *Freedom Papers* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012); and Katherine Gerbner, *Christian Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

knotting of sacrilege and slavery undertaken by Épiphane in *Servi liberi*, could do as a critique, what kind of material and affective impact it sought in its messy simplicity. To understand the key, but somewhat obscured, connection between slavery and sacrilege elaborated at its core, the text must be read not only in terms of "discourse" or as an act of "power/knowledge" (methods that informed my introduction to and reading of the case in Chapter Three), but in the terms of the Franciscan representational economy in which it was crafted and by looking to its associative imbedding of broader resonances and resemblances.

5.2 Fragment One

> Here I will report a case I *witnessed* [*vidi*]. A Black woman, pregnant to be sure, in *labor* and about to give birth [*pregnantem laborantem in partu*], was cared for as long as there was hope for recovery and delivery. But when her health gave out, they let her perish with *two little ones* in her *womb* [*cum duobus parvulis in ventre suo*], to avoid paying a surgeon to open the womb so they might be *baptized*. The little ones *kicked* [*saltabant*] in the womb, separated themselves from one another [*seperabant se ab invicem*], and for four or five hours went on *living* in the presence of an associate of mine, who sent for the surgeons out of charity, for them to receive *baptism*. But once the Black woman was dead, no one wanted to help the little ones who *were seeking baptism* [*parvulis patentibus baptismum*]. Despite *kicking and stirring* [*saltantes et pulsantes*] in the womb because their *time had come* [*tempus eorum advenerat*], they were *buried in the mother's womb without baptism* [*sepulti sunt in ventre matris sine baptism*]. […][258]

5.2.1 I – A (M)other's Labor

Marked not only by sadness of death, Épiphane's narrative disclosed his anger at the preventability of the deaths of a mother and her unborn twins, the result not of human negligence, but of a cold, economic rationale that determined the worth of a person solely from her economic function. Here, labor entails both its obvious meaning in this context – labor as a painful physical preparation for birth – but it also raised the question of labor as productive economic activity.

[258] Épiphane de Moirans, *Servi liberi*, 122-123 [51].

Épiphane's statement, "As long as there was hope for her recovery and delivery," suggested both that the possibility of whether the unnamed woman would be able to work again was the primary factor that would determine her fate, and that her reproductive capacity, her ability to reproduce life as exploitable labor, was the only characteristic upon which determinations about her own life and viability depended. The cold economic rationale enjoined by the woman's captors would have held first that the lives of the infants would only be viable if their mother would survive to undertake the reproductive labor involved in their upbringing.[259] Secondly, and likely flying in the face of a sacramental ethic suggesting that every attempt should have been made to baptize the children, it also held that the cost to a surgeon could not be justified without assurance of the possibility of the children's upbringing. The infants would be viable if, and only if, their mother would have survived to undertake the reproductive labor involved in raising them. Épiphane emphasized what would have been interpreted as the sacrilegious logic of the woman's captors by suggesting that they did not consider the cost to the surgeon to be legitimate to save the infants' lives. When it became clear that she would not survive, her life was deemed expendable, and, thus, the infants were so deemed too – they were buried in the womb to die, without baptism, amid each other's kicks and stirs.

Read alongside other passages, Épiphane points to death as a possibility that either casting out or keeping in could afford – a difference that could be encapsulated as "kicked out" versus "kicking around" or "kicking at the door." Elsewhere in *Servi liberi*, Épiphane pointed out the injustice entailed by masters putting slaves out of the house when they were too old or ill to work. In a passage that immediately preceded Épiphane's narrative about the unnamed woman, the friar wrote, in direct address to slaveholders, "when [slaves] are good for nothing because of sickness or old age, you toss them out of their homes [*eiicitis illos extra domum*], to perish from hunger and

[259] For example, the *Code noir* specifically prescribed food provisions from the age of weaning, in article XXII.

misery."[260] And elsewhere he wrote, that "Black slaves not strong enough to produce anymore because of old age or infirmity are thrown out by their masters [*eiiciuntur a dominis*] to die."[261] The words used in these passages offer rich associations, resonances, and etymologies and will be returned to alongside others, but whether slaves were kicked out or "ejected" (*ejecere, ejeci, ejectum*) or kept in, in the case of the unborn twins, "entombed" (*sepulto, sepultar, sepultat*) in the mother's womb, death through either of these opposed options was based on a cold economic calculation about economic productivity and determination of the use for persons held as property.

When the theorist Achille Membe countered a Foucauldian elaboration of *biopolitics* with *necropolitics* to name the functional productivity of death and sovereign power to determine life and death (instead of its appropriation, enfranchisement, administration, and refinement of life) in colonial contexts, we might say that Épiphane's early modern account is informed by a similar sensitivity.[262] Like Membe's, Épiphane's pessimistic account critically emphasizes how ethical determinations around death – questions about who should live or die – are made subservient to questions of maximizing material profit. In other early modern Caribbean accounts like those of the Dominican missionaries Jean-Baptiste Du Tertre (1654) and Jean-Baptiste Labat (1722), these missionary authors made passing references about the need to treat slaves well, to feed and clothe them sufficiently, to give them Sundays free of work, etc., precisely in order to make their labor sufficiently productive, and both friars also decried abuses of English planters precisely for this reason.[263] The issue they took was not so much with violence or abuse directed against slaves in itself, especially in the case of Labat who ran one of the most lucrative plantations in Martinique at his time, and who wrote of the great pleasure he took, at times, in his punishment of slaves,

[260] Épiphane de Moirans, *Servi liberi*, 122-125 [51].
[261] Épiphane de Moirans, *Servi liberi*, 46-47 [21].
[262] Membe, *Necropolitics*.
[263] Labat, *Nouveau Voyage* and Jean-Baptiste du Tertre, *Histoire Generale des Antilles habitées par les françois* (Paris: Thomas Iolly, 1667).

especially when he deemed them sorcerers. Here too the propagation of Jean-Baptiste Colbert's *Code noir* in 1685, shares the goal not of curtailing abuses against slaves, but of maximizing the productivity of labor by legally securing exceptions.[264] In full force during the period of Labat's missionary activity, the *Code noir* is a legal document that secured, in the late seventeenth century, what Agamben has traced as a "state of exception" or "state of emergency" as the legal context for slave life.[265]

The reduction of the viability of an individual's life to the calculation of his or her economic function (for the unnamed enslaved woman, a function related to both possibilities for the meaning of labor – as work or as the delivery of children), stands in marked contrast to the Franciscan conceptualization of the person, even if the Franciscan account that congeals around the person is also one that emphasizes his or her function. How did Épiphane's witnessing of the suffering of a dying woman and her unborn children, *kicking* and stirring, or his interaction with a formerly enslaved man *kicked out* into the street upon reaching old age rub up against a Franciscan definition of the person? Put otherwise, does Épiphane's intervention into questions of enslavement add a Franciscan contribution to questions of person that sat at the core of slave codes and, what Colin Dayan has called, the legal rituals of terror that they maintained in making determinations about spirit and matter?[266]

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[264] Louis Sala-Molins has pointed to the indebtedness of Enlightenment liberalism to the Code noir in *Dark Side of the Light: Slavery and the French Enlightenment* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005). Across multiple publications, Colin (Joan) Dayan has emphasized the role of the Code noir as securing exceptions, and she has analyzed laws of servitude in terms of ritual. See, for example, Colin Dayan, *The Law is a White Dog: How Legal Rituals Make and Unmake Persons* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013). See also Susan Buck-Morss's assertion of the links between the Code noir and Hegel's master/slave dialectic in "Hegel and Haiti," *Critical Inquiry* 26, no. 4 (2000), 821-865.

[265] For the beginning elaborations of Giorgio Agamben's tracking of the figure of the *homo sacer*, see the first volume in his series: Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998). For a critical reflection on Agamben's exclusion of the figures of slaves, barbarians, and outlaws, see Magnus Fiskesjö, "Outlaws, barbarians, slaves: Critical reflections on Agamben's homo sacer," *Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 2, no. 1 (2012), 161-180. Fiskejö criticizes Agamben for his privileging of the obscure figure of the *homo sacer* over the figure of the slave, implicated as slaves were in the very pages of Aristotle that Agamben explicates. For points of connection between Agamben and Franciscanism, see Lorenzo Chiesa's "Giorgio Agamben's Franciscan Ontology," *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy* 5, no. 1 (2009): 105-116.

[266] Colin Dayan, "Legal Terrors," *Representations* 92 (2005): 42-80.

5.2.2 II – Desire and the Francsiscan Concept of Person

We come back to the question of the Franciscan definition of the person precisely through a detour afforded by this passage in *Servi liberi*. Épiphane narrativizes the thwarted desire of the infants for baptism after their mother has died as onlookers' negligence sealed their fates. "[T]hey kicked [*saltabant*] in the womb, separated themselves from one another."[267] And further down, Épiphane describes them as "kicking [*saltantes*] and stirring [*pulsantes*] in the womb because their time had come [*quia tempus eorum advenerat*]." The Latin word (*saltō, saltare, saltāvī, saltātum*) means to dance or jump. The participle *pulsantes* (from the verb *pulso, pulsare, pulsavi, pulsatum*) not only means pulsating or stirring, but also pushing, beating or knocking on. Épiphane interpreted the infants' kicking or knocking on the door of their mother's womb as an expression of desire for baptism and for life.

In Christianity, the leaping of infants in the womb has similarly been interpreted as a meaningful sign. Épiphane was no doubt familiar with the passage in the first chapter of the Gospel of Luke wherein John the Baptist, still in the womb of Elizabeth, Mary's kinswoman, leapt in Elizabeth's womb upon meeting Mary pregnant with Jesus. He would have not only known the passage from the general familiarity of any priest of his time with the gospels, but he would have prayed two passages from the same chapter of Luke everyday as part of the divine office – the Benedictus at lauds (dawn prayer) and the Magnificat at vespers (evening prayer).[268] The relevant verse from Luke says that John the Baptist "leapt" in Elizabeth's womb: "And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped [*exsultavit*, in the Vulgate] in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost."[269] And the passage also suggests that Elisabeth immediately interpreted this leaping as a sign: "For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation

[267] Sunshine's translation of *saltabant* as "kicked," could also be translated as "jumped" or "leapt."
[268] Lk. 1:68-79 KJV; Lk. 1:46-55 KJV
[269] Lk. 1:41, KJV

sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy."[270] Though the Latin verbs here are different – Épiphane's *saltare* meaning to dance or jump and the evangelist's *exultare* to leap up, exult in, or to rejoice – the meanings are close. For instance, soldiers might *saltabant* or *exultabant* in celebration of a victory. Here, movement is a meaningful sign – indeed, a response – proffered in the absence of speech.

In his *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, Bonaventure points precisely to John the Baptist's leaping *in utero* as a meaningful sign, and he got caught up in the fact that such an act seemed to him to unfold beyond the limits of nature:

> And from the fact that the infant rejoiced beyond the capacity of nature it is certain that he encountered the Lord of nature. And from the fact that the babe responds from inside the womb it is certain that you have conceived him who calls from the womb according to that found in Isaiah 49:1: 'The Lord called me from the womb. From my mother's womb he has remembered my name,' etc.[271]

In his treatment of the passage from Luke, Bonaventure suggested a series of correlating calls and responses that necessarily move beyond the verbal – there is no speech in utero. Elizabeth hears Mary's greeting. The greeting does not land on deaf ears, but has an effect – "the *effect of the Virgin's greeting is introduced*, which consisted of the *excitement of the mother* and *the joy of the child* [emphases in the original]." And elsewhere, here quoting Elizabeth in Luke, "For behold, when the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb rejoiced for joy." The joy of the infant cannot be expressed by speech, so it is expressed in leaping or rejoicing – the infant *exsultavit*. Here, Bonaventure cites the early medieval monk, Bede: 'Because he was unable to do so by voice, with exalted soul he greets his Lord […].' A threefold series emerges consisting in Mary's greeting, Elizabeth's excitement, and the infant's leaping – which Bonaventure interprets as the infant's desirous response. Bonaventure's interpretation of John the Baptist's in utero leaping thus rests

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[270] Lk. 1:44 KJV

[271] Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke, Chapters 1-8*, edited and translated by Robert J. Karris (Saint Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2001), 80.

upon precisely the same foundations as Épiphane's – namely, the question of desire. Bonaventure's emphasis on the theme of desire is predictable here, since it occurs as a prominent feature throughout all his work, if not the sole defining feature of his oeuvre. The infant's leaping is described "as one desiring to stand in honor and salute his Lord, whose precursor he was." Similarly, Épiphane attributes desire to the unnamed woman's dying twins, when he suggested that "they were *seeking* baptism [*patentibus baptismum*]" – suggesting, at once, openness, exposure, and vulnerability.

Finally, quoting and elaborating St. Ambrose's discussion of John the Baptist's leaping, Bonaventure suggested that in utero, John the Baptist, "was not alive to human eyes, but nevertheless existed." In its intractable liveliness, desire is precisely the stuff of the person and it is through it that we come to a Franciscan sense of the person. By way of associating the *in utero* leaping of the twins of a dying enslaved woman, as described by Épiphane, with a scriptural example of in utero leaping that Épiphane knew well, not only from his training, but from his daily prayers, I have begun to cull a Franciscan definition of person along Bonaventurian lines. We could say that the Franciscan person is desire constituted in relationship. Before moving on, this must be presented a bit more schematically to demonstrate a difference with other theological emphases, to understand the legal implications.

5.2.3 III – The Dignity of Desire, Twinship

As Laure Solignac has shown, for Bonaventure, the theological problem of the person was one that applied to the three persons of the trinity, to angels, and to human beings. All created things were considered by Bonaventure to be vestiges of the divine Creator. As such, they are expressions of the "unity, the truth, and the bounty of God," things which can be found in all

creatures.[272] Now, Solignac shows that in Bonaventure's discussion of "vestiges" and "images," he draws the distinction from Augustine, but, whereas Augustine emphasized a distinction between God's vestiges (irrational creatures) and God's images (rational creatures, like angels and humans), Bonaventure emphasizes that "the angel and the human were equally vestiges." Put otherwise, for Bonaventure, all were vestiges, but angels and humans enjoyed the *dignity* that came from being the image of God. Dignity is based on the fact of possessing a rational nature, understood by Bonaventure in terms of "memory, intelligence, and will." The human person is an image and *resemblance* of God, in the sense that a child resembles his or her parents. In the human person, God expresses God's very own substance – memory, intelligence, and will – and the human enjoys his or her dignity.

Whereas contemporary accounts of the desiring subject have pinpointed language and recognition as the inextricably linked failures through which the subject emerges as split; what we might call the Franciscan subject, also defined in terms of its desire, emerges in Épiphane's passage just as well through its significant action. The kickings (*saltantes*) express desire as open ended, as opening up and opening out (*patentibus*) of the womb to baptism and to life. Just as the twoness of Jesus and John the Baptist's in utero interaction mediated through maternal affirmation (paraphrasing Elizabeth, "as soon as I heard your greeting, the infant kicked") established a communicative circuit that, as Bonaventure acknowledged, unfolded beyond the natural, the twinship of the infants is structurally significant. Not only were twins long-regarded as highly ambivalent figures in many African cosmologies and medicinal practices, where they were alternatively feared or revered, thought to possess secret knowledge and special power, so too were they regarded in European medieval medicine and scholastic theology as uncanny figures of

[272] Laure Solignac, "Les personnes selon saint Bonaventure," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 94, no. 3 (2010): 451-480: 467.

potential monstrosity.[273] In Europe, the conception and birth of twins indexed a mother too-fecund, one with too much desire.[274] According to Maya Deren's assertion, religious cosmologies are joined, in Haitian Vodou, for instance, where the sacred twins known the Marassa, are "said to be the first children of God and their feast has, in some cases, been assimilated to Christmas, itself a celebration of a holy child, offspring of one human and one supernatural parent."[275] The power and danger of twins who held knowledge and desire from the womb enjoys representational precedent in the biblical twin figures of Jacob and Esau, whose vyings for paternal recognition began in utero and persisted throughout life ("But the children struggled together within her [Rebekah]; and she said, 'If all is well, why am I like this?' So she went to inquire of the Lord").[276]

Given all of these dense, uncanny, and longstanding associations with twinship, how can the twinship of the infants described Épiphane's text be interpreted as a meaningful sign or as a suggestive symptom?[277] The Franciscan elaboration of the person or subject, the twinship of the infants *in utero* is crucial for interpreting their actions as part of meaningful communicative circuit – albeit one established through action rather than speech. (As we will see, the silence of the mother – too ill to confess in the sacrament of penance -- is also crucial to this circuit.)

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[273] See Philip M. Peek, *Twins in African and Diaspora Cultures: Double Trouble, Twice Blessed* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2011) and E.E. Evans-Pritchard, "Customs and Beliefs Relating to Twins among the Nilotic Nuer," *The Uganda Journal* (1936). On twins in medieval and early modern Europe, see William Viney's short but informative article, "The Significance of Twins in the Middle Ages," https://thewonderoftwins.wordpress.com/2013/07/23/the-significance-of-twins-in-medieval-and-early-modern-europe/.

[274] The Dominican scholastic Albertus Magnus revised earlier Greek medicinal theories that twinship occurred in relation to the shape of the mother's womb. For him, equally significant were women's penchants for excessive sexuality, which could cause twinship or other forms of monstrosity (conjoined twins, hermaphrodism, and the like). Viney, "Significance of Twins."

[275] Maya Deren, *Divine Horsemen: The Living Gods of Haiti* (New York: McPherson & Co., [1953] 2004), 38.

[276] Gen 25:22 KJV.

[277] We have already seen above that twins were considered to be symptomatic of a mother with too much fecundity in Medieval European medicine. Psychoanalysis offers multiple and complicated trajectories for the symptom. In *Three Essays on Sexuality*, Freud writes that, for neurotic subjects, "the symptoms constitute the sexual activity of the patient." In a footnote added in 1920, he elaborates upon the symptom as a kind of compromise: "neurotic symptoms are based on the one hand on the demands of the libidinal [drives] and on the other hand on those made by the ego by way of a reaction to them" (Sigmund Freud, "Three Essays on Sexuality," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. VII [London: Vintage, 2001], 163). By invoking the language of the symptom here I mean to suggest that something is at stake which is both related to the body and which can be subject to interpretation.

Consistent throughout the various accounts of twinship is the fantasy of twins going through a developmental process *in utero*, where they interact meaningfully with an other, without being yet interpellated – personified and subjectivized, if you like – through the world of language. Just as John the Baptist's desire for the messiah was mediated through the Mary's speech, or as Jacob and Essau's *in utero* struggling initiated a pre-lignuisting and pre-visual struggling against one another (the womb is not only silent, but dark), Épiphane's ascription of desire to the unborn twins and his ascription of desire to them rests upon the imagination of their interaction *in utero* – interaction through which they could emerge as persons constituted by desire for life and baptism. Late term infants kick and shift with frequency. The twinship of Épiphane's infants makes it possible for him to attach specific meaning to those kicks – a desire for life and baptism, and the thwarting of that desire by those who let them die is reinscribed in *Servi liberi* to distribute and communicate the symptom of their desire to a broader readership who might be affectively moved (i.e. converted) by it. In the case of twins, such meaningful interaction could be interpreted as natural.

Uterine Communicative Circuits of Twinship

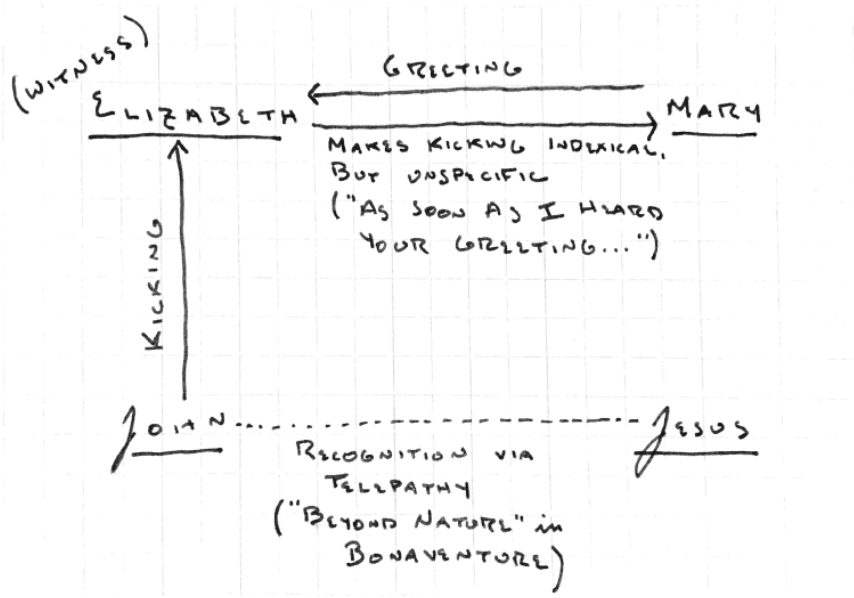

Figure 8. Chart One—Elizabeth

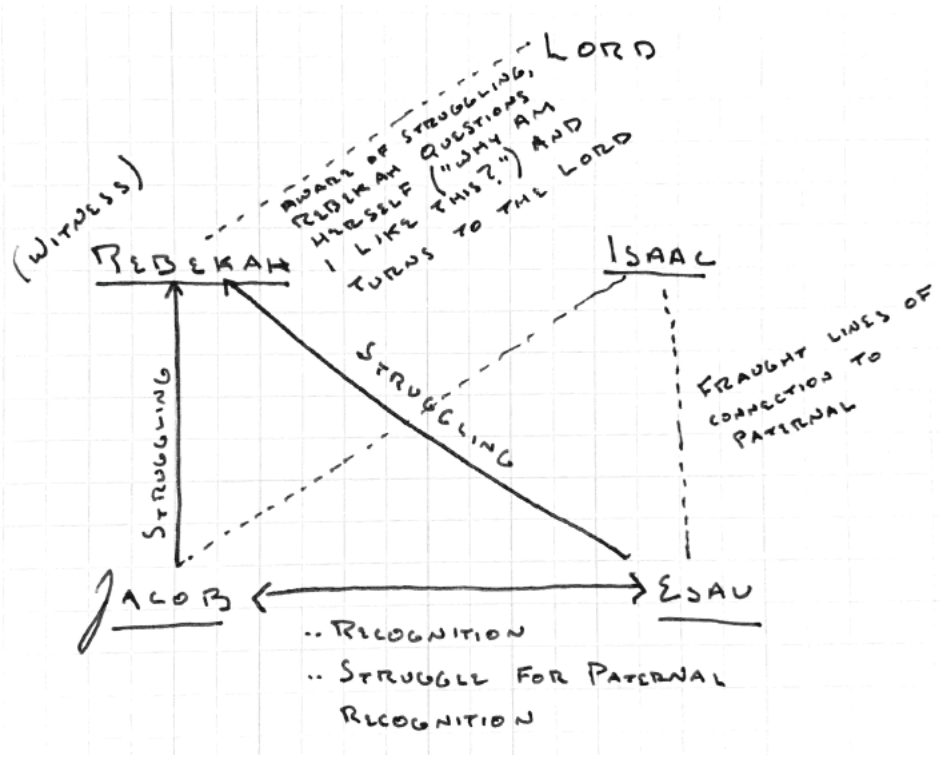

Figure 9. Chart Two—Rebekah

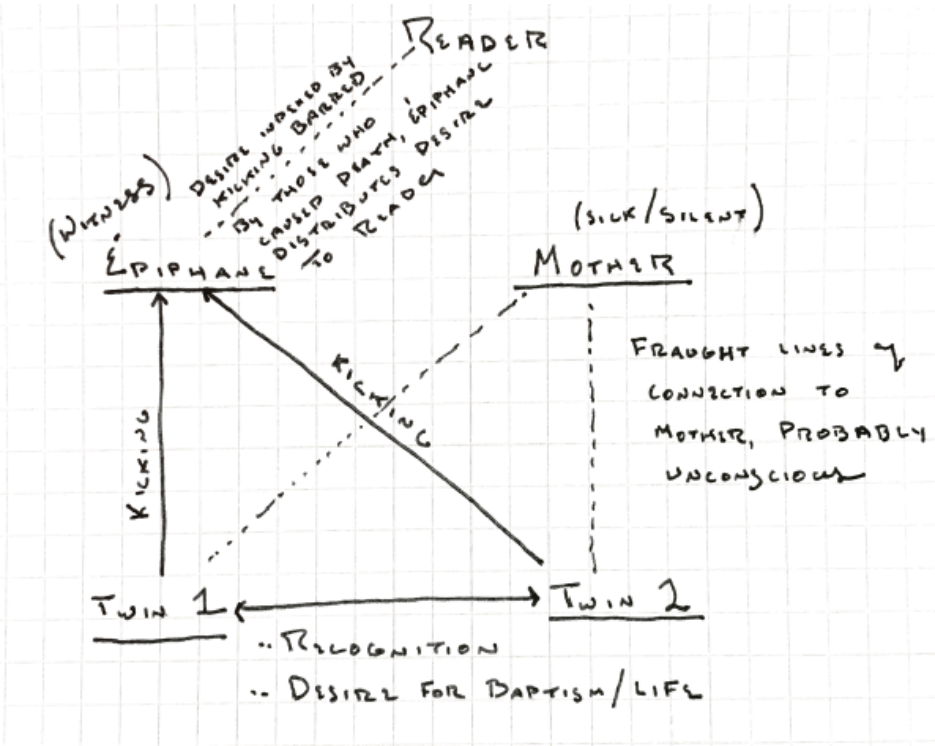

Figure 10. Chart Three—Épiphane

These uterine communicative circuits of twinship can be compared in charts. The charts will carry the name of the first position, the witness-object for the communicative action of the infant or infants – Elizabeth, Rebecca, Épiphane. The second position (upper right) is that of a figure somehow implicated in the circuit, but who does not directly relate communicatively to the in utero infants. Mary's greeting initiates the circuit in the Elizabeth chart, but the circuit is joined by Elizabeth's assertion that John's leaping is meaningful. In Rebekah's chart, the father Isaac is implicated as one whose inheritance can be sought. In Épiphane's chart, the mother is silent and likely unconscious, but, as we have seen, the fate of the infant's is directly tied to hers by her captors.

The fetuses populate the third and fourth positions. In each case, we establish recognition between them as necessary for the communicative circuit and meaningful action. This is clear enough in the case where the infants share the same uterine space, in the Rebekah and Épiphane charts, but it is more difficult in the Elizabeth chart. In that chart, recognition—specifically John's recognition of Jesus—is crucial to the communicative circuit, but such recognition must have been undertaken, along an order we might understand as a kind of transmission, and this is why Bonaventure considers it beyond the order of nature.[278] For Bonaventure, in utero interaction between twins who shared the same uterine space would not have been surprising, according to the medical knowledge and scholastic debates of his day.[279]

In each chart, the infants undertook an action that was interpreted by the witness as meaningful. My argument is that, for their action to be meaningful, their twinship is structurally necessary because it implies developmental recognition of the existence of an other (i.e. one

[278] See below page 173-175.

[279] The dual nature of Jesus (as human and divine), his positioning within the three persons of the trinity, and the opening of natural, preternatural, and supernatural channels around him (particularly when John the Baptist and Jesus encountered one another again at the latter's baptism, when the heavens were opened, the Spirit descended, and the Father spoke) could all further complicate the account of Jesus's developmental trajectory, but need not be dwelt on here.

another). This action is expressed in the form of kicking or struggling. The witness interprets this action as meaningful, giving the sign the status of an index. While, in the Elizabeth chart, this sign is recognized and referred back to Mary, in the Rebekah and Épiphane charts it is referred to a third party – to the Lord, or to the reader, respectively. In Épiphane, the leaping in utero is interpreted as a meaningful sign indexing the existence of a desiring person, subject, or soul in search of baptism and life. This sign is disclosed to the reader through the friar's textual operation, as an attempt to turn their thwarted desires into a cause for action and conversion on the part of a reader. It is an attempt to distribute the symptom of their thwarted desire via the text. For the twins' actions to be meaningful and for their desire to be thwarted, their mutual recognition is structurally necessary as the bedrock for their desire.

5.2.4 Baptism, Womb, Tomb

The problem that Épiphane began to raise in the passage on the enslaved woman and her infants leaping in utero was primarily one of slaveholders' mistaken determinations and valuations of her human dignity. At the same time, he bestowed that dignity to the unborn infants in the form of his ascription to them of desire for life and baptism, a desire made possible by the unique developmental affordances symbolically attached to twinship. As we will see, the theme of slaveholders' mistaken apprehension was dramatically intensified throughout this segment of text, until it built to a condemnatory crescendo at the end. In their determinations about the use of an enslaved woman's labor – as both reproduction and work – they mistook her function. In their tying of the infants' fates to her own, they dismissed and thwarted the infants' desires. In making determinations about whether slaves should be kicked out, upon reaching old age, or held in, entombed in a womb, masters made determinations about the function of slaves and subjugated

questions of life and death to questions of maximizing material profit. Slaveholders' desires were disordered and sacrilegious. We will eventually see how this had the effect of forfeiting their own personhood, and the position of dignity attached to it.

A select passage where Épiphane discusses masters' kicking out of slaves due to illness or old age, a topic that also appears immediately before Épiphane's recapitulation of the death of the enslaved woman with her infants, is marked by a textual shift into Spanish – an uncommon move in the text – to report repeated direct speech that the friar heard slaves say:

> Black slaves not strong enough to produce anymore because of old age or infirmity are thrown out by their masters to die. Unwilling to take care of them in their old age or severe, incurable illness, Spaniards call this [*botar los negros*] 'kicking the Blacks out.' This is what slaves who were very old and sick or afflicted with incurable diseases told me: [*Mi amo me botó, me echó de casa*] 'My master kicked me out, he threw me out of my home.'[280]

"Amo" signifies the master who owns an animal or a slave, but the word has a dense etymology, beyond the obvious double meaning in Spanish (and other romance languages) of "I love." Stemming from a medieval Latin nursery word for mother or wet-nurse – *amma* – it was transformed in the Thirteenth Century (Bonaventure's time), when it first appears in the masculine form and came to signify proprietorship, ownership, and mastery. The shortening of the double m from the Latin to one m likely came from the formation of child's speech.[281] Perhaps underscored by Épiphane's shift into Spanish to report direct speech and by the fact that, of the two places in *Servi liberi* where the friar wrote of slaves being ejected ('*me echó*,' *eiiciuntur*, or '*botar*') for sickness or old age, one directly precedes his reporting of a scene that involves infants being entombed (*sepulti*) in their mother's womb, without baptism, their desires thwarted, the etymological history for "amo" seems both suggestive and, perhaps, opens up interpretation to the inexhaustible. Nevertheless, the transformation of relationships from ones of fecundity and dependence – *amma* or *ama* as the direct

[280] Épiphane de Moirans, *Servi liberi*, 46-49 [21].
[281] "Etimología de amo," in *Diccionario Etimológico español en línea*, http://etimologias.dechile.net/?amo (accessed 15 October 2018).

speech of a child to its nursemaid or mother – to *amo* as a designation that describes the power of life and death a master could enjoy over a subordinate animal or slave speaks powerfully to Épiphane's sense that slavery (as sacrilege) is the most significant disruption of creation's conversion, the itinerary of its return to God.

Franciscan ideas of person that congealed in themes like dignity, desire, resemblance, as we have already seen, and emphasized the dignity of person-vestiges over other vestiges. The proper ethical function of the person-vestige (one who, like God, possesses memory, intelligence, and will) was to make the slow and ongoing return back to God. When slaveholders (*los amos*) made determinations about life and death of slaves based on a cold economic rationale of labor, they thwarted the desire of creation through their own twisted desires. We will see that, for Épiphane, such mistaken determinations consisted in nothing less than the abdication of slaveholders' personhood. If in doing so – as Épiphane argued – that, in doing so *los amos* became *less than* animals, this statement must be read not only as sardonic and hyperbolic condemnation, but along specifically Franciscan lines. As sacrilege, slavery hinged upon the misapprehension of the dignity of what kind of person the slave was, a misapprehension that resulted in practices of stealing, misuse, and disregard.

Instead of receiving baptism, even though their "time had come" (*tempus eorum advenerat*), the infants "were entombed in the womb of the mother without baptism" (*sepulti sunt in ventre matris sine baptismo*). On their very face, Épiphane's words offer a threshold onto an inexhaustibly dense and longstanding history of Christian correlations between tombs, wombs, and baptismal rites, drawing its impetus not only from Paul's Epistle to the Romans ("Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?"[282]), but in the writings of early church

[282] Paul's passage continues, "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted

fathers like Ambrose, Augustine, and Tertullian, as well as in surviving hymns of the early church. Associations between wombs, tombs, and baptism would have been affectively impactful for Épiphane's readers. In early Christianity, baptism was consistently emphasized as a form of death, conception, and re-birth, all at once. Early baptismal fonts were shaped like wombs, tombs, or sometimes both, when rectangular features associated with entry into the font corresponded to circular ones related to coming out of the font, emergence into new life.[283]

In its discussion of Jesus's baptism by John in the Jordan, recounted in *Hymns of the Church*, the water of the river Jordan in which Jesus was baptized is likened to the water of Mary's womb:

> The river in which Christ was baptized conceived him again symbolically, the damp womb of water conceived him in purity and bore him in holiness, made him rise up in glory. [284]

If we have already seen a relation between the resonance between Épiphane's discussion of children kicking in the womb with John the Baptist's *in utero* exultation and leaping, this second meeting between Jesus and the Baptist, now adults, is correlated with that earlier telepathic meeting. Here too, communication from beyond barriers (the wall of the womb or the wall separating the world from God) loom large. Precisely what allowed Bonaventure to see John's leaping in utero as a supernatural sign undertaken in the absence of speech is paralleled in the scriptural assertion of the Holy Spirit's descent onto Jesus immediately after his baptism – an impossible breaking through barriers. This event also directly parallels the Spirit's descent into Mary's womb during the annunciation. The experience of the *mysterium* of the sacramental economy encapsulates precisely the inexhaustibility of resonances and associations – an experience foreclosed by slaveholders who

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together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Rom. 6:3-6, KJV.

[283] Everett M. Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdman's Publishing, 2009).

[284] Ephrem the Syrian, Hymns on the Church, 36:3. Quoted in Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church,* 504.

refused the imposition of law and an experience that, in Épiphane's view, was denied to children seeking baptism (and life) and to their mother, as well – "they let her perish."

Given a Franciscan twist, the womb, tomb, baptism correlation takes on even more forceful significance. Francis of Assisi staged the first live nativity, and Christmas – the celebration of the incarnation – was *the* crucial feast for early Franciscans.[285] What was celebrated here was God's *kenosis* (in Paul's words, "God's taking on the form of a servant or slave) – God's poverty and humility in the incarnation. The wood of the crèche was seen as related to the wood of the cross, and so, if Jesus's birth was linked directly to his death, and this is why Franciscan theologians held, not without controversy, that if Adam and Eve had not sinned God would still become incarnate in human form because God desired to enter God's creation. Franciscan sacramental implements like altars, baptismal fonts, and objects that held the eucharist were frequently constructed not from gold or marble, but from simple and humble materials (like pewter and wood), and the injunction that sacramental objects – chalices, patens, and the like, be constructed from humble materials is imbedded in the earliest *Capuchin Constitutions* of 1536.[286]

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[285] For but one example, see the early Franciscan hagiographic source known as "The Assisi Compilation:"

> Francis held the Nativity of the Lord in greater reverence than any other of the Lord's solemnities. For although the Lord may have accomplished our salvation in his other solemnities, nevertheless, once He was born to us, as blessed Francis would say, it was certain that we would be saved. On that day he wanted every Christian to rejoice in the Lord and, for love of Him who gave Himself to us, wished everyone to be cheerfully generous not only to the poor, but also to the animals and birds.

"The Assisi Compilation," 130.

[286] "We order that our Churches have only one small bell of about one hundred and fifty small pounds. In our places there shall be no other Sacristy than a locked closet or just a trunk. A professed Friar [perhaps notably, not necessarily a cleric] is to carry the key with him always. Everything necessary for divine worship shall be kept in that cupboard or chest. There should be two small Chalices, one of pewter and the other with just the cup made from silver. Let there be no more than three poor vestments without gold, silver, velvet or silk, or any else precious or unusual. However, these must be very clean. The palls on the Altars are to be of ordinary cloth, the candle-sticks of wood. Missals and Breviaries and all the other books too should be bound simply without fancy embellishments so that all the things for our poor use may radiate most high poverty and set us on fire for the precious riches of the heaven where are our treasure, delight and glory. [….] So that poverty, the holy bride of Christ our Lord and of beloved of our Father may remain among us always, the Friars must be careful in all things pertinent to divine worship, in our buildings and in the furnishings we use so that there may be nothing extraordinary, superfluous or precious, knowing that God wants from us our promised obedience in holy poverty rather than sacrifices. As [Pope] Clement [VII] says in his declaration, God delights more in a pure hear and holy works rather than in very precious and very ornate things. Nonetheless our poverty should radiate cleanliness entirely." Hanbridge, *Capuchin Constitutions.*

It does not seem beyond the pale to suggest that the surface of Épiphane's language in suggesting that the infants' "time had come (*advenerat*)," relates to the high degree of reverence Franciscans held for *advent* and the idea and celebration of God's incarnation. If Francis' staged God's entrance into the world in the humblest of forms, and if he and his theologically astute followers like Bonaventure and John Duns Scotus emphasized this in their teachings, Épiphane stages a scene both of egregious abuse of the sacraments, no less than the denigration (the "blackening" as rendering value-less) of life itself. Épiphane thus stages an advent without incarnation or birth -- indeed, a sacrilege. Drawing on the juxtaposition of sacrilege and slavery in the Tridentine catechism, we can see how Épiphane stages a link between sacrilege and slavery by showing how the sacred dignity of the person was reduced, mistaken, and misused as an object of private pleasures, and the desires of the infants for baptism were thwarted and cut off by inconsistent and contradictory laws. And, yet, a "nevertheless existing" in the direst circumstances, signified by the infants' desires in their kicking and stirring (*saltantes* and *pulsantes*), is distributed to the reader in Épiphane's textual operation – a last ditch attempt to stoke the disordered desires of the reader and to effect and affective return to the *intineraria* of conversion.

5.2.5 A Psychoanalytic Aside: Transmission as an Alternative to Telepathy or Index

Insofar as it complicates a need to take sides between telepathy as transmission without medium, on the one hand, or to indexicality, as gesture to sign via the signifier, on the other, a brief comparative, psychoanalytic aside may help to provide a way for scholars of religion to theorize a Bonaventurian "beyond the order of nature," without the need to share in what they might consider to be his metaphysical or theological alibis. The Franciscan symbolic I am using to read these scenes opens onto the order outside-of-language that Lacan called the Real. Here, I am interested in

developing a dialogue between what Épiphane, using a Christian-Franciscan symbolic framework, perceived in the infants' kicks, the linkages of desire and death that opened up in his telling, and a psychoanalytic notion of transmission as involving similar thematics.

In philosopher and psychoanalyst Willy Apollon's paper "The Limit: A Fundamental Question for the Subject of Human Experience" he theorizes what is at stake when, around 25 weeks' gestation, an embryo's auditory system is sufficiently developed for it to respond to intra-uterine (for example, the maternal heartbeat) and extra-uterine sonic perceptions.[287] Of course, what is at stake here is the first experience of sonic perception, without prior referent, corresponding visual stimuli, etc. Whereas Lacan took as foundational the moment at which the child perceived himself as a totality via the image in the mirror, Apollon, basing himself in discoveries made around the successful psychoanalytic treatment of psychosis, has sought to explore the possible effects of this fundamental moment of auditory perception without other supporting stimuli. In this instance, which Apollon calls the "effraction," the auditory perception of a voice, coming from outside the uterine environment, has traumatic effects, inaugurating a body, as distinct from the biological organism and inaugurating the desiring subject. Apollon writes:

> The work entailed in the child's confrontation with the audible and his management of its consequences overdetermines the formation of his body (as a site of this effraction) and its detachment from the organism, making it function at times according to a logic that has more to do with the effects of the audible than with the neurophysiologic logic.[288]

Indeed, it must be emphasized here that Apollon postulates this moment of the effraction as that of the origination of a body that is distinct from a mere biological organism— a *human* body subject to

[287] Apollon, "The Limit," 103-118. See, also, Librett's elaboration of Apollon's concept of the effraction, especially pp. 84-87: Jefferey Librett, "The subject in the age of world-formation (*mondialisation*): Advances in Lacanian theory from the Québec group," in *Innovations in Psychoanalysis: Originality, Development, Progress*, eds. Aner Govrin & Jon Mills (New York and London: Routledge, 2020), 75-99.
[288] Apollon, "The Limit," 107.

desire, hallucination, symptoms, etc., which all aim at some incomplete expression of a pure mental representation that will never be fully spoken. Apollon continues:

> This surging forth of the spirit or mind in the subversion of his biological being forms the basis for the child of what will be later experienced as an absence of boundaries, on the one hand between the spiritual (the subversion of the audible) and the biological, on the other hand, between the psychical, or the being's reaction to the effraction, and the spirit or body.[289]

In these passages, I am struck by the attempt to submit the voice and its effects to a kind of formalization, one which allow psychoanalysis to provisionally theorize domains of experience which it would be difficult for biological modes of observation to track. Apollon's introduction of the effraction offers one provisional psychoanalytic concept (perhaps among others) that help us to think about modes of transmission that are more capacious than the concept of the index, necessarily tethered, as it is, to the deployment of signs, without delving into telepathy. In a sense, it is a contemporary attempt to conceptualize something like Bonaventure's "beyond the order of nature," without the necessity of subscribing to his theology or his metaphysics.

5.3 Fragment Two

> […] The Black woman wasn't married but rather living [*sociata*] in fornication with a friend, as was the custom [*uti consuetum est*]. As it happened, I went to see her at her home for three days and remained almost the whole time to prepare her for the Sacrament of Penance, but she was *wracked with pain* [*doloribus pressa*] and *slept when we wanted her to confess her sins*. Thus it happened that, once her health gave out, they sent for the parish priest to administer the sacraments to her, because I had gone to visit her. The Lord Pastor came carrying the Most Blessed Sacrament in solemn procession. I asked where they were taking it. "Who heard that Black woman's confession?" The surgeon told me: "They say it was the Capuchin Father." I knew immediately I hadn't given her absolution, because she was asleep. I *rushed to her by a shortcut,* to prepare her; I got her ready as well as I could and gave her absolution, because she was in *extreme danger* [*extremo periculo*]; indeed, she died that very day. When the Most Blessed Sacrament arrived, I was anxious to see if the Lord Pastor would ask me, so he would know if she had confessed. *But he didn't* [*sed nihil*]; instead, he gave

[289] Apollon, "The Limit," 107-108.

> her the Viaticum. After we returned, in the sacristy, I asked the clergy, "Who heard that Black Woman's confession?" Then everybody hesitated, was surprised, and looked at each other; *they fell silent* because they didn't know what to say. I said to them: "Is this the way you administer the Sacrament of the Eucharist? If I hadn't rushed over there, the *concubine* [*concubina*] would have received the Viaticum without the Sacrament of Penance." And I left. […][290]

5.3.1 Sacraments, Sacrilege, and Pain – Between (at least) Two Silences

If, in the first passage, movement and action, undertaken in the absence of speech and developmentally afforded by the unique trajectories of twinship, proved decisive in establishing communicative circuits, here, silence and miscommunication abound in and all-around sacramental ministrations. Listening for the significance embedded in these speechless interstices is crucial if we are to understand how animality and the accusation of sacrilege surge in the proceeding passage. If excavation of the first part of the passage focused on the desires of the twins, for baptism and life, now we turn to the figure of the unnamed enslaved woman – seized upon by priests as a potential object for sacramental ministration, to see how concerns about sacraments and sacrilege intersected the desires of the parties in play – the woman, Épiphane, and the other priests.

The silence of the woman who "slept when we wanted her to confess" is juxtaposed with the silence of stupefied priests whom Épiphane confronted in the sacristy. And yet, the woman's silence oscillates with her being "wracked with pain" – wrackings whose sonic content is left unmentioned, a silence, perhaps dignified, on the part of the author. If we have already seen his role as "witness" for the twins, Épiphane's position in terms of the broader cast of the scene – the woman, the priests, and the surgeon – offers much for excavation. Épiphane slips from the "we" of the "we wanted her to confess her sins" [*volebamus confiteretur peccata sua*] at the end of the encounter, when he leaves the other clerics in the sacristy, silent and stupefied at his question. Embedded in the

[290] Épiphane de Moirans, *Servi liberi*, 122-123 [51].

juxtaposition of these two silences, as we will see, is nothing less than Épiphane's valuation of who a Christian is.

For the woman, the refusal of the confessional speech that the clerics wanted is occasioned by her alternatively sleeping or being wracked with pain. Even though it appears in a context potent with dynamics of confession and sexual difference, the specificity of this pain, albeit one which also stands in relation to truth, differs from the ways relations between pain and truth have usually been theorized in anthropological accounts, which primarily have theorized such a relation vis-à-vis practices of torture.[291] Again, scriptural references can help to provide some initial orientation. The Book of Jeremiah reads, "For I have heard a voice as of a woman in travail, and the anguish as of her that bringeth forth her first child, the voice of the daughter of Zion, that bewaileth herself, that spreadeth her hands, saying, 'Woe is me now! for my soul is wearied because of murderers'" (Jeremiah 4:31, *King James Version*). A passage from Isaiah is also resonant, and similar to the selection from Jeremiah. It refers to the battle cry of God, as a woman in labor: "I have long time holden my peace; I have been still, and refrained myself: now will I cry like a travailing woman; I will destroy and devour at once"[292] Both passages symbolize labor in terms of a moment of striking

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[291] In E. Valentine Daniel's *Charred Lullabies,* the author draws a distinction between pain and beauty in his exploration of torture in Sri Lanka. Daniel writes:

> There is however, one – at least one – difference. While beauty too puts language on trial it does so in a manner quite different from the way pain does. Beauty finds language wanting because of beauty's profound inexhaustibility; pain finds language wanting in pain's excruciating particularity. If beauty as a qualisign is pregnant with inexhaustible possibilities, pain is a *sinsign* that is exhausted in its simplicity and singularity. […] Pain is highly localized. Its outermost limit is the boundary of the victim's body. Its inner limit can be as small as the point in one's foot where a nail is being pounded in. And no one pain is like any other (233).

In Épiphane's passage, pain still stands in relation to truth, as we will come to see, but, here, it is not as localized as Daniel's suggests when he, understandably, draws upon the empirical situation of torture to theorize pain. In the case of the unnamed enslaved woman, pain was more global, connected as it seems to have been to the circumstances of a failed childbirth. Similar observations could be made of Talal Asad's "Notes on body pain and truth in medieval Christian ritual," as well as Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, upon which Asad draws. One departure, which theorizes pain differently, though it is underdeveloped, can be found in a suggestive sentence in Annemarie Mol's *The Body Multiple*, where approaches to pain in childbirth are contrasted in contemporary European contexts: "Whereas in France pain is driven as much as possible from the scene of birth, Dutch women learn to *dive into* their pain, endure it, and use it to get attuned to – no, not just to what is happening to them passively, but to what, actively, they are doing." E. Valentine Daniel, *Charred Lullabies: Chapters in an Anthropography of Violence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996): 233; Talal Asad, "Notes on body,"; Foucault, *Discipline in Punish*; Annemarie Mol, *The Body Multiple* (Durham: Duke, 2003): 175.

[292] Isa. 42:14 KJV).

defiance and destruction that come from longstanding resentment at disorder – a long-awaited thwarting of the existing orders of the misrule of law and the prevalence of disordered desire. The figure of the laboring woman crying out in pain is connected to prophecy and the apocalyptic deliverance of long-awaited justice. Indeed, a woman with crying out in labor pains also appears along these lines in the polyvalent apocalyptic language of the book of Revelation – "And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve starts. And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered."[293]

Not only would Épiphane would have been familiar with the Isaiah passage from its liturgical use, where it was associated with the season of Advent, the significance of which has already been related to the infants' thwarted arrival (*advenerat*). And not only would the passage have probably been committed to his memory, as he would have been required to pray it as one of the old testament canticles in rotation during the four-week cycle for vespers (evening prayer) in the Roman breviary. The friar actually cites this very verse from Isaiah at a crucial juncture much later in his text. In a chapter critically engaging mostly-Jesuit Iberian theorists of economy and theology, Épiphane used the Isaiah passage in this context:

> [Diego de] Avendaño and others admit that the buying and selling of slaves is illicit; therefore, those dealings should be completely destroyed, eradicated, and eliminated. Indeed, because bishops and [vowed] religious consent to this, they will participate in the punishment from the Lord, just as if they were involved in the blame […]. For what Isaiah said will come to pass for all Christians […]: 'I have always been silent, quiet, patient; I will speak as if in labor: I will exhale and gulp down at the same time [*Tacui semper, silui, patiens fui, sicut parturiens loquar dissipabo et absorbebo simul*].[294]

Taken together, these scriptural passages and Épiphane's use of the Isaiah passage suggested the symbol of a woman long-wracked with pain in such a way that in the cries and moans of her pain, a

[293] Rev. 12:1-2 KJV.
[294] Épiphane de Moirans, *Servi liberi*, 342-343 [29].

non-verbal communication suggests a moment of reckoning, irreducible to speech. For not only does "*doloribus*" signify physical pain, but also affects like anguish, indignation, and resentment – a complaint. The polyvalent intertextual message of the "I" in the Isaiah passage, as it was cited in Épiphane's text, called for more interpretation. Imbedded in the first person was not only Épiphane's status as witness to crime, wrong-doing, and sacrilege, but the resonance of that "I" with the original, scriptural "I" (i.e. God). Understood in this way, Épiphane cast himself in a prophetic role (i.e. as God's emissary) in his citation of the passage. But, we can further read that first person as the "I" of the unnamed enslaved woman whose refusal of confessional speech, in favor of presumably sonic wrackings with pain (i.e. cries, moans) and the silence of sleep, was cast by Épiphane as both significant and as enough. The judgement of God, the complaint of Épiphane, and the painful sounds of a woman disregarded and left to die are all consolidated in this intertextual "I."[295]

In cases where one is close to death (a condition which Épiphane signals explicitly in the passage – "*extremo periculo*"[296]), confessional absolution can be administered without the normal

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[295] On intertextuality, see Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language*. See also Michel de Certeau's striking account of the "I" of mystical discourse in "Mystic Discourse," *especially* 90-95, *for instance, on the function of "I" in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century mystical discourse and, I think, relevant to the present discussion*:

> What is important here [in a reading of Jean-Joseph Surin] is the fact that the 'I' in this case plays the role of a 'shifter.' On the one hand, it confirms the 'objectivity of the text,' since the author (the subject of the utterance), the narrator (of the text), and the actor (the hero of the story) are bound together in a single 'I,' and since the 'I' is by convention identical to a proper name. Thanks to this 'referential pact,' it bolsters the traditional syntagm with new reliability (saying 'I believe that….' assumes that the subordinate position is not, or is no longer, self-evident). On the other hand, it designates both the reason for and the content of the discourse: *why* one writes and *what* one writes. **In this way, it compensates for the lack of an ecclesial mission. The need to give personal witness intervenes when Church prediction loses its value, when the delegating missionary institution loses its credibility or neglects its duties. The "I" replaces the world as speaker (and the institution that is supposed to make it speak)** (94, emphasis added in bold).

Read along these lines, Épiphane's vignette seems to participate precisely in what Michel de Certeau would call "mystic speech." Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980); Michel de Certeau, Mystic Discourse," in *Heterologies: Discourse on the Other* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 80-100.

[296] "*Extremo periculo*" was a well-worn idiom in seventeenth century theology, in general, and in sacramental theology, in particular. It is used across seventeenth century texts in precisely the context Épiphane uses it – a sacramental state of exception. It was also used in tandem with "*periculo mortis*" (in danger of death).

formula of verbally confessing sins. It seems that this is what was at stake when the friar ran "to her by a shortcut" [*breviori itinere cucurri ad illam*] to give the woman absolution before the other clerics gave her communion. The shortcut was thus at once geographical and sacramental, and was legitimated by the "*extremo periculo*" of the circumstance. The recurrence of "*itinere*" here, which, as we have already seen, frequently occurs in Franciscan accounts of conversion – where it resonates with Bonaventure's *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum* or with the early *itineraria* or travel narratives of early Franciscan missionaries. Épiphane's statement that he prepared her as well as he could and gave her absolution ("*ut disposuissem illam et quomodo potui disposui et dedi ei absolutionem*"), suggests precisely that such a sacramental shortcut was undertaken by Épiphane in order to prevent the sacrilege of her receiving the eucharist without having received confessional absolution. In the case of the woman, her communion would have been sacrilegious because she lived with a man without being married, even though Épiphane softens this sin by citing custom ("*uti consuetum est*"), and, perhaps, by referring to her as a concubine (*concubina*), a status which was recognized, in particular, in medieval Iberian legal elaborations, as established in the *Siete Partidas*, for instance.[297]

Épiphane's own descriptions of his sacramental ministrations present him as concerned with the validity and propriety of sacramental administrations, and, at the same time, his textual operation presents two very different kinds of failures of significant speech. The woman's refusal of confessional speech is cast, in Épiphane's account, as an indictment of the order that caused her death, and the sounds of pain that attended it apocalyptically foreshadowed the demise of those who caused her death. Against this, there emerged other silences, more damning – words that should have been said or the kind of silence that marks the space of knowing one does not have an utterable answer. First, there is the silence of the "Lord Pastor," who came to administer the *viaticum*

[297] The fourth partida, Title XIV is entirely devoted to the problem of concubinage, and Robert I. Burns includes a long explanatory note on the subject. Robert I. Burns. *Las Siete Partidas: Family, Commerce, and the Sea: The Worlds of Women and Merchants (Vol. 4)* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 950-951.

(eucharist given to a person close to death or in danger of death). His silence is indexed by Épiphane's assertion that he was "anxious to see if the Lord Pastor would ask me, so he would know if she had confessed." "*Sed nihil*." But nothing. Second, the silence of the other clerics Épiphane confronted in the sacristy whose silence betrayed that they had no way to legitimate their carelessness actions, ones Épiphane represented as a violation of the "Most Blessed Sacrament." Here, finally, we arrive at slavery as sacrilege amid dumbfounded clerics left alone in a sacristy.

5.4 Fragment Three

> […] I say this in passing because the Indies are full of *horrendous crimes* and *abominable sacrileges* just in terms of this alone. But from this it's clear how masters behave toward Blacks when there is *no hope for slavery and profit and no care for welfare of body and soul*, because they are *held like beasts*, *treated like cattle*, *punished like wild animals*, afflicted with penalties, and ground down like serpents. But I say that those who in *word and deed* consider blacks to be animals and beasts are more irrational that those very wild beasts and Blacks. Indeed, I say that those very people are insane and mad with greed. Not only are they deprived of the light of charity and justice but also reason. They are without conscience, morality, and rational nature, *worse than beasts and cattle*, *more foolish than beasts of burden that have no understanding*; they don't seek anything from Blacks except labor or require anything except their own temporal gain, by fair means or foul.[298]

5.4.1 Slavery, Sacrilege, Animality, and the Worse-than-Bestial

If one component of representational economy involves a parity between words and things – that what people do with things or how they interpret them suggests something about how they use and interpret words – then Épiphane's "*dictis et factis*" (utterances and deeds) suggests a reciprocal relation between slaveholder's mistaken valuation (their consideration of blacks as like animals) and their actions – holding, treating, punishing enslaved people. Such a parity of word and deed was

[298] Épiphane de Moirans, *Servi liberi*, 122-123 [51].

imbedded in the Catholic sacramental system, where efficacy of the sacrament was established through the correlation of practices (such as pouring, dipping, anointing, eating, drinking) involving materials (water, oil, salt, bread, wine) and formulaic ritual utterances. To understand the Indies being full of "abominable sacrileges," correlated with "horrendous crimes," we must understand the link between word and deed as it was at work in Catholic and Franciscan sacramental systems, and how this could have led to the assertion – one I suggest should be read "to the letter" – that slaveholders were "worse than cattle" and "more foolish than beasts." Though the language surrounding slaveholders – "conscience," "morality," "rational nature" and "understanding" suggests that slaveholders had relinquished their humanity through unreason, I read Épiphane's positioning them beneath cattle and beasts, not as hyperbole, but literally to try to show how Franciscan theology is at work in the friar's textual operation. Put otherwise, if slaveholders lacked the faculties associated with human, divine, and angelic persons, as we have already seen them elaborated, then what is it that made them *less than* beasts, instead of *like* beasts? The Franciscan flair of the text, the puzzle of the text, must be at work at that level.

To find the detail of words and deeds through which enslaved people were "held like beasts, treated like cattle, punished like wild animals, afflicted with penalties, and ground down like serpents," we could go to a variety of sources to find specific practices through which enslaved Africans were punished by slaveholders, including the texts of Jean-Baptiste du Tertre and Jean-Baptiste Labat mentioned above. Indeed, we could also go, for example, to Épiphane's own description of practices that he considered brutal and condemned – like drawing up contacts and selling at auction; whipping undertaken with certain kinds of fish skin and vines; burning involving metallic implements; amputation, castration, and branding; and shackling with iron chains, among others, many of which Épiphane related explicitly to the treatment of animals, and which have been considered in past chapters. Aside from these excessive forms, some of which were, at least tacitly,

outlawed by power brokers of state and church, we could also go to the *Code noir*, promulgated just a few years after *Servi liberi* was composed, to see what, at least, was legally permissible and deemed reasonable. These practices though – whether deemed excessive or deemed reasonable – are relatively well known, and a catalogue of cruelty is not what I am after. Rather, I wish to understand how Épiphane could read such practices as sacrileges, and I wish to understand the subjective and affective effects he took such sacrileges to have – what the effects of sacrileges were on the souls who practiced them.

If we have seen a longstanding juxtaposition between the stealing of persons and the stealing or misuse of things, the resonance of slavery as sacrilege is clear enough, but this does not answer the question of what, in participating in such sacrileges, would make slaveholders less-than beasts. Here, we come back to what has been the crucial Franciscan feature all along – the question of desires and relation (implicated in speech and action) as the bedrock for the person. The repeated words and deeds, ritualized in practice and in law, of mistreatment garnered against enslaved people as animals, drew upon a longstanding, though obscure, juxtaposition between slavery and sacrilege to create a connection between them. Slavery was a sacrilege not only as it entailed, as sacrilege did, practices of stealing and misuse of sacred objects, but because it created a rift in the order of creation, leaving creation unable to return to God.

Beyond what might be seen as theological abstraction, this insight sat at the core of a Franciscan economy of relation, as related to the questions of power, hierarchy, and labor, and it was a crucial feature of how Capuchins sought to organize their life in their reform.[299] We have already seen the double meaning entailed in the mother's labor, and the cold economic rationale that, in Épiphane's view, obstructed the possibilities it afforded – life and return to God. Against labor

[299] On economy, as related to Catholic theology, see Giorgio Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).

understood in the sense of an object that could be profitably extracted, in their reform, Capuchins drew upon a longstanding – though, according to their critique, not always observed – Franciscan practice that labor – manual work – was connected at once to the soul's return to God and to "the glory of poverty."

In early Franciscanism, labor was radically severed from monetary profit, and income was cleaved from hierarchical structures of labor extraction.[300] In their reform, Capuchins sought a return to this early ideal, which they thought had been betrayed. What friars did with things in their labor and what they did with words were thought to be inextricably related. Citing the example of the Apostle Paul, who "worked while preaching," the original *Capuchin Constitutions* (1536) asserted that work was a means to an end other than monetary accrual. That end was a return to God, indexed by an affective stoking of the spirit, and any things the friars had that were left over (any surplus) should be "given to the poor for the glory of poverty." The Capuchin vision asserted that manual work was merely an opportunity to avoid idleness, a means to a decidedly modest end ("Since an end is not reached without a means, each should strive therefore to put aside all the harmful and pernicious things that hold us back from God or block the way to Him"). Work pertained to excessive occupation, something to do amid idleness, but it was never to take the place of the end goal: "While always their eyes open to God, let them walk along the highest and shortest way [i.e. take shortcuts]. Thus the work given to man by God, accepted and commended by the saints in order to maintain the devotion of the spirit, may not be for them the occasion of distraction or neglect."[301] The Capuchin reform thus held the potential of a radical critique of forms that set up

[300] One notable episode in early Franciscanism pertained to Clare of Assisi's refusal to accept a rule that would require her nuns to rely on profits from landholdings, and, thus, the income accrued through the labor of serfs. See Joan Mueller, *The Privilege of Poverty: Clare of Assisi, Agnes of Prague, and the Struggle for a Franciscan Rule for Women* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006). While, in my view, Mueller does not fully explore the potential social implications of the spiritual virtue of poverty, it seems clearly implied in her text. Francis of Assisi forbade friars from interacting with money.

[301] For the section on work, see chapter five of the Hanbridge, *Capuchin Constitutions,* 13-14.

work as an end – as in the working to death of slavery – or as the means to an end pursued by perverted desires. In Épiphane's critique of slavery this Franciscan vision of work was decisive.

In the sacrilege of slavery, people seized upon people as animals (beasts of burden) and evacuated possibilities of desire and relation from labor. They turned them into objects of private desires and pernicious pleasures, remembering the Tridentine catechism with which this paper opened. The birth, life, and baptism of the twins were thwarted. The life of the mother cast aside. The labor of writing – of Épiphane's word crafting – inserting this traumatic kernel into a theological treatise on slavery, a kind of textual move that had never been undertaken in such texts before, shocks the reader with an affective charge only representable in the limited and insufficient formulation – "slavery is sacrilege." I suspect that Épiphane hoped the reader would be shocked to silence (not unlike the priests he left in the sacristy) by some realization – more affective, than based in knowledge – by their own less-than-animality. The "worse than" of Épiphane's "worse than beasts" marks that what is at issue was not a formula of reason – one wherein slaveholders could be considered like beasts – but one of desire, something that Franciscans saw as inherent in all entities in creation. Slavery was a sacrilege because it thwarted the *itineraria* of return to God through conversion.

5.5 Conclusion

Resplendent Poverty has argued that Franciscans' cosmovisions can and should be productively inquired into to better understand how they enter historical narratives of scholarly interest, and, in attempting to excavate these, has explored the hagiography of Francis of Assisi (Chapter Two) and the work of several key Franciscan reformist mystical teachers (Chapter Three). Franciscans were agents in shaping: medieval and early modern religious life; considered responses social questions like that of African-Atlantic slavery (Chapter Four and Chapter Five); and mission contexts and

colonial fields; among a variety of other domains. And yet, this project has not merely been interested in the fact that they *were* agents (a statement that, from a social constructivist position, could be and has been made of many sorts of persons and non-human entities) or even in *how* they exercised agency (the task of most disciplinary historical narratives), but, rather, how their unique positions on and cultivated experiences of conversion (i.e. subjective formation) paved the way for singular acts that sometimes had disruptive consequences for the social link. (I think back to the examples in Chapter One related to Francis stripping naked in the public square or embracing the leper or, in Chapter Four and Chapter Five, of Épiphane's act of writing that emerged in response to his encounter with a dying woman in labor with twins.)

In writing about the scenes that structured friars' spiritual lives, linking these to their lives "in the world," I have increasingly turned to psychoanalytic theory, since I think it offers a novel way to theorize religious experience beyond the tools that social constructivist or psychological approaches have been able to offer. In doing this, I have also accepted the risk that goes with taking up a theory, which, at its best, is derived from and revised according to clinical praxis. Put otherwise, psychoanalysis is first and foremost an experience that someone can have. Only secondarily is it a theory, and, furthermore, the value of this theory for social scientific and humanistic studies may be dubitable. At the same time, focused as it is upon the rigorous elaboration of a theory that will help conceptualize experiences that unfold beyond the stakes of the "ego"—the "me" that one thinks on is—it seems particularly valuable for the exploration of religious experiences. On the one hand, it is consistent with some accounts of religious experience insofar as it aims to offer a rigorous account of agencies that exceed the stakes of the "me." On the other hand, because it presents a rigorous way to discern the registers of the imaginary, the symbolic, and the real (see below), it does not necessarily take for granted the particular religious discursive formations used to interpret such experiences. While related questions pave the way to future work, beyond the scope of this

dissertation, it seems important to say a few words directly about this, in closing. For this purpose, it seems particularly crucial to reflect, in closing, on the stakes of the psychoanalytic act in relation to the social link.

In the course of working on this project, over the course of several years, a prominent early modernist historian once asked me where Épiphane's argument for reparations came from. In posing this question, I think that she wanted both to mark the surprising novelty of his argument and to know what discourses Épiphane relied upon to craft his argument. Indeed, there were some tempting coordinates, and I have included some of them along the way of my discussion. Prominent anti-slavery arguments authored by other clerics like Barolomé de las Casas or Alonso de Sandoval fell short of Épiphane's condemnation of African slavery or in seeming lack of urgency around questions related to the catechesis and pastoral care of enslaved Africans, respectively. His argument for reparations and focus on the foundational question of slavery itself exceeded anything to be found in these and other clerical commentators. Still, another point of comparison could be the nearly contemporaneous account of the Germantown Quakers who wrote a letter condemning slavery based on the Golden Rule ("Do unto others…"). And yet, perhaps surprisingly, Épiphane's argument does not seem to be situated in this specific approach—one based in empathy, which would so dominate later religious abolitionist discourses. Furthermore, the assumption that Épiphane's act would have its precedents in these discourses could comprise an alibi for its self-purported prophetic singularity and charismatic flare. The question here is whether there are writerly ways of representing religious experience that could provide a rigorous scaffolding to account for this kind of singularity, without assuming that things have to be reduced to a certain kind of evidence (read: social constructivist/genealogical).[302]

[302] Jeffrey J. Kripal's work also seems to be in search of disciplinary approaches that could account for these dimensions of religious experience and is attuned to the kinds of evidence that could get dismissed from the

I thought that there was something very singular in Épiphane's act, a singularity certainly related to its novelty, but, in a way, also beyond it. Psychoanalysis offered me a way to begin to theorize the centrality of an act, the introduction of an act as if from outside pre-existing social rules, norms, and values, in a way that seemed to fit nicely with expressions of religious subjects' experiences. What was at stake in Épiphane's act could begin to be evoked by tracing signifiers and resonances that repeated and reformulated themselves in the text that he produced. A writerly way of working with this would be to see if resonances could be found to repeat among different far-flung samples of textual materials in such a way that something called Franciscanism could cohere, even if only for an instant here and there, before it would again recede, as the basis for Épiphane's act. In the title of my project, I have offered the phrase "resplendent poverty," drawn from the Capuchin Constitutions of 1536, as an attempt to capture or to convey an oxymoronic and paradoxical Capuchin-Franciscan ethos. What strikes me about this phrase its irreducibility to an imaginary register. I propose that this is the kind of ingredient that can keep religious subject working on it.

In Lacanian psychoanalysis, there is a division between the three registers of the imaginary, the symbolic, and the real. Despite the extensive amount that has been written about them, by Lacan and others, I would like to briefly (re)introduce them here from the perspective of my experience, to close with a brief statement about how they might be of use to scholars of religion. The imaginary is the world of images, meanings, and discourses that make it possible to cohere an entity as a "me." This coherence tends toward a flimsiness and a lack of real durability. The symbolic pertains to an underlying structure that breaks the stakes of the imaginary, often in moments of rupture. For Lacan, signifiers that appeared in dreams, slips, and hallucinations, for instance, pointed the way

outset. See, for instance, Jeffrey J. Kripal, *The Flip: Epiphanies of Mind and the Future of Knowledge* (New York: Bellevue Literary Press, 2019).

toward a symbolic structure, even if its total elaboration would remain inexhaustible. (It is important to remember that the point of psychoanalysis is not to colonize the unconscious under the rule of the ego but to open up space for experiences that could not be received by social others or via language.) These signifiers comprised something about which the analysand might say more and something that often seems to the analysand to have nothing to do with the "me" constituted by the imaginary (i.e. who me thinks me is). Beyond the imaginary and symbolic, Lacan asserts that there is a real. Some Lacanians seem to consider the real as synonymous with material reality (as if that reality existed unmediated by perception), but I think about the real more in terms of an experience that would be unrepresentable in language, but which, nevertheless, can be *evoked* in language. It would also be helpful to evoke some kind of primordial trauma here. (Granted, these registers are complex, and more can be said about them. I only offer a very hasty provisional sketch to move toward a specific takeaway.)

Within psychoanalytic and scholarly discourses, there are precedents for thinking about imaginary, symbolic, and real aspects of religious experience. The religious rituals of the obsessional neurotic were geared toward the coherence of a durable "me" and aimed to extricate that which stood outside this "me." Moses's deliverance of the law—the provision of signifiers to maintain a structure behavior—could be said to have a symbolic content. Beyond this, though, there was the real encounter with the burning bush and with a name that mobilized Moses's quest.

As Franciscans sought out vowed lives among poor people over the course of the last several hundred years of their existence, they sought ways to elaborate and to theorize something about what motivated them, as can be seen in the hagiographical sources on Francis of Assisi's conversion in Chapter Two. They also began to create a vast spiritual literature that sought to explore and to convey, using a variety of imaginary and symbolic tools, affective spiritual states that they thought led to a kind of transformation in Christ. I have tried to consider and convey such

arguments as cleaving a space for the subject to exist in ethical relation to the real and to lack, to a traumatic encounter with God or seraph and to poverty. Friars thought that such a spiritual *modus vivendi*, premised on poverty, would have effects in the world—that the divine itself could descend amid poverty. In my extensive discussion of Épiphane's text, which aims to parse the imaginary, symbolic, and real elements as represented in the text, I have tried to show how the effects of such a cosmovision—more as lived than as theoretically elaborated—might produce novel effects. Such an interpretive mode seems very much in keeping with the name of the Capuchin father—Épiphane as epiphany.

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