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The Abeng Submission Guidelines

Article and essay submissions may address any pertinent problem, topic, practices or phenomena in any historical period, including the contemporary situation. They may focus on any social-cultural complex or domain, including, but also going beyond, "religion." Any disciplinary or field or transdisciplinary discourse may characterize a submission, as long as it reflects critical engagement of the framing ISS agenda. Please acquaint yourself with our ongoing research agendas prior to submission.

Articles

Word count: 5,000 (approximately)
Abstract: 150 words

Review Essays / Comments / In the News

Word count: 1,000 to 2,000 (approximately)
Abstract: 50-75 words

File Format: Microsoft Word (Times New Roman, 12 point, Left Justified, Double-spaced)
Citations Format: Endnotes
Citations Style: Chicago Manual of Style (latest edition)

Materials must not have been submitted elsewhere.

For all other types of submissions (alternate media formats including audio and video, interviews, etc) please contact the editor.

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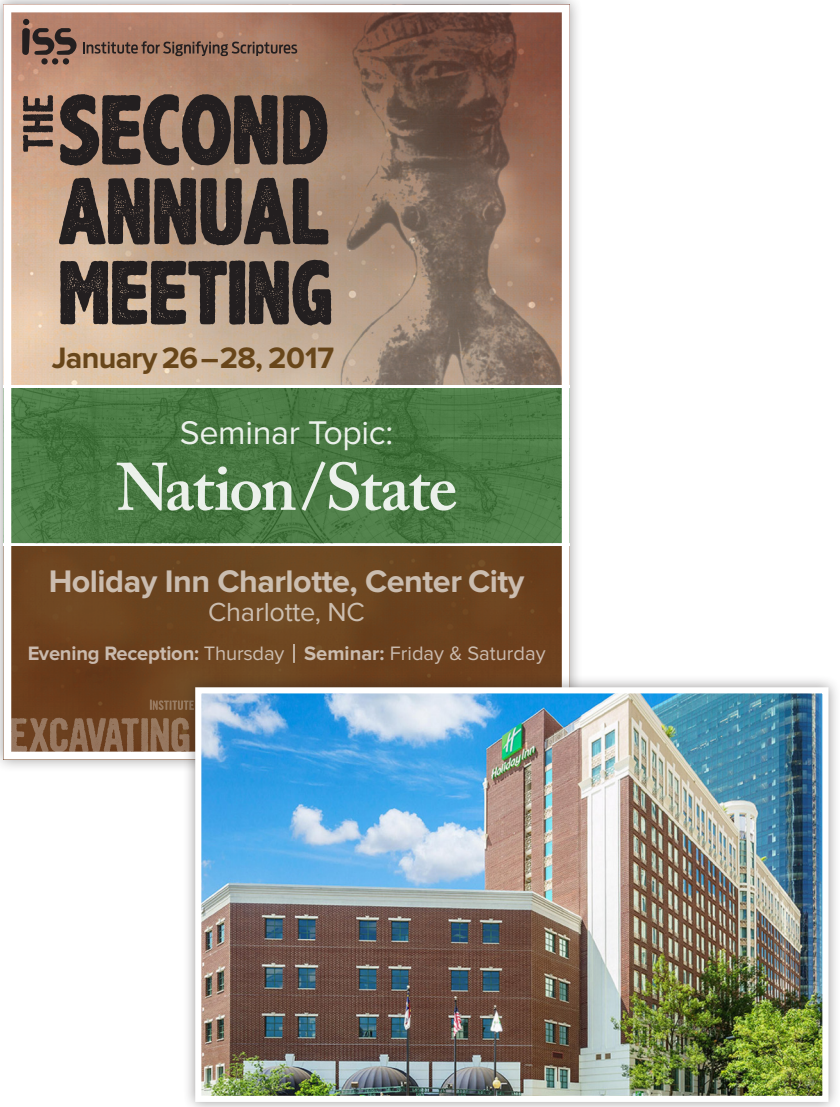

Holiday Inn Charlotte, Center City in Charlotte, North Carolina.
Site of the Second Annual Meeting.

"IF THE PRESIDENT DOES IT…IT'S NOT ILLEGAL…": THE MODERN NATION/STATE AS THE SCRIPTURAL

DIRECTOR'S ADDRESS 2017

INSTITUTE FOR SIGNIFYING SCRIPTURES SECOND ANNUAL MEETING

JANUARY 27, 2017
CHARLOTTE, NC

Vincent L. Wimbush

If the president does it…it's not illegal…

— Richard Nixon, 6 April 1977

The law's totally on my side, the president can't have a conflict of interest.

— Donald Trump, 22 November 2016

[Trump] is the president-elect, so [what he does] is presidential behavior.

— Kellyanne Conway, Counselor to Trump, 4 December 2016

So many other political figures and political situations around the world—Modi of India, Putin, Mugabe, Assad, the situation in the Gambia, in the Congo, in the Philippines—can be added to the articulations just quoted to represent the phenomenon, the problem of the "strongman," as one writer put it recently (Steve Coll, "The Strongman Problem, From Modi to Trump," *The New Yorker*, Jan 18, 2017). The biggest weapon in such situations? The politics, that is to say, the manipulation, of language and meaning.

Last year's inaugural Annual Meeting held in Portland was aimed, and I think rightly functioned, to orient us to the hard but important level of thinking and engagement many of us want and clamor for. Focused on the topic ***MEANING***—what "it" is; why and how and by whom "it" is constructed, communicated, and represented; how "it" is maintained and upended; the other ongoing questions,

problems, and issues "it" begs; and some of the consequences for human enslavement, striving, liberation, and agency—*meaning* provided opportunity for us to think at the most basic level about our thinking. Provoked by Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, it helped us make ourselves aware again of the reality—not often faced—that meaning is not the simple universal need; that not all can or need or must invest in meaning. Desperation, being "dirtied," being not loved or not remembered can make one eschew meaning, can help one see and experience the pursuit of meaning as something other than benign or rich or affirming or natural experience; it can be experienced as violence, death. The French philosopher Jacques Rancière, in his *Politics of Aesthetics*, challenged us to think about the formation of meaning as the political and this in terms of *le partage du sensible* ("the distribution of the sensible"), that which can be apprehended by the senses. Among the many other questions/issues raised last year that lingered, one had to do with the identification of the party, the one collective, unit, so to speak, that has taken upon itself primary and ongoing interest/investment in constructing and protecting and using meaning—the modern nation/state. This party or category—the nation/state—was only referenced lightly last year; we agreed to return to it as the focus of our seminar theme this year. With it we intend to include all levels and modern forms of polities/of the political. (To be sure, at our last meeting we were aware of the onset of the presidential campaign and 2016 election, so the situation in the U.S. was very much in mind, even as we heard in our ranks the appeal to remain sensitive to other situations around the world.)

Among the issues that should concern us, then, has to do with coming to terms with the state as meaning-maker and meaning-manager/governor. How did such responsibility or arrogation or duty come about? How does it work? With what results or consequences? How do we participate, how are we implicated, in it? How are we complicit in it, suffer from it, or transcend it?

Since the invention of writing, so Claude Lévi-Strauss has taught us, there have been and remain in evidence corresponding politics of the scriptural, with a few elites in possession and control of the scriptures; but after the invention of the printing press such politics became fevered and sedimented, the former effectively facilitating the invention of religions of the modern-world (that is, "world religions") and the modern nation/state, both of which are formed/bound (*religio-, religare*) not by blood but by a type of "distribution of the sensible," by the collective "imagination" reoriented, as reading formation. So we are reminded by the provocative works of T. Masuzawa (*Invention of World Religions: Or, How European Univeralism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* [2005]) and

B. Anderson (*Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* [1983, rev. ed. 2006]).

The epigraphs for this essay—about Richard Nixon; from or about Donald Trump—were ripped from the (daily) headlines of our times, including now the times of Trump. They were meant to be not simply shocking (have we not lately had our fill?), but suggestive. They certainly indicate that the phenomenon to be more poignantly named and analyzed is of our own time—not merely modern and contemporary worlds in some vague sense that becomes filler for scholarly introductions. No, the epigraphs force us to see that the matters are directly before us, threatening and challenging us. Yet this does not prevent but should rather encourage a critical historical—not historical-critical!—perspective. I have in mind a brief turn to a few historical examples as windows onto the making of the modern nation/state as (deadly serious) play with or manipulation of meaning; these examples may help provide perspective on the situation we here in this room along with so many other contemporaries have in common. The examples are from a highly representative slice of Europe of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries:

First, France: In his *L'écriture de l'histoire* (*Writing of History*, [1975] 1988),[1] de Certeau makes eighteenth century France a rather wide-open window onto how a society came to be "managed" (*policé*) through the structuring of language and religion, religion as language. These two fraught categories in functional terms are made to become one domain, one sphere of control and manipulation. Their con-fusion makes the religious-secular divide somewhat insidious if not laughable. The clerics during this era come to be socialized as the functionaries—the living embodiment, carriers, guarantors of the right order—of a system, network, and ideology called "the church" or "religion." They were in this era committed to getting right—even living, reflecting—the interpretation of the broad society-defining, society-regulating/-ed texts (scriptures) and the practices and rites the texts called for. They began to see themselves as those primarily responsible for the management of doctrine, ritual, and all other pertinent practices that mark the modern French-inflected and, more broadly, western-structured sphere of the religious (*Writing*, 189-190).

For the sake of the organization, consolidation and control of the (French) state in this period ideologists stressed the need to govern "social nature," the emotions and beliefs of all subjects: *Gouverner, c'est faire croire*… ("To govern is to make [subjects] believe…")—so went what was understood to be the animating

[1] See Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, trans. Tom Conley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988 [1975].

ideological principle under Richelieu.[2] De Certeau indicates that philosopher Marin Mersenne of the same general period is said to have argued rather bluntly the "management of minds" as the overarching rational goal of the state (Writing, 155).

De Certeau's unelaborated almost cursory reference to Nicolas de la Mare's second book (Livre II) of his famous *Traité de la Police* (1705) (**Figure 1**) belies

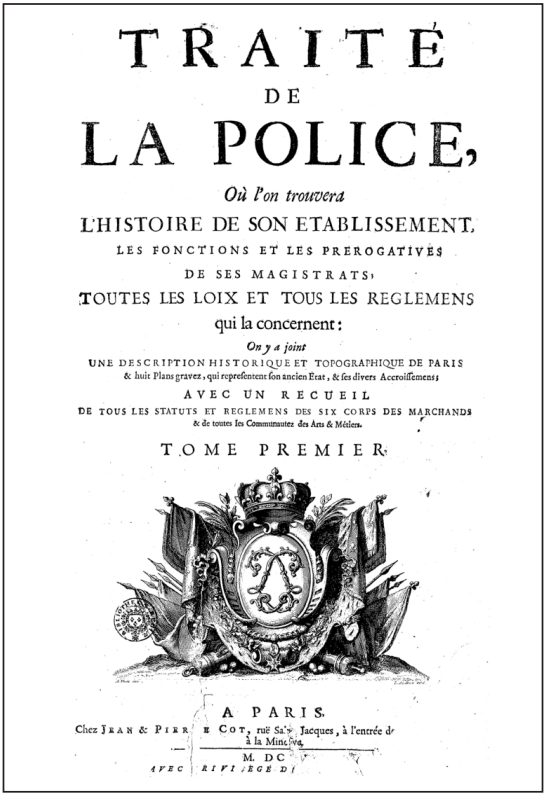
TRAITÉ
DE
LA POLICE,
Où l'on trouvera
L'HISTOIRE DE SON ETABLISSEMENT,
LES FONCTIONS ET LES PREROGATIVES
DE SES MAGISTRATS,
TOUTES LES LOIX ET TOUS LES REGLEMENS
qui la concernent:
On y a joint
UNE DESCRIPTION HISTORIQUE ET TOPOGRAPHIQUE DE PARIS
& huit Plans gravez, qui repréſentent ſon ancien Etat, & ſes divers Accroiſſemens;
AVEC UN RECUEIL
DE TOUS LES STATUTS ET REGLEMENS DES SIX CORPS DES MARCHANDS
& de toutes les Communautez des Arts & Métiers.
TOME PREMIER.
A PARIS.
Chez JEAN & PIERRE COT, ruë Saint Jacques, à l'entrée de la Minerve.
M. DC
AVEC PRIVILEGE DU

Figure 1

its importance. *La police* here should be understood more along the lines of Rancière's notion of the "distribution of the sensible"—that which aims to provide a totalizing account of the population by assigning to all the titles and roles deemed

[2] See Etienne Thau, *Raison d'Etat et pensee politique a l'epoque de Richelieu* (Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 2000), 169f. See also de Certeau, *Writing*, 155.

appropriate and natural, fixed (*Politics*, 93.) Devoted to religion as …*le premier & le principal objet de la Police*… ("the first and principal object of governance"), de la Mare's book makes dramatic the point not only that policing of society and culture in general was for elites at issue, thought to be their right and burden, but that "religion" in particular, first and foremost, was to be policed and to function as police; and that this policing would be done through manipulation and control *of* discourse, manipulation and control *as* discourse (*Premieres preuves tirees de l'Ecriture Sainte, des Conciles, des Peres & du Droit Canon*), that is, it should have to do with sacred texts and all textual productions that flow from them.[3] In other words, for the sake of serving the interests of the new nationalist and nationalizing elites, religion was partly (re)constructed as discourse in terms of the scriptural. In this regime, clerics were directed to be differently oriented, to uphold certain practices and regimes: they began to function no longer on the traditional order of shamans and priests, but in the new order as scholars and exegetes, "living scriptures," defenders of the language of dominance and against non-Catholics and the religio-social-culturally impious.[4]

If we fast forward to the late nineteenth century, we can see in stark display some of the dramatic and disturbing and perduring consequences of the ideologization of Europeanist discourse management, in what can be considered the advancement of nationalization on the order that we recognize and experience today. Consider what is now known variously as the Berlin Conference, the Congo Conference, or the Scramble for Africa, of 1884-85. Convened by Otto von Bismarck, the meeting was intended to divide Africa according to the interests—social, political, and economic—of the European powers at the time. Never has Europe been so united, so much in agreement. In this case it was in agreement around its power and prerogatives in regard to Africa. It presumed the authority and might to the (re)drawing of boundaries, (re)naming of peoples of another part of the world, and the subjection of such peoples and their lands and all the wealth their lands held to different (European) languages and customs, rules and laws. The conference ushered in a period of fevered activity resulting in a period of colonial rule, disruption, and violence that obtained well into the twentieth century, with

[3] See Nicolas De La Mare, *Traite de La Police*… (Paris, 1722 [1705]), *Livre Second: De La Religion. Titre Premier: Que la Religion est le premier & le principal objet de la Police , & que dans tous les temps les soins en ont ete consiez aux deux Puissances, la spirituelle, & la temporelle.*

[4] De Certeau, *Writing*, 187; 189, n#131. This orientation throws different light on the scriptural politics that obtained among European nations, protestants versus catholics, especially the British versus the French. The French, the Catholics generally, were not at uninterested in the scriptural; they simply played a different style of scriptural politics from the protestants. All played the management game. It is worth noting that Equiano figured himself a proper protestant Englishman through his firm opposition to Father Vincent's supposed French Catholic biblical illiteracy. See Olaudah Equiano, *Olaudah Equiano: The Interesting Narrative and Other Writings*, edited and with an introduction by Vincent Carretta (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 200; and Vincent L. Wimbush, *White Men's Magic: Scripturalization as Slavery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 87-89.

the rise of mid-century independence movements. Aspects of the conference agreement continue to have their effects to this day. **(Figure 2)**

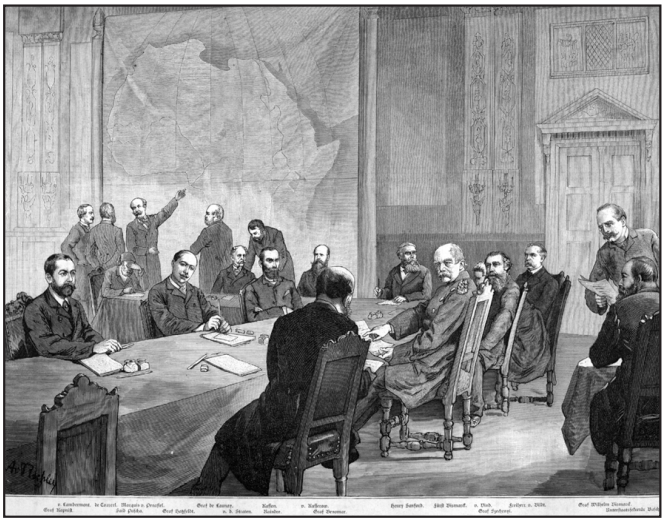

Figure 2

The major point to be made here—"Africa" was through the conference signified, more to the point, it was (en)scripturalized, written up according to the interests of this or that state; inscribed as ("new," almost "modern") subject, humiliated peoples. The differently inflected scripturalizations of the French peoples, of the British, and so forth, provided the ideological and political conditions for the (en)scripturalization of the "Africans" as Others. In this new order of nationalizations, those who cannot be placed or cannot place themselves within, or learn to negotiate, the particular scriptural regime around which a nation is constructed and defined are considered as Other, as marginal, with the severest consequences. The possibilities for humiliation and subjection of the Other are wide-ranging and consequential. Those who cannot "read"—with respect to and in line with the nationalist politics and management and social orientation—cannot participate, cannot be considered citizens.

Now to the U.S.: Given the setting of our meeting, we can hardly fail to take notice of the eighteenth century scriptural foundations of the U.S., especially that which is termed its history of civil religion. This unusual if not unique incipient

state-church nexus that is the somewhat odd U.S.-style civil religion has its foundational texts, its scriptures, among which in the earliest period were the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and Washington's Farewell Address. These civic texts reflect roots in the English tradition of common law and natural rights as well as in dissenting Puritanism. These civic texts as canonical texts reflected and helped to produce a nationalism that in turn promoted what Americanist Francois Furstenberg in his book *In the Name of the Father: Washington's Legacy, Slavery, and the Making of a Nation* called "consent…and a sense of mutual obligation."[5] Consent as concept became "a powerful mythology" of the Founding Fathers, centered chiefly around the morality and ethics, the orientation and sensibilities of and corresponding honors bestowed on, George Washington as the "Father of the Nation," the "national patriarch." As scripturalizations/memorializations of the likes of Washington, these civic texts "bound Americans into members of a single nation…." (21). Their uses were made to parallel the phenomenon of the reading of the Bible, not just in the scope (or universality) of readership, but also in the types of practices by which they were engaged (51). "Citizens" were told to read and interpret these civic texts as "sacred practice." They were taught to "'engrave'" Washington's words on their hearts just as they had been taught to internalize passages from the bible…to take Washington into their hearts just as they took Jesus into their hearts...to read the Constitution as they read the Ten Commandments" (52). One cleric, in eulogizing Washington as he referenced Washington's Farewell Address, is recorded as having exhorted mourners to take a rather amazing psycho-cultural and hermeneutical step: "…bind [the Address] in your Bible next to the Sermon on the Mount that the lessons of your two Saviors may be read together" (52; my emphasis). This step is of profound socio-cultural-historical-political and analytical importance.

Identifications between the nation, the Constitution, the Bible, and the texts of the founders were strong to the point of reaching fever pitch—what some religion scholars would describe as "enthusiasm." The phenomenon is made clear in the frontispiece to a Bible, the first to be printed in New York, in 1792.[6] **(Figure 3)**

[5] (New York: The Penguin Press, 2006), 10-11, 14, 16-17, 19-20, 220. That such a phenomenon is not unique to the U.S., and should be understood in terms of a comparative history of religions and culture is reflected in several works, including the work of Buddhism scholar Alan Cole. See his *Text as Father: Paternal Seductions in Early Mahayana Buddhist Literature* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005).

[6] See *The Self-Interpreting Bible: Containing the Sacred Text of the Old and New Testaments*, by Scottish cleric-theologian Rev. John Brown (New York: Hodge and Campbell, 1792[1778]). See Furstenburg, *In the Name*, 60; and http://www.electricscotland.com/bible/brown/index.htm.

Figure 3: John Brown's Bible

The center of the image was an allegorical representation of "America" as a woman in a headdress, her elbow resting on a plinth with the names of Revolutionary "fathers" listed, Washington first. In one hand, the figure holds a scroll of the U.S. Constitution; her other hand reaches forward to accept the Bible from a kneeling woman. A third woman holds a pole atop, which is the liberty cap. Washington's life had become, in effect, a "sacred text," needing to be read in order for citizenship to be secured, for American-ness to be confirmed (Furstenburg, *In the Name*, 61). The skill and practice of reading these civic texts were made the requirement for and registration of civic engagement. Like the situation in ancient Athens or Alexandria or India or China or Calvin's early modern Geneva, citizens in the society that was becoming the United States were understood to be scripture-readers who through their reading could continually affirm their consent to the fathers. (Note: Some of you will perhaps recognize that I used this image as the cover of the book *MisReading America: Scriptures and Difference*. The title reflects the point I wanted to make—that communities of color have historically not only been assumed to misread the nation but sometimes as part of resistance have intentionally misread it.)

There were immediate but also perduring and profound implications and ramifications in such cultural practices: for one thing, the practices were also complexly intertwined with the problem of slavery. The reading of civic texts promoted a paternalist understanding of slavery supposedly grounded in "bonds of affection"; that is, for those (whites) enslaving others, slavery seemed to make more plausible the social-political myth about and more natural the practice of tacit consent on the part of enslaved blacks. Insofar as the paternalist image of slavery masked the brutal violence upon which it was established, it helped make easier the acceptance of the lesser forms of coercion involved in persuading "free" Americans to "consent" to the nation in the making (Furstenburg, *In the Name*, 103). The notion that had obtained in the oratory and writings of Jefferson and (to a lesser degree) Madison that citizenship for "all" was a matter of consent of the living in ongoing dynamic relationship with the living was powerful (220). But by making allegiance to the nation "in the name of the fathers," in connection with the use of civic texts, they feared that some had or might betray part of the vision of a nation grounded in the consent of the living. The exaltation of the Founding Fathers/Founding Texts was turned into uncritical veneration and genuflection. Furstenberg provokes us with what I consider to be for all moderns, especially those undergoing the U.S. inflection of modernity, a still haunting question: "By persuading future generations to live by the will of dead fathers, and to do so *by their own choice*, had civic texts ultimately turned Americans—this people so…prepared to live free or die—into slaves?" (230-31).

Here is the critical point—U.S. civic texts were written and made to function, made to work, and be engaged and disseminated in much the same way with some of the same rituals, practices, and processes, politics, and were located in the same psychic space as "religion" (61). The religion as scriptural practice/civic-text-reading analogy begs more analysis of how "religion" figures in these (and other similar historical and contemporary) phenomena and situations in which the nation or state or governmental polity is constituted, manages, and is managed. Benedict Anderson should be referenced again: he challenged readers to think about modern nationalism as a cultural-discursive system, much like religion (*Imagined Communities*, 63, and chaps. 1-2). And our common seminar texts from last year and this year provoke our thinking and more question-raising about (among so many other things, to be sure) where and how religion figures in the political, and with what consequences. We have only to continue to play with these categories in order to tease out more of the powerful ideas they register in more expansive trans-disciplinary terms.

Two theorists in particular I have found helpful in analyzing the categories and the phenomena they reflect, including the types of situations and examples touched on in the epigraphs for this address. Zygmunt Bauman, the late big-theory sociologist who taught at Leeds, in the UK for many years, in a fascinating interview in 2005, reflected on globalization, what it means, specifically, the forces and dynamics it provokes and the challenges it holds for us, especially pertaining to conflict and violence:

> …a monopoly on the use of force which, according to Max Weber, formed the basis of the modern state, ceased to exist long ago.It has become clear that that this monopoly, which the nation-state has long claimed for itself…was designed to fit in to the framework of territorial battles and wars…Today's terrorism…[is] a phenomenon of the era of globalization…The most powerful armed forces of all time…are helpless against the…adversary [that] has no headquarters, no military base, no barracks to be bombed…Its organizational structures are of only theoretical importance…If al-Qaida really exists, it is as a global, extremely Manichean conception of the world with a wide array of potential disciples…Which came first, the chicken or the egg? We are facing much more than a politicizing of religion, whether Muslim or any other. The issue is the *religionising* of politics, where the normal conflict of group interests is regarded as an eschatological matter, and the confrontation of these interests as having an apocalyptic character.[7]

I also turn your attention to a scholar of international politics and conflicts, with special focus on Islam—Bassam Tibi. In his book *Islamism and Islam*, Tibi references the same concept—religionising/religionization—and seemingly takes credit for coining it:

> …I have taken in the past years an approach I call "Islamology," to distinguish it from standard Islamic studies. Islamology emultates the earlier model of Sovietology in dealing with Islamism as a source of global conflict. The underlying argument is that political, economic, and social concerns are articulated in terms of religious claims, thus heralding what I have termed the religionization of politics.[8]

[7] "The unwinnable war: an interview with Zygmunt Bauman" Dec. 1, 2005. https://www.opendemocracy.net/globalization-vision_reflections/modernity_3082.jsp. Accessed Jan 17, 2017.

[8] (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 35.

Both analysts argue the importance of the notion of the "religionising" of politics, viz., a particular influence or determinant on and manipulation of the nation/state or body politic. This is in distinction to the more typically simplistic and naïve and dangerous notion of the politics of religion or politicized religion with its deleterious and corrupt effects and what such a notion usually assumes and conveys—among other things, about "religion" as a thing or a separate domain, normally beyond and free of the dynamics of politics. Although without detailed explication or analysis both seem to want critical analysis to reorient itself to the ways in which religion is unpacked to be experienced in/as the public square, on/as the public stage, in terms of certain social-cultural practices, with profound psycho-social-cultural consequences. This we have seen with the two examples I cited already. Bauman relates this phenomenon to his theoretics regarding modernity as "solid" on the one hand, "liquid" on the other. The former represents the onset of modernity, with felt need for certainty and order, including Manichean sensibilities and politics. The arrangement that developed from this impulse is frayed and has long since collapsed, even though this does not mean that the structuring—the Manicheanism that defined it—does not remain a force.[9] Tibi has addressed the phenomenon through focus on the radical tension and conflict that defines Islamism, which, although different from other religious systems in many important respects, is ultimately seen to be poignantly metonymic of the Manichean politics conceptualized and driven by modern developments among religions.

But what I should like to do is push the analysis to the point of making religion and religionization less vague and concrete, less otherworldly and beyond critical analysis of the sort we aim to model in our discussions and projects. I maintain that what is misrecognized or unrecognized in the theoretics of Bauman and Tibi and others has to do with scriptures, or in more precise functional or operational terms, with scripturalization and scripturalizing. Modern-world and contemporary "religion" is in my view, basically and complexly for the most part, the phenomenon/politics of scripturalization and the varied complex iterations, performances of it, and responses to it. This suggests, of course—as I made reference above—a scrambling, an upending, of the traditional modernist dualistic categories and concepts of religion and the secular. Scriptures—in terms of the theoretics of the dynamics and politics of scripturalization/scripturalizing and as analytic wedge—lead us in another direction and to another depth of analysis. It suggests the analytic potential in playing around with the formation, orientation,

[9] See his *Liquid Modernity* (Malden MA: Blackwell Publishers, Inc., 2000)

and politics of the human, of human collectives, including the nation/state, even including "religion," as (projection of the politics and ideologies of) the scriptural. The possibilities for understanding the social psychology, the expressivism, the politics, of our collectives through focus on such phenomena are enormous. (I am also proposing here that an ongoing ISS collaborative research agenda might turn around this issue. About which more in due course and in another forum.)

As a rather astounding and articulate challenge to the sort of rhetoric and orientation reflected in the epigraphs included above, rhetoric and orientation not uncommon around the world among authoritarian strong men, Barack Obama's Farewell Address delivered on January 10, in Chicago, will be, I predict, much remembered and analyzed and engaged. It reflects a rather astute understanding of the nation as scriptural formation and matrix, with its possibilities and challenges:

> Our Constitution is a remarkable, beautiful gift. But it's really just a piece of parchment. It has no power on its own. We, the people, give it power, give it meaning—with our participation, and with the choices that we make and the alliances that we forge.

In spite of the fear and anxiety stoked by the new U.S. administration, and in spite of its articulations and projections (as evidenced in the claims of the selected epigraphs) of the politics of scripturalization, Obama's critical reading challenge is shown to be understood and taken up by many, including a sister-citizen, poignantly by name America Ferrara, when she shouted at the Women's March in Washington, D.C., on January 21, part of several rallies around the country, "…the president is not America…we are America…" **(Figure 4)**

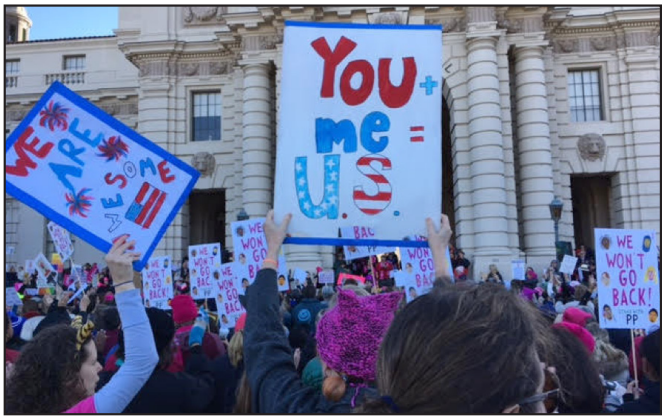

Figure 4: Pasadena, CA

To be sure, authorities generally work to create realities and truths for the rest of us—what I call the work of scripturalization, defining us, labeling us—in terms that are not merely hurtful but absurd: how can a human being be "illegal"? How can a living breathing being or agent be deemed only 3/5th of the specimen? Or be sold for a sum of money? But we may, we must, also see that we can talk back, and scripturalize in alternative keys.

I continue to be enthralled and appropriately disturbed by the work of the late Black Arts era poet Lance Jeffries who, in his poem "My Blackness Is the Beauty of This Land," modeled what I call for here as he rendered the nation a scriptural phenomenon, a constructed scripturalization that nevertheless has inspired and provoked and facilitated as resistance continual scripturalizing practices and play. One reads with amazement his deft and poignant alternate casting of readers/instantiations of the nation—from the assumed natural unremarked white representative to the non-white, even black, Other. I draw your attention to a couple of stanzas that make the profound point:

> My blackness is the beauty of this land,
>
> my blackness,
>
> tender and strong, wounded and wise,
>
> my blackness:
>
> …
>
> While I here standing black beside
>
> wrench tears from which the lies would suck the salt
>
> to make me more American than America …
>
> But yet my love and yet my hate shall civilize this land,
>
> this land's salvation.[10]

Was Jeffers channeling the sentiment already registered by J. W. Johnson in the now famous song "Lift Every Voice and Sing"?[11] Might the latter be considered the more authentic, more poignant, more truth-telling national anthem—in which death/inhumanity/race supremacism as defining ideology and acts are acknowledged and

[10] See his *My Blackness is the Beauty of this Land* (Detroit: Broadside Press, 1970).

[11] cf *Lift Every Voice and Sing: A Celebration of the Negro National Anthem*, ed. Julian Bond and Sondra Kathryn Wilson (New York: Random House, 2000).

some of the founding fathers and the natives of the land—are poignantly because deliberately and hauntingly misidentified?

……

Stony the road we trod,

Bitter the

Chast'ning rod,

Felt in the day that hope

Unborn had died;

Yet with a steady Beat,

Have not our weary feet,

Come to the

Place on which our fathers sighed?

We have

Come over a way that with tears has been

Watered,

We have come, treading our path

Through the blood of the slaughtered,

Out from

The gloomy past, till now we stand at

Last

Where the white gleam of our star is

Cast.

…….

May we forever stand,

True to our God,

True to our native land

And I think no one sums up the ongoing challenge and needed orientation and sensibility—including what can help conceptualize an ongoing project for us that begins with contemporary and ongoing nation-making and unmaking, far beyond the vague and vacuous focus on religion as their exceptional domain, and texts as their obsessional objects (translated and further problematized and expanded by Hector Amaya,[12] whom we read together and discussed this year)—no one, I assert, has a more apt and compelling mantra and tagline (with my friendly gloss for our application) for what might be considered the ongoing defining critical project in regard to scriptural politics among us than Sojourner Truth: "[We] don't read such small things as letters, [we] read [wo]men and nations."

[12] See his *Citizenship Excess: Latino/as ,Media and the Nation* (New York: NYU Press, 2013)

REFLECTIONS ON THE SECOND ANNUAL MEETING

Alonzo Huntsman
Salt Lake Arts Academy

The second annual conference of the ISS convened in Charlotte to focus on the notion of the state/nation, its construction and how ideas of citizenship and belonging are understood and enforced. The topic could not have been more prescient given our own nation's recent election results, and how some of the words spoken and actions taken by the new administration in Washington D.C. exemplify some of the problems of nationalism, nativism and ethnonationalism.

Words matter. The focus of the ISS in critiquing the relations of discourse and power had much to work with. In a very real sense, the words of the U.S. President become a type of scripture on their own, sanctified by the simple fact they have been uttered by the highest office of the land. Words from the president have the power to set the tone of civil interaction, they sanctify ideological perspectives and model acceptable behavior.

But what if the pronouncements of our nation's highest office fail to meet the expectations of a majority of its citizens? What if they are the antithesis of civil? What if instead they serve to demonize citizens and residents. What if they feed hate, promote lies, and implicitly sanction corrosive, bigoted behavior? The policing of nationalism and even ethnonationalism is done through discourse.

For example, what are the implications of the executive's tough talk on immigration? What are the implications of the fixation with immigrants from Mexico and not Canada? Are we not a nation of immigrants? Are some types of immigrants better than others? Are we not all human beings, brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, sons, daughters searching for the best lives we can achieve for ourselves and our family? An intense and exaggerated focus on immigrant related crime has implications for all immigrants. In fact, those who find themselves in this country without the necessary bureaucratic stamps of approval are criminalized for their very being; they are called out as "illegals" and "aliens."

What we witness as a result of this discourse is the criminalization of individuals and families that seek better lives for themselves in a territory other than the

one in which they were born. Moreover, for those born "legally" (as if one could be born otherwise!) who have the physical characteristics, cultural attributes or linguistic traits that differ from white America, suspicions of illegality or criminality are implied. Americans of Latin American heritage suffer from the political rhetoric designed to unite a majority white political base.

And what of this "fake news" that featured so prominently in the run up to the election? Today's story of a Hillary Clinton-led child sex ring run from a New Jersey pizza shop has parallels with yesterday's outrage of a black man raping a white woman. They don't need to be true to be powerful. Fake news articles are little more than coded tales that reinforce the basest of malignant thinking. Their proliferation during the election season served to unite various groups into virtual political communities.

For me the most powerful event of the second annual meeting was the viewing of Ava DuVernay's Netflix documentary: *13th*. The film unpacked the history of race and incarceration in ways that made it impossible not to see the structural factors that lead to the remarkably disproportionate rates of imprisonment in the U.S. relative to other countries, especially the incarceration of people of color. Systems of oppression are durable and continue to reinvent themselves. Corporate interests, like ownership of private prisons, reap financial gain from the number of bodies (disproportionately black) imprisoned on a daily basis.

Corporate interests were behind the legislation of "three strikes and you're out," and "mandatory minimum sentences" that have put hundreds of thousands behind bars. Mass incarceration has had a devastating impact on poor communities and disproportionately poor communities of color. Political scare tactics designed to produce votes (e.g. "The Southern Strategy" and Willie Horton) serve to demonize some people over others. The ability to profit from punishment serves to broaden the behavior considered criminal. And race and wealth are part of this equation. Those who are rich and guilty can make bail and hire lawyers to fight their cases. Those who are poor and innocent spend time in jail when they can't make bail, and then cop a plea deal rather than take the risks and suffer the expenses of a court trial.

13th provides the starkest of example of the creation of "scripture" codified as criminal law. These laws become part of our civil structure, benefiting certain interests while decimating others.

P. Kimberleigh Jordan
Drew University

A note of self-contextualization: my entrance into the Wimbush world of transdisciplinarity occurred in the progenitor research project called "African Americans and the Bible." In that project, I found the beginnings of my own scholarly identity in trans- or interdisciplinary locations. I am now an inter/transdisciplinary scholar working at the intersection of religion, dance studies, and the African diaspora. Surprisingly, my last convening with the Institute for Signifying Scriptures was its debut in Claremont, CA. Between then and now, I finished my PhD in Performance Studies, completed a Ford Foundation postdoc, and joined the faculty of Drew University Theological School.

BEFORE THE MEETING

As I prepared to travel and immerse myself in the problematics of nation/state at the 2017 Annual Meeting of the Institute for Signifying Scriptures, there were unfolding in the public sphere important new "scriptures" for this nation/state. These "scriptures" were not biblical texts, but "scriptures" as provocative assertions of the politics of language and discourses of power in the U.S. Before the ISS's Second Annual Meeting, I felt as if I were in a liminal space between President Obama's farewell speech and a flurry of *fin de siècle* productivity, and between the new administration's attempts to contradict the previous administration and produce an early alt-right blast-off—mostly by way of executive orders. In the days prior to the meeting, executive orders swirled all around, causing me to grapple with the over-functioning, yet performative—in an Austinian sense—spoken and textual space that executive orders inhabit.

Seminar attendees were invited to "meet before the meeting" with Hector Amaya's text *Citizenship Excess: Latino/as, Media, and the Nation*. Amaya's text helped me think about the performance of "political capital accumulation" that creates a negative space where citizenship does not exist, or where the full performance of citizenship is constrained by racist and xenophobic realities. In contrast, the positive space of excess citizenship for a few elites is marked by the over-distribution of political and legal goods. Reading Amaya's text in the ongoing news cycles more fully exposed a global stage for colluding discourses of power for elite, non-ethnoracial whites attempting to claim 'legitimate' monopolies over nation/states. As Amaya's text focused specifically on Latinas/os, the new inhabitant of the White House put a nativist (4) spotlight on his fantastical notions of Mexicans—as 'illegals,' 'bad dudes,' 'criminals,' and 'bad hombres'—notions deployed to lubricate the birth canal of the neo-fascist state.

THE MEETING

In the midst of this public discursive swirl, I arrived in the Queen City of North Carolina, a state encumbered with its own hegemonic uses of discursive power. Despite the cold weather, the ISS welcome was warm. Dr. Vincent Wimbush's Friday morning address—itself a transdisciplinary treatise navigating the language spectrum from political analysis to poetry—caused the swirl of language to settle enough to be structured by theoretical analysis. He invited us into a weekend of unobstructed critical conversation in seminar format. Experiencing this structure was refreshing, as it veered from the usual conference dichotomy of active paper presenters and passive paper recipients. Through this invitation, we launched a weekend seminar where everyone's voice mattered around the table. The address further invited us to consider the nation/state as meaning-maker and meaning-manager, as well as to inquire of ourselves how we participate in and are implicated by it.

In critically assessing the current moment, Dr. Wimbush pointed out that the foundational texts of American "civil religion" serve as its "scriptures" or canonical texts. Unlike the biblical canon, the U.S. canon of civil religion "scriptures" is an open canon—which, in the current environment, is being added to daily through expressions of power played out particularly by way of executive orders. On January 27, 2017, in the middle of the ISS Meeting, the current U.S. president issued the *Executive Order Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States*. Added to the canon of civil religion "scriptures" of the nation/state, this executive order decreed that citizens of seven countries in the Islamic Middle East traveling to the U.S. for immigrant or non-immigrant purposes, would be denied entry because the nature of their homelands and/or religion increased the likelihood that they would act as foreign terrorists while in the U.S. This set of events made for a clear, concrete platform from which to analyze scripturalization, power and the nation/state.

We continued on Saturday, even as the newest executive order, informally being called "the Muslim Ban," was unfolding across U.S. airports. Prof. Halvor Moxnes led our session with the coincidental and proleptic title of "The Nation-State as Police/Governor." He focused again on Amaya's *Citizenship Excess*, while looking specifically at immigration and human rights from a European perspective. Provocatively, he invited us to review the language used to name people entering countries. While our group brainstormed, I received the first of several text messages from friends inviting me to protest the executive order at airports north and south. In that

instance, the informality and immediacy of the text message crashed into the formal language and official structure of the executive order. I was surprised and inspired by the almost instant, yet fierce and improvisational response of protestors. Those protestors made a lot of important "noise," offering another kind of discursive power through their signs, chants, drums, and songs.

How ironic that on the weekend that we gathered to fathom discursive powers of the nation/state, a most hegemonic example would be issued by the White House and a contrasting performance would come to exist from the offended emotions of diverse and grassroots people. Yet, how compelling that the people's response to the authorized White House document was a kind of improvisational noise that seemed to me to create a notable disruption in the plans of the powerful nation/state.

Prof. Moxnes' session was helpful in parsing the seminar topic generally, as well as analyzing the particular chaos being wrought in those same hours by the executive order signed by Donald J. Trump, and now added to the canon of U.S. civil religion "scriptures." It began with these words:

> "By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and laws of the United States of America, including the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), […] and to protect the American people from terrorist attacks by foreign nationals admitted to the United States, it is hereby ordered […]

My 'takeaway' from this moment is that there are multiple excavations of discourse and power begging to be done. The official, civil, religious, canonical texts require fathoming; but of equal (greater?) importance are excavations of discourse and power that may be cacophonous and noisy and arise out of improvisation of the people. Each sphere of discourse has its own power to examine.

ANOTHER LENS

Dr. Wimbush concluded his address with a reading of James Weldon Johnson's "Lift Every Voice and Sing" and offered it, among other texts, as another lens for reading nation, politics, and ideology. Johnson's "Lift Every Voice ..." is a particularly fitting citation for this historical moment, as 2017 marks the centennial of the event known as the Silent Protest Parade. In addition to writing the words to "Lift Every Voice... ," Johnson, as secretary of the NAACP, 'choreographed' this embodied act of resistance in 1917. In the Silent Protest Parade, 10,000 Black people marched silently down New York City's Fifth Ave. to protest lynching and other racist violence against Black people in the U.S. While the nation/state, then and now, creates excess

citizenship for some and restrained or non-existent citizenship for others, bodies confront and resist the powerful discourses of the nation/state. Johnson's creative and interpretive work as a distinguished Harlem Renaissance performing artist,

Scene from protests at JFK Airport, New York, on 1/28/2017, the weekend of the Executive Order banning citizens of seven countries from traveling to the United States, which came to be known as the "Muslim Ban."

Photograph by Rhododendrites; Permission: Creative Commons Wikimedia.

Silent Parade in New York City in 1917, organized by James Weldon Johnson and the NAACP. The Parade protested riots in St. Louis and racial violence in the United States.

Photograph: Image available from the United States Library of Congress' Prints and Photographs Division under the digital ID ds.00894; Permission: Public Domain

musician, and political activist offers a performative lens from which to consider present powers—of both official state hegemony and noisy, improvisational, embodied resistance.

AFTER THE MEETING—AT THE AIRPORTS

As I left the 2017 ISS Annual Meeting to fly home, I wondered how my own body would confront, resist, be implicated by, or participate in these discourses of power—produced, on one hand, by the executive administration, and on the other hand, produced in response to the hegemony manifested in the official text. The convening had highly attuned me to consider ways that the language of the newest executive order impacted bodies and souls of human beings—from refugees to protestors.

With the airports being places of disruption during the weekend, I wondered what and whom I would find there? Would there be brown travelers sadly being detained? Hosts of loud protesters? Impatient TSA and airport employees? Would I be allowed to travel freely and cross borders without incident? The Charlotte Holiday Inn was the intellectual staging area for ISS 2017 Annual Meeting. US airports were the contested space where language, bodies, and power confronted each other anew. All these strands of discursive power swirled around each other on one cold weekend in January.

Lalruat Kima
AICS, Mizoram India

Last year on November 8, while Americans queued at the polling booths to elect a new president, the Indian prime minister Narendra Modi interrupted the citizens of his country just getting around to call it a night with a nationally televised announcement that the 500 and 1,000 rupee notes would be taken out of circulation within the next three hours. The next morning, Indians woke up to realize the effects of Modi's demonetization. Cash transactions were restricted to the smaller denominations. Banks were overwhelmed with people rushing to deposit their cash holdings before government issued deadline(s) after which the demonetized notes would not be accepted. Long queues wove around ATMs as people waited to withdraw limited amounts of cash in smaller denomination. The front-page headline of *The Times of India* on November 9, 2017 captured the mood rather wittily: "America counts votes while India counts notes."

As the effects of demonetization continue to dominate the headlines in India, conversations with ISS friends and colleagues in Charlotte helped frame the anecdotal reports coming in from across the country as starting points for more analysis; three of these trajectories stand out.

What is the significance of a currency note, a piece of paper with the appropriate inscriptions, that tenders more value than it's worth as paper? Cash marks a significant development in human transactions and how value is fixed. That the Modi government might have unintentionally unmasked the technics of this human activity seems to have been lost amid the heightened reactions to the far-reaching effects of demonetization. Moreover, that one set of inscriptions replaced an older set of inscriptions in the new 500 and 2,000 rupee notes only underscored the pliability of the value/meaning invested in a piece of paper.

Who then gets to fix value? Modi bypassed the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of governance when he announced the move to demonetize. Although an elected official and his inner circle of advisors can be singled out to have gotten the ball rolling, it took a nation of citizens to play the game. A consenting electorate of transacting consumers validated the myth of a monetized script signified with value as legal tender. The latest demonetization narrative has shifted to a cashless economy and e-payments. Even if physical currency were totally phased out of circulation, e-payments only underscore shifts in the field of significations. As an ISS meeting attendee had suggested, what might the analytical terrain of scripturalization and big data look like?

The resilience of Modi's demonetization, despite daily reports of its negative effects coming from across the country, depended on an undergirding narrative web. Modi's initial rationale—"terrorist" organizations exploiting counterfeit currency—is long forgotten. The narrative has moved since to curbing "black" money, to sever the link between cash transactions and corruption, and most recently to push India toward a cashless e-economy. On their own, each of these rationales could rally enough consent. Any modicum of achievement will inevitably reinforce the myth of "nation" and governmentality; myths that are spun and reinforced by narrative layers. Ava DuVernay's eponymously titled documentary *13th* highlighted the American warp and weft—States' rights, slavery, race relations, mass incarceration, and significations on the Constitution as foundational narrative. Screening the documentary film to round off our discussions at Charlotte, *13th* was a timely reminder of the urgent need for critical vigilance with regard to the narratives that spin the worlds we inhabit.

Danielle Patte
Vanderbilt University

As could be expected, during the meeting my reflections were framed by Vincent Wimbush's Director's Address. Building upon the preceding Annual Meeting, he reminded us of the ISS agenda:

- What it [ISS] can mean to us as we strive to be free agents, what compelling contribution it can make in the world.
- Modeling and advancing conversations about, and critical research projects on, the inventions and orientations of the human and the structures of their social order.
- [Framed by] the concept of 'scriptures' as shorthand for the politics of language and the relations of discourse and power.
- Having to do with naming and addressing our fraught global/local situation…conversation and work that can facilitate and model freer agency that in turn may shape a freer world.
- The state as meaning-maker and meaning-manager/governor. How did this come about? How does it work?
- With what results or consequences? How do we participate, how are we implicated, in it? How do we suffer from it or transcend it?

Then to my delight, Vincent Wimbush turns to Michel de Certeau's[1] *L'écriture de l'histoire* – the English title of which, *The Writing of History*, hides a play word: L'écriture does mean "the writing" – a primary concern of this book –, but it is also the phrase that designates "Scripture," and therefore the title could be *The Scripturalizing of History*… a horrible translation but a most appropriate title for our meeting.

When we write or talk about any event of the past (as represented by its traces, including writings, such as the Bible) or of the present, we are not simply writing its history; we are *scripturalizing it* – whether or not we are conscious of doing so.

Vincent continues by offering a very helpful description of the way in which, according to de Certeau, [18th-century French] society came to be 'managed'

[1] With whom by chance I interacted, long ago, when I was embedded in the Jesuit library of Chantilly (France) in 1969, where I was "distracted" from my research (on early Jewish hermeneutic) by a small colloquium (gathered around Roland Barthes) discussing semiotics and Biblical studies – that I was allowed to observe as auditor (as Michel de Certeau also was); it was my first introduction to semiotics. Xavier Léon-Dufour sj, published several of the papers (and additional requested essays, including by P. Ricoeur) in *Exégèse et herméneutique* (Paris: Seuil, 1971). You give me the occasion to pull down from my shelves some of his books I had not opened for a long time.

(policé) through the structuring of language and religion, religion as language. … The clerics come to be socialized as the functionaries—the living embodiment, carriers, guarantors of the right order—of a religious system or ideology. [And that]…*Gouverner, c'est faire croire*… ("To govern is to make subjects believe")… [and is] the "management of minds" as the overarching rational goal of the state.

And it is not simply French political leaders who perform this *scripturalizing* of society: present-day political leaders do so everywhere – including in the USA; and WE do so each time we speak about an event. Consequently, before commenting on the rest of Vincent's address, I want to turn to a theme which came back again and again in our conversations: the way in which the Trump campaign, and now his government, attempts and often succeeds in "making us believe" all kinds of "fake news"—implementing what de Certeau calls the "management of minds" as the rational goal of the modern state. And now "fake news" is used to speak about "factual" newspaper reports. Much has been said about this in our discussions. Let me add a few sideways reflections based on Michel de Certeau's works.

I met him in 1969, i.e. a year after he had published his most insightful reflections in May 1968.[2] In this article, de Certeau offers a definition of event which is very pertinent for our discussion: "Un événement n'est pas ce qu'on peut voir ou savoir, mais ce qu'il devient." (An event is not what one can see or know about it, but what it becomes). According to de Certeau's definition, when a report (a newspaper report, a critical exegesis of a biblical text) strives to speak as accurately as possible about "what one can see or know about" an event, it does not really present the event. Pretending the report is accurate is what would be called today spreading "fake news." And indeed this is what political discourses (if one can designate Trump's discourses in this way) do. And it is also what we commonly do in historical studies and biblical studies…and what we should not do in ISS!

An event is not only what one can see or know about it, *but [also] what it becomes*. As de Certeau wrote elsewhere, an event is always "une rupture instauratrice"—a break (rupture) with what preceded it, which opens up new possibilities

[2] Michel de Certeau, "Pour une nouvelle culture: Prendre la parole," *Études*, juin-juillet 1968, 39-54 – written a few months after the confusing "event" of May 1968. (If you're too young or too American to remember, just Google "1968 France"!).

(instauratrice).[3] So, in *L'écriture de l'histoire*—a book which for me (a fanatic of methodology) is primarily about historiography (illustrated through the study of 18th-century French society)—de Certeau insists that a historian's sight must be broadened: it should not be limited to the facts of an event; it must include the event's impacts as an ongoing production of meaning. The historian's role necessarily involves reconfiguring the past from the perspective of the present. Not projecting upon the past our visions, but recognizing how the past marks our present. Historiography—and by extension whatever we say about any "event"—includes, for de Certeau, three stages/dimensions:

1. It is a product of the social milieu in which it is produced; it is a product of consummation; if it was not valued in this social milieu it would not be produced (with Marx, against Ricoeur); *we choose to say something about an event, because such saying has some value in our milieu*.
2. Historiography is a practice; the historian has a technique. The latter are critical methods that evolve with cultural changes; *we usually analyze the event we want to talk about – rather than talking, as it were, off the top of the head*.
3. Historiography encompasses BOTH historical scripturalizing (écriture/writing) as mirror (reflecting the present as it reflects the past; lie as well as truth) AND performative scripturalizing (écriture/writing) as the building of a tombstone for the dead, as a burial ritual; scripturalizing both honors and eliminates the past, as in the process of mourning.[4] But because of this dual character, historiography accounts for the traces of – the memory of—the past events up to the present, thus in the history of its receptions. *Our discourse about any event involves scripturalizing it both in the sense that our scripturalized discourse reflects the present as it reflects the past (including the recent past), and in doing so we both honor and eliminate the past event by showing what this event becomes in our present*.[5]

"There is a dissociation between the existential exigency of saying meaning and the social logic of doing it" (*L'écriture de l'histoire*, 171). A thinking practice of

May 1968. The second was entitled "Pour une nouvelle culture: Le pouvoir de parler," *Études*, octobre 1968. These two articles framed his reflections leading him to write *La culture au pluriel* (1974) and *L'écriture de l'histoire* (1975).

[3] Michel de Certeau, *La Faiblesse de croire* (Paris: Seuil, 1987). Chapitre 7 "La rupture instauratrice."

[4] It involves a tension between science and fiction (with Ricoeur). It is constructed (fiction) but also scientific (representation of this reality). This "both/and" distinguishes De Certeau from deconstruction: meaning is not simply constructed and thus open to deconstruction.

[5] Again "an event is not only what one can see or know about it, but [also] what it becomes."

scripturalizing (what ISS is all about) always and necessarily reflects the tension between the necessity of thinking our practice (the existential exigency of saying meaning) and the impossibility of truly scripturalizing it (in the social logic of doing it). So in the end the choice of what to say and not to say about an event is pragmatics—it is ethics. It concerns "what it [the event] becomes" in our context; how particular aspects of the event affects our neighbors (in the most general sense). And this ethical dimension—focused on the way our speaking/doing affects our neighbors—makes our scripturalizing (as individuals, as small groups, as ISS) a way of resisting the scripturalizing by political authorities and institutions. This is urgently needed, as evidenced by Ava DuVernay's documentary film, 13th—but not a simple task.

Another book by Michel de Certeau which is very appropriate for me is *The Practice of Everyday Life (Arts de faire)*, in which he makes an important distinction between "strategy" (implemented by institutions and structures of power) and "tactics" (implemented by individuals)—that I take as two ways of scripturalizing.[6] He illustrates the difference between strategies and tactics by describing "Walking in the City"—a chapter beginning with the description of "the city" (New York City viewed from the World Trade Center) as it has been generated by the "strategies" of governments, corporations, and other institutional bodies, followed by the description of how individuals walk through the city in ways that are "tactical" following their own purposes, taking leisurely walks or taking shortcuts, "poaching on the territory of others"—using for their own purposes the strategic grid of the streets, bending its rules and products to reach their goals as they wish. Nevertheless, we live in city grids that resulted from the strategic scripturalizing by institutions and structures of power (the "management of minds" as the overarching rational goal of the state, and that reflect disastrous (racist, political, classist, etc.) ideologies in front of which we feel just powerless. We have to live in these city grids.

Yet, we pedestrians can navigate freely the city grids, transgressing them in a tactical scripturalizing! Liberty begins with speaking out.[7] And we do so already following (consciously or not) the models of many transgressing tactical discourses—such as the way of life and the scripturalizing discourses of slaves and of oppressed people, whatever might be the oppressions they suffer. The difference is that as an Institute made up of academics—or retired academics—we can envision

[6] Trans. Steven Rendell (Berkeley : University of California Press, 1984).

[7] The act of walking is to the urban system what the speech act is to language or to the statements uttered. (97)

and practice our transgressing, tactical scripturalizing from a position of relative power. Our speech act is not powerless; it is transformative.[8]

This is a hope that drove Michel de Certeau. What we are doing cannot be effect-less. Our study of the scripturalizing performed by the nation-state, and our recognition that in turn we are scripturalizing by writing/speaking about the nation-state is neither pointless nor powerless.

And yet…

Can we truly hope that together we will perform significantly transformative speech acts that would have the real power to address the racism embedded not only in our culture but also squarely in our entire economic system—as per *13th*—so much so that by the very use of my phone (powered by Verizon), or by going to buy something for my garden (at Home Depot), I contribute to this racist order. As was expressed in many ways by our group, seeing *13th* put a damper on our hopes for easy solutions. We might lure ourselves into thinking that eighteenth century French society, or the Berlin Conference, or Thomas Paine's eighteenth century (Seth Perry), or late 19th century scholarship (Halvor Moxnes, *Jesus Beyond Nationalism*) were parts of a long-gone ugly past. But Hector Amaya's *Citizenship Excess: Latino/as, Media, and the Nation*, and Halvor Moxnes (on the construction of the "immigration problem" by the alt-right attempting to implement their policies on immigration as reasonable and in the national interest) and *13th* all made it clear that this ugliness is with us and that we are part of it, contributing to it even as we are striving to confront it. Indeed our very location, Charlotte, North Carolina (which, as a matter of conscience, led some would-be participants not to join us for this meeting in this location) is more ambivalent than it seemed from afar as the "Refraction" of Eric Hoenes del Pinal pointed out as a "local Latino" (Guatemalan).

Should we take *13th* as a representation of the "grid of the city" established by the scripturalizing "strategy" (performed and implemented by institutions and structures of power) in which we cannot but live and function: acknowledging that

[8] Yet for how long? In the euphoria of May 1968 – the powerful cultural movement that almost toppled the French government – de Certeau writes, "En mai dernier, on a pris la parole comme on a pris la Bastille en 1789 […]. Ainsi s'affirme, farouche, irrépressible, un droit nouveau, devenu identique au droit d'être un homme, et non plus un client voué à la consommation ou un instrument utile à l'organisation anonyme de la société." de Certeau, "Prendre la parole," *Études*, juin-juillet 1968, 49. I have seen this transformation in many aspects of French society – e.g. the hierarchical structures of many institutions vanished, my cousins who abandoned their studies to join workers on the floor the factories. Some of these remain, but the *policé* structuring of ideological order slowly came back, with a strong racist and xenophobic competent (against Arabs, Muslims). So my next sentences.

we cannot but be subjected to these institutions and structures of power. This is in large part what this annual meeting has done for us: as Monya Stubbs wrote, we "are subjected by the governing authorities (passive imperative)" (reading ὑποτασσέσθω in Rom 13:1 as a passive imperative) and have to acknowledge that this is what our situation is (and therefore we "subject [ourselves] to the governing authorities" reading ὑποτασσέσθω in Rom 13:1 as a *middle* imperative, referring to subjection).[9] By scripturalizing on their scripturalizing strategy (and on the greed of the city they impose upon us), we acknowledge that we cannot help but to be subjected to these governing authorities (passive). But by the very fact that we are scripturalizing on their scripturalizing strategy we subject ourselves to these governing authorities in the ambivalent position of people who know the game. And therefore we have the freedom to be pedestrians who, walking in the grid of the city, transgress the grid, taking liberating shortcuts – upholding, championing, becoming ourselves "the girl born in Nepal who learns Spanish from the Salvadoran boy who sits next to her in English class" in Charlotte, North Carolina (Eric Hoenes del Pinal).

[9] I quote Monya Stubbs, *Indebted Love: Paul's Subjection Language in Romans*, Eugene: Pickwick, 2013, 120. This is a powerful book that reads Paul's letter to the Romans through an interpretive process framed, from beginning to end, by Harriet Tubman.

JOURNALING THE BODY INTO NATURE: AUDRE LORDE'S POETIC TRANSGRESSIONS OF ENVIRONMENT'S SCRIPTURE

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Introduction

"*That* place, the green, the trees, and the water, formed," Audre Lorde told Louise Chawla in a 1984 interview, "my forest of Arden. And I would write about beautiful scenes. It was the only green place I ever saw [as a child]."[1] Lorde, the notoriously self-identified "Black feminist lesbian warrior poet," and author of numerous literary works, was referring to the source of the imagery of "green space" embedded in her extraordinary *oeuvre*.[2] As a child, Lorde's mother, Linda, would take Lorde and her two older sisters to a waterfront near Harlem River Drive and a nearby "project park," not too far from their home on Lenox Avenue in Harlem. The two scenes crept into Lorde's poetry often enough to prompt one of her students at Tougaloo College, where Lorde taught for six weeks on a National Endowment for the Arts residency grant in 1968, to ask, "Miss Lorde, would you call yourself a nature poet?"[3]

Chawla, a graduate student in Environmental Psychology at the City University of New York Graduate Center when she interviewed Lorde, was conducting research for her dissertation, "In the First Country of Places: Environmental Memory in Contemporary American Poetry," a psychological analysis of the relationship between childhood memories and affinities to nature. Like Lorde's student at Tougaloo, Chawla was also curious about Lorde's imagined relationship to nature, but an essential reason for incorporating Lorde into her study was to ensure the inclusion of a "minority poet" in the collection of writers whose work she examined.[4]

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[1] Louise Chawla, "Poetry, Nature, and Childhood: An Interview with Audre Lorde," in *Conversations with Audre Lorde*, ed. Joan Wylie Hall (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2004), 115.

[2] Among Lorde's most well-known writings are *The Cancer Journals* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1980), *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name—A Biomythography* (New York: Crossing Press, 1982), *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches by Audre Lorde* (New York: The Crossing Press, 1984), and ten books of poetry compiled in *The Collected Poems of Audre Lorde* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997)

[3] Chawla, "Poetry, Nature, and Childhood," 115.

[4] Louise Chawla, "In the First Country of Places: Environmental Memory in Contemporary American Poetry" (PhD diss., City University of New York, 1984), 219.

Not that considering Lorde a nature poet is only reasonable as a procedure of multiculturalism. Critics have recognized, and continue to acknowledge, Lorde's affinity for the natural world in her writings, and even after her death in 1992, Lorde's poems "The Bees," "The Brown Menace or Poem to the Survival of Roaches," "Song," and "What My Child Learns of the Sea" were reprinted in an edited volume on nature poetry by Black writers entitled *Black Nature: Four Centuries of African American Poetry*.[5]

At the time of her conversation with Chawla, however, Lorde herself had not thought of her work as nature poetry, even as images of the park and its nearby waterfront emerged in her writing.[6] This was partly attributable to her commitment to urban communities, particularly New York City, where she had spent the majority of her life at the time of her interview with Chawla, where she had raised her children, and where she had devoted her life to teaching and activism. "The city to me," Lorde admitted to Chawla, "represents almost a speeded up version of America, of the problems of America. They are symbolized in very different ways certainly in the South, the Midwest, or even in the West. But New York, Boston, Washington, Detroit—these industrial cities to me seem to be almost symbolic of not just of oppression, but … of pressures."[7] While the city imbued within Lorde a sense of trepidation and heightened awareness of the multiple forces operating within the compressed blocks of metropolitan life, it joined with her affinity for green space to arouse a poetic longing to bring words to the contradiction she felt between the two places she coveted. This strain, Lorde acknowledged, was attributable to her being born in Harlem, but also to having parents who refused to let her identify the United States as "home." Rather, home was the Caribbean, specifically the islands of Grenada, her mother's birthplace, and Barbados, her father's. The United States was only a place where their family resided, temporarily, until they could return to the Caribbean after having realized the "American Dream" of accumulating a fortune from laboring in the thriving industrial economy. "I think that is why that green and those trees were so magical," Lorde confessed to Chawla, "because my mother used to tell us stories about the fruit trees, and how she would get up in the morning [in Grenada], and there would be dew on the bucket of water that they would haul back and forth."[8]

[5] *Black Nature: Four Centuries of African American Poetry*, ed. Camille Dungy (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009).

[6] In the interview, Lorde claimed that the green areas were embellished with "rose trellises." See Chawla, "Poetry, Nature, and Childhood," 116.

[7] Chawla, "First Country of Places," 118.

[8] Chawla, "Poetry, Nature, and Childhood," 120.

Yet, there were likely other reasons behind Lorde's uncertain relationship to nature poetry, like its inclination towards "sterile word play," and the ways it was undergirded by popular images and epistemologies of environmentalism that generally classify nature as a space protected from the industrial worlds that had, among other things, pulled her parents to the United States.[9] Born from the Progressive Era's religious view of nature, environmentalism imbues the "wilderness" of biodiversity with sacred meaning by associating it with an imagined primordium, a mythologized genesis that is consistent with the West's predisposition to create space as pristine, and thereby necessitating the creation of something new. Environment, then, is a *scripture* of the primordial wild that carries the "redemptive capacities of God's creation."[10]

While Lorde's allusions to green space evoke a sense of escape similar to that of environment's scripture, nature, for her, held a source of meaning beyond it. When she moved to St. Croix in 1986, Lorde sought a different style of life from what she had experienced in the city, but she also imagined the island as possessing a source of maternal meaning. In the film, *Litany for Survival: The Life and Work of Audre Lorde*, Lorde, while walking with her daughter, Beth, along a beach in St. Croix, confides: "The ocean has always been for me a place I needed to be close to. And I think that's from Grandma. I think that's from my mother, you know… She never talked about it, but when I see Grenville, when I see Grenada, and Carriacou, and I know. I know it must have been what helped her keep her sanity. Her, and a whole lot of Caribbean women."[11] In this powerful scene, Lorde seemingly awakens to her mother's beckoning, in a more explicit way than in her conversation with Chawla, to the power of nature to bring her to a consciousness of her ancestral home. Nature—whether the ocean, a city park, or a waterfront—was not an insulated space cleansed of the impurities of modern production. Rather, nature was a power, available to everyone, but more easily accessible to women, that envelops all sentient beings in the timeless rhythms of birth and death; it arouses a sense of home, even beyond the physical location of the Caribbean. "I get this feeling more and more and more the

[9] Lorde's phrase, "sterile word play," is taken from her popular essay, "Poetry Is Not a Luxury," in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches by Audre Lorde* (New York: The Crossing Press, 1984), 37.

[10] This phrase appears in Evan Berry's Devoted to Nature: *The Religious Roots of American Environmentalism* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 2. In this text, Berry delineates the Biblical origins of environmentalism. His work might be enhanced by considering its scriptural mapping alongside Vincent Wimbush's broader notion of scripture, as a "social-psychological-political structure establishing its own reality." See Wimbush's *White Men's Magic: Scripturalization as Slavery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 19, as well as his "Introduction: TEXTureS, Gestures, Power: Orientation to Radical Excavation" in *Theorizing Scriptures: New Critical Orientations to a Cultural Phenomenon* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 3.

[11] Ada Gay Griffin and Michelle Parkerson, dir. *A Litany for Survival: The Life and Work of Audre Lorde* (New York: Third World Newsreel, 1995).

older I get," Lorde explained to Chalwa, "[that] I am part of a chain, I am part of a continuum. It did not start with me and it will not end with me, but my piece is vital."[12]

Most commentaries on Lorde's environmentalism focus on *The Cancer Journals* (hereafter *Journals*), which details through intimate journal entries her experiences of breast cancer, and the institutional structures that impede her, and other women's, honest reckoning with the disease.[13] Through *Journals*, scholars tend to position Lorde within the theoretical pantheon of environmental thinkers and environmental justice activism, but *Journals* is more than a singular text of environmental thought; it is part of a longer series of Lorde's reflections on how industry, as an invisible instrument of the environment, distorts the proper unfolding of nature—of her body, and of the planet. In writings beyond *Journals*—like *A Burst of Light* and her essay, "Of Generators and Survivors—Hugo Letter"—Lorde rendered, through journaling industrial assaults on her body and the spaces she inhabited, how she had been enmeshed into, and contaminated by, instruments of production that threatened to not only destroy her, but nature as well.[14] These machineries of environmental contamination were components of the violent "power" popularized in her social thought.[15] Lorde did not identify as a nature poet, nor did she actively align herself with justice movements solely organized around traditional "environmental" concerns, which is why I hesitate to characterize her as intentionally signifying on environment's scripture. More accurately, by tapping into a sacred,

[12] Chawla, "Poetry, Nature, and Childhood," 124.

[13] Scholars tend to position Lorde's *The Cancer Journals* as her most environmentally oriented text. See, for example: Sabrina McCormick, *No Family History: The Environmental Links to Breast Cancer* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010); Tina Richardson, "Changing Landscapes: Mapping Breast Cancer as an Environmental Justice Issue in Audre Lorde's *The Cancer Journals*," in *Restoring the Connection to the Natural World: Essays on the African American Environmental Imagination*, ed. Sylvia Mayer (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2003); Stella Bolaki, "Re-Covering the Scarred Body: Textual and Photographic Narratives of Breast Cancer," *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal* 44, no. 2 (June 2011): 1-17; and Mary K. DeShazer, *Mammographies: The Cultural Discourses of Breast Cancer Narratives* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013).

[14] Lorde saw an intimate connection between her journals and her poetry. "I write in my journal fairly regularly," Lorde told Mari Evans in a 1979 interview, "I get a lot of my poems out of it. It is the raw material for my poems." Mari Evans, "My Words Will Be There," in *Conversations with Audre Lorde*, ed. Joan Wylie Hall (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2004), 75.

[15] In his introduction to the volume, *I Am Your Sister: Collected and Unpublished Writings of Audre Lorde* ed. Rudolph P. Byrd, Johnnetta Betsch Cole, and Beverly Guy-Sheftall (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), Rudolph Byrd brings Lorde into a longer tradition of Black feminist thought, connecting her writings and activism to such figures as Maria Stewart, Sojourner Truth, Anna-Julia Cooper, and Lorraine Hansberry. While Lorde, like her foremothers, was concerned with the specificities of Black women's lived experiences, and envisioned Black women beyond the domestic sphere as prominent agents of the public realm of national and international political struggle, what distinguished her from them was her mobilization of multiple movements—"the civil rights movement, the black power movement, the second wave of the U. S. women's movement, and the gay and lesbian movement," 12; her mapping of subjectivities of Black Feminists and Black queer people; and her development of a "new critical social theory" that examines "difference," or those subjectivities that diverge from, and are disempowered by, the white, male, heterosexual subject. Difference manifests in various forms of dominance, from the colonization of Blacks' expressions of gender to practices of sadomasochism in American culture.

maternal sensibility—often termed the "erotic"[16]—she came to understand her body as forfeited for industrial progress. Through her journals, she revealed nature as more than the collection of spaces detached from the sins of capitalist production that enthusiasts of the wilderness celebrate; rather, such detached spaces are part of a scripture that itself results from industrial power's capacity to pressurize spaces into urbanity, create concentrated market access for consuming global cultures, foster diasporic movement among Black people, as well as generate toxic waste that ensnared Lorde, and other Blacks, into a geopolitics of sacrifice for economic profit. By journaling her body's encounter with industry, and poetically rendering her body's meaning in light of capitalist production, Lorde illuminated Afro-diasporic populations as integral, if not indispensible, to environment's scripture.

Industry, Embodiment, and the Concealment of Cancerous Waste

Six years before her conversation with Chawla, Lorde endured a radical mastectomy to treat breast cancer, an illness she partially attributed to her work during the 1950s as an assembly-line laborer at Keystone Electronics in Stamford, Connecticut. Keystone manipulated and refined quartz crystals imported from Brazil to make them more usable for conducting electricity for radios and radars. Lorde worked extensive hours as an X-ray machine technician in the wretched conditions of the factory. "The air was heavy and acrid with the sickly fumes of carbon tetrachloride used to clean the crystals," she wrote in Zami, "Entering the plant after 8:00 A. M. was like entering Dante's Inferno. It was offensive to every sense, too cold and too hot, gritty, noisy, ugly, sticky, stinking, and dangerous."[17] The process of cutting, assessing, and cleaning the crystals exposed Lorde, and her fellow workers who were Black and Puerto Rican women, to carbon tetrachloride, a chemical linked to liver damage and kidney cancer. Workers who produced crystals at an accelerated rate were given bonuses, which instigated antagonistic competition among the employees, and enticed them to engage in risky behavior to heighten their production count for higher wages. One of Lorde's biographers, Alexis De Veaux, noted that, "In order to increase her weekly bonuses [Lorde] began… hiding handfuls of crystals in her socks, chewing them up and spitting them into the toilet on her breaks."[18]

[16] I am seizing upon Lorde's infamous notion of the "erotic" as outlined in her essay, "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power," in *Sister Outsider*, 53-59. In it, Lorde defines the erotic as "a resource within each of us that lies in a deeply female and spiritual plane, firmly rooted in the power of our unexpressed or unrecognized feeling," 53. The erotic, which sanctions feeling, materializes through, among other things, poetry, and is transmitted within communities, both within and across generations.

[17] Audre Lorde, *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* (New York: Crossing Press, 1982), 126.

[18] Alexis DeVeaux, Warrior Poet: A Biography of Audre Lorde (W. W. Norton & Company, 2006), 41.

Lorde's work at Keystone, and the ways it rendered her vulnerable to illness, sensitized her to the effects of industrial production on public health, not only in the generation of toxic materials, but in the medical industry's evasion of identifying the environmental causes of disease. *Journals*, a series of entries over the course of eighteen months after her mastectomy, details Lorde's pain and fear of breast cancer, her attempts to integrate the disease into her life, and her emergence from this interior work as a "warrior." The book is comprised of three chapters, "Transforming Silence into Language and Action," remarks she delivered at a 1977 meeting of the Modern Language Association, about exposing silences that hide suffering; "Breast Cancer: A Black Lesbian Experience," an account of her discovery of her breast cancer, her decision to have a mastectomy, her experience of the procedure in 1978, and how she was empowered by a community of women who were by her side during her convalescence; and "Breast Cancer: Power vs. Prosthesis," a sweeping critique of the American Cancer Society's (hereafter ACS) "Reach to Recovery Program," which was designed to aid women in coping with breast cancer.

Each of the chapters reveals a distinct dimension of the disease and its personal and social consequences, but Lorde's focus on ACS in the third chapter attends to an industry that denies, through an elaborately coordinated marketing campaign, the realities of enduring a mastectomy. Her awareness of ACS's merchandizing power allowed Lorde to object its systematic techniques of disciplining women into post-mastectomy embodiment. She begins the chapter with an account of her encounter with a volunteer representative from the "Recovery" program who visited Lorde following her surgery. The volunteer pressed Lorde to wear prosthesis, which Lorde saw as fostering an illusory view of female bodies that was driven and sustained by white masculine desire. Sexualizing women through cosmetic attachments shielded them from themselves and others, while becoming part of a profit venture. The "Recovery" program, in Lorde's estimation, "encouraged [a] false and dangerous nostalgia in the mistaken belief that women are too weak to deal directly and courageously with the realities of our lives."[19] The illusion of cosmetic prosthesis prioritized women's physical appearance over the interior journeys that might lead them towards modes of critical resistance, rooted them in their past embodiment instead of the present realities of post-mastectomy life, and steered women from identifying breast cancer's environmental causes, which she bluntly captured as "the cosmic war against radiation, animal fat, air pollution, McDonald's hamburgers and Red Dye No. 2."[20]

[19] Lorde, *Journals*, 59.

[20] See *Journals*, 58-61. Lorde's own research prompted her to note the links between animal fat and breast cancer.

While *Journals* is often noted for its searing critique of the ACS, it was not Lorde's first published writing on the organization. Two years before her cancer diagnosis, her poem "The American Cancer Society Or There Is More Than One Way To Skin A Coon," appeared in her fourth published collection of poetry, *New York Head Shop and Museum*.[21] "Of all the ways in which this country/Prints its death upon me," Lorde wrote in the poem's first stanza, "Selling cigarettes is one of the most certain." Cigarettes, however, were not as deadly as the actual contamination that threatened her children: "Yet every day I watch my son digging/ConEdison GeneralMotors GarbageDisposal/Out of his nose as he watches a 3 second spot/ On how to stop smoking." The ACS's anti-smoking campaigns, then, distract from the identifiable industries that exposed her child to toxic waste. This orchestrated collusion between anti-smoking campaigns, which present the ACS as civically concerned with the population's health, and industrial pollution, which resulted from environment's scripture, forms an "american cancer," as she notes in the poem's second stanza—a social disease that dumps material and symbolic pollution onto Black people.

Maternal in its avowed concern for her son's physical well-being, "American Cancer Society" resonates with Lorde's belief that for Black women, "poetry is not a luxury," but a means of imagining a life "architecture" that can bridge them to a new world.[22] Poetry, then, is not simply meter and verse, but cultivates a sensibility of the workings of power—how it is accessed, mobilized, and denied in racial capitalism. In "American Cancer Society," cancer is a physical disease, the subjection of Black bodies to symbolic degradation, as well as a poetic device signifying society's malignancy. In another published journal, *Burst of Light* (hereafter *Light*), a series of entries that traced Lorde's international travels, her search for a homeopathic cure for her cancer, and her formulation of a Pan-African feminism from meetings with Black women in Germany, France, and South Africa, Lorde would bring together her reflections on her breast cancer, which by that time had metastasized to her liver, and her uses of cancer as poetic device. Cancer, she would write in her November 13, 1986 entry, was as "political as if some CIA agent brushed past [her] in the A train on March 15, 1965, and air-injected [her] with a long-fused cancer virus." Reaffirming her belief that her body was exposed to industrial contaminants that

[21] Audre Lorde, "The American Cancer Society Or There Is More Than One Way To Skin A Coon," in *The Collected Poems of Audre Lorde*, 107-8.

[22] See Lorde's "Poetry Is Not a Luxury" as well as her interview with Charles Rowell, "Above The Wind: An Interview With Audre Lorde," *Callaloo* 14, no. 1 (Winter 1991).

threatened her natural earthly existence, she attributed her vulnerability to political arrangements, reminiscent of a war campaign, that determine "the air we breathe and the water we must drink."[23]

Journaling the Cancer of 'Natural' Disaster

At the time of her interview with Chawla, Lorde was preparing to leave the United States to live in the Caribbean islands where her parents were born. While she had spent her life in New York City, and had stayed there to rear her children, she had begun turning to the Caribbean after visiting Grenada, for the first time, in 1978. Moving to St. Croix in 1986 was the realization of Lorde's, and her mother's, dream. On the island of St. Croix, she found "West Indian voices in the supermarket and Chase Bank, and the Caribbean flavors that have always meant home"; a healing network of Black women who nurtured her, and helped her recover from "academic burnout"; and the feeling of the earth "at 6:30 in the morning under a tropical crescent moon working in the still-cool garden" (emphasis mine).[24] In St. Croix she acquired an identity beyond that created by her celebrity. She was even given another name, "Gamba Adisa"—meaning: "Warrior: She Who Makes Her Meaning Clear"—and had her acts of imagination phrased as "Audre-ism(s)."[25]

This sense of home—a place free of urban congestion and pressure, and the illusions created by industry—was disrupted on September 17, 1989, when Hurricane Hugo ripped through the Caribbean and the Southeastern corner of the United States, leveling the island of St. Croix. In her essay, "Of Generators and Survival—Hugo Letter" (hereafter "Generators"), Lorde chronicled the disaster, from the day after the storm passed, September 18, 1989, until almost three months later on December 18, 1989. First published in *Hell Under God's Orders: Hurricane Hugo in St. Croix—Disaster and Survival* (1990) edited by Hortense M. Rowe and Lorde's partner, Gloria I. Joseph, and then again in a 1991 issue of *Callaloo*, the entries are a series of reflections on the effects of Hugo on her community in St. Croix.[26] While framed as a letter to the reader—its opening salutation of "Dear Friends" signals an epistolary form—it is also divided into five dated sections, resembling the journal entries of *Journals* and *Light*. While *Journals* details the invasion of pollutants into Lorde's physical self, which brings her to an awareness of silences surrounding

[23] Lorde, *Light*, 140.

[24] Lorde, *Light*, 119-120.

[25] Gloria I. Joseph, "Remembering Audre Lorde," in *I Am Your Sister*, 249.

[26] Lorde, "Of Generators and Survival—A Hugo Letter," in *Hell Under God's Orders: Hurricane Hugo in St. Croix—Disaster and Survival*, ed. Gloria Joseph and Hortense M. Rowe (St. Croix: Winds of Change Press, 1990), 202-215. Also published in *Callaloo* 14, no. 1 (Winter 1991), 72-82. My references will be taken from the version printed in *Callaloo*.

the treatment and environmental causes of her illness, Light extends the political background of her illness, and her uses of cancer as a poetic device. "Generators," a final collection of journal entries, expands Lorde's understanding of environment's scripture through expanding the signification of cancer. The entries are as much accounts of the destruction of her home as they are reports on neocolonial industries that disturbed the natural world. "This is our home," she wrote on October 2, 1989, "We pass from the stun of crisis to the interminable frustrations of long-range coping within a profit-based economy."[27] The captivating dream of the Caribbean that Lorde's mother summoned within her by shuttling her to green spaces in Harlem, was undermined by disasters, and, reminiscent of the ACS's "Reach for Recovery Program," the structured failures of relief programs to support those in need.

Two weeks after Hugo, the military arrived, evacuating those who could afford to leave, while bringing "armoured (sic) trucks and rifles and military police" instead of food and supplies for residents.[28] Armed forces—including the Navy, National Guard, U. S. Marshals, F.B.I., the Marines, and the Military Police—began to fray the fabric of the community, and its efforts of recovery, by protecting the Hess Oil Corporation, which had grown into the largest oil refinery in the Western Hemisphere, and held numerous contracts with governments of both St. Croix and the United States. In fact, Hess had specifically chosen St. Croix because its government offered tax incentives and exemptions on import fees. In this sense, St. Croix was part of a larger system of Caribbean dependency that included Grenada, which, like St. Croix, had been invaded by the United States six years prior. Upon visiting Grenada a few months after the invasion, Lorde had prepared an essay, "Grenada Revisited," about the history of the United States' colonizing of the tiny Caribbean island, and had referenced the event, on its second anniversary, in her remarks at the "The Black Woman Writer and the Diaspora" conference she attended at Michigan State University in the fall of 1985.[29] In her conference remarks, Lorde recalled how the media deployed racial imagery to hide U. S. imperialist practices. She noted that the portrayal of the military takeover in Grenada featured Black soldiers: "How can we ever forget the faces of young black American soldiers," she asks, "bayonets drawn, in front of a shack in Grenville, Grenada?"[30] Lorde asked her audience to consider

[27] Lorde, "Generators and Survival," 78.

[28] Lorde, "Generators and Survival," 74.

[29] See Lorde's "Grenada Revisited," and her remarks at the "'The Black Woman Writer and the Diaspora" conference, published as "Sisterhood and Survival," *The Black Scholar* 17, no. 2 (March/April 1986). In her remarks at the conference, Lorde asked her sisters to identify their power—whether political, financial, or spiritual—to build and support their communities for the future. "… [T]he origins of our oppressions are the same. It was very affirming to see all over the world women of color rising up and demanding—'You took our land, you didn't pay for it, you messed it up, polluted it, misused it, now give it back!", 7.

the illusion of the image, the ways it deployed a fallacious patriotism that obscured how limited economic opportunities conscripted Black men into the military, much like how she had been structurally enlisted to work for Keystone Electric. When considered with the invasion of Grenada, the U. S.'s military invasion of St. Croix following Hugo was part of a profit-defending apparatus to protect the tourist industry. Through its collaborations with government agencies, like the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and media narratives that racialized the "lawlessness" of the residents that justified a policing curfew, industry was steadily regenerating itself, and cohering into a transportable, neoliberal apparatus.[31] As Lorde explained, poetically, with cancer metaphors, this apparatus also contaminated the climate: "Hurricane Hugo was a terrible natural disaster, but nature heals herself. It is what we inject to her like tumors that fester and grown loathsome without constant attention, refusing to self-destruct, because out of our twisted wisdom—some fantasy of bloodless immortality—we have created them as if they would last 1,000 years."[32] As foreshadowed in her poem, "American Cancer Society," cancer acquired multiple meanings throughout her journals: it was an illness that would ultimately destroy her physical body; a "political weapon" orchestrated by industry that would infect the natural environment; and now, in "Generators," it was a disease of nature caused by humanity's misplaced attempts to engineer eternal life through technological production. Each of cancer's poetic meanings illuminated the West's impulse to systematically unsettle nature's balance.

Naturalizing the Black Female Body as Scripture

Lorde's conversation with Chawla in 1984 was a window into her unfolding poetics of nature, of the ceaseless rhythms of birth and death. Whether the imaginary of home summoned by her mother, or the beaches Lorde encountered while in St. Croix, she saw herself as shrouded in an erotic, maternal power. Even in her transition to the ancestral world, Lorde's interior journey renders a panoramic window into the industrial power elided in environment's scripture—its inscription of illusion onto the world of meaning that alienate women from their bodies and their spiritual power; its militarizing control of resources; and its unbalancing of nature through technological progress. "Environmental justice," a popular gesture for mobilizing around the encroachment of industry on the under-resourced, suffers

[30] Lorde, "Sisterhood and Survival," 6.

[31] This apparatus continues to emerge after "natural" disasters, like in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. For a comprehensive accounting of the expansive power of the neoliberal recovery apparatus, see Cedric Johnson's edited volume, *The Neoliberal Deluge: Hurricane Katrina, Late Capitalism, and the Remaking of New Orleans* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

[32] Lorde, "Generators and Survival," 75.

from an investment in the possibility of governmental structures intervening on behalf of the victims of toxic waste, yet Lorde suggests that these, too, are facets of environment's scripture.

Lorde is part of a long tradition of writers who imagine Black embodiment in ways that disrupt scriptural parameters of space and discourse. As Vincent Wimbush has thoughtfully demonstrated in his careful examination of Equiano's *Interesting Narrative*, the text is "a 'scriptural' story in the most fundamental terms, not only because it is about a particular set of 'scriptures', a reading of parts of the English Bible as scriptures, including how they are made to function in a complex social-political and discursive regime… [It] is a scriptural story because it is an epic story, a story about a great journey, a great struggle, a story about trauma and survival, about the 'fall' into 'sin', about 'salvation' and transformation, about knowing things and accessing and wielding power."[33] Wimbush opens us to readings of Black autobiographies that necessitate a deeper history of Black subjects, one that centers the rewriting of Black bodies, and their signifying upon the engulfing scriptures that emerged from the Atlantic complex. Lorde enters this scenario during a pivotal historical moment in the secularization of the encounter narrated by Equiano and others. By journaling her body, she showed how institutionally supported illusions of post-mastectomy female bodies hide environmental degradation, how technological production conjure catastrophic hurricanes, and how military-supported disaster recovery efforts hide industry's waste. Lorde extended into the twentieth century the long tale of racial capital and its excesses of production hidden behind a scripture of the environment that inadequately accommodates the multiple formations, and consequences, of racial capitalism's power over the material world. When the environment's scripture ravaged her body through industry, she drifted off to a dream of a physical homegoing that was ultimately eroded by the same forces that unnaturally hastened her death. As climate-related destructions continue to ravage our environments throughout the Global South and beyond, she whispers, still, into our ears.

[33] Wimbush, *White Men's Magic*, 9.

SCRIPTURALIZATION OF WHITENESS: ROOTS OF US NATIONALISM IN COLONIAL BRITISH EXCEPTIONALISM

Ron M. Serino

The spreading of the Gospel ... was an absolutely indispensable justification for the planting of the flag. Priests and nuns and school-teachers helped to protect and sanctify the power that was so ruthlessly being used by people who were indeed seeking a city, but not one in the heavens, and one to be made, very definitely, by captive hands. The Christian church itself ... sanctified and rejoiced in the conquests of the flag, and encouraged, if it did not formulate, the belief that conquest, with the resulting relative well-being of the Western populations, was proof of the favor of God. ... God, going north, and rising on the wings of power, had become white.

–James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*

During the period of Western modernity the conquest and exploitation of the World by the West created a geographical and historical context in which the white races formed the centers from which the exploitation and exercise of hegemonous power took place. These centers defined the structures of authentic human existence. The distances from these centers were adjudicated by varying degrees of humanity, so that at the outermost periphery, where color or blackness coincided with distance, the centrist position held that these were lesser human beings.

–Charles Long, *Significations*

Vincent Wimbush, in his "Director's Address 2017" for the Institute for Signifying Scriptures, calls us to consider elements in "the making of the modern nation/state" (7), postulating that "for the sake of serving the interests of the new nationalist and nationalizing elites, religion was partly (re)constructed as discourse, in terms of the scriptural" (7). In response, this essay, part of a larger project analyzing the role that biblical interpretation played in endowing racial whiteness with scriptural

authority at the beginning of the British colonial project in North America,[1] takes up Vincent Wimbush's concept of the "scripturalization" of whiteness.[2] In broad terms, scripturalization is the process by which aspects of culture become scripturally or religiously authoritative by getting read back into the biblical text through interpretation. Wimbush defines scripturalization as "*a social-psychological-political structure establishing its own reality.*"[3]

This essay argues that the scripturalization of whiteness in the emergent British Empire of the seventeenth century undergirded development toward US nationalism in colonial British America. In the British inflection of the construction of whiteness in early modern Britain and its colonies, English exceptionalism was combined with European color symbolism, both of which were based in part on biblical interpretation of biblical exceptionalism and biblical color symbolism. Such exceptionalism and color symbolism were used to racialize whiteness and imbue it with religious virtue and power. Britain represented itself as Israel and depicted non-Christian, non-European lands and peoples as non-Israelite. Such portrayals were foundational to the legitimating ideology of British imperialism. As Wimbush put it, referring to later European imperialism in Africa, "In this new order of nationalizations, those who cannot be placed or cannot place themselves within, or learn to negotiate, the particular scriptural regime around which a nation is constructed and defined are considered Other, as marginal, with the severest consequences" (9). Still today, the legacy of the scripturalization of whiteness in the globalized (i.e. Euro-Americanized), twenty-first century world stands in stark contrast to justice movements of #BlackLivesMatter and indigenous, refugee, and immigrant rights.

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[1] I argue there that the scripturalization of whiteness, biblical interpretation fusing imperial, racial, and sacred ideologies, coalesced in early seventeenth-century Britain due to shifts in biblical interpretation caused by the rise of the British Empire, emergent racial ideology, and epistemological changes fueled by the combination of Protestant biblical literalism, emergent scientific discourse, and the rise of individual authority, as these were expressed through late pre-critical biblical typology. I illustrate this process using representations of King James as King Solomon, especially in Solomon's maritime commerce with Ophir and his interactions with the Queen of Sheba in 1 Kings 9-10.

[2] Vincent L. Wimbush, *White Men's Magic: Scripturalization as Slavery* (New York: Oxford, 2012); idem, "'No Modern Joshua': Nationalization, Scriptures, and Race," in *Prejudice and Christian Beginnings: Investigating Race, Gender, and Ethnicity in Early Christian Studies*, eds. Laura Nasrallah and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 259-78; and idem, "TEXTures, Gestures, Power: Orientation to Radical Excavation" in *Theorizing Scriptures: New Critical Orientations to a Cultural Phenomenon*, ed. V. L. Wimbush (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 1-20.

[3] Wimbush, *White Men's Magic*, 19, italics original. More fully, he states: "I theorize scriptures in terms of scripturalization and have isolated four stages in or aspects of the phenomenon: (1) scripturalization as social-cultural matrix, within which ideological and discursive rules and practices are made evident and common; (2) scripturalization as framework for nationalist polity and the politics of nationalization, in which the evident and common ideological and discursive practices are legitimized, encoded, and regulated; (3) scripturalization as socio-psycho-logical carapace/overcoat, by which the evident, common, encoded, and regulated discursive practices are naturalized for the sake of social regulation, self-regulation in the social-cultural matrix and the nation; and (4) scripturalization as the translocal/transcendent field on which or regime in which power dynamics and strategies are played out or advanced as discursive coercion and sometimes negotiated and resisted on these terms" (ibid.).

In light of this legacy, my work is motivated by the call of James Cone for white religious scholars to write and speak more about racism, as well as by the work of white theological ethicists like Jennifer Harvey in responding to that call by critiquing whiteness.[4] Harvey insists "that we [whites] go back to discover our racist pasts" in order to see clearly how white supremacy functions as "standard operating procedure."[5] Building on the use of Critical Race Theory (CRT) by biblical scholars such as Gay Byron, Cheryl Anderson, Shawn Kelley, and Denise Kimber Buell, I seek to contribute to a critical whiteness perspective in order to help facilitate deconstruction of the ideological privilege of whiteness.[6]

In making my argument that whiteness was scripturalized in the early development of the British Empire, in such a way that would undergird later US nationalism, I must first establish what I mean by "whiteness" or even "race" in the early seventeenth century. My contention is that the concept of race as it is generally known today existed in this period of British history, albeit in varying and multiple cultural guises, mostly religious and national. England was in the process of transition from medieval, cultural (primarily religious) conceptions of "race" in the Elizabethan period (Christians, Moors, and Jews) to fairly developed modern racial categories in the mid-to-late seventeenth century, combining religious divisions with national, ethnic, and skin-color differences. In distilled form, the concept of race developed largely out of the polarity between ideology of "civilized" and "barbarian."

At the core of the concept of racial whiteness, which comes to anchor expressions of nationalism in the U.S., is the idea of English exceptionalism. During the English Renaissance of the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries, the English were struggling to separate themselves from the Continental European image of England as savage and barbarous and to redefine themselves as a respectable, cultured, and powerful, nation (then empire) on the European scene. According to Ian Smith, one way that the English did this was to separate "whiteness ... from savagery and primitivism and reformulate [it] as the distinct, esteemed ethnic feature of the new national historiography." He argues, "Whiteness affixed to power, therefore, constituted a national rebranding that accommodated the rise of

[4] James H. Cone, "Theology's Great Sin: Silence in the Face of White Supremacy," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 55, no. 3-4 (2001): 1-14; Jennifer Harvey, *Whiteness and Morality: Pursuing Racial Justice through Reparations and Sovereignty* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

[5] Jennifer Harvey, Karin A. Case, and Robin Hawley Gorsline, eds., *Disrupting White Supremacy from Within: White People on What We Need to Do* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2004), 4-6.

[6] Gay L. Byron, *Symbolic Blackness and Ethnic Difference in Early Christian Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Cheryl B. Anderson, "Reflections in an Interethnic/racial Era on Interethnic/racial Marriage in Ezra," in *They Were All Together in One Place? Toward Minority Biblical Criticism*, ed. by Randall C. Bailey, Tat-Siong Benny Liew, and Fernando F. Segovia (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 47-64; Shawn Kelley, *Racializing Jesus: Race. Ideology and the Formation of Modern Biblical Scholarship* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Denise Kimber Buell, *Why This New Race: Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

an English colonial and imperial imaginary."[7] This developing racial consciousness, white identity, progressed along several simultaneous paths, but with common elements that Smith persuasively argues can be connected to the idea of the English as civilized and non-English, especially non-European, as barbarous. The expulsion of the Moriscos from Spain in 1609 added ideological fuel to this developing racial animosity of white, Christian, Europeans toward darker, non-Christian, non-Europeans.[8] Smith concludes that race emerged as an "efficient means of management" for "English national identity."[9]

In seventeenth-century Britain, the idea of racial whiteness began to emerge from the categories of "English" and "Christian," meaning more broadly "European." According to historian Alden Vaughan, by the mid-seventeenth century, "'white' was emerging as a ... label for [Europeans in America] in lieu of 'Christian' and 'English,'" but he argues that "the *idea* of races—imprecisely defined and inconsistently explained—had arrived ... with the first English settlers."[10] Vaughan contends that seventeenth-century language does not definitively evidence the formulation of the concept of race, but rather "it showed society inventing a vocabulary to express its racial ideology."[11]

This evolution of the self-description of "English" or "Christian" to an explicit self-articulation of "white" as a distinct category of human beings was a key development in British racialization. In spite of the captivating skin color contrast between pale English and dark Africans, developing racial constructs were not limited to black and white. Significantly, the British had extensive contact with another large group of non-European peoples: Americans. Illustrating racialization beyond a black-white binary, George Fox wrote in 1657 that Christ is for all "tawnies ... blacks ... and you that are called whites."[12] "Tawnies," or browns, referred most often to

[7] Ian Smith, *Race and Rhetoric in the Renaissance: Barbarian Errors* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 3, 6.

[8] Ibid., 86.

[9] Ibid., 151.

[10] Alden T. Vaughan, *Roots of American Racism: Essays on the Colonial Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 16, 173. From at least 1629, Virginia censuses identified only two types of inhabitants: "*Englishe*" (or "Christian") and "Negroes," and in Barbados, colonized by the British in 1627, a proclamation of 1636 read, "Negroes and Indians that come here to be sold, should serve for Life, unless a Contract was before made to the contrary" (157). Whiteness appears as a legal category in 1652, when Rhode Island's legislature epitomized the prevailing English bifurcation of humanity when it referred to 'blacke mankind or white'" (172) and Virginia decreed in 1662 that "mulatto children of free white fathers" were not free (141). While "race" may have been fluid in Jacobean Britian, encompassing an ever-changing mix of nationality, culture, religion, language, and phenotype (most often skin color), a definite hardening of racial boundaries can be identified in the immediately following decades.

[11] Alden T. Vaughan, "The Origins Debate: Slavery and Racism in Seventeenth-Century Virginia," in Vaughan, *Roots of American Racism*, 171.

[12] Quoted in Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, [1978] 2004), 110.

Americans in such contexts. The use of colors to represent distinct cultural or ethnic groups was becoming increasingly frequent.[13]

In my view, the concept of racialized whiteness, even if not its mature terminology, emerged when, in the context of the rise of the British Empire in the early seventeenth century, English cultural exceptionalism, correlated with biblical exceptionalism, was mapped onto traditional European color symbolism. This new racial category, "white," was distinct from its predecessor concepts of "English" and "Christian" and became an essential part of the English interpretation of godly virtues, such as wisdom, power, or glory, which were attributed to biblical Israel and were then applied to England and Englishmen as Israel's unique successor. Consequences of this essentialization of race include racist attitudes and racist violence. As northern Europeans, especially the British, came to increasingly dominate North Atlantic geopolitics and trade, this vision of the white, Christian, British monarch as God's representative on earth became increasingly loaded and applied to support imperialistic endeavors.

Given that English, or British, exceptionalism was a key ingredient in the construction of whiteness in the emergent British Empire, the remainder of this essay will excavate ways that such exceptionalism scripturalized whiteness and will consider some of its effects in colonial British America. Colonialism relied on emphasizing, or manufacturing, power differentials between colonizers and colonized. Fortuitously for European imperialists, religious distinctions between Christian and non-Christian encapsulated other cultural and ethnic differences, as well as fundamental power disparities, between Europeans and non-Europeans. Undergirding the entire structure of European imperial-colonial ideology was the notion of European/Christian exceptionalism. This Christian exceptionalism is closely related to, and can draw support from, the biblical idea of Israel as God's Chosen People.[14] While many European nations and European settler colonialists viewed themselves and European civilization in general as exceptional, English cultural exceptionalism assumed the superiority of Protestant Christianity in particular. In Protestant

[13] Racial whiteness appeared in English literature in the early seventeenth century in places such as the following: Thomas Middleton used "white people" for Londoners in his 1613 "The Triumphs of Truth" in *Jacobean Civic Pageants*, ed. Richard Dutton [Staffordshire: Ryburn Publishing, 1995], 152; John Williams declared King James to be "of complexion white" in his *Great Britains Salomon: A Sermon Preached at the Magnificent Funerall, of the Most High and Mighty King, Iames* (London: John Bill, 1625 [STC 25723]), 37-39, Early English Books Online (EEBO), http://eebo.chadwyck.com; Joseph Hall named "our whiteness" when comparing white English to black Africans in his "Upon the Sight of a Blackamoor" (Hall, *Occasional Meditations* [Wynter, *Works*, X:45-187], 138-139); and Richard Brome's *The English Moore* (1631) used "white Man" to refer to racial whiteness (Kim Hall, *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995], 171, quoting Brome's 4.4.31-2 in Steen ed.). Thanks go to C. Travis Webb for pointing me to the first reference.

[14] For example, discussing early Massachusetts colonial governor John Winthrop (1630), historian Mark Noll writes: "in Winthrop's view, the covenant for the Puritans was analogous to God's covenant with ancient Israel" (Mark A. Noll, "'Wee Shall Be as a Citty upon a Hill': John Winthrop's Non-American Exceptionalism," *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 10, no. 2 [Summer 2012]: 8).

interpretation, exceptionalism is often framed in Calvinist language of election theology: God's Elect who are chosen for salvation [for example, Isa 42:1; 45:4; 65:9, 22; Matt 24:31; Mark 13:27; Col 3:12; Titus 1:1; 1 Pet 2:6 (KJV)].[15] A construction of biblical exceptionalism, Israel as unique and chosen by God, was therefore used to sanctify English exceptionalism by interpreting the English (or British) as unique inheritors of God's promise to biblical Israel. British imperial apologists emphasized English cultural exceptionalism and related it to the Bible, interpreting the British as God's true Israel, commanded by God to subdue and possess the land and people of Canaan in North America.

Evidence of English exceptionalism appears in many seventeenth-century English texts. As an example, Ben Jonson's *Masque of Blackness* declares Britain to be so special that it is like a "diamant" on the ring of the world! The light, or power, of King James is also said to be "past mere nature."[16] Similar exceptionalism can be seen in the attitudes of superiority that characterized most interactions of English with the original Americans. Despite current US mythology about the First Thanksgiving, early English interactions with indigenous Americans were ambivalent at best. Most problematically, in the minds of the English it was never a meeting of equals.

The culture of the English colonizers was, in their own eyes, far superior to that of colonized non-European peoples. Significantly, these attitudes appear even before the founding of the first permanent British colony in North America. King James himself used contemporary, popular English attitudes toward indigenous Americans and racist, imperialist language both to disparage Americans and to highlight English exceptionalism. In his 1604 pamphlet *Counterblaste to Tobacco*, written three years before the founding of the first permanent British colony in North America, James had expressed the popular British attitude toward Americans as "barbarous, beastly, ... and slavish."[17] He portrayed Americans as ordinary, uncivilized, un-Christian, unclean, unchaste, effeminate, childish, foolish, less human (possibly

[15] David Carr and Colleen Conway write: "Belief in the triumph of the people that God chooses [in the Hebrew Bible] is an early form of what is often termed 'election theology'—that is, the idea that God has chosen a particular people to care for and defend. ... [In this tradition] God chooses not a place, nor a territorial nation, but a people, and protects them against seemingly impossible odds" (David M. Carr and Colleen M. Conway, *An Introduction to the Bible: Sacred Texts and Imperial Contexts* [Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010], 49-50). I cite the KJV to invoke the English version developed in this period.

[16] Ben Jonson, "The Queenes Masques: The First, of Blacknesse: Personated at the Court, at White-Hall, on the Twelv'th Night, 1605," in *The Characters of Two Royall Masques: The One of Blacknesse, the Other of Beautie: Personated by the Most Magnificent of Queenes, Anne, Queene of Great Britaine, &c., with her Honorable Ladyes, 1605 and 1608 at White-hall* (London: Thomas Thorp, to be sold at the signe of the Tigers head in Paules Church-yard, 1608 [STC 14761]), B3v, EEBO.

[17] James, *The Workes of the Most High and Mighty Prince, Iames, By the Grace of God King of Great Brittaine, France & Ireland Defendor of the Faith &c: Published by Iames, Bishop of Winton & Dean of His Majestie's Chappell Royall* (London: Robert Barker & Iohn Bill, Printers to the Kings most excellent Maiestie, 1616, 1620 with supplement [STC 14345]), 214, EEBO. James first published *A Counterblaste to Tobacco* anonymously in 1604 but included it as part of his *Workes* in 1616.

less-than-human), fit for slavery, lowest-of-the-low, and smelly garbage. James then defined English-ness as antipodal to characteristics of Americans. The English in this exceptionalist ideology are special, refined, Christian, clean, chaste, gentlemanly, wise, fully human, lordly, and supreme. Many of these English cultural stereotypes of civilized selves and barbarous others, when combined with color symbolism, came to define and justify white views of racial superiority. Ethnic others were, and in some instances still are, characterized, in the words of King James, as "stinking and unsauourie," "corrupted and execrable," "beastly," "wilde, godlesse, and slavish."[18]

From the time of its founding in 1607, the English settlement at Jamestown, Virginia, experienced rapid fluctuations in its fortunes. By the mid-1620s, the sustainability of the English "Adventure" in North America was far from certain. Conflict between English colonists and the indigenous peoples turned into full-blown war with the so-called Massacre of 1622 and constant threats from Spanish America compounded English inexperience in their New World, all of which had led to crippling famine in the fledgling colonies and financial loss at home in England. King James asserted royal control over the private Virginia Company in 1624, and the Rev. Samuel Purchas stepped into the role of imperial apologist for God, King, and Country.

At this crucial moment in the foundation of the English colonial project, Purchas used biblical interpretation to sacralize and legitimate English imperial ambitions in the expansion of English overseas commerce. Purchas was a well-connected Anglican cleric and writer who met and influenced King James, due to Purchas's strongly articulated promotion of British imperialization in the first several decades of English colonization in North America. During the earliest stages of English colonialism, Purchas used biblical typology to popularize the idea of biblical Israel as a type for the idealism and exceptionalism of the divinely-chosen, commercial, Christian Englishman.

Purchas's magnum opus, *Hakluytus Posthumus* or *Purchas His Pilgrimes*, published in 1625, only months before King James's death and one year before the author's own death, is a massive collection of third-party travel narratives, documenting the recent surge in European global maritime exploration, trade, and colonization.[19] The two extended essays by Purchas, "King Salomons Navie" and

[18] It is crucial to note how eerily similar white racial views of others persist in some U.S. contexts even today, directed at times toward Muslims, Latino/as, and/or African Americans.

[19] Samuel Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumus* or *Purchas His Pilgrimes*: *Contayning a History of the World in Sea Voyages and Lande Travells by Englishmen and Others*, 4 vols. (London: Henry Fetherston, 1625). Hereafter I will reference the original (1625) edition by the conventional short title *Pilgrimes* (not to be confused with either of two previous works: *Purchas His Pilgrimage* or *Purchas His Pilgrim*) and will use in-line citations by volume, book, and page (book one was printed last and is paginated separately).

"Virginias Verger," are some of the largest sections of Purchas's own writing within this larger work, and they represent Purchas's most developed thoughts. Purchas followed in the footsteps of the great English imperial propagandist and fellow Anglican cleric Richard Hakluyt; however, Purchas was the writer who popularized and sacralized the English imperial project at a *crucial* moment of national doubt, after the first uncertain and unsuccessful decades of England's first lasting colonial enterprise in Virginia.

Illustrating how English Protestantism helps form one basis for whiteness in British empire, Purchas's two other major editorial insertions in his larger work are anti-Spanish and anti-Roman Catholic discourses. Thus, Purchas promotes Protestant British interests by opposing Spanish imperialism, and Roman Catholicism in general, and by advocating for Protestant British imperialism in Virginia, all in the name of King James as the new King Solomon and the British as the *true* inheritors of Israel, doing God's will. Purchas incorporates within emergent British imperial ideology two elements that I wish to focus on: developing racial ideology as justification of empire and biblical interpretation as sanctification of empire. This potent combination, I argue, is how whiteness becomes scripturalized at the very foundation of the British colonial structure in North America.

Informed by CRT and postcolonial theory, I read Purchas's colonial tract entitled "Virginias Verger," especially in view of his contemporary treatise "King Salomons Navie," as a key participant in the scripturalization of whiteness. Purchas helps to shape the formation of white racial identity in Britain and its North American colonies, by objectifying and demonizing Native American peoples in the name of King James, Britain's Solomon, and England, God's Chosen People Israel. I utilize this early modern example of combining proto-racial ideology and biblical interpretation in order to identify, within English ideologies of empire, illustrations of cultural exceptionalism and racial essentialism. Using CRT's critical whiteness studies, I consider representations of whiteness by white Europeans (how whites see themselves), the role of whiteness in history and culture, and white privilege as manifested in racializing exploited, colonized peoples.[20]

Forming the basis for later US nationalization, Purchas, as English apologist for empire, portrays an assumed cultural superiority of Protestant Christianity and European civilization, especially as both were practiced by the English. He expresses

[20] Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, eds., *Critical White Studies: Looking Behind the Mirror* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997).

belief in English cultural exceptionalism as a manifestation of the English role as God's Chosen People. Purchas presents Protestant English culture as normative for all of humanity and argues that the advantageous strategic position of the English in North America is the result of God's Providence and thus is sanctification of English imperialism, based on the biblical precedent of Israel's conquest of Canaan. Purchas is a key participant in the scripturalization of English whiteness, interpreting the British as God's true Israel, commanded by God to subdue and possess the land and people of Canaan in North America (or Nova Albion, as they called it in the late-sixteenth century, "New White-land"!).[21]

Purchas sought to encourage King James and motivate his fellow Englishmen using twin arguments of spiritual imperative and material gain. According to Purchas, England is under a spiritual imperative as inheritor of God's covenants with Adam, Noah, and Abraham. God has commanded people in Genesis to "replenish the earth" and to have dominion over earth and living things. Christians specifically are to enter and possess the spiritual realms, "as the Israelites entred upon the houses, Cities and possessions of the cursed Canaanites" (*Pilgrimes*, IV.ix.1809). But, Purchas avers, it is not "lawfull for Christians to usurpe the goods and lands of Heathens," for "it was [only] by speciall indulgence that Israel both spoiled the Egyptians and disherited the Canaanites" (1810). Invoking the often-cited European right of settlement in uninhabited or unused places, Purchas argues that the English right to settle in North America is given biblical precedent by the "holy Patriarks," Abraham and Jacob, who moved to "parts of the world [that] were not yet replenished." Moreover, Purchas adds that for the English, like David, conquest of indigenous people is justified by the recent armed conflict, "vindicating unnaturall, inhumane wrongs to a loving and profitable Nation, entertained voluntarily, in time of greatest pretended amity." Purchas uses 2 Samuel 10 to support this claim: "On this quarrell David conquered all the Kingdome of the Ammonites," even though Moses had prohibited its invasion (Deut 2:19). Referring to Hebrews 11, Purchas asserts that just as "the Holy Patriarks had promise of Canaan," so "Virginia [is] by so many rights naturalized English, ... [since] disloyall treason hath now confiscated whatsoever remainders of right the unnaturall Naturalls had, and made both them and their Countrey wholly English" (1813). Thus, the English appropriate God's

[21] *Albus* is "white" in Latin, and Albion, an ancient Latin name for Britain, invokes whiteness in reference to the land, ostensibly the white, chalky cliffs near Dover on the English Channel.

"speciall indulgence" to Israel to disinherit the Canaanites: "Canaan, Abrahams promise, Israels inheritance, type of heaven, and joy of the earth ... [is] like ... to this of Virginia" (1814).[22]

English imperialization, for Purchas, is fulfillment of God's providential will. He writes, "Although I am no Secretary of Gods Counsell for the Indies, yet event hath revealed thus much of his will, that no other Christian Nation hath yet gotten and maintained possession in those parts [Virginia and Bermuda], but the English: to whom therefore wee may gather their decreed serviceablenesse" (1824). More even than God's revealed will, North America is God's direct gift to England: "the hand of God, which have given England so many rights in Virginia," ultimately due to "forfeiture [of Native rights, in the English view] in that late damnable trechery and massacre, and the fatal possession taken by so many murthered English. Gods bounty before, his justice now hath given us Virginia." Purchas concludes his argument by comparing God's guidance of Israel to Canaan with God's guidance of English reason and arguments in colonizing North America, invoking "God the Father, Sonne and holy Ghost, which goe before us in these things, if not in miraculous fire and cloudy pillars, (as when Israel went to Canaan) yet in the light of reason, and right consequence of arguments" (1826).

Just as Purchas depicts the English as God's Chosen People commanded by God to inherit and possess North America, Purchas uses biblical "othering" to strengthen imperialist claims, representing North America as Canaan and indigenous Americans as cursed biblical peoples. In addition to the comparisons of Americans to Canaanites and Ammonites, which I already mentioned, Purchas suggests that the innocent English settlers have "perhaps better right then the first [inhabitants of Virginia], which (being like Cain, both Murtherers and Vagabonds...) I can scarsly call Inhabitants" (1811).

The central factor in the scripturalization process as demonstrated by Purchas is the assumption of the racial superiority of the English and the dehumanization of non-Europeans. Englishness, seen in the Faustian mirror as the cultural apex of religion and civilization, was poised to transform North America into a highly racially stratified society, based on the alleged superiority and normativity of white Englishness. White Englishness defined itself by cultural and racial othering,

[22] As stated by Perry Miller, "Virginia ... was the first and, still in 1625, the principal English colony" (*Errand into the Wilderness* [Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1956], 115); thus, I think "Virginia" in this context should be understood as colonial British America in general.

starting with the abjection of its closest neighbors, the Scots and the Irish, as a way to prove itself worthy of inclusion in high Continental European culture.

This cultural, racial/ethnic othering was an essential component of English biblical interpretation of themselves as God's Chosen People. Even though Purchas begins his tract by claiming with Acts 17:27 that God "hath made of one bloud all Nations of Men," he ultimately denies the true humanity of the indigenous peoples, disparaging native Virginians by calling them "wilde and Savage ... Barbarians, Borderers, and Out-lawes of Humanity" (1811). Further negating Native American humanity using pretense to white male honor, Purchas accuses "Indians in Virginia" of what in reality are white English crimes, but which, projected onto the racialized other with claims of self-innocence, soon become common racial stereotypes: sexual violence, inhumane brutality, and association with the Devil. Purchas writes: "Virginia was violently ravished by her owne ruder Natives, yea her Virgin cheekes dyed with the bloud of three Colonies (...this last butchery intended to all, extended to so many hundreths, with so immaine,[23] inhumane, devillish treachery)" (1813). The brutality and treachery of the English passes unmentioned. Purchas continues in this vein by claiming that Americans, contrasted with "so good a Countrey," are "so bad people, having little of Humanitie but shape, ignorant of Civilitie, of Arts, of Religion; more brutish then the beasts they hunt, more wild and unmanly then that unmanned wild Country which they range rather then inhabite; captivated also to Satans tyranny in foolish pieties, mad impieties, wicked idlenesse, busie and bloudy wickednesse" (1814).

Purchas determines that the English have a commission from God to educate and convert, what would later be called the "white man's burden." He writes, "hence have wee fit objects of zeale and pitie, to deliver from the power of darknesse, that where it was said, Yee are not my people [Hosea 2], they may bee called the children of the living God" (1814). Ironically where Hosea's prophecy was self-imprecating of his fellow Israelites, Purchas is pointing out the speck in his racialized brother's eye. Likewise, he writes that "Humanity and our common Nature forbids to turne our eyes from our owne flesh; ... love our neighbors as our selves, and to play the good Samaritan with these our neighbors (though of another Nation and Religion...) to recover them ... from the power of Sathan to God; so by humanity and civility from Barbarisme and Savagenesse to good manners and humaine polity" (1816).

[23] "Inhumanly cruel or savage; brutal," OED, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/91795.

Such conciliatory language is surprising considering that Purchas has just expressed hope for Native American slavery or genocide, awaiting the time when Virginia would "cover, reward, inrich us with a totall subjection at lest, if not a fatall revenge. And thus much of our right which God hath given us: whose Virginian tribute is his glory" (1813). Indeed for Purchas, "God almighty, [is] the great Founder of Colonies," and provides the resources of foreign land and people for English imperialists. Purchas writes, "God goeth before us, and hath given Virginia so rich a portion, to allure and assure our loves; ... in endowing Virginia with ... the bodies of Natives servile and serviceable..." (1826). America's land and people, in the white English view, were created by God to allure and service the English.

When the prospect of "serviceable Natives" proved ultimately untenable due to their susceptibility to European diseases and their greater knowledge of local topography used to conceal escape, the English did not hesitate to follow another Spanish example, utilizing enslaved Africans. In discussing the advantages of English ports in North America, Purchas mentions, in passing and with no scruples, that in 1564 and 1567, "Sir John Hawkins having made ... profitable Voyage[s] by sale of Negroes on the coast Townes of America," could have benefitted from a friendly English port to rest and re-provision (1825). In his conclusion, Purchas hopes his reader will consider what to "the willingnesse of a heart truely English, sincerely Christian, may seeme tolerable, if not commendable" (1826). I submit that it is hard not to consider such arguments in light of emerging notions of whiteness and white racism.

For example, Purchas did not separate biblical history from present reality. Consider this almost identical, yet direct, reference to racialized labor by one of Purchas's contemporaries and business associates in the Virginia Company: indigenous Americans should be "compelled to servitude and drudgery, and supply the roome of men that labour, whereby even the meanest [Englishmen] of the Plantation may imploy themselves more entirely in their Arts and Occupations, which are more generous, whilest Savages performe their inferior workes of digging in mynes and the like, of whom also some may be sent for the service of the Sommer Ilands [Bermuda]."[24] This type of reasoning involves the conflation of "Israel" with English and the conflation of non-Israelites with non-English peoples. Considering that

[24] Edward Waterhouse, "A Declaration of the State of the Colony ..." [1622], in *Records of the Virginia Company of London*, ed. Susan Myra Kingsbury, 4 vols. (Washington, DC: 1906-35), 3:558-9; quoted in Theodore W. Allen, *The Invention of the White Race: Volume Two: The Origin of Racial Oppression in Anglo-America*, rev. ed. (1997; New York: Verso, 2012), 30.

Africans and indigenous Americans were conscripted and enslaved for hard labor, as the English and other Europeans served as "officers and men of command," the Bible was thus used to rationalize and justify English exceptionalism and supremacy.

Increasing white English power, founded on violence, was the foundation of the growing British Empire. After 1622, indigenous people were completely excluded from all English settlements, and even religious leaders like Purchas who were hoping for large-scale conversion of Americans called for the use of force. In *Pilgrimes*, Purchas compares his present "Northerne America" with "our Britaine in Caesars time, either for the numbers or civilitie." In a marginal note to one of the documents he edited on Virginia, it says, using a frequently racialized reference to Jer 13:23, "*Ad Graecas Calendas* [never]. *Can a Leopard change his spots? Can a Savage remayning a Savage be civill? Were not wee our selves made and not borne civill in our Progenitors dayes? and were not Caesars Britaines as brutish as Virginians? The Romane swords were best teachers of civilitie to this & other Countries neere us*."[25] Purchas articulates this military aspect most directly in his overall conclusion, attributing any English violence to the necessity of keeping the peace in the midst of racialized conflict: "His Majestie is also pleased to send a Running Armie of Souldiers to scoure the Countrey of the unneighbourly malicious Naturalls; and to secure the planters from their privie ambushments. For openly they dare not attempt, but lurking in secret places attend advantages. I feare not but so bright a Sunshine will quickly produce blessed effects" (1972). This "Sunshine" is King James.

Undergirding all of Purchas's work is his perspective, articulated in the conclusion to his larger work that "All Nations dance ... to doe the English service ... to perfect the English" (1970). And above all, "in this English Centre ... the Centre of that Centre ... [is] King James." As the pinnacle of his interpretation of the British as the true Israel, Purchas interprets King James as the true Solomon. Purchas claims that King James is "like a Salomon indeed by voluminous Writings...; ... that, in his Royall body hath had the honour not to be polluted with women; above men, above Salomon" (1972)! In his final conclusion, Purchas hopes that the "two Colonies of Virginia and New England (with all their Neighbors) God make as Rachel and Leah, which two did build the house of Israel, that they may multiply into thousands, and there inlarge the Israel of God" (1973). Thus does Purchas participate in the

[25] Purchas, *Pilgrimes*, IV.ix.1755, marginal note. The Latin phrase, often written "Ad Calendas Graecas," literally translates as "until the Greek Calends," but since the calends were part of the Roman calendar, not the Greek, it essentially means, "never." The quotation from Jer 13:23 about a leopard's spots is often used in conjunction with another phrase in this verse ("Can Ethiopians [Cushites, Heb.] change their skin?"). This verse is frequently cited to claim the essential nature of race.

scripturalization of whiteness by biblically sanctifying white, male English domination and imperialization in North America.

Exceptionalism was so powerful that it saturated wider English culture, encompassing far more than imperialist objectives. As I discuss in more detail in my larger project, such a concept of English exceptionalism sanctified by biblical exceptionalism was a primary assumption underlying racialization by the English, and it was a central component of the construct that, when overlaid with color symbolism, comes to be named as whiteness in the next generation. Israel, God's chosen people, are for James, Purchas, and their contemporaries, British, Protestant Christians, a chosen people who came to be increasingly defined as white. The scripturalization of whiteness at the dawn of the British Empire continued to gather strength throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Eventually, colonial British America focused its rays on illuminating U.S. nationalism, another product of hegemonic whiteness. Today, as much as ever, the scripturalization of whiteness needs to be deconstructed, to free us all from its bondage.

ESTAMPA

Estampas of the Nation/State: Estampas are a genre of Latin American literary writing characterized by evocative prose that centers on a particular character and location imagined to be typical of a place and time. Often depicting saints, religious figures, or "typical" national characters, the term derives from mass-produced print images that have circulated in Latin America since the mid-19th century. Like the best photographs and figurative paintings, literary estampas show care of composition and high levels of detail that evoke deeper truths, and suggest intimate and surprising connections to the quotidian aspects of life. At the ISS meeting the estampa genre was used in one of our sessions to invite reflection on the complexities of the Nation/State and its influence over everyday forms of critique.

ROQUE SANTEIRO

By Jason Hiebert

When the small town of Asa Branca was held hostage by the bandit Navalhada and his crew, Luis Roque Duarte (a local *santeiro*, an artisan who makes images of saints for devotional use) was selected by the townspeople to deliver the ransom money. While everyone else hid behind locked doors, Roque delivered the payment. Imagine their joy when Navalhada and his outlaw band left town. That joy soon turned to disappointment when they found priceless relics from their small chapel missing, which was in turn followed by despair when they discovered a headless body on the bank of the river that they could only assume to be Roque's. Despite the terror of their experience, life went on for the residents of Asa Branca. They honored Roque's memory, and were glad to hear that Navalhada was captured and sentenced to prison.

Just as everything was almost back to normal, a young woman named Lulu returned from the river with an incredible story. She had seen Roque Santeiro in a vision. What was more, she had rubbed mud from the river on her leg at his command and was completely cured of a limp. Following the story of Roque Santeiro's miraculous intervention, the people of Asa Branca began to venerate him as not

simply a martyr, but as a saint. A small local shrine quickly became a magnet for tourists and pilgrims, all eager to receive Roque's blessing. Two other women rose to prominence based on their connection to Roque Santeiro and his memory: one was Mocinha, who had been engaged to him when he died. The other was Porcina, who claimed to have married him after a whirlwind affair while he was traveling earlier in life (although it was known among a select few that her story was a ruse to profit from Roque Santeiro's popularity).

The cult of Roque Santeiro grew, and Asa Branca with it. Seventeen years later, the small town was important enough that government officials were considering the construction of an airport to facilitate travel to the nearest major city, Rio de Janeiro. In addition to the money from tourism, the connotative (perhaps divine?) influence of Roque Santeiro had enabled one local landowner (Chico Malta) to become an internationally-known cattle baron.

What, then, are we to make of it when Roque suddenly returns in the flesh? His version of the events is outlandish, scandalous: He only paid Navalhada half the money and ran off with the other half. Furthermore, he was the one who stole from the church, and he used his ill-gotten goods to venture into the world and become independently wealthy. The body? An underling of Navalhada's that fell out of favor. Now Roque has returned to make amends and seek pardon.

Our town is founded on the story Roque's sacrifice. If that mythic history is disproven, we will become a laughingstock, a pariah. Our religion will be null. Our tourist industry will wither - and with it, all other industries. Our airport will be built elsewhere. We have, as a community, an interest in preserving the mythic Roque Santeiro against Roque incarnate.

Many among us also have a personal stake in this struggle. Mocinha, for seventeen years a virgin bride in waiting, soon finds herself disappointed when she compares Roque to her disappeared fiancée. On the other hand, Porcina takes Roque for a lover even as she wrestles with the reality of what his presence in town will do to her, socially and financially. For some, like Chico Malta, it is easy to decide in favor of Roque Santeiro over against Roque - business and his personal interest in Porcina coincide. Others, like *padre* Hipólito, find it more difficult to balance a personal call for integrity against the need to care for the welfare of the community. And of course, Roque himself obstinately insists that he has returned to Asa Branca to stay, come hell or high water.

So what do we do, now that our myth is unmade? Do we choose the practical or the idealistic? The historical or the historic? Is there another story that we can tell, one that involves the human Roque, and not the saint Roque Santeiro? Is there a way to save our religion, our industry, our town, our selves?

CUATRO ESTAMPAS

By Eric Hoenes

Our common text at the ISS meeting this year was Hector Amaya's *Citizenship Excess*, which offers a powerful critique of how the idea of citizenship shapes the social and political lives of Latin@s. Moreover, in preparing for the meeting Vincent Wimbush asked us to think about how our gathering site might add to, inspire, or challenge our thinking about the Nation/State. It occurred to me that the best way I could contribute was to exploit the conjunction of my ethnic identity and place of residence. To this end I have organized my contributions as a set of vignettes, or rather *estampas*, as we might call them in Latin American, of life in Charlotte, North Carolina.

First, though, a few words about the way I am using the term *estampa* here. The term literally refers to mass-produced print images. Estampas became important bits of visual and material culture in Latin America beginning in the mid-19th century. Inexpensive and hence easily attainable, they circulated (and continue to do so today) alongside other print materials (calendars, almanacs, magazines), as well as on their own. The term has a religious connotation in that images of saints and other religious figures (Popes, folk saints, etc.) have been popular subjects of estampas. They have also frequently depicted "typical" national characters, which leads us to two semantic extensions of the term I am also invoking here. First, the term has come to designate a literary genre that is characterized as a short piece of evocative writing centering on a social figure or location that is seen as representative of a particular place and time. Second, the term is used to describe staged performances of "traditional" folk (often indigenous) life, which might be, for example, performed for the benefit of tourists or at civic events.

In using the term here I am therefore calling to mind several meanings—religious, literary, and folkloric—and deliberately invoking the problematic character of these representations. I hope that readers will have already started imagining

the kinds of criticisms that these genres open themselves up to. However, it is my equal hope that readers will see that this genre offers some interesting possibilities for critique as well. In illuminating aspects of quotidian life through this sort of writing, might we not also find new ways of understanding the complexities of life in the Nation/State?

With this in mind I offer my *Estampas de Charlotte, Carolina del Norte*.

Primera Estampa: El Supermercado

I knew I was going to be okay living in Charlotte the first time my partner and I went to the supermarket. This was because not only did I find cans of a familiar Guatemalan brand of black beans there, but I also learned that I wouldn't have to compromise by eating them with Mexican cheese. In the dairy aisle at Compare Foods on North Tryon Avenue, I had my choice of *quesos frijoleros*—hard crumbly cheeses meant to be eaten with beans— that were helpfully labeled with the flags of different Central American countries: Honduras, El Salvador, and, of course, the good one— Guatemala! Had I been South American, the *ají* might have offered this relief; had I been West African, it might have been the palm oil. In any case, the ability to consume familiar, nationally-coded foodstuffs provided me (as it no doubt has for other newcomers to Charlotte) a modicum of comfort in what might otherwise seem a disorienting or hostile place. These goods can be found side by side, sharing supermarket display spaces as well as shopping centers long since abandoned by the city's Anglo-Americans.

Charlotte might well be in the American South, but there were material objects that could provide a gustatory link to my birthplace. Moreover, the fact that these cheeses were there meant that there were other Central Americans here as well. Would I recognize them? Would they recognize me? In any case, those foods had lent this new place a familiar taste.

Segunda Estampa: El Señor de los Milagros

On a Sunday in mid-October, La Hermandad del Señor del los Milagros holds its annual celebration of the Peruvian saint's day. The sights, smells, and sounds of the procession would be familiar to anyone who has witnessed a saint's day celebration in Latin America. Men dressed in dark suits and purple overcoats hoist a large bier holding the sacred image on their shoulders. Women wearing white

head cloths accompany them, carrying gold fringed banners, flowers, and swinging the silver censers that emit the pungent smell of incense. A brass band playing a lumbering funereal march sets the pace for the whole event. Onlookers crowd around hoping to receive the saint's blessing. Children are transfixed by the image, until they realize that there is ice cream and cotton candy to be had just over there.

The one thing that reminds you that you're in Charlotte, though, is that instead of processing through the entirety of the city as he might in Lima, El Señor de los Milagros makes a single circuit around the parking lot at Saint John Neumann Catholic Church. For those few sacred hours, though, while El Señor makes his journey, that piece of east Charlotte is transformed.

Tercera Estampa: Piolín por La Mañana

"¿A que venimos? ¡A triunfar!". Eddie "Piolín" Sotelo used this refrain to punctuate the dialogue that he, his guests, and imagined audience engaged in on the nationally syndicated radio program *El Show de Piolín por la Mañana*.[1]

Piolín por la Mañana was incredibly popular with working-class Latino (undocumented) immigrants. *Piolín* created a shared aspirational narrative for his audience in which honest, if arduous manual labor could lead to (modest) economic success, but only if one also sought out citizenship. This conservative narrative was communicated through a "*relajo*"— a sort of carnivalesque genre in which the normal rules of polite discourse were not just relaxed, but subverted. The show's cast expertly exploited uncertainties, infelicities, and ambiguities in meaning during their time on the air.

Callers were eager to feed into the *relajo*, too, and the show regularly featured prank calls in which Piolín and his cast would help audience members convince friends or family members of some outrageous (but also plausible) premise that would cause them distress. Quite often these pranks exploited transnational links between emigrants and those who remained "at home." One such call (performed on October 5, 2011), featured a man in his early twenties calling from California (where he lived and worked) to his girlfriend in Guanajuato, Mexico, with the pretext that a psychic advisor had told him that their relationship was in trouble. One of the show's cast members adopted the flamboyant vocal mannerism of Walter Mercado[2] to play a psychic and convince the woman of this bad news. The psychic

[1] At one time the most listened to radio program in the U.S.A., the show went off the air in 2013 following a legal scandal.

[2] The famous Puerto Rican astrologer.

instructed the woman to perform a series of ridiculous actions so that he could read her fortune over the phone, including having her blow into the receiver as a way of imbuing a set of chicks with divining power (chirping sound effects played in the background to enhance the affect). He managed to convince the woman that her relationship could not survive across this distance from Guanajuato to California, and the woman was in tears before Piolín broke in to reveal it was all a prank arranged by her boyfriend. But the woman was inconsolable and continued to insist that her relationship was doomed. "*Los pollitos dijeron que íbamos a tener problemas*," she sobbed ("The chicks said we would have problems"). Eventually she was consoled by the boyfriend who re-affirmed his love for her, and promised that he would soon have enough money to help her come North.

As a final touch the boyfriend added, "*Mi amor, Piolín me recetó su coyote*." ("My love, Piolín recommended his coyote to me.")

To which a Piolín quickly retorted: "¡*No, compá! ¡Eso afuera del aire, tengo mi invitación para la Casa Blanca y me vas a dejar mal!*" ("No, man! Do that off air, I have an invitation to the White House and you're going to make me look bad!")

In the end, feelings were mended and everyone (including the woman) shared a laugh, but it was a laugh predicated on tragedy—on two lovers kept apart by national borders, two people whose lives were no doubt marked by a great deal of uncertainty and insecurity—of their future prospects, each other's fidelity, of his ability to work and earn in order to arrange for her unsafe passage into the U.S., of his legal status that might force a reunion in Guanajuato. Even Piolín's status as successful media figure with budding connections to national politics ended up imperiled.

Cuarta Estampa: Garinger High School

There are two things you should know about the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District (CMS). First, that thirty years ago these schools were held up as models for both racial integration and student achievement. They are no longer held up as either. The end of busing, the creation of whiter enclaves, and the state's systematic disinvestment in public education have meant that today the schools, and especially those that serve largely non-white, non-middle-class students, are in bad shape.

The second thing you should know is that the 30,000 students that CMS serves were born in 157 different countries and speak 169 different languages at home.

Those are extraordinary figures. And we should wonder what life is like for those kids. No doubt they are being socialized to be a particular kind of Anglophone national citizen. To be sure, many of them are uncertain about their own, and their loved-ones' legal status in a country and state which can seem openly hostile towards those deemed somehow "other," be it in terms of race, class, nationality, immigration status, gender and/or sexuality. On the other hand, it seems quite likely that these young people are finding new ways of interacting with each other that fall outside of or run around those narratives.

A girl born in Nepal tells me that she is learning some Spanish from the Salvadoran boy who sits next to her in English class. I like the image of these two teenagers exchanging one language, while they are supposed to be submitting to another. What are they saying to each other? What does this exchange mean for them? How long before the teacher notices? What will she make of it? Will they be in trouble? Does any of this matter if the school can't keep the lights on and the doors open? What would this Nepalese girl and Salvadoran boy (and their classmates) think of our discussion here today anyway?

BOOK REVIEWS

King, Joshua. *Imagined Spiritual Communities in Britain's Age of Print;* pp. 368. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2015.

King (Associate Professor of English, Baylor University) writes here about efforts during the nineteenth century "to turn the circulating printed page into a medium for imagining and participating in competing versions of a British Christian community" (2). As indicated by the title, King take a cue from Benedict Anderson regarding the development of national consciousness through the mediations of nineteenth-century print. King argues emphatically and persuasively, however, against Anderson's assumptions about the necessarily secularizing force of this phenomenon, arguing instead that "this print-mediated form of national imagination was powerfully shaped by competing efforts to imagine the nation as a Christian community and the place of one's own religious group within that collective" (289). King argues not just that the print-culture imagining of British nationalism and Christianity went together, but that they went together differently in the divergent imaginings of various writers. "[A] range of nineteenth-century creative authors, clergy, educators, and journalists made commentary on reading, reflective attention to the act of reading, and attempts to model reading practices central to imagining membership in conflicting versions of a Christian British community" (6). The range of authors and genres confronted here is mostly limited to the producers and products of elite British literary culture: King's chapters are organized around figures such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Matthew Arnold, and Christina Rossetti, and the second half of the book is dedicated specifically to a genre of long poetic cycles. The density and complexity of the close readings here will make this book most interesting to literary scholars already familiar with and invested in this literary culture. The argument toward which King brings them together, however, merits the attention of anyone interested in the relationship among Christianity, nationalism, secularism, and the Anglophone print public sphere in the nineteenth century.

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Mueller, Maxwell Perry. *Race and the Making of the Mormon People*; 352 pp. Chapel Hill: University of North Caroline Press, 2017.

Maxwell Mueller's book is an account of a leaders and members grappling with the human implications of a racialized theology rooted in church founder and prophet Joseph Smith's *Book of Mormon [BoM]*. Understandings of—and policies based on—race continued to be influenced by the racial, political and theological perspectives of nineteenth and twentieth century church leaders. The book analyzes white Mormon interactions with the small handful of black members who joined the church in its earliest days, and with "Lamanites"—Native Americans, portrayed in the *BoM* as descendants of a branch of white Israelites who, as a result of "sin," are "cursed" with a "skin of blackness" that renders them, and any who "mixeth with their seed" as "loathsome." For early Mormons, this curse explained the skin color and perceived degeneracy of the Native American population. The *BoM* promises that these cursed Lamanites could again become a "white and delightsome" people provided they lived in accordance with Mormon notions of righteousness. In 1981 the *BoM* text was changed to "pure" and delightsome, which Mueller unconvincingly argues is what Smith really meant to begin with.

Mueller attempts to dodge the profound implications of this deeply racist theology by claiming that the *BoM*'s depiction of race was not really about race at all. Rather he argues that "whiteness signifies humanity in a state of accord with both the commandments of God and the cultural norms of man. As such whiteness is a racial category that is, ironically, empty of race," (42)! A more critical reading might find that such a policy was all about race and the writing and reading of scripture to support such a view. The book then chronicles the marginalizing interactions of Mormons and Native Americans informed by this color-coded notion of human value, both before and after the church's exodus to Utah. In this focus on pigment-rich peoples, Mueller never straightforwardly addresses "the Making of the Mormon People" other than to highlight what did not make a Mormon. The implication is an unarticulated apology for an almost exclusively white church, moreover, a church that operated as an implicitly white supremacist organization from its inception to the removal of the ban on black male members holding the priesthood in 1978.

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Tomlinson, Matt. *Ritual Textuality: Pattern and Motion in Performance*; 186 pp. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Matt Tomlinson's ethnography of Fijian ritual performances offers much of interest to the student of scriptures. Using the metaphor of motion, but "perhaps in a counter-intuitive way," Tomlinson tracks how distinct patterns emerge in the performance of rituals, patterns that constitute texts. Tomlinson uses Bakhtin's definition of text as "any coherent complex of signs" (3). These patterns are not static but active. In these ways *Ritual Textuality* works against the notion of ritual as separate from quotidian social life, and the text as static or book-centered. Rather, Fijian social life moves in performative paths discernable in the enactment of patterned sequences (text) that generate ritual efficacy (38).

Tomlinson traces four patterns in particular, but takes care in both the introduction and especially in the conclusion to make sure the reader is not misled into thinking of these as closed systems. These four patterns (sequence, conjunction, contrast and substitution) emerge in eclectic sites in Fiji.

For the first sequence, Tomlinson examines how a Pentecostal preacher at a revival led listeners along a path by using a sequential system of declaration-promise-action. So different from Fijian Methodist sermons, which enjoy "an aura of 'traditionality,'" Tomlinson notes that the Pentecostal performance mirrors traditional Fijian oratory much more than Methodist sermons do (45).

Next, Tomlinson uses a hallmark of indigenous Fijian tradition, drinking kava, to explore the pattern of conjunction. Ritual kava drinking, like Christian communion, exhibits a pattern of chiasmus. Both rituals are "figuratively X-shaped," and "in both, people who consume a sacred substance incorporate its associated social order into themselves while incorporating themselves into this social order." (50)

The pattern of contrast emerges in a discussion of how nineteenth century Methodist missionaries wrote about deathbed conversions of Fijians to narrate a message of a happy (i.e., Christian) death. In doing so, a pattern of fractal recursivity occurs, which calibrates usually opposite pairs, like public and private, or life and death. Because these pairs are co-constitutive, they open up particularly powerful possibilities with "forceful consequences" (73). By writing about Fijian "happy deaths," Methodist missionaries created reading publics that could enjoy such stories as a sign of their success in far-off Fiji. But by dismissing traditional Fijian spirits and demons, these missionaries unwittingly opened up "a new private

demonic realm" that twenty-first century Fijians now work out in whispers about near-death encounters with spirits and "dreams of malicious killers" (91).

Tomlinson's fourth and final pattern of substitution appears in Fiji's 2006 coup leader and self-appointed prime minister Voreqe Bainimarama's varied uses of monologue. Bainimarama speaks monologically in the sense that he uses techniques that seem to offer a "unified will, which, because already unified, cannot receive a meaningful response" (93). Using four interlocking strategies of redefinition, exclusion, legal and physical intimidation, Bainimarama manages to generate a textually coherent and monological statement about "we the people," which substitutes for and erases all other statements.

Tomlinson's concluding chapter retains the same four strategies with which he began, but in ending he explores different modes by which they are performed. Though one might wish for more explicit statements about the power differentials and hierarchies emplaced by these modes of ritual textuality, the book successfully and elegantly makes the case that texts are performative paths. Tomlinson shows why "it matters when people articulate semiotic and textual patterns" (125). *Ritual Textuality* might even be read as a case study of scriptures, scripturalizing, and scripturalization. Its close reading of patterns exposes how ritual textuality can achieve a sense of "powerful inevitability" … that seems "to move, drawing people, words, and things together in a full and faithful completion" (126).

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Watts, James W., ed. *Iconic Books and Texts*; 446pp. Sheffield: Equinox Publishing, 2015.

This edited volume contains published reflections from the Iconic Books Symposia convened by James W. Watts and Dorina Miller Parmenter. The volume and symposia reflect a three-year, multi-disciplinary conversation pertaining to "the iconic" facility of books within the on-going processes of cultural formation. While also noting the "semantic" and "performative" dimensions of the book (Watts 2015, 15-16), the essays demonstrate other facets for the student of scriptures to consider— including the role of the image, printing and writing techniques, the

economics of replication, meta-prescriptions of the book, the policing of construction and destruction, and the power of customization and possession.

Given the ethnological makeup of the anthology, some readers will bristle at the application of "iconic" in such expansive terms. I join Watts in agreeing with Vincent L. Wimbush's view that the adjective's importance is in its provocation of questions, not its definition of answers (2). Members of ISS will enjoy the opportunity to test comparisons across a wide range of contexts.

Those in our circle will benefit from pairing these essays with those in Wimbush's edited volume, *Refractions of the Scriptural: Critical Orientation as Transgression* (New York: Routledge, 2016), as a way to consider the politics surrounding those books that manage to appear iconic. Here ISS might investigate the individuals, institutions, and communities that imbue social visions through books as well as the significations that enable books to overshadow those relating through them. In this way, *Iconic Books and Texts* is a most welcome contribution to our ongoing studies.

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