

**EXPLORING SEXUAL FEELINGS THROUGH ROMAN CATHOLIC IMAGES:
THE LUST JUDGMENT OF GENTILE RELIGION**

By

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To the Faculty of Washington State University:

The members of the Committee appointed to examine the thesis of
SILVIA MARIA FRANCESCA STEIN find it satisfactory and recommend that it be
accepted.

Chair

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EXPLORING SEXUAL FEELINGS THROUGH RELIGIOUS IMAGES:

THE LUST JUDGMENT OF GENTILE RELIGION

Abstract

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Religious discourse and imagery may proscribe transformative power centers away from Church proscriptions against sex. *By clearly demonstrating that religious images can be found erotic (May, 1982, Tyrrell, 1989) this study is a preliminary examination towards an ethic based on the Diasporic voices of Roman Catholic women in eastern Washington about sexual feelings. Diasporic groups are the same stereotypes not imaged on the artist's traditional rendition of a white male crucifix.*

Both male and female religious have been documented reporting sexual feelings towards the crucifix during prayer (May, 1982, Tyrrell, 1989). With the current media frenzy on male priests and sex (Barry, 2002), as a group, male priests are difficult to recruit and study for sexual feelings. This study of Roman Catholic women in a weekly eastern Washington bible group substitutes for an explanation of the sexual feelings experienced by priests, as reported by May and Tyrrell (May, 1982, and Tyrrell, 1989), and functions as a preliminary study of parishioner worship of the priestly figure.

This study has been informed by symbolic constructionism (Denzin, 1992, Blair and Michel, 1999), critical studies on the mechanisms of art as media reproducing systems of gender and racial oppression through eroticisation of the white male image (Martin,

Krizek, Nakayama & Bradford, 1999, Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000), the crucifix as the symbol maintaining division between Muslims and Christians (Henneberger, 2001), and by the admitted feelings of sexual arousal among religious Roman Catholic men and women during worship of the crucifix (May, 1982, Tyrrell, 1989). The discussion then explores the manifestation of the erotic in a phallus shaped design in front of an eastern Washington Roman Catholic university. Lastly, to address the architect's design and artist's depiction of the crucifix as possibly defamatory regarding the popularly accepted historical memory of Jesus, Washington state criminal code 9.58.010 prohibiting defamation of the deceased historical figure in public memory is discussed as providing possible legal recourse for Roman Catholic priests and others who claim the historical memory of Jesus. A proposal to pursue damages resulting from defamation of the historical Jesus by artists and designers could provide financial security for religious communities, particularly priests, seeing them through current and future media and legal focus on Roman Catholic sex abuse cases (Goodstein and Stanley, 2002, Liptak, 2002).

Dedication

This is dedicated to **Sandra Beckenbach**, my friend for many years in Germany who never labeled me disabled or foreigner, and loved me for being fully human; **Gigliola Maria Addini-Stein**, my mother who never questioned my male-like femininity, and loved me for being fully human; to **Eileen Thomas**, the president for the Eastern Washington National Association of American Colored Persons who, while I was in jail, never asked me what color I am nor why I could not afford a private attorney, and recognized me as fully human; and to Ornella Orlandi who recognized her 11 year old Muslim student as fully human, and removed the crucifix from her Italian classroom.

Ornella, Eileen, Gigliola, and Sandra helped me to speak out angrily and imposingly in demanding Justice for those in jail, any jail, whether it be academic, punitive, historical, cultural, or religious in demanding Justice against those who labeled you and me “disabled”, “elderly”, “rebel”, “liberal”, “heretic”, “deviant”, “student”, “racist”, “harasser”, “colored”, “tanny”, “criminal”, “insane”, “lazy”, “nigger”, “sexist”, “coon”, “foreigner”, “dumb”, “queer”, “white trash”, “thief”, etc... until they too, the teacher, the judge, the doctor, the attorney, the politician, the administrator, and the priest not merely admit they are fully human but begin disassembling our inherited (mis)labeling practices which make these positions possible, to compensate those, like me, they have (mis)labeled and thus denied to be fully human.

Lastly, this work is dedicated to the memory of **Jesuit priests and their associates**, and in particular **Edith Stein**, steadfast and true "to develop sources of strength that will make possible the emergence of something that wasn't there before [...].

Counterremembering" (McWhorther, 1999, p. 209).

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THE CRISIS FOR AMERICA AND ROMAN CATHOLICS: SEX SECRETS

Religious discourse and imagery may proscribe transformative power centers for Roman Catholics, away from Church proscriptions against sex. *This study is a preliminary examination towards an ethic based on the silent voices in a Jesuit eastern Washington institution marginalized about, not values, but real sexual feelings, by clearly demonstrating that religious images can be found erotic (May, 1982, Tyrrell, 1989).*

Both male and female religious have reported having sexual feelings towards the crucifix during prayer (May, 1982, Tyrrell, 1989). With the current media frenzy on priests and sex scandals escalates (Barry, 2002) male priests are difficult to recruit and study for sexual feelings. Instead this study of a phallus shaped traffic island at a Roman Catholic university in eastern Washington is used explore the manifestation of the sexual feelings of priests as reported by May and Tyrrell (May, 1982, and Tyrrell, 1989).

The investment in Roman Catholic operated schools, universities, parishes, community and hospital services seems at risk as reported incidents of sexual abuse and harassment are on the rise (Goodstein and Stanley, 2002).

This crisis is such that the church is seriously “at risk of losing some of the legal protections that have shielded it from criminal prosecution in the United States, and its moral authority on issues like social justice and family values” (Goodstein and Stanley, 2002). The Vatican itself is even being sued. As attorney Jeffrey R. Anderson explained in representing his clients, victims of sexual abuse, against the Vatican: “Parishes are corporate subdivisions of the dioceses, which become the subdivision corporations of the Vatican” (Liptak, 2002). Under international law, the Vatican is a state: “It has defined

territory and population, a government and relations with other states” (Liptak, 2002).

The Vatican is the only religion with a status of sovereign state.

Perhaps a way to initiate the discussion about sexual abuse is to explore sexual feelings. I do not suggest that sexual abuse is synonymous to sexual feelings. I do suggest that based on case studies of Roman Catholic religious and their confirmation of having sexual feelings (May, 1982, Tyrrell, 1989) it is an opportune time to investigate what relationship there may be between sexual feelings and religious images which are part of the prayer ritual for the Roman Catholic religious (May, 1982, Tyrrell, 1989). **I suspect that the prayer alone does not direct one’s sexual feelings towards particular persons, and that visual re-enforcement, through the use of religious images, assists in directing sexual feelings towards personifications of the image prayed to (Bennett, 2001).**

The phenomena of sexual feelings and Roman Catholic divination of the crucifix has been a topic for theology since 1100 C.E. with the institutionalization of priestly celibacy (Boswell, 1981). As Roman Catholic Jesuit theologian B.J. Tyrrell discussed in *Christointegration* “it is often the case that sexual feelings that occur in prayer are ways of expressing longing for union with the divine, rather than simply substitutes for actual sexual experience with another human being” (Tyrrell, 1989, p.117).

The issue of sexual feelings for the religious is typically concerned with the men, the scandal of the priest’s need for intimacy, but not women’s issues and their sexual feelings.

Rather than to scandalize sex, it may be time to acknowledge the role sex, and the erotic, play across cultures and through religion. (McWhorter, 1999, Boswell, 1981).

In John Boswell's *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality* (Boswell, 1981) the argument was posed that intolerance of eroticism in sexuality was not a feature of Christian doctrine until the 11th century C.E. preceded by the 8th century C.E. institutionalization of the crucifix (Boswell, 1981).

I explore, here, the crucifix as erotic in an empirical research study that involved a focus group discussion with other women.

The crucifix is often interpreted without reference to Old Testament references to the poetry of love, such as Song of Solomon (Boswell, 1981). As will be discussed later, it is disturbing that a de-contextualized image of a bare breasted man, bolted and hanging dead, or nearly dead, and bloody and tortured on a cross, can signify the erotic to some Roman Catholics (May, 1982, Tyrrell, 1989). Yet, this notion of the erotic may be revealing of the symbols surrounding even a religious minister charged with pedophilia who is identified as being priestly (Goodstein and Stanley, 2002).

Priestliness (McWhorter, 1999), as associated with the oppressive power of a few even becomes associated with politics of whiteness (Martin, Krizek, Nakayama & Bradford, 1999) when secrecy compounds the Roman Catholic crisis of sexual misconduct in the priesthood.

What some Roman Catholics, Church leaders as well as their followers, find erotic (May, 1982, Tyrrell, 1989) needs to be discussed and understood. The hope is that through discussion about the sexual feelings (May, 1982, Tyrrell, 1989), as a counter-memory to the lies and myths we've inherited from Roman Catholicism (McWhorter, 1999, Boswell, 1981) sexual intimacy can be expressed without the manifestation of sexual abuse, such as the cases of pedophilia finally brought to the public arena.

SYMBOLIC CONSTRUCTIONISM

It is odd that Roman Catholic the crucifix, an act of violence, has been found to be associated with generating sexual feelings (May, 1982, Tyrrell, 1989). Film, such as a video of Rodney King clubbed by police in Los Angeles, CA, evokes immediate emotional reactions for viewers, but sculptures and architectural images, suspended in time, are less effective for viewers to perceive the violence depicted (Arnheim, 1996). Roman Catholic theology narratively communicates the violence done upon the historical Jesus, but the fixed imagery used does not seem to effectively offend or shock in the age of mass media. Instead, the crucifix, fixed in a moment of time, become eroticized, (May, 1982, Tyrrell, 1989) perhaps confusing and eroticising violence for sexual feelings (Lester, 1995, May, 1982, Tyrrell, 1989). Both male and female religious have reported having sexual feelings towards the crucifix during prayer (May, 1982, Tyrrell, 1989). This study on the mechanisms of art as media, reproducing systems of oppression (Kincheloe and McLaren, 2000) through eroticisation of the white male image, analogously attempts to explore the admitted feelings of homoerotic arousal among Roman Catholic priests towards the image of Jesus (May, 1982, Tyrrell, 1989) by substituting a study of women in an Eastern Washington bible group and their erotic feelings for that of male priests and their homoerotic feelings. Admittedly the analogy between women's sexual feelings towards a male image may not have the same intensity as those of male priests who ritually identify themselves as married to Jesus (Tyrrell, 1989). Currently, though, under the media coverage of sex scandals

involving priests, male priests are not easy to recruit as human subjects for study of homoerotic arousal.

This study offers a critical analysis of the crucifix using symbolic constructionism (Denzin, 1992, Blair and Michel, 1999). Symbolic constructionists locate public knowledge within distinct forms of discourse. Symbols and images (Berger, 1973) are studied as a choreographed meaning generated through the human capacity to project and elicit meaning (Blair and Michel, 1999). Through analysis of language and religion (Barker & Galasinski, 2001) the symbol or image such as the cross or crucifix, key in furthering the original meaning of the symbol or image across time, place, religion and culture (Berger, 1973), steps towards an intervention could be taken to alter the meaning by altering or removing this symbol (Arnheim, 1996). As an example of the crucifix as the key symbol I cite the chain reaction generated by an Italian schoolteacher who removed the crucifix that symbolized to her the death of spiritual growth (McAfee, 1980) from her public school classroom (Henneberger, 2001).

This study explores the crucifix as re-enforcing patriarchy by eroticizing the image of the sculpted male nailed onto the wooden cross. Traditionally the crucifix is a sculpted wooden image of the historical Jesus, who was crucified in 33 C.E. circa, nailed to a wooden cross. Theologian Gustavo Gutierrez proposed that the crucifix represents the power of the state to punish Jesus, the power to oppress, and not of salvation (McAfee, 1980).

As Blair and Michel proposed in their study of the NASA memorial, “[I]f cultures are the connected webs of signification that we think they are, or if cultures are really like biological systems, then a single text [visual or narrative] is connected in some manner to

every other text in the system” (Blair and Michel, 1999, 43). This means that if we can root-out the key image generating a system of symbols and images holding a structure together (Arnheim, 1996), such as patriarchy, then we can remove or diffuse all the other images or symbols within or associated with patriarchy in that system. The patriarchy I identify here is the system of oppression and secrecy maintaining the Roman Catholic Church as evidenced for so many years until their recent disclosures of members of the priesthood violating the traditional proscriptions for celibacy.

In this study Roman Catholic women’s voices are brought to the foreground to comment on the crucifix. This is in contrast to their traditional assigned role supporting the Roman Catholic priest (Tyrrell, 1989). A re-imagining of the crucifix is applied in this study that de-centers and frames the crucifix as an issue for a group of Roman Catholic women to comment on. Feminist Judith Plaskow suggests a possible cultural re-imagining of religious male identified icons in the book *Standing Again at Sinai* (Plaskow, 1991).

Plaskow’s work is used to set the visual space. opening the viewer’s mind to not only accepting, but inviting women into their long-earned position of power, influence, and leadership (Plaskow, 1991), as empowered and speaking-out in a focus group consisting of only women from an eastern Washington parish bible study group.

THE CRUCIFIX, DIASPORA AND WHITENESS

For the past 2000 years Jews have not ruled their homeland, non-white male priests have not ruled their city, and Roman Catholic women have not ruled their sexuality nor ruled their city: Vatican City. To be like a foreigner in your own country, city, or

abroad in another nation, or with no homeland, is to be in a Diaspora. Jews now have a nation to rule, Israel, only after they displaced another nation into another Diaspora: Palestine (Said, 1977).

And while many non-Jews without a homeland or without political representation in their homeland rightfully identify themselves in a Diaspora, others falsely claim a Diasporic status. For example, Jolanta Drzewiecka suggests in *Diaspora as a Transnational Site of Exclusions and Power Struggles*, 2001, that Poles outside of Poland are in a Diaspora and that a “re-invention of a Polish American [D]iaspora identity in a specific political context” is necessary (Drzewiecka, 2001, p. 17). What Drzewiecka fails to notice is that since Poland is now an independent state and Poles are organized and have political representation in their homeland, particularly when abroad (Drzewiecka, 2001), Poles in Poland or abroad are not in a Diaspora. Instead, Roman Catholic women, and persons of color (non-whites), due to the lack of representation in Roman Catholic hierarchy (Vatican City) are in a Diaspora.

The Roman Catholic caste of mostly white priests and teachers has the power to delegate the rules as leaders over those subjected to them. “In making these rules, this group of people – whom Nietzsche begins to call the priestly caste – empowers itself. It feels powerful in the act of creating rules, and if it can successfully impose those rules on itself, and on others, that sense of power is intensified. [...] Priests are dangerous animals, Nietzsche maintains. Unlike their more active, impulsive aristocratic counterparts, they can plan ahead, control their impulses -- which that means among other things, they can *lie*” (McWhorter, 1999, p.52).

It is necessary examine how the crucifix and the cross and crucifix are used to re-enforce a white priestly identity versus the removal of the crucifix. Male priests,

synonymous with whites in positions of power, have traditionally held power and have not, thus, had to define themselves, they just “are” and go unchallenged (Martin, Krizek, Nakayama & Bradford, 1999) in their divination and use of the crucifix. Additionally, in the study of “Self-Labels for White Americans” by Martin, Krizek, Nakayama and Bradford (1999), white university undergraduates participating in an Arizona State University survey sample associated white with being “Christian” and “priestly”.

In the discussion of the crucifix and its potential to symbolize oppressive power Roman Catholic liberation theologian and priest Gustavo Gutierrez proposes a subversion of stereotypes through a subversion of traditional stereotypes of Jesus as suffering. Essentially Gutierrez refuses the oppressive symbolization of Jesus as crucified (McAfee, 1980). The crucifixal imagery only serves the agenda of the oppressor who co-opts the suffering of the person of color, the Roman who co-opts the suffering of the historical Jesus who was crucified by the Roman occupying forces in Judea. This is not a refutation of the crucifixion but a statement against its pervasiveness in the memory of Roman Catholics and Christians (McAfee, 1980).

Gutierrez maintains that the Jesus depicted on the cross is not the Jesus who spoke against oppression in all its manifest and covert forms. *What the crucifix provides is a re-enactment of a crucifixion, informed by Roman Catholic indoctrination for an artist who was never present at the crucifixion.* Gutierrez writes: “You see the resignation and acceptance on the face. of the Son of God in his moment of greatest suffering? [...] Is he complaining to God? Is he challenging Herod and Pilate who put him there? Is he trying to change society? Is he agitating among the poor for a redistribution of wealth or a new social order? Is he wishing he had a gun so that he could destroy his oppressors? For

centuries the church taught such acquiescence, passivity, and resignation in the face of poverty and injustice -- a political message that the [status quo] rulers and the rich found ideally suited for keeping the masses docile. But that is by no means the universally received opinion today. We must create a society in which no one is crucified [silenced] or harmed as Jesus was. That will be one way we can thank him for his great love for us” (Gutierrez quoted by McAfee, 1980, p. 5).

As Vaclav Havel wrote, patriarchy and other systems of totalitarian origin held together through images and ideology are as vulnerable as a house built of cards. “[I]t can be said that [patriarchal] ideology, as that instrument of communication which assures the power structure of inner cohesion is, in the post-totalitarian power, something that dominates it to a considerable degree and therefore, tends to assure its continuity as well. It is one of the pillars of the system’s external stability. This pillar, however, is built on a very unstable foundation. It is built on lies. It works only as long as people are willing to live within the lie” (Havel, 1989, p. 50).

Let’s look at a crucifix...



Figure 1, “Christ on the Cross”: Jesus appears depicted here as a pinned and mostly nude white male. Is he completely vulnerable to Roman violence upon his body as part of public entertainment or is the painting constructing his sexuality, depicted by *Jesus’ seemingly swollen genital area beneath the loincloth*, as triumphant over the Roman violence? Emphasis and comments are mine – photo reproduced from The New York Public Library collection.¹

Why is a historical figure born in what is now the territory claimed by Israelites, Jewish and Palestinian alike, seemingly portrayed as a white northern European male? The whiteness painted on Jesus may be a product of European painters predating the investigation of race, as an element in oppression (Villanueva, 2002). That medieval and renaissance painters identified whiteness, in their representations of Jesus, with Roman

¹“Christ on the Cross.” *Microsoft® Encarta® Encyclopedia 2001*. © 1993-2000 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

Catholicism possibly symbolically informs (Blair and Michel, 1999) the later identification of whiteness with being priestly (Martin, Krizek, Nakayama & Bradford, 1999).

As is reported in the following *New York Times* story in which a history teacher removed the crucifix, the depiction of a white Jesus on the crucifix for Roman Catholics in Italy is the central image signifying the division between Christians and Muslims. (Henneberger, 2001). As I suggested on pages 6 and 7 those in a Diaspora, thus not in the position of Roman Catholic political representation and leadership, are non-whites and particularly women. Muslims, particularly Palestinians who also happen to be in a Diaspora, are often identified as non-white (Said, 1977) also. These Diasporic groups are the same stereotypes not imaged on the artist's traditional rendition of a white male crucifix.

INTERVENTION: ORNELLA ORLANDI REMOVES THE CRUCIFIX

Cattaneo La Spezia, Italy: Under the fascist dictator Benito Mussolini Italy instituted that the crucifix be hung in every Italian public office and classroom in 1929.

This "fascist era law requiring that crucifixes be hung in public buildings was never taken off the books, and the country's solicitor general has ruled that such displays do not violate the law that made Italy a secular state" (Henneberger, 2001) known as the Roman Question in 1929, providing the Vatican the status of a nation state.

Recently this law proscribing crucifixes for public offices and classrooms was challenged. After the September 11, 2001, attack on New York City's Twin towers, in

the coastal city of La Spezia, where 1,000 out of 100,000 are Muslim (Henneberger, 2001) a public school teacher, “Ornella Orlandi removed a crucifix from her public school classroom. [... S]he hoped the gesture would make a new Muslim student feel more comfortable.” Ornella not only wanted to have her student feel welcomed, she wanted her 11-year-old mostly Roman Catholic pupils to learn tolerance (Henneberger, 2001).

“But since then, parents and school, church and elected officials in this northern port town have furiously condemned her action. They see what she did as an attack on the country’s Catholic culture, an assault on their central religious symbol in the middle of a war that many here clearly see as Islam versus Christianity. For them, Ms. Orlandini was giving into the enemy when she touched that crucifix.” (Henneberger, 2001)

Ornella is identified as “giving into the enemy” -- an “enemy” one of many western imaginations have created (Said, 1979).

The debate of maintaining the crucifix as the symbol of division between Muslims and Christians would not have been made possible without Ornella’s gesture of cultural synthesis demonstrating not only tolerance to her Catholic students for the Muslim boy, but putting into action Ornella’s conviction. As a Muslim man in La Spezia said: “crucifixes have to be taken down because they are just wood with dead bodies on them” (Henneberger, 2001).

EXPLORING THE SITE FOR INTERVENTION

On March 21st 2002, a day referred to as Holy Thursday by Roman Catholics, the

Pope, the one male overseeing all Roman Catholics, released his “Letter of His Holiness John Paul II to Priests”. In this letter, like an alcoholic telling his wife life will improve if she’ll join him in another glass of wine, the leader of the sovereign nation (Liptak, 2002) directed victims and clergy to be “conscious of human weakness” and to “embrace. the mystery of the cross” (Henneberger, 2002).

The white male depiction on a cross, is a place. of pain inflicted upon Muslims, persons of color, and women who are excluded by this national symbol for Roman Catholics. This exclusion is ritualized in the papal statement that does not question the universal representation of the crucifix as white, male, and potentially erotic. As the focus group women unanimously informed me, the crucifix visually elicits the erotic sentiment towards a nude and disempowered male, because he is nailed down and thus made accessible, a carved body.

Instead of a solution for sexual transgressions by his national leaders, the priests, what the Pope unwittingly proscribes to victims and abusers (Henneberger, 2002) may be more of the same drug, and as for an addict, the very carnal proclivities kept secret are made salient through the crucifix of religious adoration:

As the church shows her concern for the victims and strives to respond in truth and justice to each of these painful situations, all of us – conscious of human weakness, but trusting in the healing power of divine grace. – are called to embrace. the mystery of the cross and to commit ourselves more fully to the search for holiness.

-- John Paul II (Henneberger, 2002)

This is a holiness rooted in a nation state’s adoration of a wooden carving, an

adoration that admittedly arouses the religious and racial divisions based on whiteness as being priestly (Henneberger, 2001, Martin, Krizek, Nakayama & Bradford, 1999) *and the sexual feelings* (May, 1982, Tyrrell, 1989) *the Pope seemingly hopes to dissuade.*

Of peculiar interest, here, is the disempowerment or figurative impotency of the Pope himself, the Roman Catholic nation's leader, as he prescribes more of the crucifix, the drug, for adoration. As Roman Catholic psychologist Gerald May warns in *Will and Spirit* male priests and religious women need to be "aware of the limitations of all images of God and the need on the part of both sexes to deal in a healthy way with erotic, genital experiences that can occur during prayer" (May, 1982, p. 150). The clergy are thus even further disempowered by repeated exposure to the only nude body they are ordained to see: a carved crucified male body, white, immobilized and disabled by the nails affixing it onto two beams, traditionally bolted onto the wall behind the church altar. This nation's carving cannot reciprocate love, but the site between the crucifix and the altar can commemorate human sacrifice, as in the erotic "when a priest had his way with dozens of altar boys in the dark of the confessional, in the confines of the sacristy, even on the altar of St. James [Chapel, Esther, LA] and other churches" (DePalma, 2002).

In the recent coverage of an the Church predictably keeping silent about sex abuse allegations no decisive steps were taken against priests accused of pedophilia: "[c]ourt documents made public in an article in *The Hartford Courant* on Sunday [March 17, 2002], including transcripts of confidential depositions, suggested that Cardinal Egan had failed to act decisively against priests accused of abusing children, never reported the information to law enforcement authorities and fought the efforts by victims to be compensated" (Herszenhorn, 2002).

The possibility here of using consciousness raising, through focus groups interventions discussing the crucifix and the feelings associated with adoration of the crucifix for members of Roman Catholic citizenry becomes salient. The crucifix, in this way, can be seen as the product of the “beast” – a “beast” in the form of the artist as creator:

He [the artist] was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast [crucifix], that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed.

(St. John’s Revelation 13:15)

METHOD

Using artistic religious objects may assist in verifying the existence of sexual feelings (May, 1982, Tyrrell, 1989) as an alternative to directly interrogating the Roman Catholic religious about their sexual feelings. Both male and female religious have reported having sexual feelings towards the crucifix during prayer (May, 1982, Tyrrell, 1989). *Although discussion of this study is later applied analogously to explore sexual feelings among priests, it is difficult, during the current media focus on Church related sex scandals involving priests, to test a group of male priests* (Barry, 2002). Only self-proclaimed celibate men are eligible to be priests. Instead of men, the focus group (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990) for this study consisted of three female participants from an Eastern Washington college community parish weekly bible study class. All three women were practicing Roman Catholics, over forty years old, and had attained a

master's degree. They were recruited by the parish bible group leader, a woman, who asked for volunteers from the bible group to participate in the focus group.

Research question: do Roman Catholic women of an eastern Washington bible study group, who participate in the focus group discussion, express that the sculpted wooden crucifixal image can be found erotic, possibly eliciting sexual feelings?

The presence of women in the focus group is key. Women have been relegated to marginal roles in most religious communication (Plaskow, 1991).

Establishing a body of work that not only surveys women in a parish, but also symbolically places a woman in the center of discourse [e.g. placing a woman on a crucifix], and the center and view of religious discussion can shift, eliciting new insights. The shift is away from the feelings of men at the center of discourse and places the woman's voice, sharing a common biological oppression with others (Bem, 1993, Bonvillain, 2000), into the central position of authority by having these women interpret and share with me their perception of the meanings generated by crucifix of the crucifixion.

The visual overhead aids presented were a short documentary on the artistic evolution of male imagery in religious iconography in the Sistene Chapel in Vatican City, and a smaller than life-size carved wooden object depicting an unbloody, white, neatly posed, intact and bare breasted version of Jesus nailed down to a cross. The object hung above and behind me on a wall, as I stood between the wall and the altar length table with the focus group women seated.



Figure 2 depicts a re-enactment of the focus group meeting in front of a wooden crucifix. Substitutes for the Eastern Washington bible study participants are seated at the altar length table from where I, as moderator, stand. I was positioned between the altar table and the crucifix.

The focus group was shown a video on the cultural basis of idealized religious male imagery and worship in Roman Catholicism with particular focus on Michelangelo's Sistene Chapel in Vatican City. Following the video the European renaissance's cultural obsession for physical youth and intactness was discussed followed by the story of an Italian history teacher, Ornella Orlandi, who removed the crucifix from her classroom after she felt the image posed division between her mostly Roman Catholic students and a Muslim boy (Henneberger, 2001). Immediate and widespread national Italian outrage followed news coverage of Orlandi's removal of the crucifix in a public school classroom (Henneberger, 2001).

Discussion of the negative reaction to Orlandi's reported removal of the crucifix focused on Ornella's own role as a crucifical image; we reasoned that media coverage

and public objection to her act provided the mental landscape to remove the centrality of religious divination of the male figure depicted on the crucifix.

If an image of an immaculate male on a crucifix stimulates sexual feelings for women and men towards the imaged male (May, 1982, Tyrrell, 1989), then questioning the portrayal on the crucifix as desensitizing the observer from the obvious pain of a woman seems necessary.

Following this line of reasoning it may then be possible for the women to see themselves as located within the rhetorical terrain (Plaskow, 1991) to question not only the institutional display of crucifixes, but to explore their opinions on possibility that such practices be removed from public spaces.

The basis for questioning the transference of sexual feelings (May, 1982, Tyrrell, 1989) across generations and geography, and the de-centering of a crucifixal image dates back to the practice of venerating “[t]he cross, as first used in Christian art, [which] generally did not show the body of Jesus, not only because the early church still followed the Jewish prohibition of images as idolatrous, but also because the empty cross symbolized Jesus' resurrection rather than his death. [...] By the 7th century, however, it had become customary to represent the whole figure of Jesus, alive and robed, as the triumphant Christ, in front of the cross but not attached to it. Gradually, as the [Catholic] church put more emphasis on his suffering and death, Christ was portrayed naturalistically in a loincloth and crown of thorns, nailed to the cross. The wound in his side was visible.”²

And not only was he depicted as this tortured image, the Christ born in the

² "Cross." *Microsoft® Encarta® Encyclopedia 2001*. © 1993-2000 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.

Mediterranean region was given exotic to the Mediterranean (Said, 1979) blonde hair and typically northern European traits.

The group met for nearly two hours after the Sunday noon mass at an eastern Washington parish. The three participants in the conversation are identified by numerals: number 1 is married and a peace and justice activist in Eastern Washington; number 2 is also married and teaches catechism to adults in Eastern Washington; number 3 is not married, converted to Catholicism 2 years ago, and is completing her doctoral degree in liberal arts here in Eastern Washington. I am identified as moderator, am single, teaching speech and media ethics, and completing a master's degree in communication.

Towards the end of the session, after showing the video on the Vatican's Sistene Chapel by Michelangelo and providing the participants with a copy of the *New York Times* story on Ornella Orlandi removing the crucifix I asked the participants if "those who worship the crucifix project their sexual feelings" on the crucifix, and if these feelings are of an erotic nature. Number 1 and agreed that these feelings are of an erotic nature, and number 2 referred to the feeling as "sometimes it's taboo, sometimes it's not, sometimes it's wrong, sometimes it's terrorist, whatever. But there is a love there."

THE SALIENT FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

The following is a transcription of the last 15 minutes of the recorded discussion on the 17th of March 2002:

Moderator: "Do those [Roman Catholics] who worship the crucifix project their sexual feelings onto the sculpted wooden crucifix, and if so, is this of an erotic

nature?”

3: “Coloring of the mind why it was. It did cross my mind.”

Moderator: “So love of the male image maybe changed the way to look at the images of Jesus by that artist.” (Reference made to Michelangelo the artist behind the frescoes of the Sistene Chapel in the Vatican.)

1: “But then why would he make him [Jesus] blonde in a country [Judea] where everyone’s skin is dark? Primarily, like in India where my husband’s from, have dark hair and light skin?”

3: “Am I off base if I am saying it [the crucifix] could almost be not erotic as in Playboy or anything like that but an erotic image of a not otherwise...yeah of a God [Jesus].”

1: “Not that I have read many Playboy, Playgirl...whatever...(laughter).”

3: “Seeing a statue of Theresa of Avilla, that was very erotic, but you know.”

Number 3 recently converted from Episcopalian to Roman Catholicism. She later clarified that a statue of Theresa of Avilla, a Roman Catholic saint, aroused for her erotic feelings towards women.

1: “When I was at home and had this argument with my niece and her husband to be about the fact that Playboy was just another form of art just like Michelangelo’s [religious art].”

Moderator: “Number 3, how about for yourself the idea of ...I didn’t know if I touched on something new for you or not. But contexturaling [in the video on the Sistene Chapel] the art as made by men, portraying

men, and maybe particularly the possible erotic or romantic imagination, we'll put it that way."

Number 3 voices an awakened awareness and sensitivity towards the hardships endured by women. Earlier number 3 had identified herself as experiencing erotic feelings towards the statue of Theresa of Avila, indicative of her communicating a similarity in sexual feelings towards religious art of both the male crucifix and the female saint.

3: "I have been aware of those theories about Michelangelo, so that [the idea of the erotic and religious art] was not a show stopper for me. It did make me think about the images of Christ and the crucifixial image and how that changes and how that is colored not only by the particular artist but also by culture at large. And I think what made me think about that the most about that was the picture of the little boy [the Muslim boy in the *New York Times* article on his school teacher Ornella Orlandi], because at first glance I would have not seen this image and said WOW, this [woman, Ornella Orlandi] is a crucifixial image. [...] And how we represent that male suffering versus female suffering."

Number 2, a bible and catechism teacher for adults summarizes and closes the focus group discussion:

2: "So there is a common element, culturally played out in different ways...sometimes it's taboo, sometimes it's not, sometimes it's wrong, sometimes it's terrorist, whatever. But there is a love there."

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study of the crucifix has been informed by symbolic constructionism (Denzin, 1992, Blair and Michel, 1999), critical studies on the mechanisms of art as media reproducing systems of gender and racial oppression through eroticisation of the white male image (Martin, Krizek, Nakayama & Bradford, 1999, Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000), the crucifix as the symbol maintaining division between Muslims and Christians (Henneberger, 2001), and by the admitted feelings of sexual arousal among Roman Catholic women during worship of the crucifix. (May, 1982, Tyrrell, 1989). For men and women who pray to these idealized religious icons “it is not unusual for men to experience erections and for women also to experience genital stimulation – sometimes even to the point of orgasm” (May, 1982, p. 150). As such, the religious narrative contextualizing art and architecture tends to dissuade the viewer from acknowledging the erotic elements representing sexual feelings and desires, while the idealized image desensitizes the observer from the graphic cruelty of a real crucifixion. Associated with these sexual feelings towards the idealized crucifix is the artist’s portrayal of a typically white male figure.

The focus group participants confirmed that they perceived the crucifix as erotic. Verbalization of the erotic feelings towards a religious statue of St. Theresa of Avilla was also identified by participant number 3. In identifying her attraction with a statue of the female saint number 3 then transferred the crucifical image on the female Italian schoolteacher who removed the crucifix from her classroom as an act welcoming a Muslim boy and teaching tolerance to her mostly Roman Catholic students.

This image worship rooted in a nation state's adoration of a wooden carving, an adoration that admittedly arouses the religious and racial divisions based on whiteness as being priestly (Henneberger, 2001, Martin, Krizek, Nakayama & Bradford, 1999) and the sexual feelings (May, 1982, Tyrrell, 1989) is what the Pope seemingly hopes to dissuade.

The finding of this study seems to confirm previous reports of sexual feelings by Roman Catholic religious men and women associated with the crucifixal worship (May, 1982, Tyrrell, 1989), and its potential to signify or heal religious division if removed. Removal of the crucifix (Henneberger, 2001) opens the landscape for future critical studies. Examining the reactions religious art and architecture can stimulate, and the possibility of removing images found unacceptable by community standards from public spaces (Christians, 2001) are areas for critical studies and media ethics as well. The focus group participants all agreed that a removal of the crucifix, without proper planning, could generate serious affective reactions among Roman Catholics.

The danger of disturbing the Roman Catholic ritual of crucifixal worship is not to be underestimated, and a proposed removal of the crucifix could be met with severe emotional resistance (Henneberger, 2001). As focus group participant number 2 stated regarding the crucifix:

So there is a common element, culturally played out in different ways...sometimes it's taboo, sometimes it's not, sometimes it's wrong, sometimes it's terrorist, whatever. But there is a love there.

Proposing removal of the Roman Catholic crucifix, based on the finding that its use is offensive to some modern sensibilities (Christians, 2001) or its symbolism of religious division between Christians and Muslims (Henneberger, 2001) could cause discomfort for Roman Catholics. Based on number 2's comment, it's possible that veneration of the crucifix functions as a substitute for love. That love is represented by an image, say a wooden crucifix that cannot feel, much less reciprocate "love", is later discussed in a later section using Ackerman and Jahoda's *Anti-Semitism and Emotional Disorders* (1950).

Next, we'll explore another site in eastern Washington in the discussion between Roman Catholic sexual feelings and religious images (May, 1982, Tyrrell, 1989).

THE GONZAGA UNIVERSITY PHALLUS IN SPOKANE, WA

With the predominant media and legal concern on sex scandals reported among Catholic teachers as well as clergy, and particularly their silencing of their student or subordinate victims (Tierney, 2002, DePalma, 2002, Clines, 2002) we must reflect upon the manifestation of possible homoeroticism or eroticism in the following two cases in which Roman Catholic institutions incorporate the phallus in architecture. If the phallus is incorporated so freely in publicly accessible architecture what implications does this have for the priest or educator and the student body.

Communities are imagined and created (Drzewiecka and Wong, 1999). For 1300 years the Roman Catholic altar with the bare-breasted and at times naked youthful male

crucifix has been the site of worship. Most large medieval churches were built on the plan of a Latin or Greek cross, symbolic of Christ's body.³

As discussed previously, being male and priestly becomes even more disturbingly prominent when it is associated with the architecture and whiteness (Martin, Krizek, Nakayama & Bradford, 1999) within a predominantly European white religious community that maintains its symbolic ties with the Vatican. The Vatican is the sovereign nation state over all Roman Catholics, and as such steadfastly preaches abstinence from sex except for pro-creative purposes among married couples (Liptak, 2002). The Vatican's credibility to proscribe orders against non-heterosexual sex and birth control is questionable when considering the placement of a 140 foot penis design on the grounds of a Catholic university in Spokane, WA. Of interest to us is that the parish church, St. Aloysius, is within 200 feet of this phallus.

In 2000 I performed a series of interviews and a focus group discussion with Washington State University graduate and undergraduate students. Our topic was the prominent 140-foot long and 30-foot wide phallus-shaped traffic island at the entrance of a Roman Catholic university in the city of Spokane, WA. The relevance of the study in 2000 with that of the focus group discussion on the crucifix is that both studies explored the cultural artifacts left in public view by Roman Catholic men erecting religious art and architectural designs while seemingly failing to question the emerging erotic meaning generated by these choices.

³ "Cross." *Microsoft® Encarta® Encyclopedia 2001*. © 1993-2000 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved.



Figure 3, the phallus shape is already visible from the entrance of the Gonzaga administration building housing the Jesuit president's office. Notice the tip of the phallus projects out and away from the university campus and into the lower socio-economic north-side of Spokane. The higher social-economic strata live on the south side, behind the phallus.

The focus group members, all of whom were graduate students in a rhetorical theory seminar at Washington State University, viewed a videotape. All present at the focus group affirmed the obvious phallus shape of the object. The interviewees, consisting of undergraduates separate from focus group participants, were presented with a photo of the subject. The four interviewees were asked an open ended question: "what possible interpretations do you see represented of this object?"



Figure 4, an overhead-view of the phallus-shaped traffic island installed in 1984 at Gonzaga University, Spokane, WA, a Roman Catholic institution overseen by the priests of the Society of Jesus. This view of the phallus shaped traffic island was photographed by me on Easter Sunday, 2002, from the office of Gonzaga University president Robert Spitzer, S.J., in the administration building. The erection of this phallus project cost the university half-a-million dollars in today's currency.

Only one interviewee, a female undergraduate from mainland China, did not identify the phallus shape.

Gonzaga University, the site of this idealized phallus design in plain view, is an institution operated by the Society of Jesus, or Jesuits. When I informed the three interviewees of the Jesuit priests' involvement in operating Gonzaga University the resounding response was that since the phallus shape could go unnoticed in the architectural planning for Roman Catholics it was obvious confirmation of sexual repression by the planners.



Figure 5, the area of the circumscribed phallus tip landscaped with flowers and bushes is almost as long as my car, photographed here in the immediate background on Easter Sunday 2002. According to myth Easter Sunday is when Jesus is resur(e)rected(?) from his death on a cross.



Figure 6, the urethra (opening) of the phallus tip in the foreground, with Gonzaga University and St. Aloysius Church in the background.

While performing further research on the internet I downloaded a photo of the phallus (<http://www.vatican.va/>) shape incorporated in St. Peter's and St. Peter's square.



Figure 7, the Vatican's phallus: "I'm not mad about it, just incredibly frustrated," said Theresa Thompson, who attended Mass at Our Lady of Lourdes cathedral on her lunch hour on Friday. 'It's like this problem that just keeps on coming up. Every time you think you've got it taken care of, it rears its ugly head.'" -- Kelly McBride (March 24, 2002) "Spokane Catholics distressed". *The Spokesman Review*. A1, A20.

The design of figure 7 perfectly matches the phallus used at the Jesuit institution, Gonzaga University in Spokane, WA in figure 4 and of the phallus design of Calligula's circus, 50 C.E., upon whose remains the Vatican sits -- see the figure on page 48 in appendix B, and the counterattack proposal on pages 49-53).

As Drzewiecka and Wong (1999) write in "Construction of White Ethnicity": "Participants choose these ethnic practices to meet specific needs. These practices, though painstakingly recreated, acquire a unique recontextualized cultural meaning by their mere practice in a different context, in a different time" (Drzewiecka and Wong,

1999, p. 201). This is particularly in light of the sexual and pedophile scandals involving the culture of the Roman Catholic priests, their ties to the Vatican as a nation state, and the sexual abuse of their angels: their altar helpers and students.

ON WORSHIP, ELECTRA/OEDIPUS COMPLEX, AND SEXUAL FEELINGS

In *Christotherapy* II Roman Catholic and Jesuit theologian at Gonzaga University, Spokane WA, Bernard Tyrrell discusses the stages of “neurotic anger -- the repressed or expressed – which has its roots in rejection” of one’s sexual feelings (Tyrrell, 1982, p.265). The priestly caste’s (McWhorter, 1999) and the Catholic parishioners’ sublimated sexual attraction toward the divine parent, “god”, visible in Roman Catholic art and architecture (May, 1982), I propose, is also a site for rejected sexual feelings.

In Ackerman and Jahoda’s *Anti-Semitism and Emotional Disorders* (1950) the root of religious bigotry and hostility is the unresolved attraction towards a parent figure in gentile religions. Particularly for Roman Catholics the impossibility of sexual unity with one’s love for god imaged as the virgin mother or father in religious art, respectively known as the Oedipus or Electra complex, is a sexual frustration rooted in religious idolatry and acted out as sexism and prejudice (Ackerman & Jahoda, 1950). As Roman Catholic psychologist Gerald May (1982, p. 150) warns, the men and women who pray to these religious icons of god, crucifixes and statues, such as of St. Theresa of Avilla, need “to deal in a healthy way with erotic, genital experiences that can occur in prayer. As such, the religious narrative contextualizing art and architecture tends to dissuade the viewer from frankly acknowledging the erotic elements in art and architecture

representing sexual feelings and desires.

Associated with these sexual feelings and erotic the veneration towards the crucifix is the artist's portrayal of a typically white male figure. The gender and religious divisions, as well as the racial ramifications after nearly 2000 years of Christianity and in particular Roman Catholic worship of this white male image, associated with the erotic, is a lush green field for further analysis in both critical studies, law and media ethics in Washington state.

A POSSIBLE LEGAL RECOURSE: WASHINGTON STATE CODE 9.58.010

A proposal to pursue damages resulting from defamation of the historical Jesus by artists and designers could provide financial security for religious communities, particularly priests, seeing them through the current and future media and legal focus on Roman Catholic sex abuse cases rise (Goodstein and Stanley, 2002, Liptak, 2002). For this discussion we'll entertain the notion of signs and effigies in relation to a Washington state law from 1909 which limits the discourse and imagery of a historical figure. The most significant application of this law to effectively protect the memory of the deceased was in 1916 in *State vs. Haffer*, 94 Wn. 136, 162 P. 45. In *State vs. Haffer* the court found a Washington state publisher guilty of the criminal charge of defaming the historical memory of George Washington. None of George Washington's descendants were plaintiffs, merely the public's knowledge of George Washington's place in history sufficed: "Libeling memory of deceased applies to injury to deceased's relatives, memory of deceased existing in living persons, and memory resting in history. *State v. Haffer*, 94 Wn. 136, 162 P. 45 (1916)."

Since 1916 there has been no significant case that claimed defamation of the historical memory of a deceased person existing in unrelated living persons or resting in history. In *Spangler v. Glover* (1957) the court refined the application of 9.58.010 by specifying that “[i]n determining whether a publication is libelous per se, the court is concerned with the nature of the defamatory words used, not with the identity of the person about whom they are uttered. [...] It is not necessary, to impose liability, that the person defamed be named in the publication if, by intrinsic reference, the identity of the defamed person is indicated.” *Spangler v. Glover*, 50 Wn.2d 473, 313 P.2d 354 (1957).

In *State v. Mays* (1910) it was determined that “‘Defamation’ in this section does not imply that the words are false.” *State v. Mays*, 57 Wn. 540, 107 P. 363 (1910).

According to Washington State Law, (2002) § **9.58.010**. Libel, what constitutes libel or defamation of the deceased is: “Every malicious publication by writing, printing, picture, effigy, sign[,] radio broadcasting or which shall in any other manner transmit the human voice or reproduce the same from records or other appliances or means, which shall tend:

- (1) To expose any living person [priests] to hatred, contempt, ridicule or obloquy, or to deprive him of the benefit of public confidence or social intercourse; or
- (2) *To expose the memory of one deceased [Jesus] to hatred, contempt, ridicule[by depicting his death as erotic] or obloquy; or*
- (3) To injure any person, corporation or association of persons in his or their business or occupation, shall be libel.”

In determining if defamation has occurred, the court is concerned with the nature of the defamatory words or signs used, such as a phallus-shaped traffic island as a rhetorical text (Blair & Michele, 1999), and not specifically with the identity of the deceased person (Jesus) about whom they may be identified as associated with.

In the case of Gonzaga University the identity of the historical Jesus is alluded by the identification of Gonzaga University as a Roman Catholic institution operated by the Society of Jesus. *To impose liability it is not necessary that the person defamed, Jesus, be named in the publication if, by obvious intrinsic reference to the crucifixal imagery on the church behind the circumcised phallus in figure 8, the identity of the defamed person, Jesus, is intrinsically implicated. Spangler v. Glover, 50 Wn.2d 473, 313 P.2d 354 (1957).*

"Defamation" in this section does not imply that the words or the phallus imagery are false, merely that they be found offensive or provoking public agitation towards those who claim the historical memory of the deceased. State v. Mays, 57 Wn. 540, 107 P. 363 (1910).

The Washington code criminalizing defamation of a historical memory of a deceased person is still valid and one of the few such blue laws remaining in the United States. The code is ambiguous enough that it could be researched for its application to the historical Jesus in a case of traditional religious blasphemy.

Blasphemy can be analogous to a portrayal or possibility of interpretation of images associated with the historical memory of the deceased, Jesus, that violate the customs of his day – i.e., the Jewish custom to not idolize portrayals (crucifixes) of the human body.

For this discussion the artist or architect is the defendant. Other options are the

Gonzaga University board of trustees, including members of the Society of Jesus, who approved of the installation of the phallus design in 1984, or the Vatican itself. Gonzaga University is within St. Aloysius parish's domain, and the parish is under the domain of the Vatican. As attorney Jeffrey R. Anderson explained in representing his clients, victims of sexual abuse, against the Vatican: "Parishes are corporate subdivisions of the dioceses, which become the subdivision corporations of the Vatican" (Liptak, 2002). The Vatican is the only religion with a status of sovereign state. Under international law, the Vatican is a state: "It has defined territory and population, a government and relations with other states" (Liptak, 2002). Members or the women religious in the community, as plaintiffs, could find the phallus design, obviously within the parish boundaries (figure 6), offensive and defamatory to their historical memory of the deceased, Jesus.

The interpretation of defamation, in this case, lies with the values and standards held by the persons or public history perpetuating the historical memory of Jesus. *Spangler v. Glover*, 50 Wn.2d 473, 313 P.2d 354 (1957).

How to claim historical memory, here, is ambiguous and merely refers to the plaintiff, claiming that the act or product is found injurious to the "memory of deceased existing in living persons, and memory resting in history." *State v. Haffer*, 94 Wn. 136, 162 P. 45 (1916).

Just how might a court of law rule on this hypothetical objection and violation of this law is uncertain particularly since the last significant claim of defamation to a famous historical figure, George Washington, was in 1916. The plaintiff should consider the federal regulations restricting pornography in cases when the subject has been found "lascivious (lewd; lustful) exhibitions of the genitals" in a publicly accessible area

(*Tacoma News Tribune*, 1995). This may be possible if the Gonzaga University penis-shaped traffic island is found to represent such a representation offensive to public memory.

Another possible application of the criminal code is to the crucifix. According to the United States Justice Department there are three standard criteria in determining if a subject is pornographic and publicly offensive. It must be perceived as the depiction of a sex object, which the focus group women affirmed with the recognition of the erotic appeal of the crucifix, it must show the person as vulnerable, and have a focus on the pubic area. With the central positioning of the male figure's pubic area in the middle of the crucifix, and the vulnerability of a disabled image on a crucifix the criteria of offensive and possibly pornographic may apply here (Emory, 1995). Of importance here is whether or not the crucifix can be framed as center of focus for selling the image of Roman Catholicism to the public.

Thus a must is establishing that the material is "objectionable" to the plaintiff. Key here is that it is not necessary to prove that the defendant, in this case the architect or artist or persons responsible for the implementation of the phallus shape at Gonzaga University, had actual knowledge of the falsity or truth of the material, it is merely necessary that the phallus be found objectionable. In regards to the crucifix, the material deemed defamatory by those claiming the historical memory of Jesus, as argued in this theoretical application of the criminal code to a traffic island, should also be explored for censorship and criminal sanctions upon the artist or persons found responsible.

CONCLUSION

This study of the crucifix has been informed by symbolic constructionism, (Denzin, 1992, Blair and Michel, 1999) critical studies on the mechanisms of art as media reproducing systems of gender and racial oppression through eroticisation of the white male image, (Martin, Krizek, Nakayama & Bradford, 1999, Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000), the crucifix as the symbol maintaining division between Muslims and Christians, (Henneberger, 2001) and by the admitted feelings of sexual arousal among Roman Catholics during worship of the crucifix (May, 1982, Tyrrell, 1989).

The study of Roman Catholic women in an Eastern Washington weekly bible group confirmed sexual feelings are associated with the crucifix. A participant even identified that she felt a statue of St. Theresa of Avilla erotic. The observations from these women may substitute for the confirmation of the homoerotic attraction experienced by priests towards religious images during worship (May, 1982, Tyrrell, 1989) and provide a preliminary study of parishioner worship and transference of their sexual feelings towards the priestly figure. After confirming the sexual feelings of Roman Catholic women in an eastern Washington parish bible group, the discussion then explored the possible manifestation of the erotic in the case of a phallus shaped design in front of a Jesuit eastern Washington Roman Catholic university. Washington state criminal code 9.58.010 provides a possible venue to address defamation of the historical memory of Jesus. Another application of the code could address possible historical inaccuracy of imaging Jesus as a white, physically intact, male image on the crucifix. A proposal to pursue damages resulting from defamation of the historical Jesus by artists and designers

could provide financial security for religious communities, seeing them through the current and future media and legal focus on Roman Catholic sex abuse cases rise (Goodstein and Stanley, 2002, Liptak, 2002). Future research could even explore removal of the crucifix as a symbol of sexism and racism based on whiteness, as proposed in this essay, and violating biblical codes against idolization of a particular image, in this case white, physically intact, and male. After addressing racism, sexism, and other Diasporic identities, disability itself remains, as well as poverty; after you've removed the white male crucifix, the cross of the disabled and the poor is that which remains upon your gentile Churches.

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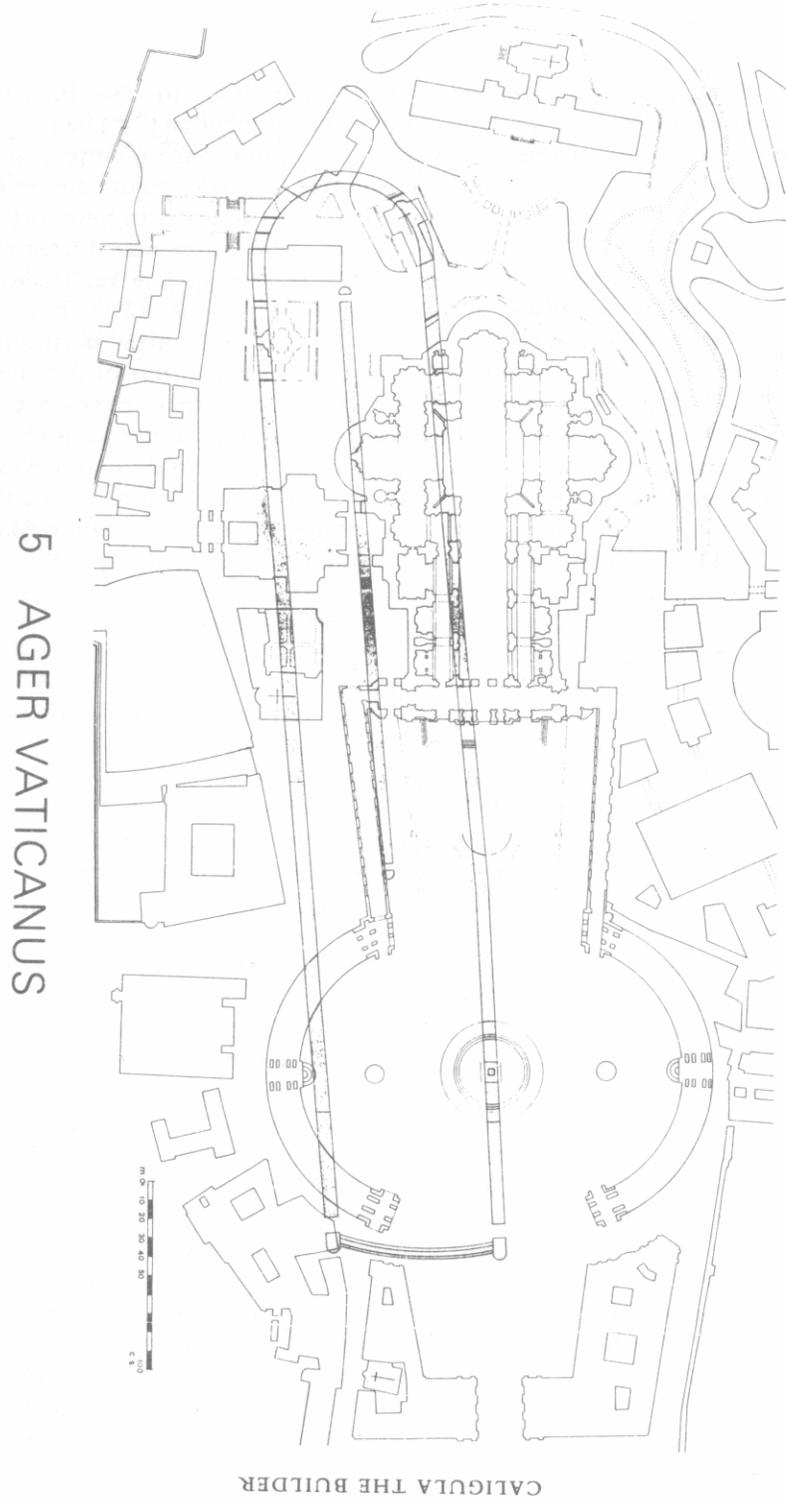
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APPENDIX B: CALLIGULA'S PHALLUS CIRCUS, 50 C.E., UNDER THE VATICAN



*APPENDIX C: MEMO SUBVERTING SEXUAL NORMALIZATION THROUGH A
COUNTER-ATTACK*

Date: Wed, 1 May 2002 07:56:25 -0700 (PDT)
From: Silvia FM Stein <stein@wsunix.wsu.edu>
To: Mary Bloodsworth <bloodswo@wsu.edu>
Cc: Jose Anazagasty <janazagasty@msn.com>, rabreidenbach@wsu.edu,
christinephd@colfax.com, lulucar@hotmail.com, schivers@mail.wsu.edu,
griffinj@wsu.edu, floricanto@aol.com, jamesn@mail.wsu.edu,
andreas_wsu@rauh.net, mlrobert@mail.wsu.edu, friendofferrets@hotmail.com,

Subject: Response for tomorrow :)

Attached is a memo form of response to McWhorther's work and beyond.
You'll need to do a careful reading of the couple of pages sent with
Ladelle's exquisite & poignant comment in mind :)

"The point is to develop sources of strength that will make
possible the emergence of something that wasn't there before [...].
Counterremembering is a practice of self-overcoming."
(McWhorther, 1999, 209)

As such, like Sokrates' elenkus, it enables you to overcome and dispell
the categories and labels people have invented for you.

Silvia

ps- for lack of a better colloquial term I used the jargon "mind fuck" to
actively describe what consciousness raising is all about for priests.

MEMO: RESPONSE & FOLLOW-UP ON SAME-SEX PRACTICES OF
SUBJUGATION, ETHICS & CONSCIOUSNESS RAISING (AKA THE MIND FUCK)
-- Ladelle McWhorther *Bodies & Pleasures*, Ch. 6-7

April 30, 2002

This impromptu commentary is rooted in my familiarity with undergraduate and
women's networking initiation rituals, Roman Catholic theological studies, and
Mahayana Buddhism training; particularly enlightening for me were the contradictions I
found between the rhetoric of peace preached and the practices of sex-based domination
enacted by academically identified feminists and priests a-like in a Roman Catholic and
non-sectarian University settings here in eastern Washington. The academically
identified feminists and priests acted with the "trust" (McWhorther, 1999, 185) endowed
upon them by their subjugated students, and other forms of followers.

My thesis, "Exposing Sexual Feelings Through Religious Images: The Lust Judgment of Gentile Religion" centers upon this very notion that the images and rhetoric of lies used, usually unknowingly, by same-sex priests and academics functions in these typically same-sex societies to subjugate, and not to cultivate, critical dissent among the followers of those same-sexed communities. This topic will be presented in a formal paper by me at the 2002 National Communication Association's conference in New Orleans, during a pre-conference for publication and the Ethics in Communication Division Roundtable with faculty nationwide.

Examining Roman Catholicism as a male-based same-sex centered network for my thesis has helped me see the contemporary University setting as a place of female-based same-sex centered bonding practices (otherwise innocuously referred to as "women's networking" groups, McWhorther, 1999, 207) solidified via a model of sex-based ritual. This approach, for me, opens new areas to critically articulate the dynamics and processes of same-sex based religious and academic communication, power relations, imagery, and of course ritual.

The overarching theme of sexual-abuse among same-sex based academic and religious alliances is similar, in this model, the systems of communication, relations and ritual operating within other same-sexed or heterosexual communities assist to perpetuate practices of sexual abuse. Dominance is held by those holding higher status, regardless of age of the subjugated.

These communities facilitate, legitimize and camouflage sexual abuse by the perpetrator by labeling such sexual practices as butch-femme/top-bottom rituals/initiator-initiate. Some "Cartesian dualism" is always involved, perpetuating dualistic, thus oppositional, reasoning (McWhorther, 1999, 207). Progeny are molded through this experience of sexual subjugation at the hands of a priest or a professor, and of course are expected to display a silent and bonafide allegiance to their oppressor. This silencing, then, is mistakenly identified by both perpetrator and subjugated as "trust" (McWhorther, 1999, 185) and is maintained and developed through the 'dedicated' scholar or altar boy who won't speak-out, who does not wish to disgrace their 'teacher'. A possible mechanism at play is that the subjugator and subjugated are caught in the unusual predicament of recognizing each other's humanity while failing to distinguish that one is ranked socially inferior while the other superior. During this failure to recognize their differences within a society based on division the two may sense they are one and call this bond "trust" (McWhorther, 1999, 185).

When living this dualism, as imposed by society, and separating students from teacher, altar boy from priest, students seem to subdue their ideas to fit within the boundaries of professorial capacities and cerebral cavities, as typified in the students' indoctrinated incapacity to challenge educators to step beyond the academic safety secured by the class-room and cranial walls. In this paradigm of inserted "trust" (McWhorther, 1999, 185) the roles cannot go reversed; as McWhorther has plainly stated "it is just that sort of prohibition – the prohibition upon inventing our own senses of self and our own ways of life – that we seek to oppose and seek to overcome [as students]" (McWhorther, 1999,

192) – in the Old Testament this proposed sub-version is the mythical David slaying Goliath, and in San Francisco 1980’s lesbian parlance it was expressed as “flipping a dike”.

The processes and dynamics of this sex-abuse-based sacrificial ritual, more allied to cults than actual spiritually or intellectually based societies, seem to be the same across the board; a sodomized altar boy experiences no ‘orgasm’ with anal penetration and maybe mistakes physical violations with part of his educational bonding process; likewise the female scholar allied with rituals such as mind-games or “fisting” (McWhorther, 1999, 185) may construe submission to the dominant or dominance of the submissive with trust and silent allegiance. The basis of these paradigms is not actually pleasure in the form of orgasm or intellectual awareness for the subdued (McWhorther 1999, 185) but pleasure in the form and art of power itself, particularly in rhetoric; whether it is perceived as power in the taking, co-opting or denial of power in giving it up.

McWhorther suggests these rituals of domination and submission are part of thematic based sadomasochistic pleasure and even identifies practices using sex organs with sexual pleasure and “control” (McWhorther, 1999, 184). I find this horrendous. It’s incredible that the Chair of Philosophy at a University (University of Richmond) can confuse rituals of pain felt by those of lower status at the hands of the powerful with sexual pleasure for the subdued; subjugation of the helpless and disabled is dangerously labeled “trust” for the dominant player here (McWhorther, 1999, 185).

McWhorther goes so far as to, on one hand in chapter 6, promote the joys of fisting for the recipient (McWhorther, 1999,185), yet, on the other hand in chapter 7 stresses “care for the self” (McWhorther, 1999,196). This antagonistic juxta-positioning of chapters begs that, by now banal, expression that one hand of McWhorther’s doesn’t know what the other hand is doing, much less is writing. A stinging and stretched-out vaginal or rectal cavity defies the boundaries proscribed by common sense for “Care for the self” (McWhorther, 1999, 196). But then again this may go hand in hand with the Foucaultian bombastic proposal that philosophical writing and consciousness raising (a mind fuck) and drugs are the same as sadomasochistic fisting. Perhaps a mind-fuck or fisting subverting the established priestly or teniored figure is pleasure, but surely not when the roles are unbalanced and it is the teacher trying to subvert the student of the academy.

Society has not yet learned to protect the student at the hands of a teacher, much less an altar boy at the hands of a priest.

The trust cultivated merely belongs to the subverted priestly figure (McWhorther, 1999) who has learned to normalize their conduct and re-align their movements within the range of the subjugator’s Fist; but this is not the case when the subjugator is already in a position of dominance. Such a conductor has not earned much less learned trust. As subjugator, conductor, creator or perpetrator, this artist has only learned power, a power rooted in the malleability, at times ignorance, and of course learned supplelessness of those

that entrust and give way to the fist. This is not learning, but merely forced indoctrination.

Only the formerly disabled Beethoven or Michelangelo rising from below the priestly and academic castes of his or her able bodied oppressor has learned and earned trust... most likely by slaying Goliaths, flipping dikes, and sub-verting the oppressor's rhetoric of consciousness raising through mind fucks. Such a fist carries the God given blow through her piano/computer keyboard, or through a chisel as Plato would have a female Sokrate do to the calloused and priestly academic spirit (*Republik* book 10).

(see the opening pages of Milan Kundera's *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* in which Kundera proposes that if re-incarnation were real it would mean for us that the historical Sokrate, Jesus or Hitler now lives happily like any other person, going unnoticed -- and certainly without sin, because even genocidal sin would merely be an exercise in the release of the Karmic cycles of justice)

If such agony and ecstasy could meaningfully co-exist, as Foucault suggests, then couldn't every moment be a peaceful co-existence of the marginalized dominating the oppressor through overlapping and parallel universes such as those of heaven and hell (Dante's *Divine Comedy*)? "Pleasure" would exist for both the chiseler and chiseled only if such exercise in pain acts as a punitive re-ification of previous (life) transgressions that are simultaneously experienced as a present life pleasure in this otherwise seemingly contemporary bodily purgation.

If the conditions stated above by Kundera were perceived to exist, Foucault's notion of pleasure could be experienced as a Karmic de-and-re-fragmentation process and used to rationalize such an existence within utilitarian ethical notions of hedons and dolors; each moment a living-out of a new notion of pleasure satisfying our former live's oppressed existence, now having earned the Karmic right to punish for pleasure without any other telos as we step outside these interlocking classroom walls and pedagogical structures of thought normalization. In light of the past, when national and academic policies expelling, censoring or otherwise sanctioning the already socially marginalized student, as well as today's Palestinian, are allowed to persist, then such an expulsion from the norms of the academy or land of a people would certainly read like a holocaust for the pedagogy as well as the Israeli, as evident in the streak of schoolroom shootings and suicide bombings. I am reminded of such a reality every time I am confronted by a student of mine or a Muslim friend. It seems that McWhorther touches upon the agony and ecstasy of such an expanded bodily existence, yet her focus is sex, and of a privileged academic class at that. McWhorther fails to develop the proposition even further. I have metaphorically extended her analogy here, as a counter-memo(ry) to subvert our classroom.

This is not to deny sex as a basic instinct; it is to recognize that what is analogous to sexual discovery, in this case discovering knowledge of the self and the world, as perhaps an evolutionary progression for the human animal away from mere sex, which McWhorther also seems to advocate.

What I do find troubling in McWhorther's book is the implication for the lower status dissenter who has no reason to negate or deny someone the kind of responsible sexual freedom as McWhorther suggests but whose failure to practice anything else but heterosexuality or practices deemed threatening to McWhorther's ideal labels her or him a target for resistance... **McWhorther seems to aim at all of society (including the lower classes and the less educated) in this section of the book rather than to clearly focus upon those in power:** "If we are going to attack sexual regimes of power successfully, other people (and some aspects of ourselves) will have to be bent to the force of this new will, and some will undoubtedly be broken" (McWhorther, 1999, 213).

If we take this to heart, McWhorther would have us treat the priest with no financial support nor power as the criminal in a case of sexual deviance perhaps. My suggestion does not dare legitimate cases such as pedophilia, but I do see pedophile priests as an unfortunate result of male-centered indoctrination in which the isolated parish priest has found no better way to practice his homo-erotic tendencies. Unlike McWhorther I'm not focusing on the whole network that normalizes male-centered eros in heterosexual or homosexual or pedophile relations, instead I would suggest going for the hierarchy itself, and not just leaving the priest alone to re-orient his attraction but to support him in this quest.

Forcing change, even in the case of the pedophiler, seems to impose some sort of sexual normalization. As such, in pedophilia or situations of real power difference if not age difference, normalization of some degree may be desirable.

Sexual orientation, I am convinced, is cultivated, and the practitioner is not completely responsible, but the institution and its hierarchy is and should be held responsible to instigate change, beginning with themselves... such as acknowledging their sexual nature and use it creatively and not destructively.

McWhorther doesn't explore how media may promote a free society and adjust for practices which are best not promoted in society. She seems to focus on the self and law and legislation, but I find that media images themselves, like the Catholic Church having centered the viewers' eyes upon the nude male torso of the crucifix, can re-direct our eyes away from the sexual normalizing practices that contributed to the formation of patriarchal norms as oppressive.

- Written at the keyboard by the metaphorical right hand of...
God(the)Father pizza anyone?