

Resisting Docility: Michel Foucault, Judith Butler
and Performative Liturgical Theology

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The body is the site on which identity is written. It is the nexus of a multiplicity of discourses and exercises of power. The body receives its definition and its articulation by that which writes upon it.¹ One of the primary ways that the body is inscribed with meaning or identity is through the power of the State. According to Michel de Certeau, the law says, “Give your body and I will give you a meaning, I will make you a name and a word in my discourse.”² All one needs to do is become compliant, giving oneself over to the law in order to be formed and to be given meaning. Theologically, we could say that bodies often seek the same totalizing logic in ecclesial settings. Bodies do not seek their identities in themselves or in God through the person of Jesus Christ. Rather, Christian bodies have accepted the logic of the State that offers meaning through docility and submission. How did this come to be?

This thesis seeks to interrogate theological embodiment through a liturgical lens. We seek to understand how the logic of the State — the logic of capitalism, precarity, and use — has insinuated itself into notions of liturgical embodiment. Through a close engagement with Michel Foucault’s work *Discipline & Punish*, we will explore how the disciplinary logic of the prison came to shape Western society’s understanding of embodiment. As will become clear, liturgical theology has not been innocent of co-opting the logic of power and domination through rendering bodies docile that the State perfected in eighteenth century prisons. Theologians have oftentimes made use of this logic in order to develop notions of embodiment to fit whatever program they happen to be pushing. Particularly guilty of this trend are theologians in the

¹ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 139.

² *Ibid.*, 149.

Radical Orthodoxy movement. Seeking to recover the ancient practices of the church, practices that they argue are better and purer than current ecclesial and theological practices, Radical Orthodoxy deploys liturgy as a sort of silver bullet against creeping notions of secularism. In this particular thesis, Radical Orthodoxy will be represented by perhaps its most popular and widely read theologian, James K.A. Smith.³ We will muster Foucault's understandings of the carceral logic of the State to critique liturgical theologies that attempt to render bodies as docile.

Rather than docile bodies, this thesis attempts to lay the foundations for a liturgical theology that shapes bodies of resistance to de-forming forces of culture such as colonialism, white supremacy, and heteropatriarchy. By engaging with Judith Butler's understanding of performativity, this thesis attempts to sketch a broad understanding of *how* liturgy can function in a performative mode. The goal is to develop a liturgical theological anthropology that is non-hegemonic and that does not render bodies as homogenous. Rather, performative liturgical theology seeks to allow bodies to perform themselves in creative ways, resisting compulsory systems of obedience and imagining communal utopic futures. In so doing, performative liturgical theology is a theology of resistance, a theology that names docility and precarity and seeks to overcome individualizing and normalizing theological moves. We turn first to Michel Foucault and his notion of docility.

³ Smith was an early adopter of the moniker "Radical Orthodoxy," publishing a book in the Radical Orthodoxy series and publishing a popular level introduction to the movement. Although he does not represent the most sophisticated strains of the movement, he has found a wide audience in certain strands of evangelicalism, especially with influential younger pastors, artists, and musicians. Thus, while Catherine Pickstock or John Milbank may better represent the intellectual prowess of the movement, it is Smith's ideas about liturgy that are being implemented "on the ground," so to speak, thus my decision to use him as the movement's voice here.

CHAPTER 2

DOCILE BODIES: MICHEL FOUCAULT AND LITURGICAL DISCIPLINE

Introduction

Foucault's preoccupation in much of his philosophical career was understanding the ways in which meaning was inscribed in subjects through social conditioning. Whether that took the form of an analysis of madness, sexuality, hospitals, or the prison, Foucault was concerned with how power shapes discourses and identities. In this chapter, we will focus on Foucault's exploration of the penal system in *Discipline & Punish*. This chapter will attempt to draw parallels between Foucault's articulation of docile bodies and James K.A. Smith's understanding of liturgical bodies. The goal of this chapter is to trouble Smith's assertions that liturgy qua liturgy produces "right desires" and shapes culture. Rather than Smith's understanding of bodies as disciplined and shaped in conformity with an ethereal, undefined notion of liturgy, this thesis will go on to attempt to lay a groundwork for a performative liturgical theology — an understanding of liturgical theology that shapes bodies of resistance against the de-forming powers that seek to subjugate individuals into docility.

Foucault offers both the lens through which one can critique liturgical projects that produce docile bodies while also offering constructive resources for further liturgical reflection. Foucault's writings on power are helpful in that power is not only a negative force in his work. Foucault argues that understandings of power as purely negative constitute a narrow, "skeletal" understanding of how power works. He argues,

If power were never anything but repressive...do you really think one would be brought to obey it? What makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, forms discourse. It needs to be considered

as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression.⁴

Here Foucault's understanding of power offers two insights useful for liturgical theology: power that operates positively — shaping social bodies through pleasure, knowledge, and discourse — and an understanding of power that moves beyond repression. It is these two insights that we will take up in response to liturgical theologies aimed at producing repressed bodies and “right” desires.

While this thesis will specifically focus on Foucault's work in *Discipline & Punish*, his analysis of disciplined bodies in carceral institutions in the eighteenth century reflected an ongoing process in other areas of the political technology of the body as well. The body was constantly being mapped by what Foucault calls “micro-physics of power.” We see this in other areas of Foucault's analysis, as in *The Birth of the Clinic* in which the body becomes “a concrete space of perception,” the subject of a medical gaze intent upon mapping bodies.⁵ Again, in the first volume of Foucault's explorations of sexuality, the state is monitoring the sexual lives of its subjects, creating discourses, special knowledges, and analyses in the hopes of controlling the sex lives of citizens.⁶ Foucault's analysis of bodies in the carceral system should be understood alongside his other analyses of power and bodies. It was not only through disciplinary practices that the state was individualizing bodies. Rather, the carceral disciplining of individual bodies

⁴ Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings*, ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), 119.

⁵ Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, trans. A.M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 9.

⁶ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 26.

was part of a larger matrix of power relations intent on developing a cartography of bodies, understanding and analyzing them in order to better subjugate them into docility and usefulness.

Foucault and the Carceral Body

Foucault sets out in *Discipline & Punish* to understand why it was that punishment for crimes ceased to be a spectacle and increasingly became something to be hidden from the public.⁷ Foucault argues that the result of a hidden punishment is threefold: it leaves the domain of everyday perception and enters into abstract consciousness, its effectiveness is seen as resulting from its inevitability, and it is the certainty of being punished and not the horrifying spectacle of public punishment that must discourage crime.⁸ The message the state was sending to the population through hidden punishments rather than brutal public executions was one of seeming benevolence: We do not want to discipline you, but we will if we have to.⁹

Foucault argues that, despite this shift from the overt shaping of bodies through punishment to a focus on the soul, a discourse of how the state exercises power over its subjects through punishment necessarily will revolve around embodiment. Indeed, any understanding of punishment must situate the body in the center of that understanding. Even in the shift to more “lenient” punishments such as confinement or correction “it is always the body that is at issue — the body and its forces, their utility and their docility, their distribution and their submission.”¹⁰ Foucault sets out to write a “history of punishment” using bodies, not systems of law, as the backdrop for his exploration. He does so by situating the body within a complex field of political

⁷ Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 7-9.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 25.

power relations bound up in economic and productive uses. The body is shaped by the state as a force of production, becoming a useful force *only* if the body is both productive and subjected. This is what Foucault calls the “political technology of the body.”¹¹

This political technology is rarely, if ever, systematically formulated. Rather, it is diffuse and composed of many different pieces over time. It is impossible to localize this technology to any one societal institution or state apparatus, often being operated in what Foucault calls a micro-physics of power.¹² The diffuse nature of the micro-physics of power utilized by the political technology of the body means that power is “exercised rather than possessed; it is not the ‘privilege’, acquired or preserved, of the dominant class, but the overall effect of its strategic positions — an effect that is manifested and sometimes extended by the position of those who are dominated.”¹³ This power operates in subtle ways, investing in subjects and being transmitted in and through them, exerting pressure on them and being resisted by them.

Foucault is critical of epistemologies that assert that knowledge can be formed outside of this micro-physics of power. Indeed, it is precisely in and through these power relations that knowledge exists. Knowledge presupposes power and there is no field of power that does not have a correlative field of knowledge. There is no analysis of individual bodies, the power-knowledge epistemology Foucault employs renders this impossible. Rather, Foucault is concerned with the “body politic,” that is, the body as “a set of material elements and techniques that serve as weapons, relays, communication routes and supports for the power and knowledge

¹¹ Ibid., 26.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 26-27.

relations that invest human bodies and subjugate them by turning them into objects of knowledge.”¹⁴

Bodies are sites of power struggles. As power is invested into bodies, attempting to shape them into productive forces of society, bodies also resist this power, pushing back against the micro-physics of societal power. This is where discipline and punishment come into play. While much of the formation of bodies is subtle and beneath the surface, whenever a body threatens to break with the status quo and struggles against the political technology of the body, that body must be corrected. This correction is not merely for the sake of the individual body, but is meant to function as an example for the body politic. The ritual of punishment is one of the micro-physics of power utilized by the state, albeit a more obvious use of power than other political technologies.

The goal of these power relations is to produce what Foucault calls “docile bodies.” He defines docile bodies as bodies “that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved.”¹⁵ In the eighteenth century, new scientific discourses began emerging that mapped the body, not only for the sake of growth or subjection, but for developing mechanisms that make the body more obedient and therefore more useful.¹⁶ The political machinery of power was now focused on breaking down the body, rearranging it in more useful ways. This “mechanics of power” allowed for an understanding of how to have a hold over the bodies of others, not only so that bodies do as the state wishes, but also so that bodies may now operate how the state wishes, with speed, efficiency, and productivity. Discipline, therefore, produces docile bodies, increasing “the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminish[ing] these same forces (in political terms

¹⁴ Ibid., 28.

¹⁵ Ibid., 136.

¹⁶ Ibid., 137-138.

of obedience).”¹⁷ Discipline dissociates power from the body, subjugating it in the name of usefulness and productivity. The body is meticulously detailed, studied, understood, and controlled. As Foucault says, “Discipline is a political anatomy of detail.”¹⁸ The body — detailed, observed, shaped — is no longer capable of resisting the political technology of the body or the micro-physics of power. The body has become docile.

A primary way to produce a docile body is to cut that body off from the social body, creating a society of individuals. This happens through practices of partitioning. “Each individual has his [sic] own place; and each place its individual.”¹⁹ The goal of discipline was to control individuals, to destroy the collective and “unusable and dangerous coagulation.” Partition was a method of “knowing, mastering and using.” Restricting bodies to certain spaces allowed the state to “eliminate the effects of imprecise distributions.” The atomistic breakdown of disciplinary power for each individual body produces atomistic bodies, disconnected from the body politic. It does so by producing “presences and absences, to know where and how to locate individuals, to set up useful communications, to interrupt others, to be able at each moment to supervise the conduct of each individual, to assess it, to judge it, to calculate its qualities or merits.”²⁰ Foucault even goes so far as to argue that it is discipline which “makes” individuals. Discipline “is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise.”²¹

Foucault argues that there are four characteristics of individuality expressed in docile bodies: The docile body is cellular, organic, genetic, and combinatory. The cellular body is

¹⁷ Ibid., 138.

¹⁸ Ibid., 139.

¹⁹ Ibid., 143.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 170.

produced by the play of spatial distribution, by the State's control of the movement of populations and the prescription of movements. The organic body is produced through the coding of activities, the control of how subjects move in the world and how bodies are exercised. The genetic body is produced by the accumulation of time.²² The combinatory body is produced by the composition of forces, that is, by the working of discrete micro-physics of power on the body expressed in tactics deployed by the State. Foucault says that tactics are "the art of constructing, with located bodies, coded activities and trained aptitudes, mechanisms in which the product of the various forces is increased by their calculated combination are no doubt the highest form of disciplinary practice."²³ Foucault asserts that these tactics were first of all practiced in carceral systems and then in the military. With their success, theoreticians began realizing how these tactics of docility could be adapted to be used for the control of both the individual body and of the complex multiplicities of social bodies. Thus the political apparatus deployed these tactics in an attempt at peace and order, seeking "to implement the mechanism of the perfect army, of the disciplined mass, of the docile, useful troop."²⁴ Military and carceral

²² Foucault uses the phrase "the accumulation of time" most prominently in his essay "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias." However, even in this essay Foucault spends just a few sentences talking about what "the accumulation of time" means, and it seems to be deployed differently in *Discipline and Punish* than it is in his essay on heterotopias. In that work, Foucault uses the phrase to denote the attempt at endless accumulation by museums and libraries, while here Foucault relates the accumulation of time to the production of docile bodies by disciplinary systems. It seems, then, that this was a concept that interested him, but that was only sketched and never fully fleshed out. Cf. Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias," *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité*, no. 5 (October 1984): 46–49; translated by Jay Miskowic in *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (Spring, 1986): 22–27, accessed October 26, 2017, <http://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/foucault1.pdf>.

²³ Foucault, *Discipline & Punish*, 167.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 168.

discipline thus became effective tactics for producing docile bodies in society, allowing for the “individual and collective coercion of bodies.”²⁵

Punishment is the direct way in which disciplinary power shapes non-conforming, non-docile bodies. Foucault argues that punishment is not meant to bring about repentance or repression. Rather, “It refers individual actions to a whole that is at once a field of comparison, a space of differentiation, and the principle of a rule to be followed.”²⁶ Punishment differentiates individuals from one another, producing an “average” to be respected and towards which non-conformists should strive. Punishment offers a quantitative way to hierarchize behaviors and bodies, producing a “conformity” that must be achieved. Thus, when bodies fail to produce this conformity, when they are non-docile, the State is able to trace “the external frontier of the abnormal,” developing a cartography of non-conformity and allowing for greater understandings of how to discipline bodies and produce docility among the populace.²⁷ Discipline and punishment, therefore, necessitate observation from an invisible force. Foucault says,

Disciplinary power...is exercised through its invisibility; at the same time it imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility. In discipline, it is the subjects who have to be seen. Their visibility assures the hold of the power that is exercised over them. It is the fact of being constantly seen, of being able always to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection.²⁸

Discipline thus works in invisible ways, ever-watchful for non-conformity, for abnormality. When it spots abnormality, more visible powers emerge to ensure conformity and docility: punishment appears to differentiate abnormal individual bodies, inscribing them as different, as other. There is no room for abnormality in a system of docility. Bodies that stand

²⁵ Ibid., 169.

²⁶ Ibid., 182.

²⁷ Ibid., 183.

²⁸ Ibid., 187.

apart from society, bodies that refuse conformity and productivity, must be punished, they must be shown to be outside of the frontiers of acceptable society. By punishing these bodies, they become signifiers to the rest of society: Remain docile or meet the same fate. Discipline thus functions as a unitary force, reinforcing homogeneity through normality, creating a “political anatomy” of the social body.²⁹ This political anatomy allows the State to normalize behavior and bodies in such a way as to insure that bodies are “reduced to a ‘political’ force at the very least cost and maximized as a useful force.”³⁰

The political use of bodies is first studied and perfected through carceral institutions. Foucault argues that the prison is the disciplinary institution *par excellence*. Foucault refers to prisons as “omni-disciplinary” in a way that other disciplinary institutions (such as schools or the military) are not. While other disciplinary institutions are specialized, producing certain kinds of disciplined bodies, the prison is an immersive disciplinary institution, inflicting upon the individual “an unceasing discipline.”³¹ Thus, Prison guards became “technicians of behaviour: engineers of conduct, orthopaedists of individuality.” Their role was to produce docile and capable bodies, bodies that were socially acceptable and productive. They did so through permanent observation, “a body of knowledge was being constantly built up from the everyday behaviour of the inmates; it was organized as an instrument of perpetual assessment.” Bodily discipline and the intimate knowledge of the inmate’s habits produced a “double effect: a ‘soul’ to be known and a subjection to be maintained.”³²

²⁹ Ibid., 221.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 235-236.

³² Ibid., 294-295.

The omni-disciplinary prison and the prison guard as a technician of power produced understandings of disciplined bodies that eventually produced what Foucault calls the “carceral texture of society.” The cartography of docility developed in prisons was not confined to the carceral institution. Rather, it assured “both the real capture of the body and its perpetual observation; it is, by its very nature, the apparatus of punishment that conforms most completely to the new economy of power and the instrument for the formation of knowledge that this very economy needs.”³³ The knowledge of docile bodies, a knowledge rendering groups of humans as useful, has been adapted by the various human sciences. The carceral network of docility conveys a “specific and new modality of power” that “required the involvement of definite relations of knowledge in relations to power; it called for a technique of overlapping subjection and objectification; it brought with it new procedures of individualization.” The carceral structure of society has rendered humans knowable in their souls, individuality, bodies, consciousness, and conduct.

The carceral network is a complex relation of power-knowledge and domination-observation, an epistemology that expands to the entirety of the human sciences. This allows the State to expand its regimen of docility beyond the carceral system. The prison occupies a central place in disciplining bodies, but it is not alone. It is linked to a whole system of carceral institutions. These institutions may seem as if they are intended to cure, to alleviate pain, or to comfort, but Foucault argues that they are spokes on the wheel of disciplinary docility. These carceral institutions — the school, the hospital, the therapist’s office — “all tend, like the prison, to exercise a power of normalization.”³⁴

³³ Ibid., 304.

³⁴ Ibid., 308.

In sum, the body for Foucault is the product of a complex, interlocking system of political technologies meant to render it normalized and docile, ready for productivity and usefulness. As Foucault scholar Ladelle McWhorter argues, “the body” as a static concept does not exist. Therefore, the philosophical (or, in this case, theological) question cannot be “What is the body?” Rather, “The genealogical question is: What are our bodies now, and what is the history of those bodies?”³⁵ Foucault’s articulation of docile bodies is to be understood in this way: an attempt at understanding the body as it was shaped through complex interplays of power. Turning to theology, McWhorter’s question remains: What is the history of our bodies? James K.A. Smith offers one such attempt at answering this question through an engagement with secularism and liturgy.

James K.A. Smith and the Disciplining of Desire

James K.A. Smith’s Cultural Liturgies series is an attempt to cast secular society as “liturgical” — by which Smith seems to mean “formative” — while articulating how the category of liturgical worship combats the rampant consumerism fostered by secular liturgies. It is important at the outset to attempt to define what exactly Smith means when he says “liturgy.” For Smith, liturgies are “formative pedagogies of desire that are trying to make us a certain kind of person.”³⁶ This means that in his work, Smith repeatedly refers to anything that shapes humans as a liturgy. The shopping mall is Smith’s favorite image of secular liturgy, representing the American drive of consumerism and profit. Thus, “the liturgy/pedagogy of the mall” comes

³⁵ Ladelle McWhorter, *Bodies & Pleasures: Foucault and the Politics of Sexual Normalization* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 157.

³⁶ James K.A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 24.

to represent anything that aims to shape us in our hearts or “guts” outside of the church.³⁷ For Smith, the heart is shaped and molded by what we desire and love, which produces “habit-forming practices in which we participate, it is the ritual and practices of the mall—the liturgies of mall and market—that shape our imaginations and how we orient ourselves to the world.”³⁸ Liturgies, therefore, are those things — both sacred and secular — that “shape and constitute our identities by forming our most fundamental desires and our most basic attunement to the world...[They] make us certain kinds of people, and what defines us is what we *love*.”³⁹

Smith is clear from the outset that he will not do any analysis of specific forms of liturgical worship. In a footnote, Smith says that to do specific liturgical analysis would represent an attempt to “valorize” a particular form or style of worship.⁴⁰ He later justifies this lack of liturgical particularity with the assertion that *all* forms of (Christian) worship are liturgical. Liturgy, for Smith, is not a specialized category with a definite genealogy and history or development. It is merely the program or habits of particular denominations or congregations as they engage in an embodied worship of God.⁴¹ These liturgies then foster rightly ordered desires that run contrary to how “secular liturgies” produce wrongly ordered desires. Liturgy is thus a “political act,” it marks Christians as set apart from secular culture, as belonging to a different city and as “subjects of a coming King.”⁴²

Smith justifies using “liturgy” to refer to secular formation by arguing that liturgies are “rituals of ultimate concern,” that is, they are rituals that are meant to form identity and particular

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., 25.

³⁹ Ibid. Emphasis in original.

⁴⁰ Cf. Ibid., footnote 8.

⁴¹ Ibid., 151ff. Indeed, Smith argues that when says “liturgy” what he really means is “worship,” the two are synonymous in his work.

⁴² Ibid., 154.

visions for the good life.⁴³ Liturgy is used to denote “our thickest practices” that “aim to do nothing less than shape our identity by shaping our desire for what we envision as the kingdom—the ideal of human flourishing.”⁴⁴ Liturgies are, Smith argues, the most important forms of ritual practice precisely because they aim at our hearts, attempting to make us certain kinds of subjects by shaping our loves. In the second volume of the Cultural Liturgies series, Smith argues that liturgies carry the Story⁴⁵ to us in the form of a *habitus* by marshalling our aesthetic impulses. They are “cunning pedagogies” by nature of their being told by and upon our bodies, “thereby embedding themselves in our imagination, becoming part of the background that determines how we see the world.”⁴⁶

It seems, then, that theological anthropology is irreducibly liturgical. Indeed, Smith refers to humanity as *homo liturgicus* throughout his work. The task of Christian theology and the Christian church is, therefore, to develop liturgies that rightly order desire, that prioritize aesthetics and narrative in order to shape subjects beyond the liturgy of the mall. If the liturgy of the mall represents rampant consumerism, the church’s liturgy represents rightly ordered desire, that is, a desire for Christ and for the kingdom of God. What is unclear in Smith’s work is what “rightly ordered desire” looks like. There are vague gestures towards “the good life” or “aesthetics” or “the gospel” but no concrete explanation of *what* those categories actually mean or how they play out concretely in liturgical praxis. The closest we get to an explanation of the

⁴³ Ibid., 86.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 87.

⁴⁵ Smith only really ever defines this “Story” as the gospel, but he never specifically talks about what he means by the gospel.

⁴⁶ James K.A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 139. Note that bodies seem to only be carriers for the heart and desire. For Smith, there is never any discourse about the concrete body, only desire and the heart.

good life from Smith is, “Humanity and all of creation flourish when they are rightly ordered to a *telos* that is not of their own choosing but rather is stipulated by God.”⁴⁷

Channeling St. Augustine, Smith argues that our hearts are restless until they find their rest in God’s *telos* for our lives, and this *telos* is a submission to the laws of God, the “displacement” of our own wants and desires in favor of God’s wants and desires for us.⁴⁸ It seems that the proper stance of human flourishing is one in which the self is dissipated entirely, replaced by a love of God that drives how we move in the world. The Christian is no longer a part of culture or society, they are part of the Kingdom of God, agents of a King operating in and among the secular domain.

Docile Liturgical Bodies

While there is certainly some good to be found in Smith’s work, his articulation (or lack thereof) of what constitutes holy bodies is troubling. Smith uses themes consistent with much of the Christian mystical tradition’s understanding of holiness, namely, that of self-emptying.⁴⁹ However, the way that Smith deploys it is imprecise and broad. Our selves are displaced by God’s self, our desires replaced by God’s desires. But what are God’s desires? What is God’s self? Does the human retain any agency in this self-emptying? The most Smith tells us is that our desires become teleological, by which he seems to mean eschatological. Our desires are no longer aimed at this world or material gain. Rather, they are aimed towards abiding with Christ in the eternal Kingdom of God. But Smith is also adamant that proper worship necessarily leads

⁴⁷ Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 175.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 176.

⁴⁹ One is reminded, for instance, of Meister Eckhart’s notions of self-emptying, along with other medieval mystics. However, Smith never invokes these figures in his discussions of the self being emptied and filled with God.

to social transformation. If our desires are primarily eschatological, how exactly do they transform society?⁵⁰

But perhaps most troubling is the way that Smith articulates liturgical embodiment. For Smith, describing liturgical worship necessarily entails embodiment: “Lungs to sing, knees to kneel, legs to stand, arms to raise, eyes to weep, noses to smell, tongues to taste, ears to hear, hands to hold and raise.”⁵¹ This embodied worship will then produce rightly ordered desires, which include a certain way of moving in the world. Bodies in liturgical worship are disciplined to abstain from culture, reproducing the *telos* of Christic desire in other subjects through ritual holiness.⁵² Smith’s liturgical body is a docile body. It is a body of conformity with other (Christian) bodies. A body that is ready for productivity and usefulness, so long as that productivity is given to reproducing the Kingdom of God in other subjects. The liturgical body is one that, rather than creatively and boldly discovering new paths of being-in-the-world, is conditioned by the teleological law of God to fit “into the grooves that constitute the grain of the universe and are conducive to flourishing.”⁵³

Smith’s version of the liturgical body is a normalized body. The body’s dispositions are being constantly reformed and righted through liturgical worship precisely so that the liturgical

⁵⁰ To be fair to Smith, this is the question he claims to take up in the forthcoming volume 3 of the Cultural Liturgies series.

⁵¹ Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 139. In this passage, Smith argues that worship requires a body to do these things. It is a remarkably ableist passage, one that, through the language of requirement, renders “proper” worship only to those who can embody worship. Such a view of liturgy and worship produces what Sharon Betcher refers to as a fear of “falling...out of the sociality of likeness and appearance...The fear of being found physically unfit.” Sharon V. Betcher, *Spirit and the Politics of Disablement* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 31.

⁵² Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 209.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 176.

body can “missionally”⁵⁴ enter the secular world and reform and renew a broken culture.⁵⁵

Bodies are instrumentalized for use, only finding usefulness insofar as they produce rightly ordered desire and missional outreach. They are taken up into the economy of reproduction, what Lee Edelman calls the logic of futurity. For Edelman, this is symbolized in the image of the Child, an image that regulates political discourses by maintaining a focus on collective futurity.⁵⁶ For Smith, normalized bodies of worship will necessarily reproduce themselves in acts of communal missional worship, reforming God’s “good but broken world” into the image of the future Kingdom of God.⁵⁷ Abnormal bodies must be normalized through liturgical worship. Disordered desire must be re-ordered through a liturgical encounter with God. Freedom means losing the self and its desires in favor of a homogenizing sameness instantiated through God’s desires worked in us.

What is becoming clear is that Smith, despite his assertions of belonging to a different (holy) society, is reproducing the carceral system of observation and discipline in ecclesial garb. As Foucault has shown, the carceral epistemology of docile bodies eventually bled out from the prison and now structures society itself. Smith’s arguments for liturgical embodiment echo what Foucault argued about docile bodies. That is, liturgical bodies are bodies that have been shaped into docility by a political anatomy, albeit an ecclesial politics. For Foucault, it was the political apparatus of the State that sought to render bodies docile. For Smith, the liturgical body is

⁵⁴ Smith, like many evangelicals over the past decade and a half, uses the word “missional” to denote a certain evangelistic lifestyle. The “missional” life is a life devoted to missionary activity in one’s local context.

⁵⁵ Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 157.

⁵⁶ Cf. Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 11.

⁵⁷ Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom*, 157. Again, Smith is never precise on what a culture reformed in the image of the future/coming Kingdom of God would actually look like, what ethic would be used to shape it, and who would be included in that kingdom.

rendered docile by God. What is troubling in Smith is that he is never clear about *what* exactly it is that God forms in liturgical bodies, *how* desire is to be oriented, and *why* the self's desires must be eliminated in favor of an ethereal ethic of cultural reformation. The focus of liturgical embodiment for Smith is combating the ways in which secular culture seeks to re-define areas of ultimate concern, shaping our desires towards things that are not of the Kingdom of God.

In his criticisms of “secular liturgies” and culture, Smith is never clear about what he is critiquing beyond “consumerism.”⁵⁸ One of the most glaring omissions in Smith’s work is his lack of critique of the death-dealing aspects of Western culture. There is no critique of patriarchy or white supremacy and no engagement with disability.⁵⁹ Secular culture, it seems, refers only to consumerism, only to things that aim to shape our material desires away from God and towards the accumulation of wealth. Smith remains frustratingly imprecise in his definitional work, arguing merely that liturgical bodies are made devoid of their own desire, infused instead with God’s (undefined) desire, and therefore will necessarily reform a culture that is actively shaping subjects to desire not-God. While Smith never employs the term docility, it is safe to say that his liturgical anthropology could be called an ethic of docility. Bodies are not resisting death-dealing aspects of Western society, they are not confronting specific and concrete issues of oppression or resisting regimes of power that seek the de-formation of abnormal bodies. Rather, bodies are informed by liturgical practices that inscribe them with God’s desires by nature of God acting in those liturgical practices upon the bodies of Christians.

⁵⁸ Consumerism appears to be interchangeable and synonymous with capitalism in Smith’s work.

⁵⁹ Smith also does not address issues of sexuality in any of his books, a significant weakness in works about “desire.” As David Brown has compellingly argued, “It is only if Christianity recovers a more relaxed attitude to the use of sexuality as deep metaphor that it will be able to appreciate more fully once more...the mediating sacramentality of sexuality.” Cf. David Brown, *God and Grace of Body: Sacrament in Ordinary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 36-37.

In Smith's conception of embodiment, actual humans play little to no role. His is a profoundly theocentric (or christocentric) understanding of human action. God acts in the liturgy and indwells bodies, rightly shaping desire. There is no explanation of *how* the clergy or the laity interact with one another, how (or even if) the clergy oversees the liturgy or channels God into the liturgy, or how the laity receives God in the liturgy. It seems that humans show up and passively receive God and allow God to work through them through some ethereal ritual. Similarly, human desire is uncritically shaped by secular liturgies as well. The person as thinking individual has completely disappeared in Smith's work, appearing, rather, as a sponge, passively and uncritically absorbing either God's shaping desire or the misshaping desire of culture. Liturgical bodily formation, therefore, is entirely exterior to both the self and to the ritual.⁶⁰

Redemptive Hegemony and Ritualization

As we saw in the previous section, Smith locates the power of ritual external to ritual itself. (Sacred) Liturgical ritual is invested with power by God, it seems that the ritual in and of itself does not function to in-form bodies. In contrast, ritual theorist Catherine Bell locates the power of ritualization precisely in the ritual itself. Amy Hollywood, in her reading of Bell, argues that "power and its dispositions are generated and regulated through rituals themselves, rather than lying outside them as that which constrains or otherwise marks these activities off as special."⁶¹ Indeed, locating the power of ritual external to ritual is a category mistake for Bell, who argues that ritual practice is situational, strategic, embedded in a misrecognition of what it is

⁶⁰ Interestingly, it is unclear in Smith's work where exactly secular rituals receive their power to shape and mold bodies.

⁶¹ Amy Hollywood, *Acute Melancholia and Other Essays: Mysticism, History, and the Study of Religion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 230.

in fact doing, and able to reproduce or reconfigure a vision of the order of power in the world, what Bell calls “redemptive hegemony.”⁶²

According to Catherine Bell,

The term ‘redemptive hegemony’ denotes the way in which reality is experienced as a natural weave of constraint and possibility, the fabric of day-to-day dispositions and decisions experienced as a field for strategic action. Rather than an embracing ideological vision of the whole, it conveys a biased, nuanced rendering of the ordering of power so as to facilitate the envisioning of personal empowerment through activity in the perceived system.⁶³

Perhaps, then, redemptive hegemony is a helpful category through which to view how Smith’s liturgical theology renders bodies powerful only insofar as they conform to his vision of normalization through God’s acting in the liturgy. So long as bodies conform to ecclesial political power, they are rendered useful and holy. If bodies leave the ecclesial political sphere (what Smith calls a “monasticism”) they are rendering themselves open to de-formation, to disordered desires shaped by culture rather than by God. The church thus becomes a hegemony in Smith’s thought: God, and therefore power, is only to be found in ecumenical liturgical praxis.

Absent Smith’s analysis of ritual, both religious and secular, is any understanding of how power dynamics work in situations of bodily formation. It seems that there is a binary opposition in his work: Secular rituals function *only* to deconstruct bodies and dis-order desire, Christian rituals exist *purely* to form bodies to “rightly” desire what God desires. However, as Catherine Bell helpfully reminds us,

Ritualization, as a strategic mode of action effective within certain social orders, does not, in any useful understanding of the words, ‘control’ individuals or society. Yet ritualization is very much concerned with power. Closely involved with the objectification and legitimation of an ordering of power as an assumption of the way things really are, ritualization is a strategic arena for the embodiment of power relations.

⁶² Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 81.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 84.

Hence, the relationship of ritualization and social control may be better approached in terms of how ritual activities constitute specific embodiment and exercise of power.”⁶⁴

It is precisely in Smith’s lack of any articulation of power relations or ideology that renders his project untenable. In Smith’s understanding, there is no complex interplay of power, there is just good vs. evil, right vs. wrong. The church/liturgy is incapable of disordering desire. There is no recourse in Smith’s system to understand something like the Catholic clergy sexual abuse scandals, the Christian perpetuation of heteronormativity and patriarchy, the evils of colonialism often cloaked in the guise of missionary activity, or any other myriad problems that persist in Christian churches. There is no way to account for what I refer to as “liturgical failures,” that is, those people who perform the liturgy or attend worship regularly and still maintain white supremacist ideologies.⁶⁵

The way forward for a constructive liturgical understanding of bodies would necessarily entail a Foucauldian study of liturgy, an attempt to understand the power dynamics of clergy-laity-ritual. This chapter began with a lengthy exploration of the docile body in Foucault’s work. It is precisely this kind of genealogical work that needs to be present in theological anthropology — both a genealogy of Christian understandings of bodies *and* a genealogy of specific liturgical rituals. Smith’s analysis is consonant with what Foucault refers to as the carceral society, the society that has learned how to discipline bodies into obedience through punishment and normalization. For a constructive theological liturgical anthropology to shape bodies of resistance — abnormal bodies that refuse to be homogenized and co-opted by the State — it must seek to understand the development of liturgy, the political moves that led to the form of liturgy (or worship) that we have today, and the hidden interplay of ideology and power

⁶⁴ Ibid., 170.

⁶⁵ We will return to this notion of liturgical failures at a later point in the argument.

underneath every ecclesial form. It must take seriously Foucault's approach to history, an approach that "disconcerts; it offers a means of criticizing the present, without the possibility of a return to the past."⁶⁶

Unfortunately, due to the constraints of space, there will not be a genealogical understanding of liturgy and power in this thesis. Rather, in conversation with Judith Butler, the next chapter attempts to sketch a broad foundation of how liturgy can function as a performative, as an impure tool of criticism. This approach to performative liturgy keeps Foucault always in the background, realizing that we can never escape the multivalent operation of normalizing power and discipline. And, while Smith uses discipline as a bludgeon with which to shape liturgical docile bodies, this sketch attempts to understand that discipline, rightly conceived, can lead to bodies of resistance. Indeed, "disciplinary power enhances our capacities and develops new skills; it trains us and offers ways of being in the world that can be novel, transformative, or appealing."⁶⁷ It is this positive Foucauldian understanding of discipline that will inform performative liturgical anthropology.

⁶⁶ Felix Driver, "Bodies in Space: Foucault's Account of Disciplinary Power," in *Reassessing Foucault: Power, Medicine and the Body* ed. Colin Jones and Roy Porter (London: Routledge, 1994), 115.

⁶⁷ Cressida J. Heyes, *Self-Transformations: Foucault, Ethics, and Normalized Bodies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 8.

CHAPTER 3

RESISTANT BODIES: JUDITH BUTLER AND PERFORMATIVE LITURGICAL THEOLOGY

Introduction

We turn now to Judith Butler's notion of the performative. For Butler, performativity has more to do with speech-acts as constituting bodily construction than it does with concrete embodied practices.⁶⁸ And, while liturgical theology certainly entails an analysis of liturgical speech-acts, we are more interested in threading together Butler's work on performativity with notions of liturgical embodiment in Siobhán Garrigan and Louis-Marie Chauvet. By understanding liturgical theology as performative theology, we will then attempt to sketch an understanding of liturgical embodiment that seeks the liberation of the oppressed, the end of marginality and precarity, and the fostering of communal understandings of embodiment and solidarity. This chapter represents the first steps in developing a theological anthropology through a performative liturgical lens.

Defining Performative Bodies

Butler begins her work *Gender Trouble* with a meditation on how bodies are socially constructed. She argues that most conceptions of the body as socially constructed understand bodies as passive mediums "on which cultural meanings are inscribed or as the instrument through which an appropriative and interpretive will determines a cultural meaning for itself."⁶⁹ This understanding of the socially constructed body leads to the instrumentalization of bodies for

⁶⁸ Cf. Hollywood, *Acute Melancholia*, 218.

⁶⁹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* 10th Anniversary Edition (London: Routledge, 1999), 12.

which cultural meaning is merely an external affair. However, for Butler, the body itself is a construction, it is not a mere receptacle of meaning. The question then becomes, “How do we reconceive the body no longer as a passive medium or instrument awaiting the enlivening capacity of a distinctly immaterial will?”⁷⁰

Butler sets out to answer this question by engaging issues of identity, specifically sexual and gender identity. She argues that identity is always in flux, arising and dissolving depending on how it needs to be used politically at any given moment. This openness of identity resists obedience to normative understandings of definitional closure, allowing bodies to perform themselves through concrete practices as they see fit.⁷¹ Thus, gender identity becomes performative, “that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed. ... There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results.”⁷² In her analysis, Butler argues that gender is constituted through “a repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being.”⁷³

Here we begin to see Foucault’s understanding of discipline as constituting a positive identity — as allowing for capacities to envision new ways of being-in-the-world — is a helpful approach to identity construction. Butler is clear that our identities are always circumscribed in the complex interplay of political and social power. Bodies are always constituted socially, they

⁷⁰ Ibid., 13.

⁷¹ Ibid., 12-13.

⁷² Ibid., 33.

⁷³ Ibid., 43-44.

always are already “cultural signs” that run into limits of culturally instituted fantasies and norms.⁷⁴ Gender performance is closely monitored and policed by culture, and thus carceral discipline comes to play a role in gendered performance: “As a strategy of survival within compulsory systems, gender is a performance with clearly punitive consequences. Discrete genders are part of what ‘humanizes’ individuals within contemporary culture; indeed, we regularly punish those who fail to do their gender right.”⁷⁵ However, gender is also something capable of producing subversion within those compulsory systems. Gender is an “act,” open to instabilities and splitting, self-parody, criticism, and hyperbolic expressions of what society deems as natural. Thus identity becomes political, creatively and subversively embodying alternative ways of existing in systems that demand normalization. Identity is constituted through political discipline, produced and generated to form subjects into normalization, but it is precisely in this disciplinary action that Butler locates the possibility for subversion.

Butler argues that gender subversion happens through repetition, the repeating of gendered acts that functions in such a way as to displace gender norms and demonstrate the absence of any ontology of gender. Through such subversive acts, identity is progressively deconstructed, establishing “as political the very terms through which identity is articulated.”⁷⁶ The critical task of subversive gender performances and identity deconstruction is to re-describe possible identities that *already* exist, “but which exist within cultural domains designated as culturally unintelligible and impossible.”⁷⁷ It seems that, for Butler, subversive performative identity consists in acts that remain unintelligible to mainstream culture, performances that do

⁷⁴ Ibid., 90.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 178.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 189.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

not find their possibilities outside of culture or existing power structures. Subversive identities are those found in (and which expose) the gaps of societal logic, that show the cracks of systems of compulsory obedience by means of exploitation.⁷⁸

In *Bodies That Matter*, Butler further sketches out notions of the performative, arguing that performativity is not mere act but rather is to be understood as a ritual, “a reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names.”⁷⁹ Therefore, performativity must be understood within a process of iterability, “a regularized and constrained repetition of norms.”⁸⁰ These ritual performances of gender and identity are done under forces of prohibition and stand with the threat of ostracism or even death compelling the shape of the performance. Butler argues,

Generally speaking, a performative functions to produce that which it declares. As a discursive practice (performative ‘acts’ must be repeated to become efficacious), performatives constitute a locus of discursive production. No ‘act’ apart from a regularized and sanctioned practice can wield the power to produce that which it declares. Indeed, performative act apart from a reiterated and, hence, sanctioned set of conventions can appear only as a vain effort to produce effects that it cannot possibly produce.⁸¹

Essentially, what Butler is here arguing, is that identity is something constituted through reiterated performances, ritual acts of self-identification that produce identity. The citationality of the body, produced through ritual performativity, is always an interpretation of the social

⁷⁸ Butler here uses the notion of drag performance to demonstrate precisely how gendered performances can utilize the binary power structure of dominant society to subvert that very power structure, constructing an identity that seems to conform to certain gender norms, but does so in ways that seem incomprehensible — indeed, impossible — to the arbiters of political ontology. Cf. *Ibid.*, 174-180.

⁷⁹ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (London: Routledge: 1993), xii.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 70.

norms operating to form bodies. These citational interpretations of normativity “expose the norm itself as a privileged interpretation.”⁸²

Butler understands performativity as the materialization of the body. For Butler, a return to the notion of the material entails an understanding that materialization is a process that “stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter.”⁸³ Materiality is produced by performativity and sociality. Theologian Mayra Rivera helpfully points to the fact that, for Butler, “Materiality does not precede sociality but is shaped by it. And furthermore, corporeality is formed by processes that vastly exceed the individual body.”⁸⁴ Here we find resonance with Foucault. For Butler, as for Foucault, we cannot speak of the body, of *my* body, apart from the communities and societies and interplays of power that shape it. Ladelles McWhorter’s Foucauldian question comes into view again: Not “What is the body,” but “What is the history of our bodies?” The recollection of our bodies is something that is always incomplete, however, something never fully narratable. Butler says, “To be a body is, in some sense, to be deprived of having a full recollection of one’s life. There is a history to my body of which I can have no recollection.”⁸⁵ Thus, any understanding of embodiment also understands that there will always be gaps, fissures, things that we cannot understand or cite or describe about ourselves. Identity is always a process, never completed, and always communal.

The invisible working of normativity and power renders some aspects of our identities and bodies unknowable. But it is precisely in these moments of “stoppage, interruption” and open-endedness in which the most authentic self is discovered.⁸⁶ Moments of stoppage and

⁸² Ibid., 71.

⁸³ Ibid., xiii.

⁸⁴ Mayra Rivera, *Poetics of the Flesh* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 144.

⁸⁵ Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 38.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 64.

interruption are what performativity attempts to name, interrogating the gaps in our performance and in the performances of dominant, normalizing culture. Citationality, materiality, and performativity offer the framework through which we can begin to understand our embodiment, the complex interplay of power, obedience, and history that constitute our identities. This framework also offers methods of resisting the normalizing logic of the carceral society. Performativity recognizes that one cannot escape the systems of compulsory obedience in which we all live. But what performativity offers is a way of living within those compulsory systems of obedience in subversive and parodic ways.

Through understanding performativity and ritual, interrogating the ways that our bodies came to exist in the space in which we inhabit, we are able to imagine different ways of being-in-the-world, ways that seem impossible to normalizing logic. As Butler argues, performativity recognizes the ways in which we are implicated in that which we oppose. It thus allows us to turn “power against itself to produce alternative modalities of power, to establish a kind of political contestation that is not a ‘pure’ opposition, a ‘transcendence’ of contemporary relations of power, but a difficult labor of forging a future from resources inevitably impure.”⁸⁷ Performativity recognizes that disciplinary and normative systems of compulsory obedience are impossible to escape. What performativity offers, however, is a way of working *within* those systems to subvert them. There is no ideological understanding that our ritual performances of identity will be “pure” or untainted. To use the language of theology, there is no understanding of a “two-kingdoms” political theology whereby the Christian (or queer, in Butler’s formulation) belongs to a holy kingdom while culture belongs to the kingdom of the corrupt world. Our subversive performances are always somewhat “tainted,” they necessarily make use of tools that

⁸⁷ Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 184.

have been used to dominate and oppress and silence. But they do so in creative ways, turning those very methodologies of power against themselves, imagining new possibilities for the future.

One of the primary ways of imagining those new possibilities is in assembly. In her most recent work, Butler has begun sketching a performative theory of assembly. She argues that bodies assembled together, even in silence, “signify in excess of any particular written or vocalized account of what they are about.”⁸⁸ By assembling together bodies call into question the “powerful dimensions of reigning notions of the political.”⁸⁹ Although Butler does not specifically gesture towards Foucault’s notions of individualizing power, it is clear here that her performative assemblies are to be understood as resisting the carceral logic of individualism. Recall that, for Foucault, the carceral society functions to normalize bodies through individualizing practices of power. By producing individual bodies, the State is thus able to render bodies as docile, as capable of subjection and use. What Butler is here proposing is that bodies, even in silent assembly, resist that individualizing logic and challenge the power structures that perpetuate what she calls precarity — the condition where the political apparatus induces certain (abnormal, non-docile) populations into living in failing social and economic networks and who are more exposed to violence, injury, and death.⁹⁰ Performative assemblies name those structures of power and begin bringing new situations into effect.⁹¹

Turning to notions of embodiment, Butler argues that bodily acts become performative in that bodies are inscribed with certain expectations and fantasies and norms. We are imprinted

⁸⁸ Judith Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 8.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 28.

with these norms, “branding us like so many passive recipients of a culture machine.” We are “produced” by these norms and inscriptions, not in the sense of “being brought into being” nor as determinative of our identities. “Rather, they inform the lived modes of embodiment we acquire over time, and those very modes of embodiment can prove to be ways of contesting those norms, even breaking with them.”⁹² Butler views her work, however, as a normative work. Not all normativity is necessarily bad normativity, just as not all discipline is bad discipline in Foucault. Rather, in clarifying her earlier work on gender performance, Butler says she was not attempting to prescribe certain performances of gender as the “right” performance over and against others. Rather, she was attempting to offer

the breakthrough of certain kinds of gender performances into public space, free of police brutality, harassment, criminalization, and pathologization. The point was precisely to relax the coercive hold of norms on gendered life—which is not the same as transcending or abolishing all norms—for the purposes of living a more livable life. This last is a normative view not in the sense that it is a form of normality, but only in the sense that it represents a view of the world as it should be. Indeed, the world as it should be would have to safeguard breaks with normality, and offer support and affirmation for those who make those breaks.⁹³

Performativity is thus a way of naming utopic practices — practices bent on bringing about a world in which otherness and abnormality are protected and affirmed. The new normativity for performativity is one that, ironically, offers no norm for performance but rather safeguards expressions of identity that defy the logic of compulsory obedience. Perhaps an aside into queer utopic politics is in order. Queer theorist José Esteban Muñoz argues that such an understanding of performativity goes against the usual pragmatic program of gay politics (i.e. focusing on issues of marriage or inclusion in the military) and understands queerness and performativity as a horizon, a refusal to submit to the logic and power of compulsory

⁹² Ibid., 29.

⁹³ Ibid., 33.

heterosexuality. Muñoz calls this understanding of queer performativity “queer time.” Queer time defies linearity of “straight time,” that is, it defies concrete and pragmatic political logic, a logic that demands that the only future is now. Queerness, however, represents a stepping out of straight time “and a movement to a greater openness to the world.”⁹⁴ In deployments of the pragmatic under the regime of straight time, Muñoz finds a not-doing, an anti-performativity that is only concerned with the now. Muñoz argues, “Doing, performing, engaging the performative as force of and for futurity is queerness’s bent and ideally the way to queerness.”⁹⁵ The performative is thus a way of imagining the utopic future, the potentiality of a community that refuses the poisonous present.⁹⁶

Returning to Butler’s notion of communal performativity, she argues that assembled bodies represent a new way of understanding time and space. Rather than a dominating singular logic or will, what bodies assembled together symbolize is distinctive and adjacent demands for a different future. “Together they exercise the performative power to lay claim to the public in a way that is not yet codified into law and that can never be fully codified into law. And this performativity is not only speech, but the demands of bodily action, gesture, movement, congregation, persistence, and exposure to possible violence.”⁹⁷ As in Muñoz, utopia is always on the horizon, always incapable of being bent to the logic of straight time or compulsory obedience. Bodies in precarity — bodies that have been defined as abnormal by the carceral state — assemble together and call into question the legitimacy of that logic. As these abnormal bodies performatively gather together, they do precisely what Butler argued the performative

⁹⁴ José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 23.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁹⁷ Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, 75.

does in *Gender Trouble*: they become impossible, they resist and refuse the individualizing logic of carceral society. The body “exercises a right that is being actively contested and destroyed by military force and that, in its resistance to force, articulates its way of living, showing both its precarity and its right to persist.”⁹⁸ Bodies gathered together in protest refuse to be normalized into the individualizing discipline of the State. They are non-docile and joyously abnormal. They assert their identities and their right to exist precisely by gathering with other individualized bodies, showing that the logic that seeks to dominate and subjugate and render precarious cannot succeed in the face of resistance. Public gatherings of dissenting bodies are performative acts that demonstrate the futility of docility. They refuse to be put to use in normalizing disciplinary society, and they perform an alternate future where precarity is named and overcome through communal acts of mutual affirmation and support.⁹⁹

Butler ends her work on performative assembly with a meditation on sociality. The body is always social, inextricably bound to social reality. She says, “Bodies are always in some sense outside themselves.”¹⁰⁰ For Butler, this means not just in human sociality, but bodies are always interacting with their lived environment: nature, cities, neighborhoods. Bodies are shaped by intensely sensual reality, at times even being lost in that reality. Bodies are formed in a complex relationship with the environment. But they are formed in very specific ways through social

⁹⁸ Ibid., 83.

⁹⁹ Butler is not idealistic in her conception of bodies in protest. For example, she is careful to point out the death-dealing potential of racist and violent mobs. She is not praising demonstration in and of itself, but a very particular kind of communal gathering, the kind that refuses the normalizing logic of the state that induces bodies into precarity. Butler’s conception of communal performativity thus provides a framework that praise the Black Lives Matter protestors in Ferguson and to condemn the white supremacists in Charlottesville. There is no intrinsically good or bad gathering. Rather, the question is: “Under what conditions do we find bodies assembled?” Cf. Ibid., 124.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 212.

interaction with other bodies. Butler says, “The individual, no matter how intensively self-referential, is always referring to itself through a mediating form, through some media, and its very language for recognizing itself comes from elsewhere. The social conditions and mediates this recognition of myself that I undertake.”¹⁰¹ A good life always looks like a life lived with others, a life that does not lose my I-ness, but rather is transformed by connections with others, connections that consist both in being depended upon and depending upon others. Because we all live in some form of precarity (but certainly some live in more precarious realities than others), we have a reciprocal obligation to others, an obligation to “produce together conditions of livable life.”¹⁰²

We have moved from Butler’s earliest work on the performative, work that offered resources for constituting identity by subverting systems of compulsory obedience by showing the gaps and cracks in the totalizing logic of carceral society, to a more social understanding of how the performative works in assembly with other bodies. The body is socially constructed through a complex interplay of compulsory systems of obedience, social interaction, the lived environment, and identity performances. What Butler offers to a theological anthropology, especially to a liturgical anthropology, is an understanding of how identity can be constituted in performative ways, both through linguistic construction (as in *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies That Matter*) and through bodily performative acts in concert with others (as in *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*). In the next section, we will turn to liturgical theology through a Butlerian lens. The goal of the next section is to begin constructing a theology of embodiment that resists carceral and colonial logic of subjugation and domination. Rather than rendering

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 214.

¹⁰² Ibid., 218.

bodies as docile, the goal of this theological sketch is to articulate bodies in resistance to totalizing and normalizing disciplinary systems.

Siobhán Garrigan, Louis-Marie Chauvet, and Social Liturgical Embodiment

The benefit of a liturgical theological anthropology is that it offers a fundamentally communal understanding of embodiment. Indeed, as Siobhán Garrigan reminds us, “Sacraments do not happen just because they are instituted to do so by the hierarchy of the church or by dogmatic theology: they require the participation, the faith, of the people.”¹⁰³ Liturgical and sacramental theology are inextricably social. They begin with the church-community and are concerned with how social interaction shapes bodies. Thus, liturgical theology is uniquely situated in systematic theological discourses to incorporate Foucauldian and Butlerian understandings of socially shaped bodies. Liturgy is, first and foremost, concerned with individual and collective bodies. Mark Searle argues that ritual liturgical acts affirm communal and corporate identity, even while allowing the individual to assume each ritual act as their own.¹⁰⁴ This section sets out to develop an understanding of liturgy through a performative lens, primarily in conversation with Siobhán Garrigan and Louis-Marie Chauvet. Keeping in view the theories of Michel Foucault and Judith Butler, we will attempt to avoid the pitfalls of docility through casting liturgical anthropology as a Butlerian ritual bodily performative act. Ultimately, the goal is to sketch the beginnings of an understanding of Christian embodiment that can

¹⁰³ Siobhán Garrigan, *Beyond Ritual: Sacramental Theology After Habermas* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2004), 4.

¹⁰⁴ Mark Searle, “Ritual,” in *The Study of Liturgy* Revised Edition, ed. Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, Edward Yarnold, and Paul Bradshaw (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 56.

function as a critique of the de-forming and death-dealing ways that Christianity has been co-opted into white supremacist, misogynist, and heteropatriarchal ideologies.

Siobhán Garrigan sets out to develop a sacramental theology that takes seriously the practical meaning of the Christian message — an accessible God of love and suffering, an imperative for forgiveness, an ethic of social justice, and a claim that hope is greater than death. With these categories in mind, Garrigan seeks to situate theology in sacramentality. Rather than instrumentalizing sacrament, Garrigan casts her project as primarily interpretive — interpreting theological categories through the lens of liturgy and sacrament.¹⁰⁵ For Garrigan, the study of liturgy and sacrament needs to be grounded in liturgical interpretation rather than in systematic reflection. She argues that a shift from systematics to interpretation re-casts liturgical and sacramental theology in two primary ways: theology now reflects on divine-human relations in an experiential way and allows the voices of women and other marginalized people who have been excluded from systematic discourses to be heard.¹⁰⁶

Despite its insistence on embodiment and inclusion, liturgical theology has largely remained dominated by white men. This has led to a hegemony of liturgy: rather than incorporating voices from the margins, liturgical theology has held all Christians to a certain center, defined differently in different liturgical theologies. There is no room in centralizing liturgical projects for marginality, thus the voices of those at the edges are silenced. Garrigan says, “*Lex orandi lex credenda* as it impacts on ecclesiology means that those who do right worship are thought to be the right church; those who do not are not.”¹⁰⁷ Garrigan thus closely analyzes a series of Christian liturgies ranging from a traditional Church of Ireland liturgy to gay

¹⁰⁵ Garrigan, 1.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 142.

and feminist gatherings. Garrigan finds certain commonalities in these very disparate communities. Despite differing ideas of justice, hierarchy, and ritual, each gathering had the commonality of an emphasis on “*listening* in a context of *welcome*.”¹⁰⁸ Garrigan also found that each gathering required “*critical engagement* with the stories heard, an engagement which was prompted by a series of interactions of *remembrance* and which need not always go smoothly: it involved *awkward moments* and constant *re-negotiation of leadership* roles.”¹⁰⁹ The theoretical standpoint that emerges from her examination of these various gatherings is what she refers to as the “radical intersubjectivity” of liturgy.

In her conclusions drawn from the analysis of different communities, Garrigan argues that when communicative action is denied in liturgy, it is often done purposefully in order to perpetuate certain hierarchical notions of power and thus amounts to idolatry. Systematically distorted liturgical communication claims to speak of a God of compassion and forgiveness, but what it is actually communicating and perpetuating is a hierarchical power relation.¹¹⁰ In contrast to idolatrous understandings of liturgy, Garrigan argues that radical intersubjectivity suggests that it “is not so much that God is mediated through communicative action with others, nor that God is the transcendent to which communicative action tends, but that God *is* intersubjectivity. Not that we know God through other people but that we know God as our very relating to each and every aspect of that to which we are created.”¹¹¹ Recall that Butler defines a performative as that which calls into being that which it declares. Here, Garrigan conceives of liturgy and

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 192. Emphasis in original.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. Emphasis in original.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 195.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 198.

communicative action as producing our knowledge of God precisely in the relation of the self with creation.

Garrigan's notion of radical intersubjectivity runs parallel with what I am calling performative liturgical theology. While Garrigan's notion of intersubjectivity offers a helpful way of rendering bodies as non-docile, it still is too reliant on the individual. While the individual comes to know about God through the intersubjective liturgical encounter, identity is still something that is primarily gained through individual self-identification.¹¹² In a performative understanding of liturgy, there is certainly an element of self-identification and individual agency. But the performative liturgy also understands that, despite our greatest efforts at self-identification, we are still inescapably shaped through social forces. As Butler and Foucault have pointed out, these social forces shape us in both positive (bodies gathered in solidarity, disciplined bodies of resistance) and negative ways (the carceral, docile body). Performative liturgical anthropology must, therefore, articulate the body in a more social way than Garrigan allows for in her radical intersubjectivity.

Where there is an overlapping between performative liturgy and intersubjective liturgy is in the refusal of normative liturgies. Garrigan argues, "Practices vary, God is endlessly bodied forth in various ways, but the body that is God, the radical intersubjectivity of all that lives, has been liturgically encountered as radically inclusive."¹¹³ Garrigan goes on to argue that radical intersubjectivity refuses to inscribe or define sacraments in certain acts. Doing so "imposes an extraordinary limitation on the potential 'epiphanies of the sacred', those moments of awareness of God's radical intersubjectivity in the world."¹¹⁴ By allowing liturgy and sacrament to be

¹¹² Ibid., 201.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 203.

radically intersubjective or performative, these moments move beyond ritual, becoming moments of redemption “deeply and utterly expressed in terms of the ethic of justice that meeting as Christians involves.”¹¹⁵

Understanding liturgy as a Butlerian performative opens up new possibilities of understanding how Christian bodies can be shaped to resist forces that wish to render the body docile, to de-construct bodies and place them into situations of precarity. This means centering the physical body of those participating in the liturgy, or what James Empeureur refers to as the “spirituality of the body.” An understanding of the spirituality of the body in liturgical worship entails an “entry of the whole person into a way of life in which the seductions of the past are left behind in favor of service to others.”¹¹⁶ In Empeureur’s understanding of the spirituality of the body, the body is fundamentally shaped through *embodied* worship practices in such a way that they use their body to serve others. Louis-Marie Chauvet echoes this sentiment in his work, *The Sacraments*, where he argues that Christian identity cannot be separated from the sacraments, which are received through the mediation of the body. He says, “What is most spiritual always takes place in the most corporeal.”¹¹⁷ Chauvet is insistent that identity is formed bodily through sacramental worship. It is to his work that we now turn.

Chauvet argues that Christian identity is fundamentally received through the symbolic order of the church. This order is rooted in general culture, but it subverts and reconfigures that culture, bringing the culture in new directions.¹¹⁸ For Chauvet, Christian identity necessarily

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 204.

¹¹⁶ James L. Empeureur, “The Physicality of Worship,” in *Bodies of Worship: Explorations in Theory and Practice*, ed. Bruce T. Morrill (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1999), 154.

¹¹⁷ Louis-Marie Chauvet, *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body*, trans. Madeleine Beaumont (Collegeville: Pueblo, 2001), xii.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 17.

entails a personal commitment, a commitment made in community and instantiated on the body through baptism. Chauvet argues that each individual Christian, while belonging to a corporate community, works within that community in their own ways. Chauvet refers to the church as a “pattern,” an expression of reality that contains certain commonalities but remains open to interpretation and expression as each body sees fit.¹¹⁹

For Chauvet, Christian identity is a memorial identity. He argues that the memorial shape of Christian identity is a “collective memory which causes the present to budge and open onto the future.”¹²⁰ The memory of suffering and oppression, the memory of precarity and marginality is taken up into a new possibility for the future, a possibility that says, “Tomorrow will be better than yesterday.”¹²¹ The memory of suffering, the reality of Christian identity lived in moments of precarity, leads to what Chauvet calls an “ethic of dailiness.” This ethic entails an understanding of embodiment in the world marked by works of justice and liberation, mutual love and forgiveness. Chauvet understands this ethic of dailiness to be a liturgy offered to God. Rather than inscribing liturgical formation and embodiment within the church and against culture as James K.A. Smith does, Chauvet locates liturgical life in the everyday life of Christians. Liturgy is not only something done to us by some undefined structure, but something that we perform continuously in our everyday lives as we work to enact justice and liberation in society.¹²² Liturgy is what gives meaning to Christian ethics, allowing them to retain their distinctively Christian viewpoint, while ethics prevents sacramental practice from becoming ossified, resembling magic.¹²³

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 19-20.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 55.

¹²¹ Ibid., 56.

¹²² Ibid., 63-64.

¹²³ Ibid., 65.

Liturgical action is symbolic and not technical — that is, it seeks to establish communication between the participants and God, and thus among the participants as well.¹²⁴ But these communications between the participants and God, are not only conveyed by words. Rather, the “word” of worship is made up of “materials, gestures, postures, objects; the words seek not only to be there but to be ‘seen’ and ‘touched.’”¹²⁵ The word, argues Chauvet, becomes inscribed on the body in baptism and is taken inside of the body through Eucharist. The repeated performance of the liturgy grounds Christian life in the present. It does not allow for an escapism to the future or an imaginary world. Rather, the present temporality of sacrament reinforces notions of a God who is grounded in this moment, who is familiar with the reality of the present and who is actively working in this moment for justice.¹²⁶ Through this temporal immediacy, a symbolic disconnection is created, one that places the assembly *outside* of the world of utilitarianism.¹²⁷ Rather than shaping bodies of docility, Chauvet’s understanding of liturgical temporality places the subject outside of the carceral society and its demand for usefulness and utility. Rather, by stepping outside of utility, liturgy creates gratuitous space where God can arrive. Using their bodies, the assembled church effects the risen Christ and the active Spirit to “accompany them on the road of their life and communicate with them in an ever-surprising way. Thus the confession of the lips becomes the confession of faith in action.”¹²⁸

The liturgical body, accompanied by Christ and the Spirit, is inscribed with Christian identity in a non-hegemonic way. Rather than marking the liturgical body as *separate from* society or culture, the Christian is marked as the sister or brother of *all* of humanity through

¹²⁴ Ibid., 99.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 101.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 104.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 106.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

Christ. The liturgy opens bodies up to other bodies by inscribing each individual with Christ. Through the mystery of baptism and the working of the Spirit, the Christian is reminded of their place in the world, of their common humanity with others. Chauvet's understanding of Christian identity de-ghettoizes the church. Whereas Smith's understanding of docile liturgical bodies circumscribed the activity of God within the church, Chauvet's understanding of sacrament, while necessarily centered in ecclesial practices, does not limit the work of God or the identity of the Christian to the ecclesial institution. Indeed, Chauvet argues that sacramentality necessarily inscribes God on bodies without ever circumscribing God in one place.¹²⁹ Rather, it is because of the liturgical ritual of the *ecclesia* that the Christian is then able to live their lives as liturgies to God, working for justice and freedom and liberation in society.

Finally, the identity of the Christian is fundamentally social for Chauvet. He says,

The subject lives only because it is in relation with other subjects, as we have explained when speaking of language; but this relation to other subjects is not humanly fruitful if it establishes a similitude which is not sameness since it comes to being solely in the respect for the radical otherness of the other. Such is love: a relation to the other as "the other similar to me."¹³⁰

Liturgical bodies are bodies that are in community with one another. They are bodies that recognize and remember their own precarity and marginality, as well as the precarity and marginality of others. Gathered together, the sacraments inscribe the difference of God on bodies. The church thus becomes, literally, the embodiment of God in the world.¹³¹ As we have seen, Chauvet centralizes the body in his understanding of sacrament and liturgy. Taken

¹²⁹ Ibid., 169.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 163. There are some troubling notions to an understanding of "the other" as "the other similar to me." Such an understanding runs the danger of uniformity rather than multiplicity, a colonizing of the space of the other, and an understanding of homogenized bodies. However, space prohibits a more fully orbéd critique of this understanding of otherness.

¹³¹ Ibid., 166.

alongside Garrigan's understanding of liturgy as radical intersubjectivity, we begin to see the contours of a performative liturgical theology. It is to the broad strokes of such an understanding that we now turn.

Bodies of Resistance: A Few (Modest) Proposals for a Performative Liturgical Theology

This section attempts to lay the foundations for a constructive understanding of performative liturgical theology. I say foundations purposefully. Space limitations prohibit the rigorous liturgical analysis necessary to lay out a fully orbed performative liturgical theology. One would necessarily need to analyze various liturgical texts and rites, paying specific attention to the themes of embodiment and otherness present in each. It would also entail a certain amount of fieldwork to understand how (and if) these liturgies shape bodies of resistance in practice. This section will primarily seek to define what exactly is meant by performative liturgical theology, and will offer broad sketches of how to move forward with such a project.

The primary goal of a performative liturgical theology is to articulate how bodies of resistance are shaped and formed theologically. Doing so necessarily entails developing an understanding of liturgy that is not hegemonic, that allows for a multiplicity of embodiments in different communities, and that fosters solidarity in precarity. M. Shawn Copeland refers to this as Eucharistic solidarity, a solidarity that helps to teach us “how to imagine, to hope for, and to create new possibilities. Because that solidarity enfolds us, rather than dismiss ‘others,’ we act in love; rather than refuse ‘others,’ we respond in acts of self-sacrifice—committing ourselves to the long labor of creation, to the enfleshment of freedom.”¹³² Performative liturgical theology

¹³² M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, Being* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), 128.

takes this Eucharistic solidarity as a starting point for shaping bodies of resistance. It understands that, as Butler noted, the good life necessarily entails living with others, which will transform both the I and the You. Life lived in community recognizes precarity, it remembers the carceral shaping of society to render bodies docile, and it lives in solidarity with those bodies.

Performative liturgical theology does not place the I at the center of its understanding of embodiment. Rather, the primary locus of the self, especially the privileged self, the self that lives less precariously than marginalized populations, is in solidarity with others.

Performative liturgy is necessarily memorial. Beginning with Butler's claim that the performative necessarily makes use of impure tools to construct a more hopeful future performative liturgy functions as an *anamnetic* activity. Bruce Morrill defines anamnesis as "an encounter with the reality of salvation which, although accomplished by God at a definite point in past history, is experienced anew through a commemorative action."¹³³ This anamnetic mode of sacramental theology nurtures the ethical life of believers. Through remembering the work of Christ, Christians therefore adopt his kenotic posture of service in the world.¹³⁴ A performative liturgical theology remembers not only the work of Christ, but also the ways in which the church (and liturgical theology itself) has been co-opted by forces of de-formation. Because of this memory of its own abuses, performative liturgy does not claim some sort of pure and untouched status in subject-formation. Rather, performative liturgical theology is a critical theology, always in need of reassessment, of critical evaluation and interrogation.

Performative liturgy understands that the Spirit is at work in liturgical action, but it also recognizes the ways in which "the Spirit" has been deployed to reinforce the status-quo, to

¹³³ Bruce Morrill, *Anamnesis as Dangerous Memory: Political and Liturgical Theology in Dialogue* (Collegeville: Pueblo, 2000), 193.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

perpetuate hierarchical understandings of personhood, and to oppress marginal populations. Performative liturgical theology therefore adopts a posture of what Linn Tonstad calls “abortive ecclesiology.” Tonstad, applying the abortive logic of Lee Edelman (discussed briefly in chapter 1) to ecclesial institutions, argues that the church is a mode of refusal. It stands in hope, awaiting the return of Christ, but that hope is a refusal to perpetuate and reproduce modes of being that stand under the judgment of God. However, this radically apocalyptic ecclesiology also recognizes its own complicity in perpetuating injustice and precarity. For Tonstad, the church is the end of history, the end “of the order of identity’s distinctions that claim goodness and finality for themselves and that set about to exclude those thought to threaten the stability of such an order of goodness.”¹³⁵ Applying this refusal to liturgical theology, perhaps we can here articulate how performative liturgical theology sees itself as a hopeful theology. For Butler, the performative produces the effects it proclaims. Performative liturgical theology recognizes and names precarity and marginality. It seeks to shape bodies that resist these modes of being, that stand opposed to the carceral logic of society. But it does not do so only in a mode of critique or deconstruction. Rather, performative liturgical theology names possibilities of hope. It is an eschatological reality, one that will here go by the name “utopia.”

The notion of utopia is not an idealistic notion; it is not a mode of escapism that runs away from reality as it stands. Rather, performative liturgical theology sees utopia as a possibility, a horizon. In the words of Monica Coleman, “Utopias do more than reject the...inherited world; they also offer solutions for ways to make that world better.”¹³⁶ The

¹³⁵ Linn Tonstad, *God and Difference: The Trinity, Sexuality, and the Transformation of Finitude* (London: Routledge, 2016), 273.

¹³⁶ Monica Coleman, *Making a Way Out of No Way: A Womanist Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 127.

eschatological category of utopia is one that recognizes that all is not as it should be, and it stands against the logic of carceral society and capitalism that insists that things now are how they should be and will forever be. A utopian performative liturgical theology sees the march towards the horizon of utopia as a process, as unfinished.¹³⁷ Such an understanding of liturgy seeks to perform and name, concretely and in the ecclesial setting, utopic possibilities of being-in-the-world. Liturgical performance should shape bodies of resistance to forms of domination and the logic of carceral society. James K.A. Smith is correct in that the church represents a different mode of being than carceral society. However, his withdrawal from culture and his attempts at reproducing homogenizing desire are misguided and only reproduce the logic of the State. Rather, performative liturgy seeks to shape bodies to be more themselves. In so doing, it opens up possibilities of being-in-the-world, guided by the power of the Spirit as Chauvet reminds us, that defy the totalizing and normalizing logic of capitalism and the carceral State. Rather than disciplining bodies into docility, performative liturgy offers a different kind of discipline, one that opens up the self to resist precarity and domination in concrete actions of solidarity. Performative liturgy enacts a different reality. Through gestures and words, liturgical logic brings us out of the world of usefulness. It places us, rather, in a new temporal reality, a reality in which we encounter the risen Christ through the Holy Spirit mediated in physical realities of water, bread, wine, gesture, embrace, call-and-response, and singing. We do all of this in community, surrounded always by others who are seeking utopic ways of overcoming precarity, who also stand in a mode of refusal to perpetuate the logic of the State.

Finally, performative liturgy also understands that there will inevitably be what I refer to as “liturgical failures,” that is, bodies that take part in liturgical worship and action and still

¹³⁷ Muñoz, 99.

perpetuate the logic of the carceral state. There will inevitably be liturgical subjects who continue to take part in white supremacist marches, who commit sexual assault, who abuse their families. An understanding of performative liturgy is different than Smith's understanding wherein bodies merely show up, receive liturgical formation, and walk out of the church as better people, ethical subjects. There will always be Christian subjects who stand in their own, unhealthy mode of refusal: a refusal to allow the Spirit to move within them, to shape them in ways that allow them to envision utopia — those who refuse to stand in solidarity with those that society has deemed as abnormal. A performative understanding of liturgy recognizes that carceral society and the logic of reproduction are powerful forces. There will always be those who are resistant to systems that seek to undermine and subvert the logic of the state.

Performative liturgical theology, while articulating a theology of resistance and an understanding that performative action brings about different worlds and fosters a theological imagination that seeks to bring about utopic possibilities, also recognizes that what it works against is complex, multifaceted, powerful, and insidious. Liturgical failure is inevitable. This is not cause for despair, but rather a rallying cry to consider the reality of failure and to cultivate an imagination that seeks the well-being of others and the overcoming of precarity.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

This thesis has been an attempt to synthesize the work of Judith Butler and Michel Foucault into a constructive liturgical theology. We have laid out the logic of the carceral society, the normalizing and totalizing moves that the State makes to render bodies docile, performativity as a method of subversion using impure tools, and social selfhood. We have critiqued liturgical theologies that perhaps unknowingly make use of the logic of normalization and render bodies docile. And we have explored certain liturgical theologies and the possibilities they offer for a liberative understanding of liturgical theology, what we called a performative liturgical theology. Performative liturgical theology does not seek to normalize certain bodies over others, it does not position normality vs. the abnormal. Rather, it renders bodies free to be what they are, to create their own identities through ritual action and performance. Performative liturgical theology seeks to counter the logic of docility and to shape bodies that resist being used to further reproduce the death-dealing and de-forming aspects of the carceral society.

This work could be understood as laying the foundations of what Chauvet referred to as an ethic of dailiness. Performative liturgical theology certainly takes seriously the sacramental worship that happens in the gathered church, but it also understands those moments to be formative for our lives in the carceral society. Our liturgical performance does not end when we leave the church. Our performances can be understood as satisfying St. Paul's call to present our bodies as living sacrifices, a form of spiritual worship. (Romans 12:1-2) We daily perform our bodies in ways that embody the justice of God in the world. Our performative identities seek to bring forth that horizon of utopia, the eschatological hope of non-docile, non-precarious bodies.

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