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Unveiling the Army of Mary:

A Gendered Analysis of a Conservative Catholic Marian Devotional Organization

Paul Gareau

A Thesis

In the Department of Religion

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts (History & Philosophy of Religion)
at Concordia University
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Abstract

Unveiling the Army of Mary: A Gendered Analysis of a Conservative Catholic Marian Devotional Organization

Paul Gareau

The Army of Mary is a conservative Catholic Marian devotional organization that centres its religious identity on the Virgin Mary, the Catholic Eucharist, and Papal primacy. However, this group was recently excommunicated from the church for the heterodox ideas of their charismatic foundress, Marie-Paule Giguère, who claims to be the incarnation of the Virgin Mary. Though causing a decisive break with the church, this revelation has aided the Army of Mary in their continued existence by becoming the foundation of their theological and eschatological worldview.

The main purpose of this thesis is to question and elaborate upon how someone like Marie-Paule, a woman mired in a conservative socio-religious and moral framework, is able to garner modes of gendered agency that allow her to act in ways that emphasize her rather distinctive ethical convictions and religious worldview. This research will demonstrate how Marie-Paule is able to navigate the fine line between orthodoxy and heterodoxy by subscribing to a conservative and patriarchal moral outlook that favours traditionalist views of women's roles and behaviours, while engaging the unambiguous power offered tacitly through the social and symbolic gendered role of *motherhood*. Hence, through the notion of motherhood, Marie-Paule and the Army of Mary are successfully able to negotiate their particular eschatological worldview without undermining their conservative ideals of Catholic tradition and gendered morality.

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To Dr. Carly Daniel-Hughes whose guidance has helped shape the contours of this thesis and whose knowledge has deepened its analysis—thank you very much. To Dr. Norma Joseph who has taught me how to embrace the delicate spaces between orthodoxy and social critique. You have shown me that only someone who knows her/himself can truly engage with the world. I thank you deeply for this hard learned lesson. And to Dr. Donald Boisvert who has given me the greatest gift of mentorship. Over these years, you have blessed me with a sense of direction, trust, self-awareness, and pride. You have shown me that reality is a place where certainties need to be dismantled so that the holy can be seen with fresh eyes. *Merci beaucoup!*

And finally, I wish to thank the two most important women in my life. To my mother Yvette whose faith and love has always been my anchor and my inspiration—this thesis is for you. And finally, to my wonderful wife and life-partner Lucy—you are my playful smile, my gentle critic and my constant companion. My gratitude to you all.

Dedication

Simply put,

I wish to dedicate this thesis to all of the important women in my life —
for you have taught me to be a better man.

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Introduction

“C’EST PAR LA FEMME QUE LE MONDE SERA SAUVÉ.” (Demers and Giguère 8: 90)

The Virgin Mary is the central symbol of the Roman Catholic Church in representing the feminine divine and the power of women. She is arguably the church’s most identifiable and important, yet complex and often contradictory, symbol. For the Catholic hierarchy, Mary embodies the church itself as the first true Christian believer, as a tenacious and humble symbol of obedience to God’s will, and as the perfect woman. As for the cult of Mary amongst the laity, she has historically stood as a powerful symbol of intercession between the penitent and God, an advocate for the sins of humankind, a voice of condemnation for the sinful state of the world, and, most importantly, she is at times viewed equally as important as Jesus with regards to redemption. Though Mary, throughout history, has dominated the religious imaginations of the Catholic laity, there has always been a reluctance on the part of the Catholic hierarchy to fully implement and institutionalize Mary’s power into the church structure—i.e., through the theological conceptions of Trinity and Christology as well as a greater integration into a Christian soteriology and even full transcendence.¹ Ultimately, the struggle for control over Mary’s symbol of the feminine divine has always oscillated between a de-emphasis of her power by the institution and an absolute Marian devotion by some of the laity. It is this dynamic that has thus formed and informed the Marian devotional organization called *the Army of Mary*.

¹ These terms will be discussed in the second chapter of the first section entitled “Feminization of the Divine: Theology of Suffering and Marie-Paule’s Deification.” However, I will elaborate some definitions for the sake of clarity—e.g., Marie-Paule provides a new interpretation of Mary’s transcendence by being the incarnation of her spirit as well as embodying a new definition of the Trinity through the inclusion of the feminine divine in the *Quinternity*.

The Army of Mary is a conservative Catholic organization that adheres to an apocalyptic worldview emphasizing complete loyalty to the Pope and a zealous devotion to the Virgin Mary. The Army of Mary was officially founded in 1971 by a laywoman and mystic named Marie-Paule Giguère in a rural village called Lac Etchemin, Quebec. This organization quickly grew to 20,000 members with a religious mandate that bolstered conservative Catholic piety through a devotion to the Virgin Mary, the Catholic Eucharist and Papal primacy. However, due to the heterodox belief that Marie-Paule² is the “incarnation” of the Virgin Mary, in 1987 the Catholic ecclesiastical hierarchy sought to marginalize Marie-Paule and the Army of Mary because of their “conflicting theological views.” In response to this threat of institutional marginalization, the Army of Mary inaugurated *the Church of John* in the summer of 2007. The Church of John is understood to be a “transmutation” (or symbolic transformation) of *the Catholic Church of Peter* into *the Catholic apocalyptic Church of John of Revelation*. From this point onwards, the Army of Mary have been able to promulgate their own doctrines, elect their own pope, ordain their own priests, canonize saints, and declare that the “new Vatican” is in Lac Etchemin—thus becoming ideologically and institutionally autonomous. On September 12, 2007, the Vatican reacted to these developments by officially excommunicating the group *latae sententiae*, calling them heretical and decidedly “un-Catholic.”

The main concerns of this research revolve around two questions: 1) how does a conservative Catholic group like the Army of Mary negotiate their sense of orthodox identity when faced with institutional marginalization for their heterodox ideas and

² Throughout this thesis, I will use Marie-Paule Giguère’s first name in the repeated citation instead of her last name, first in order to avoid confusing her with other members of her family who carry the same last name, and secondly in keeping with the informal nature of Marie-Paule’s overall discourse.

behaviours; and 2) what role does the “feminine divine” play in underscoring their heterodoxy? The answers to these questions are complex, but they undoubtedly flow from one central source of influence and inspiration—Marie-Paule. For the Army of Mary and all of its adherents, she is the main source of new revelation from God and the moral centre for the group. Her revelations are the foundation of new theological elaborations that affect key conceptions at the heart of Christianity—i.e., Trinity, Christology, soteriology, transcendence, and incarnation. But, most importantly, Marie-Paule is a laywoman (i.e. wife, mother and grandmother) who is engaging the transcendent³ in dialogue and interpreting religious meaning. Together these elements would rightfully justify the church’s actions in electing excommunication over attempting to find compromise or institutionalize the beliefs or religious worldview of the Army of Mary. Yet, their heterodoxy simply as a transgressive attitude against the institutional church does not explain how Marie-Paule was able to capture the imaginations of so many conservative Catholic women and men, priests and nuns, from Canada, the United States and Europe. Ultimately, throughout this thesis, it has become apparent that it is not what Marie-Paule says that is particularly important, but the way in which she speaks that lends her authority.

This perspective can be easily illustrated through the way in which Marie-Paule and the adherents of the Army of Mary conduct themselves during their ritual ceremonies. Based on my participant observation of a celebratory Mass at the end of May

³ The term ‘transcendent’ will be used in a general discussion of God, Jesus or Mary. Otherwise each deity will be named individually as they appear in dialogue with Marie-Paule. The choice of utilizing the term transcendent is to reflect the dialogical relationship Marie-Paule has with the divine; in which the divine is constantly transcending metaphysical boundaries in interlocution with Marie-Paule throughout her life. In other words, it is the actions of God more than God’s substance or metaphysical positioning that informs this definition.

2008, the year following the initiation of the Church of John, Marie-Paule, in her capacity as the living embodiment of Mary, was commemorated publicly as “Mary, Queen of the Universe.” Forty priests officiated the three hour celebration to an overcapacity crowd. Many women and men (sacerdotal, religious and lay) spoke at the lectern of the importance of the Army of Mary, the relevance of the ‘signs of the times,’ and the uniqueness of Marie-Paule’s transcendent revelation. The speeches climaxed with the dramatic entrance of Marie-Paule dressed as the Queen of the Universe. She wore a white silk alb with a gold sash, and a long train with a golden underlay that stretched out behind her in the wake of her solemn procession down the aisle. She held in her hands a crystal sceptre as a symbol of her divine power with a matching tiara nestled in her white hair. Once she arrived at the front, she steered left to a sidelong chair facing away from the adoring crowd. There she sat in ‘humble’ silence throughout the remainder of the celebration, while the ‘new Pope’ of the Church of John read letters that *she* had prepared for this occasion. Quite clearly, she was the voice of authority. At the end of the service, the priests and the Pope were the first to proceed out followed by Marie-Paule unaccompanied.

This ethnographic example shows how Marie-Paule’s authenticity and justification for her actions lie specifically in her advocacy of gendered values and behaviours that promote the concerns of the conservative Catholic Church. By asserting traditionalist gendered values of women’s domesticity, docility, humility, and silence, Marie-Paule is able to effectively negotiate the power endowed in the interpretation of religious meaning (i.e. largely an androcentric discourse) without being perceived by the faithful (or even a perception of herself) as a megalomaniac. Marie-Paule consistently

asserts that she is the “zero” from which God’s will emanates. By debasing her sense of individual agency⁴ through the rhetoric of self-diminishment, she is able to act as the righteous ‘tool of God’. Therefore, it is from this outlook, sourced in Marie-Paule’s hagiographic autobiographical narrative that the Army of Mary can continue to develop theological innovations and effectively negotiate excommunication without widespread cognitive dissonance for its adherents.

However, a critical problem arises concerning the ambiguity, conflict and contradictions surrounding a woman who has been ‘empowered’ by subscribing to patriarchal values of women’s domesticity and silence—which many different feminist authorities view as emphasizing and denigrating women’s access to power as well as their sense of authenticity. According to a feminist model of women’s agency, the rhetoric of self-diminishment serves only to further enmesh women in the confines of a ‘domestic prison’, thus perpetuating violence and the inequality of women. Feminism advocates an independence from social norms of patriarchy in order to further the cause of women’s social and actual equality, thus promoting women’s empowerment. Yet, this feminist model of agency and empowerment does not fully explain how a woman like Marie-Paule is able to reach the heights of personal deification through the channels of patriarchal values.

I believe that Marie-Paule is able to negotiate the fine line between orthodoxy and heterodoxy by subscribing to a conservative and patriarchal moral outlook that favours traditionalist views of women’s roles and behaviours, while engaging the unambiguous

⁴ The term ‘agency’ will be thoroughly discussed throughout the second section, “Gendered Power and Agency—A Gendered Analysis of Marie-Paule.” For the sake of clarity, here agency is defined as the freedom an individual has to act, without compromise, in accessing his/her sense of social equality, human dignity and individual autonomy.

power offered tacitly through the social and symbolic gendered role of *motherhood*. Through the notion of motherhood, Marie-Paule and the Army of Mary are able to negotiate their eschatological worldview using unorthodox strategies without undermining their orientation towards conservative Catholic tradition and their view of a gendered morality. The main purpose of this thesis, therefore, is to question and elaborate upon how a woman like Marie-Paule, who is mired in a conservative moral and religious framework, is able to garner modes of gendered agency that allow her to act in ways that emphasize her ethical and religious worldview, even when faced with institutional marginalization.

Due to the fact that there is practically no academic research concerning the Army of Mary—with the exception being the research of Massimo Introvigne on the apocalyptic discourse of the Army of Mary (see Introvigne)—I am engaging a tremendous amount of primary material. This has shaped the contours and content of this thesis, specifically related to the amount of exposition necessary to perform a gendered analysis. The first section of this thesis, therefore, outlines the moral conservatism inherent to Marie-Paule and the Army of Mary's religious worldview. Herein, I will explain the historical and theological development of the Army of Mary, Marie-Paule's life story as elaborated in the pages of her hagiographical autobiography regarding her modes of personal suffering and religious piety, an introduction to the little known Marian apparition *The Lady of All Peoples* and her association to Marie-Paule in terms of ideological worldview, and the theological elaborations of Marc Bosquart concerning Marie-Paule and the feminine divine.

This exposition sets the stage for the second section, which outlines a gendered analysis of Marie-Paule and the socio-religious discourse of the Army of Mary. The analysis begins with a chapter outlining the pioneering critical work of Second Wave feminists, focusing specifically on the Catholic voices within that discourse. This discussion concludes with an analysis of the ‘negative’ social construction of womanhood through the Virgin Mary and, by association, Marie-Paule. This is followed by a discussion of the rebuke of Catholic Second Wave feminism by the conservative voice of new (Catholic) feminists. Though this discourse is presented as a critical alternative to Second Wave feminism, it remains largely a rhetorical vehicle for conservative Catholic values concerning gender. New feminism, nevertheless, explains and reinforces the underlying conservative view of the Army of Mary. However close they may be ideologically, there remains a need for a greater critical assessment of the social dynamics that shape and inform the socio-religious reality of Marie-Paule and the Army of Mary. The following chapter moves ‘past’ feminist discourses into a critical evaluation of liberal feminist discourse as well as a socio-historical contextualization of the culture of Catholicism. Saba Mahmood presents an interesting critique of the imposition of values of liberal feminism on “nonliberal”⁵ ideological and cultural frameworks through the notion of gendered agency. She concludes with a discussion emphasizing a subjective, relativistic definition of agency that speaks more precisely about women’s actions in specific socio-cultural contexts. This is followed by the historical and ethnographic work of Robert Orsi who contextualizes the Catholic

⁵ “Nonliberal” is a term used by Mahmood to describe the religiously conservative women that she encountered in the mosque movement in Egypt. It is a term to demarcate a contrast with the liberal values largely characteristic of Western society.

understandings of suffering, the individual negotiation of religious meaning, and the implication that overarching narrative frameworks have on shaping people's reality.

Together, these perspectives underscore a critical understanding that not only enables a gendered analysis of Marie-Paule, but also generates an epistemological self-reflexivity that is needed in order to shift our own liberal, academic perceptions and prejudices when considering the possible efficacies of conservative groups like the Army of Mary in garnering modes of gendered power and agency.

Section I. Inherent Conservatism—an Exposition of a Catholic Paradigm

Chapter 1. A Rising Mystic: Summary of Marie-Paule's Life and the Army of Mary

The Army of Mary is a conservative Catholic organization that centres its apocalyptic belief on a popular devotion to the Virgin Mary, a devotion to the Catholic sacraments, and an absolute fidelity to the Pope in Rome. Catholic conservatism is broadly a political position that harbours an historical distrust of progressive, liberal and modernist ideas. Progressive elements in the Catholic Church endeavour to promote socio-religious change by integrating into the church non-religious norms and values (i.e. secularism, materialism, political liberalism, etc.), and/or seeks a decentralization of papal power (i.e. through collegiality, subsidiarity and/or liberal theologies, such as liberation theology, feminist or womanist theology, black theology, etc.) (see Cornwell). The conservative voices of the Catholic Church, from the curia to the laity, stand opposed to these progressive elements by turning to the moral influence and the centralized power structure of the Catholic Curia and the Papal See.⁶ One strategy used by the church to disseminate conservative norms and values is through the Virgin Mary as an idealization of unquestioning fealty and devotion to the authority of the Catholic Church and the Papacy, and as a symbol of the church. It is through this idealization of Mary and Catholic hierarchy that the conservatism of the Army of Mary is thus informed.

Conservatism notwithstanding, however, in September of 2007 the Army of Mary incurred an excommunication from the Catholic Church, yet continues to prosper within

⁶ An example of this perspective can be seen through Pope John Paul II's notion of a "culture of death" where Western secular values are understood to be morally debilitating, leading ultimately to the perdition of society, thus necessitating the Catholic Church's guidance at all levels of human activity. For a more detailed discussion of John Paul II's conservatism, see Cornwell, John. The Pontiff in Winter: Triumph and Conflict in the Reign of John Paul II New York: Doubleday, 2004, 117-146.

this new marginalized reality. The reasons behind this paradoxical situation lie with their mystical leader and foundress, Marie-Paule. Marie-Paule is considered by the faithful of the Army of Mary to be the source of all new revelation from God and the starting point of their particular theological discourse. What is of key interest is that a woman stands at the foundation of a complex conservative religious framework that actively seeks socio-religious reform in relation to a Catholic apocalyptic worldview. Marie-Paule is important and unique in that she is a laywoman who is interpreting religious meaning.⁷ It is, therefore, imperative to outline and summarize the history of the Army of Mary in order to get a grasp on how Marie-Paule has become such an important figure in that she could singularly shape the lives and religious worldview of an entire organization as well as incur the wrath of the Catholic Church.

According to her hagiographic autobiographical narrative,⁸ Marie-Paule was born September 14, 1921, the first child of a very large and pious Catholic family in Lac Etchemin, Quebec, which is an isolated village one hour south of Quebec City. Her parents were devout in their religious values and to their community. Marie-Paule viewed her parents as perfect models of the Catholic virtues of prudence, restraint, diligence, faith, patience, kindness, and humility. At a young age Marie-Paule internalized these values and expressed them in her own charitable work in and around the community, such as volunteering her time in the presbyter and helping an elderly couple. It was at this

⁷ Marie-Paule as a laywoman (i.e. daughter, wife, mother, and grandmother) interpreting religious meaning is exceptional, for the majority of powerful and influential women in the Catholic Church were nuns or ascetics who were institutionalized and invariably 'under the control' of the church hierarchy—i.e., Hildegard of Bingen, St. Theresa of Avila, St. Thérèse de Lisieux, Julian of Norwich, etc. There were, nevertheless, a minority of influential laywomen in the church—for example, Margery Kempe or the Beguines. For a greater discussion concerning women in Christian history, see Mary T. Malone, *Women & Christianity* (3 vols. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000).

⁸ Specific details concerning Marie-Paule's gendered outlook will be discussed and elaborated throughout the first section of the thesis. This section is a summary of the conservative elements that make-up her religious worldview.

time that Marie-Paule began to dream of becoming a missionary nun to Africa. However, her vision was dashed by a set of trials related to her health and to different relationships in her life.

By the age of fifteen, Marie-Paule began to suffer gravely from a series of illnesses that would cause her chronic indigestion and insomnia. These illnesses would come to dominate her life and cause her great suffering and anxiety. Yet they served as a platform through which Marie-Paule mystically engaged with the transcendent in a longstanding and reoccurring dialogue where she was being groomed to play an active role in salvation history. By July 1, 1944, at the age of twenty-three, Marie-Paule under direction from God renounced her dream of becoming a nun and married a man she had just met named Georges Cliché. Her marriage with Georges was wrought with deep psychological abuses brought on by his paranoid delusions, spousal and family neglect, alcoholism, and infidelity. Nevertheless, she happily gave birth to five children in the span of seven years. This marriage would become the paradigm through which Marie-Paule would experience and internalize her greatest levels of personal, psychological and existential suffering that would later shape the theology of the Army of Mary in terms of eschatology, soteriology, and Christology, as well as consolidate a dominantly conservative gendered view of the world.

In spring of 1958, after ten years of psychological abuse at the hands of her husband, Marie-Paule received two important revelations that would shape her destiny. The first was on April 28 when Marie-Paule purported that God spoke of satanic influences within the Roman Catholic Church, which God noted would be made apparent by the contestations and demonization of her work by members of the church's priests

and bishops.⁹ This knowledge would become a touchstone for Marie-Paule in explaining the behaviour of antagonistic clergy who disagreed with her in an attempt to undermine her authenticity. The second and more important revelation was on May 4 when, again according to her hagiography, God told Marie-Paule that she was the living incarnation of the Virgin Mary. According to her autobiography, God said to Marie-Paule: “*Tu sais, mon enfant, que ma Mère bien-aimée est passée sur terre et qu’Elle est montée au Ciel sans mourir! Je dois te dire aujourd’hui, qu’Elle s’est incarnée et son regard maternel s’est penché sur toi. C’est toi mon enfant, qui souffres ma Passion et qui, au nom de ma Mère bien-aimée, vas redonner le Christ au monde*” (Demers and Giguère 1: 326).¹⁰ This revelation acts as the lightning rod of controversy concerning the later ecclesiastical attack on the Army of Mary, yet it is also the starting point in which a theology of the “feminine divine” was able to develop that underlies the entire socio-religious worldview of the Army of Mary today. With these revelations Marie-Paule passes into a new phase in her life, one primarily of institution building.

Between 1957 and 1967, Marie-Paule’s marital relations with Georges became more estranged ending in forced separation against her will. However, with this separation Marie-Paule was able to focus her time and thoughts on developing a Marian devotional organization whose activities were to usher a return to pious devotion to Mary,

⁹ In a discussion concerning the worldview of the early cultus to *the Lady of All Nations* in Amsterdam, Margry also speaks of a similar underlying antagonism with higher clergy (i.e. bishops, spiritual advisors, theologians, and even the Pope) coming into conflict with new Marian revelations, while lower clergy and the laity are depicted as being righteous in their witness and obedience to said revelations. For a greater discussion, see Peter Jan Margry, “Paradoxes of Marian Apparitional Contestation: Networks, Ideology, Gender, and the Lady of All Nations,” *Moved by Mary: The Power of Pilgrimage in the Modern World*, eds. Anna-Karina Hermkens, Willy Jansen and Catrien Notermans, (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009) 183-99.

¹⁰ Throughout Marie-Paule’s autobiographical narrative, italicized and/or capitalized quotes represent either prayerful speech or the transcendent in dialogue with her. This quoted text is unique in Marie-Paule’s narrative for it represents Divine speech, which is usually written in capitalised text, is here represented in lower-case letters. Marie-Paule does not explain this textual anomaly. Also see footnote #17 below for a greater discussion concerning Marie-Paule’s textual depiction of *divine* speech.

the Catholic sacraments and the Pope. Between 1958 and 1971, Marie-Paule with her small entourage of parish priests, nuns and Catholic lay people worked towards forming their organization. On August 28, 1971, in a small chapel in Lac Etchemin, the Army of Mary was officially inaugurated. Members of this organization see themselves as a providential work for pious action in modern times. Their role is to show the world the power and virtue of the Virgin Mary by example through a life of pious devotion and virtuous daily living. They are a ‘pacifistic army’ who, through prayer and personal sacrifice, strive towards maintaining Catholic virtues, especially those of humility and purity (“Manuel de l’Armée de Marie”). Essentially, each member—or “Knight of Mary”—has a moral and religious orientation towards inner perfection in order to overcome the evil powers of Satan in contemporary society, which the Army of Mary believe the world is currently embroiled in the early stages of the apocalypse.

Admission into the Army of Mary is simply a matter of being fully devoted to the Virgin Mary, based in canonical, apocryphal and popular delineations of Mary’s role in salvation history.¹¹ Essentially one must maintain the view that Mary is the guiding principle in the lives of the faithful in bringing them towards Christ and towards salvation. This approach necessitates an ‘interior reform’ of every Knight of Mary who must imitate Mary in order to be ready for the final judgement of Christ in the apocalypse. Thus the Knight of Mary must ideally attend Mass and receive Eucharist daily, develop a daily routine of prayer, observe the Ten Commandments, recite the Rosary daily, and have thirty minutes of ‘spiritual reading’ daily (“Manuel de l’Armée de Marie”). The Knight of Mary is asked to ‘empty the self’ in order to do the will of God

¹¹ These roles will be examined in greater detail in the subsequent chapter entitled “Feminization of the Divine,” which is concerned with the theology of the Army of Mary in relation to Marie-Paule.

through Mary. This spiritual direction is related to engendering and feeding a moral life through a conservative lens that underscores and enlarges the traditional teachings of the Catholic Church.

The distinctive mark of the Army of Mary is its uncompromising fidelity to the Catholic Church and the Pope in Rome. They see that a ‘sanctification of souls’ can only be achieved through what they call the “Triple White”: the Eucharist, Mary Immaculate, and the Pope (The Army of Mary). The Triple White is the philosophical center of the Army of Mary and, even today, remains their guiding principle. Furthermore, their sources of inspiration within the Catholic Church are the New Testament, the documents of the Second Vatican Council (with special emphasis on *Lumen Gentium* and *Signum Magnum*) as well as the apocalyptic and Marian devotional writings of St. Louis Grignon de Montfort, the works of St. John of the Cross and St. Theresa of Avila, St. Theresa of the Infant Jesus, St. Maximilian Kolbe, and Pope St. Pius X (“Manuel de l’Armée de Marie”). These sources as well as the Triple White underline the Army of Mary’s proximity to the modes of Catholic orthodoxy, thereby affirming their sense of unquestioning devotion and fidelity to the Catholic Church.

This conservative religious worldview placed the Army of Mary in very high regards with the ecclesiastical hierarchy in Rome, especially at a time of tremendous change in a post-Vatican II Church. On March 10, 1975, the Army of Mary officially received the status of pious organization by Cardinal Maurice Roy, Cardinal Archbishop of Quebec (“Official Recognition of the Army of Mary”). This was deemed as providential for the Army of Mary and understood to be a sign of great legitimacy and recognition of their pious work. It was during the next 10 years that the Army of Mary

grew to an estimated 20 000 members (Brean) mostly in Canada, France, Belgium, and the United States (The Sons and Daughters of Mary). However, the euphoria of institutional support was soon to dissipate. On January 7, 1979, Marie-Paule claimed that she was pressed by Mary to write a letter to the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops concerning sacerdotal corruption, the promulgation of a fifth Marian dogma of “Co-redemption,”¹² and that they should recognize that Marie-Paule is an instrument of God whose message must be taken into account for the church’s decisions (Demers, Vie D’amour En Abrégé 285-89). Due to the demanding tone and nature of her claims, the Canadian bishops began taking special notice of the Army of Mary and its ideas. Furthermore, between 1979 and 1992, Marie-Paule published her enormous fifteen-volume biography called Vie d’Amour. These books consist of a hagiographic-type, autobiographical look into the development of the Army of Mary starting early in Marie-Paule’s life, along with a few books outlining the lives of faith of some of the early members of the Army of Mary. The publication of Marie-Paule’s writings effected two different outcomes: 1) access into the life of Marie-Paule gave members an intimate look into her experiences of suffering and engagement with the transcendent, which in turn possibly resulted in the increase in membership; but 2) it also opened the Army of Mary to public scrutiny, giving rise to a stronger contention from the ecclesiastical authorities in their marginalization of Marie-Paule and the ideas espoused by the Army of Mary.

On February 27, 1987, the Vatican backed by Cardinal Louis-Albert Vachon (Cardinal Roy’s successor) and Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith officially revoked the Army of Mary’s status as a Pious

¹² This term will be fully explored in the sub-chapter, “The Lady of All Peoples: Religio-Political and Gendered Worldview.”

Organization, demanding a halt to all sacerdotal and religious activities. They stated their decision was in order to sanction the group due to the erroneous teachings that Marie-Paule was the incarnation of the Virgin Mary as stated in Vie d'Amour as well as the theology of Marc Bosquart—currently the premier theologian for the Army of Mary—in two books called De la Trinité Divine à l'Immaculée-Trinité in 1985 and Le Rédempteur et la Co-Rédemptrice in 1986 (First Denial by the Church).¹³ Though at first the Army of Mary retracted Bosquart's books in reaction to the Vatican's rulings, they quickly and assertively reinstated them. This marginalization, however, was a tremendous blow to the Army of Mary for they lost their official ecclesiastical support and legitimisation, which in principle placed doubt on the authenticity of their pious work. Therefore, between 1987 and 1991, the Army of Mary fought this decision in the canonical court system at the Vatican. After a final appeal and rejection at the *Supreme Tribunal Apostolic Signatura* on April 20, 1991, the Army of Mary resolved to begin building the group from within. Over the next ten years, the Army of Mary began consolidating their corporate entities and their theological identity centered in Lac Etchemin, and focused on forging a new church that would be parallel to the Catholic Church.

¹³ Massimo Introvigne adds an interesting discussion concerning the different interpretations of the term 'incarnation' between the Catholic Church and the Army of Mary. He writes that the Catholic authorities interpreted this as a 'reincarnation' informed by an Eastern religious understanding that Marie-Paule was the literal reincarnation of Virgin Mary. At the time of the church's sanctions, Marie-Paule denied this interpretation claiming instead a mystical embodiment of the spirit of the Virgin Mary, which Introvigne notes is not uncommon to Catholic mysticism. Introvigne instead underscores that the actions of Catholic authorities, in suppressing Bosquart's books in particular, "had been used by the liberal faction among Quebec's bishops to suppress a large conservative organization" Massimo Introvigne, "En Route to the Marian Kingdom: Catholic Apocalypticism and the Army of Mary," Christian Millenarianism: From the Early Church to Waco, ed. Stephen Hunt (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001) 162. Though there were political undertones to the initial accusations of heterodoxy, currently the Army of Mary are committed to Bosquart's interpretation viewing Marie-Paule as fully integrated into the metaphysical and apocalyptic worldview to the point of personal divinization. This will be further discussed in the sub-chapter, "Theology of the Feminine Divine: Marc Bosquart" with an explanation of Bosquart's particular Marian theology.

The first of several great changes was with Marie-Paule herself. On April 1, 1997, Georges Cliché, who remained married to Marie-Paule and had since the 1980s become a converted and reformed member of the Army of Mary, died leaving Marie-Paule free to follow her dream and become a nun. On April 23, she was unanimously elected as Superior General of *les Filles de Marie* (an organization within the Army of Mary drawing on the membership of over 100 religious nuns) (The Community of the Sons and Daughters of Mary). At this point, Marie-Paule was officially renamed *Mère Paule-Marie* thus initiating a personal and overall institutional transformation. March 25, 2000 witnessed the inauguration of a multi-million dollar religious complex called *Spiri Maria*. This became the spiritual and organizational center of the Army of Mary—a foothold for them to continue to grow separate from the Catholic Church. This particular act, however, proved too great for the church.

On August 10, 2001, the Conference of Canadian Catholic Bishops (CCCB) wrote a doctrinal note denouncing Marie-Paule's writings and teachings as decisively heretical and dangerous (CCCB). Until that point there had been no formal accusation of heresy against Marie-Paule because the CCCB did not wish to further alienate close to forty priests "unanimously regarded as good priests" (Introvigne 163) who claim allegiance to the Army of Mary. Between 1987 and 2007, the Vatican created an active dialogue with the priests of *les Fils de Marie* (a parallel organization to *les Filles de Marie*, but for priests) in order to influence them in moving away from their adherence to the Army of Mary. The dialogues between the church and *les Fils de Marie* were well documented and made public in the Army of Mary's journal, Le Royaume. However, the alienation between the church and *les Fils de Marie* was inevitable due to the fact that the

beliefs of the Army of Mary were indissolubly enmeshed with the views and revelations of Marie-Paule. Clearly it was only a matter of time before the Army of Mary would become fully separated from the Catholic Church.

The first acts of dissention within the Army of Mary started in 2006 with a series of baptisms, confirmations, Eucharistic celebrations, funerals and even a marriage at *Spiri Maria* in defiance of the Vatican's prohibition of sacerdotal activities. These activities were met with stern messages from the Vatican to cease all sacramental activities at *Spiri Maria*. On January 7, 2007, Father Jean-Pierre Mastropietro (the spokesperson and superior general of *les Fils de Marie*) ordained five Knights of Mary into the diaconate. Cardinal Marc Ouellet (the current Cardinal Archbishop of Quebec) sent a warning of excommunication to anyone involved in such illegitimate activities. Mastropietro did not heed these warnings and the Army of Mary forged ahead with their greatest institutional change to date.

On May 31, 2007, over a three-day celebration at *Spiri Maria*, the Army of Mary instituted what they call *l'Église de Jean* or the Church of John. The Army of Mary see this as a "transmutation" or symbolic adaptation and transformation of the Church of Peter in Rome into the Church of John of the apocalypse. *Spiri Maria* became the new symbolic Rome in parallel to the Roman Catholic Church and the new Papal See for an apocalyptic time. The reasons the Army of Mary see this as a symbolic transformation is that they view the church in Rome as remaining authentic and the authoritative representation of God's will on earth, but the Church of John was necessary in order to be ready for the eschaton—therefore, one does not exclude the other. Nevertheless with the creation of a new church, the Church of John had the freedom to promulgate and

disseminate many ideas that had been rejected or ignored by the institutional Catholic Church. The Church of John enabled the following actions: Mastropietro became the new Pope of the Church of John and was renamed *Padré Jean-Pierre* (named in relation to both churches of Peter and John); he promulgated the fifth Marian Dogma of Redemptrix, Mediatrix and Advocate;¹⁴ he ordained the five deacons of the Army of Mary into the priesthood; he canonized a key theologian of the Army of Mary named Raoul Auclair; and Marie-Paule was officially proclaimed as the living embodiment of the Virgin Mary, which also promulgated new theological reconfigurations of the Trinity and Christology to include the Virgin Mary and Marie-Paule.¹⁵

On September 12, 2007, the Roman Catholic Church took decisive action and officially excommunicated the Army of Mary and all of its members. The Papal Bull of Excommunication mentioned specifically Mastropietro and the five members that were ordained as priests and anyone who was present at their ordination. Yet this excommunication is writ large to include “quiconque *sciemment et délibérément* adhère à cette doctrine encourt l’excommunication *latae sententiae* pour hérésie” (“Déclaration d’excommunication de l’Armée de Marie et tous ces organismes affiliés”); meaning that anyone who adheres to the Army of Mary is excommunicated from the Catholic Church for time immemorial.

With this excommunication and the current propagation of the Church of John, one question remains: why would conservative and traditionalist Catholics adhere to such heterodox religious views? Furthermore, how do members of the Army of Mary retain

¹⁴ This doctrine will be explained below in the sub-chapter, “The Lady of All Peoples: Religio-Political and Gendered Worldview.”

¹⁵ These doctrines will also be explained below in the sub-chapter, “Theology of the Feminine Divine: Marc Bosquart.”

their adherence in excommunication without cognitive dissonance? Though the complete answer to these questions goes beyond the scope of this thesis, there are a few areas where the Army of Mary circumvents the dissonance between their conservative Catholic values and their faith in the works of their foundress and their organization.

First, the Army of Mary continually compare its current situation to different saints within Catholic history that have been demonized and marginalized only to be redeemed later on by the Church as strong examples of faith. Two favourites are St. Jeanne d'Arc and Padre Pio who are both examples used multiple times by the Army of Mary (see Fortin). Notably, the Army of Mary and Marie-Paule claim to be living this same reality of unfounded rejection. They believe that, in the future, the church will reverse their proclamation of excommunication and see the righteousness of the works of the Army of Mary. Currently the Army of Mary maintain that the Papal See in Rome has absolute authority from God, but they also see the necessity and inevitability of their actions of inaugurating the Church of John (see Buyse, Le Livre Blanc 1: Grâces Eucharistiques; Buyse, Le Livre Blanc 2: Rayonnement De L'église De Jean; Buyse, Le Livre Blanc 3: Amour Céleste; Fournier, "Document d'appoint"; Pillot, "Être prêts à subir l'excommunication"). It is important to understand that, with their actions, the leaders of the Army of Mary wanted to accelerate the process of excommunication and implement the Church of John so that they might be prepared for what they believe is the impending apocalypse. This is due to the divine revelation of God and, therefore, these actions are deemed by the faithful as absolutely necessary.

Second, and most importantly, the members of the Army of Mary have as justification the faith in the message and in the person of Marie-Paule. Just like the

spokespersons of the Vatican could not understand the priests in *les Fils de Marie*, it is impossible to untangle the Catholic faith of the members of the Army of Mary from their faith in Marie-Paule. Ultimately, faith in Marie-Paule has become incontrovertibly linked to their conception of Christianity. Writing on the subject concerning the proclamations of Jesus and his divinity, Marc Bosquart notes:

Si vous croyez qu'Il blasphémait [i.e. Jesus], tirez-en les conclusions. Mais si vous croyez qu'Il ne blasphémait pas, pourquoi donc faudrait-il automatiquement qu'elle blasphème, Marie-Paule, quand elle laisse dire ou doit dire qu'elle est la Fille de l'Immaculée, la Co-Rédemptrice de l'humanité? Dans le fond, elle ne fait qu'affirmer la même chose que Jésus-Christ, mais au féminin. Pourquoi faudrait-il qu'elle soit folle alors qu'Il est Dieu? [...] je trouve, en Marie-Paule, un réconfort tant moral que doctrinal, et je ne vois aucune raison de ne plus croire en elle ou de ne plus oser le dire ouvertement. [...] Après tout, si Marie-Paule est bien ce que je crois qu'elle est, sa condamnation par l'Église ne sera pas une fin mais un commencement (Bosquart, "Révélation d'hier et d'aujourd'hui" 8).

As is evident in Bosquart's writing, faith in Marie-Paule assures that this transition into excommunication becomes a less traumatic experience by becoming the 'will of God'. Therefore, the history of the Army of Mary is conflated with the historical development of Christianity. Jeanne d'Arc Demers (Marie-Paule's oldest friend and a major apologist for the Army of Mary) emphasizes this view stating, "L'Église de Jean porte dans son cœur l'Église de Pierre avec sa doctrine et ses commandements pour perfectionner en redressant certaines déviations au bénéfice d'un amour transcendant, c'est-à-dire au-dessus de la lettre des Lois, afin d'entraîner les âmes à une vie mystique toujours plus élevée et les conduire au Royaume" (Demers, "L'église et l'armée de Marie" 25-26). It is clear that the Army of Mary view themselves and their work as authentic, and bearing the divine blessing to act as *the* element of balance in the Catholic Church and in the world. This is the reason why it is important to underline exactly how Marie-Paule has come to inspire so many conservative Catholics who, in faith, are

willing to suffer the sanctions of excommunication. In the next chapter, I will explain in greater detail the source of Marie-Paule's power and influence by outlining how the feminization of the divine was brought about by different elements within Marie-Paule's life narrative and the theology that it has inspired.

Chapter 2. Feminization of the Divine: Theology of Suffering and Marie-Paule's Deification

Marie-Paule is exceptional in relation to other women in Christian history. She is able to speak with confidence of her religious conservatism and fidelity to the Pope and the Catholic Church from a space of prescribed gendered behaviour, while embracing an unprecedented level of personal deification. Though this seems to present an inherent contradiction, Marie-Paule is able to strike a balance in her religious view mainly through her gendered discourse. On one hand, Marie-Paule shares with celebrated women of the Christian tradition (e.g. St. Theresa of Avila, Hildegard of Bingen, St. Theresa of the Infant Jesus, and St. Joan of Arc) a creative engagement with society through a mystical union with the transcendent, while promoting an inward engendering and celebration of gendered values (such as meekness, humility and silence), making their views heard through a rhetoric of self-diminishment. Yet, Marie-Paule is unique among these women in that she has been able to embody the conservative gendered values of the Catholic Church by embracing her divine character as the Virgin Mary incarnate. It is by becoming 'the goddess' that Marie-Paule is able to continue to promote conservative values of the Church within a new theological paradigm in modern times.

In this chapter, I will delineate in sub-chapters five different areas that have influenced Marie-Paule's gendered worldview. The first sub-chapter underscores the different social and religious elements that have shaped her mystical engagement with the 'moral' act of suffering. The second and third sub-chapters refer to narratives of psychological abuse concerning both her father and her husband's irresponsible actions that create for Marie-Paule a platform through which she engages in a metaphysical self-

transformation. The fourth sub-chapter looks at the religio-political and gendered discourse of the little known twentieth century Marian apparition *The Lady of All Peoples* and Marie-Paule's connection to her. And finally, the fifth sub-chapter outlines the theology of Marc Bosquart and his descriptions and delineations of the feminine divine.

a) Suffering as 'Agency': Marie-Paule's Acceptance of a Life of Suffering

Marie-Paule has always made a special connection between religion and family that colours her moral and religious outlook. The stories of her youth spoke of a time in rural Quebec of Catholic ultramontanist that upheld a devotion to the Holy See with Papal reverence, an abiding respect for the ecclesiastical hierarchy as a political and moral authority, and an unrelenting emphasis on sacramental piety and popular devotion. The fervency of this religious devotion was also reflected in Marie-Paule's view of her relationship to family and friends. As with the church, she found in her closest relations courage, strength and inspiration. With the help of both religion and family, moral values of humility, respect, honour, and loyalty became the bedrock of her entire worldview.

Marie-Paule began the first volume of Vie d'Amour by portraying the underlying importance of her parents Laura and Ernest Giguère. Marie-Paule built a heroic ethic for both of her parents that clearly reflected a conservative outlook. Marie-Paule speaks of her father as being an honourable person who was very pious, charitable and hardworking. He was a loving and supportive husband and father who also maintained strong relations with his extended family as well as the townspeople of Lac Etchemin. Throughout her story, we are told that Ernest would help Marie-Paule whenever she was

in crisis. Even after his death, Ernest continued to assist her through an ‘interior voice’ of heavenly guidance. Marie-Paule truly adored her father.

Her mother Laura represented the paragon of Catholic womanhood as a woman who was unwaveringly dedicated to her husband and her family. Laura represented important virtues of prudence, restraint, diligence, faith, patience, kindness, and humility even in the face of adversity. She was completely devoted to the moral upbringing of her children. Marie-Paule described how her mother would speak to her openly about the ‘problems of life’ and all of the virtues that lead one’s soul to God. In the summer hours of play, Laura would always keep a close eye on her children so that they would not slip into morally questionable behaviours. In her narrative, Marie-Paule recollects her mother’s words: “Il suffit parfois de quelques heures sans surveillance pour briser une vie, peut-être la perdre à jamais” (Demers and Giguère 1: 30). The stringencies of her mother’s moral view provided a paradigm of gendered behaviour that institutes the role of a wife and mother as the cornerstone of morality for the family. Marie-Paule would internalize this attitude and later impress it upon her own family stating that a wife is the rock upon which the family is built. This is a rock made up of moral and religious fortitude reflected in a women’s acceptance of quiet suffering in face of grave family problems.

As a teenager, Marie-Paule describes herself as very pious, diligent and respectful. She would attend church service very early every morning to receive Eucharist. This was something that she seldom missed. Marie-Paule excelled in the domestic skills taught to women of the period (i.e. sewing, cooking and household management) as well as having garnered top grades at school, especially in catechism

class. It was in catechism that Marie-Paule was taught that one's suffering saved souls. Marie-Paule seems to have understood this to be a preparatory revelation of what was to become her life's work. Here she defined suffering to be both physical and psychological, but concluded that "les peines morales sont plus difficiles à supporter que les souffrances physiques" (Demers and Giguère, 1: 32). This emphasis on psychological suffering or internalized suffering would become the defining mode in which Marie-Paule would mystically engage the transcendent and interpret the world around her.

Following this revelation Marie-Paule decided to offer herself completely to God stating: "*Fais-moi souffrir tout ce que Tu voudras, mon Jésus d'amour... Accepte, ô mon Amour, le peu que je suis... Je veux partager aussi les souffrances de Marie, cette si bonne Mère que maman m'apprend à aimer. Je veux être victime comme Toi, si Tu le veux*" (Demers and Giguère 1: 29).¹⁶ This exclamation was an important first assertion of her devotion and her orientation towards an ascetical form of suffering—i.e. that of the victim for God in imitation of Christ. Soon after, Marie-Paule announced that she heard an 'interior voice' from God stating: "*UN JOUR, TU SERAS TRÈS GRANDE, MON ENFANT, AIE CONFIANCE, SOIS BONNE*" (29).¹⁷ This also marked an important first revelation from God legitimizing Marie-Paule. This legitimization process, however, was slow and would govern her entire life. Marie-Paule understood that suffering is clearly a mode of mystical engagement that emphasizes gendered characteristics—e.g., humility and silence—as norms of piety and power. Marie-Paule therefore maintains that the road to salvation was being a good Catholic woman like her mother and the Virgin Mary.

¹⁶ As previously stated, this section of italicized text in lower case lettering is to portray Marie-Paule in prayer. It is a style used by Marie-Paule throughout her writings.

¹⁷ Furthermore, this second form of capitalization with italicization is the script that Marie-Paule uses to represent speech from the transcendent—from God, Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and even her deceased father—and is used throughout her writings.

On the day after her fifteenth birthday, Marie-Paule professed to have received a revelation from Mary stating: “*MON ENFANT, EN L'HONNEUR DE MES SEPT DOULEURS, TU PASSERAS SEPT FOIS SUR LA TABLE D'OPÉRATION*” (Demers and Giguère 1: 35).¹⁸ This revelation, which clearly conflated Marie-Paule with the Virgin Mary, becomes another element of her authenticity vis-à-vis God's revelation. Marie-Paule accepted this as being the first step towards a purification of her soul in preparation for her bigger role, one which she did not yet understand. Soon after, Jesus spoke to Marie-Paule: “*COURAGE MON ENFANT, ENCORE UN PEU DE TEMPS. COMME IL TE FAUT SOUFFRIR POUR DEVENIR SOUVERAINE DE LA TERRE, UN JOUR*” (266). As a postscript for the reader, Marie-Paule then unpacks this statement so as to mitigate the possibility of misrepresentation and scandal over the idea of her ‘metaphysical sovereignty over the world’. She wrote: “*Dans sa portée mystique, être ROI, c'est être SERVITEUR... Être souveraine, c'est être SERVANTE. C'est accepter d'avance de suivre le même chemin qu'a suivi le Christ: voie de mépris de d'ignominie. Et cette voie conduit à la mort de soi*” (329). Marie-Paule underscored that the Christian understanding of the salvation of humanity is linked to the servitude of God that can only be made manifest through the death of the self. Like Christ, power lies in having the courage to give the self completely for the greater good of others.

This perspective of servitude to God over assertive personal agency is consistently reiterated throughout Marie-Paule's discourse in relation to her role in salvation history. She has always claimed to be the “zero” through which God acts (Giguère 288). This self-critical understanding in turn helps Marie-Paule interpret

¹⁸ The “Seven Sorrows of Mary” are: Simon's prophesy over the child Jesus, the flight into Egypt, the search for the child Jesus, the meeting of Jesus on the road to Golgotha, the crucifixion and the lance of Longinus the Roman centurion, the descent from the cross, and the burial of Jesus.

religious meaning by the will of God without undermining her own perspective of gendered moral values of humility, docility and prudence. In asserting this gendered perspective, Marie-Paule wrote how the Virgin Mary also spoke words of moral praise: “*SOIS VICTIME, ACCEPTE TOUTES LES SOUFFRANCES QUE TE DEMANDE MON FILS; FAIS-TOI HUMBLE, DOCILE, PIEUSE, BONNE ET NE CRAINS RIEN. JE SUIS LÀ*” (Demers and Giguère 1: 289). Ultimately, it was within a gendered framework of suffering in silence as a victim that Marie-Paule was able to engage the struggles of her life—more specifically, to engage the men in her life.

b) Setting a Moral Standard: Marie-Paule’s Father and his Alcoholism

Marie-Paule always declared her love and respect for her father Ernest describing him as a very honourable man. Unfortunately his proclivity to alcohol was his downfall, which would incur a drastic transformation in his temperament. His behaviour stood in sharp contrast with his wife Laura’s temperance, patience, kindness, and humility. All of Ernest’s virtues when sober would become ruined by a man suffering bitterness and guilt. Marie-Paule described many times how this behaviour was unbearable to witness: “L’alcool devient le problème angoissant qui va torturer la famille pour des années à venir. Cette période redoutée transforme complètement le père. Normalement doux et paisible, posé et compatissant, il devient après l’absorption de quelques verres, coléreux, emporté et d’une nervosité d’autant plus grande qu’il passe plus de nuits et de jours sans manger ni dormir. Pauvre maman, son cœur saigne douloureusement pendant ces jours bien tristes” (Demers and Giguère 1: 25). This pattern of behaviour, however, fluctuated between his inebriation and his sense of tremendous guilt for his misdeeds, doing

whatever he could to gain his wife's forgiveness. This pattern would affect both Marie-Paule and her mother in their views of the social, moral and spiritual ills that govern men, but also in their self-understanding as women and the roles they must play within the family and society. Marie-Paule writes, "Je vois un ange de douceur en contemplant maman, et une âme brisée et amoureusement repentante chez ce brave papa qui veut se faire pardonner" (31). Marie-Paule understood both of these individuals oriented towards God's will, but in different manners—her mother in steadfast submission to God's will, and her father succumbing to weakness but in earnest contrition and repentance for his sins. In her narrative, Marie-Paule presented her parents as key social examples of gendered behaviour—i.e., a father who is genuinely good but who succumbed to his socially and spiritually immoral weaknesses, and a mother whose piety informed her suffering in silence. But the father was always the central problem. As a result, Marie-Paule saw the challenge of her father's alcoholism as a task sent by God for the sake of purifying her soul and saving her father.

In a story about her father's deepening alcoholism, Marie-Paule came to the conclusion that the suffering of women was not a matter of punishment from God, but a matter of personal sanctification: "Avant de dormir, je songe... Pourquoi Dieu permet-il toutes ces choses? Maman si pure, si bonne ne mérite pas ces souffrances... Donc, ces épreuves ne sont pas des punitions, elles sont un moyen de sanctification [...] Sous les coups qu'elle nous porte, la Providence n'admet pas de pourquoi... C'est un sentier épineux que maman doit gravir. La sainteté ne s'obtient qu'à ce prix et Dieu, qui burine les âmes, sait mieux que nous ce qui convient pour en arriver là" (Demers and Giguère 1: 38). Marie-Paule realizes that there was a higher purpose to women's suffering in that

women must bear the weight of suffering for the world. It was at this time that Marie-Paule made a vow to God that she would sacrifice her life for her father's sobriety. As a manifestation of agreement from God, Marie-Paule's health immediately worsened. This occurred on a morning where her father was having a markedly terrible bout with alcohol. Her mother brought Marie-Paule to the doctor who diagnosed her as having 'a weak pulse' and cardiac problems; mainly indefinable ailments causing her great discomfort and anguish. This was the beginning of chronic malaises that characterized Marie-Paule's life of suffering as sanctification and constitute the platform of her mystical engagement.

In response to this phenomenon of sickness, her father finally took positive action in gaining control over his alcoholism. Marie-Paule wrote: "Les années suivantes révéleront à tous un homme qui tient ses promesses. Un jour, enfin, il entrera Lacordaire pour devenir un apôtre de la sobriété. Pendant sept ans, il sera un homme modèle, se dévouant à cette cause en prononçant des discours lors de soirées 'Lacordaire' [...] Maman...l'accompagne dans certaines circonstance où il dénonce les méfaits de l'alcool et exalte la douceur de la tempérance au foyer [...] J'aime mon père, je l'admire!" (Demers and Giguère 1: 44). Ernest proved to Marie-Paule the truth of his conviction, which alleviated Marie-Paule's despair over her father's character. This turn in behaviour deepened Marie-Paule's faith in the power of God's will and would ultimately help her with the issues of her own husband's problems, which were categorically worse.

On August 28, 1954, Ernest Giguère died suddenly of a heart attack. Marie-Paule wrote how he had had a foreboding knowledge of his death. Until this point he was very caring and helpful for Marie-Paule, buying her food and taking care of her while her

husband Georges was succumbing to his own immoral behaviours causing Marie-Paule unparalleled anxiety. Ernest, however due to the crushing weight of the circumstances of his own life, had unfortunately relinquished his pledge and reverted to drinking. Though Marie-Paule loved her father, her vow to nourish her father's sobriety was never fulfilled. In her grief for his death, Marie-Paule nevertheless describes having received a revelation of her father meeting Jesus in heaven. According to her autobiography, Marie-Paule witnessed how Jesus told Ernest that he had been saved by the pious actions and the suffering of his wife and especially his daughter. Jesus then permitted Ernest to see the spiritual path of all of his children. Ernest turned and asked Jesus, “« *mais où donc est Marie-Paule* » « *LÀ* » dit Jésus. « *Mais pourquoi? ... Et Georges?* » « *REGARDE EN BAS, AU PLUS PROFOND DES ABÎMES. MAIS, VOIS JUSQU'OUÛ IL MONTERA UN JOUR, GRÂCE AUX SOUFFRANCES BIEN ACCPTÉES DE SA FEMME* »” (Demers and Giguère 1: 198).¹⁹ In this revelation, Marie-Paule not only witnessed a foreshadowing of her own special status, but saw the divine parallel with her mother's domestic situation. However, the proportions of Marie-Paule's suffering were far greater than those of her mother. Ultimately, her narrative suggests that Marie-Paule's suffering will lead not only to the salvation of her husband, but to a Christ-like salvation of all.²⁰

Throughout her life, the transcendent had been constantly preparing Marie-Paule to accept her intimate and central role in salvation history. It is a soteriological role that necessitates a tremendous personal suffering, which is best described by the following logic: to become the instrument of divine righteousness in the world's salvation, you

¹⁹ I have kept the quotations as verbatim within this citation in order to clarify Marie-Paule's perspective as a third-party observer to a dialogue between God and her father Ernest.

²⁰ I will discuss further the soteriological elements of the Virgin Mary and the deepening parallel between Marie-Paule and the Virgin Mary in the sub-chapter, *The Lady of All Peoples: Religio-Political and Gendered Worldview*.

must pursue the proper moral standards of gendered action. Thus, she justifies herself: Marie-Paule needed to be a saviour of the world, but within certain parameters of ethical behaviour. Her level of commitment to these standards was contingent on the trials of suffering that she must face as a woman throughout her life. The main source of ‘necessary’ suffering that overshadowed her relationship with her father was that of her relationship with her husband. Along with the continual suffering caused by her physical ailments, it was her husband’s behaviour that compounded her engagement with God’s will of fully engaging in salvation history.

c) A Site of Ultimate Suffering: Marie-Paule’s Marriage to Georges Cliché

Marie-Paule was in her late teens when she first met Georges Cliché. He was very impressed by her virtuous character and proceeded to tell her, unasked, his life story. She remarked through her autobiography: “C’est ainsi que j’apprends qu’il ne se rend pas à la messe le dimanche, et cela depuis quatre ans, sauf en de rares exceptions, où son absence pourrait être remarquée. La piété n’est même pas naissante chez lui; ses parents ont eu de la difficulté avec le clergé et il s’est révolté” (Demers and Giguère 1: 61). Georges, unabashed, continued, “Ce que je te raconte, dit-il, personne ne le sait. Je sens que tu peux m’aider et je te demande de me rendre ce service...Je sais que tu es bonne, je veux ton aide, j’ai besoin de toi” (61). This statement, though disturbing for Marie-Paule, clearly characterized their relationship where Georges alternated between a desperate need for personal salvation through Marie-Paule, to an attitude of psychological abuse and neglect of Marie-Paule and their family. Much like Marie-Paule’s father, Georges was caught in a perpetual cycle of neglect and regret.

Through a series of events that drew Marie-Paule away from her ambitions of becoming a missionary nun, she claims that she succumbed to providence and arranged their marriage for July 1, 1943. She wrote: “C’est sûrement celui que Dieu me destine car tous les événements se sont enchaînés de façon à ce qu’il en soit ainsi” (Demers and Giguère 1: 73). The morning of her wedding, Marie-Paule reflected on the moment where she would be relinquishing her guarded virginity. In anticipation, she spoke of her virtue: “Notre amour était sous l’égide de Marie. Tout à l’heure, je lui donnerai ma couronne de virginité afin qu’au Ciel, un jour, Elle me la rende” (77). Marie-Paule understood that her high regard for the virtue of purity was something that could not be undermined even in marriage; that even when she gave herself freely to her husband, she remained pure in her heart. This passage also spoke to Marie-Paule’s submission to God through her submission to Georges as her husband. She wrote, “Mais voici l’heure. Revêtant ma robe nuptiale, couleur de l’Immaculée, je songe à celui qui tantôt deviendra mon mari. Je suis à lui pour toujours. Je ne songe qu’à une chose: faire son bonheur sous l’oeil de Dieu. C’est dans ce sentiment que j’entre dans l’église au bras de mon bon papa” (77). This particular passage was prominent for it underlined Marie-Paule’s Catholic view that a wife was forever linked to her husband in the sacrament of marriage. More importantly, the narrative showed Marie-Paule in and amongst the men in her life—Georges, Ernest and God.

Their marital relationship began with calm and a mutual love. Together they built a life where Georges earned a meagre living doing menial work. However things became unpleasant very quickly. Georges often flew into rages over the smallest things that happened to him as well as succumbing to paranoid delusions that people were

conspiring against him. Marie-Paule stated, “il s’imagine des choses, leur donne l’apparence du vrai et critique ceux qui l’ont toujours aidé” (Demers and Giguère 1: 111). As their nuclear family grew, Georges became increasingly irrational and emotionally distant. Marie-Paule remarked, “Mais quelque chose a changé. Mon mari revient souvent aux petites heures du matin. Il est colérique; ses heures de travail terminées, il se hâte de disparaître. Ses enfants ne l’intéressent pas du tout. Je dois lui donner l’argent que j’avais mis en banque au nom des enfants” (112). These actions were only the foundation of a deepening antagonism for Georges against his wife and children.

Marie-Paule nevertheless interpreted her increasingly difficult predicament as the will of God. She mused that, “Ainsi, le matin de mon mariage, alors que je tendais la main pour recevoir l’anneau conjugal, c’était Dieu Lui-même qui prenait possession de mon âme. La Sagesse divine est sans limite... Quand, par la suite, j’ai cru faire erreur en me mariant, c’est alors que j’épousais le Dieu vivant avec sa Croix” (Demers and Giguère 1: 117). This attitude gave Marie-Paule a religiously meaningful outlook on life that seemed to overcome the actual realities of abuse. The hardships that Marie-Paule faced in her marriage became not just a path of suffering for the sake of her husband, but truly a path that Jesus himself had arranged, leading eventually to her own divinity. For Marie-Paule, it was the path of the *cross*.

As the narrative unfolded, Georges continued with a lifestyle of unrestrained socializing, inebriation and neglect of his growing family. This left the family in perpetual financial distress and Marie-Paule’s father Ernest felt obliged to send money in order to help pay for a nanny service because Marie-Paule continued to suffer greatly from a respiratory illness. Georges, however, fluctuated between neglect and regret. The

night that his second son was conceived, Marie-Paule asked Georges to bring into the world another child so that she could do her ‘little part’ in trying to entice him away from his ‘carnal pleasures’. Georges responded with deep remorse saying that she was ‘unique amongst women’ and that he could not comprehend his own actions. Marie-Paule replied, “Georges, je connais toutes tes misères; un jour, tu comprendras. La vraie femme est faite d’amour et de pardon et il suffit d’un retour à de bons sentiments pour qu’elle pardonne tout” (Demers and Giguère 1: 119). Marie-Paule, like her mother, chose to forgive Georges instead of rebuking him for his damaging behaviour. She evoked the motto that a ‘real woman of love forgives what needs to be forgiven’. This is again an example where Marie-Paule’s gendered voice claimed moral high ground through passivity instead of assertiveness in finding practical solutions to her problems of spousal abuse. Nevertheless, as the narrative demonstrates, her forgiveness through passivity would not prevent Georges from acting deplorably, which at every recurrence caused her great pain and anguish.

On the year of the birth of her fifth and final child, Marie-Paule was completely overwhelmed by Georges’s behaviour and pleaded to God for answers, to which, according to her autobiography, God replied: “*TON MARI NE VIT PAS EN PAIX, SA CONSCIENCE LE RÉPROUVE. IL SE SENT COUPABLE ET PLUS TU ES BONNE POUR LUI, PLUS IL CHERCHE À TE POUSSER À BOUT, AFIN QUE TU TE RÉVOLTES ET QU’IL PUISSE PROFITER DE CELÀ POUR TE MÉPRISER...IL VEUT REPORTER SUR TES ÉPAULES LA VIE DÉPRAVÉE QU’IL MÈNE ET IL NE PEUT RIEN TROUVER... CONTINUE, SOIS BONNE, MON ENFANT: UN JOUR, TOUT SE RÉVÈLERA. NE T’INQUIÈTE JAMAIS DE RIEN, JE SUIS TOUJOURS LÀ*” (Demers

and Giguère 1: 142-43). God told Marie-Paule some very perceptive truths about the psychology of her husband's actions. By disclosing to her the fact that Georges' actions were sourced in his debilitating sense of guilt, it mitigated the weight and brutality of his actions on Marie-Paule. God then assuaged her anxieties by telling her that there was an end to all of this suffering, pointing to the fact that, again, this was all part of God's plan.

As her suffering becomes more acute and unbearable, Marie-Paule momentarily lost her faith and began to lash-out on her husband—but only on the page and never in person. She wrote with spiteful verve: “Vie inutile, mon Dieu, égoïste, sensuelle et parasiteuse” (Demers and Giguère 1: 151). One night Marie-Paule reached her breaking point. While Georges was away, she smoked six of his cigarettes in quick succession and smashed a glass in a rage contemplating her husband's death. This was the climactic moment of her agony and the most livid she would ever become. But she quickly regained her composure when she began reflecting on having Georges ‘meet his maker’ with his current record of sin. She instead resolved to continue suffering for the sake of his soul. In a paranormal occurrence, Georges returned home perturbed after having just survived a near death experience. In reaction to his experience, Marie-Paule told him to overcome his demons and to accept the Virgin Mary into his heart. To which he replied remorsefully that he could not even think of the Virgin Mary without thinking of her in objectifying, sexual terms as a woman. Marie-Paule was completely revolted by this comment and remarked, “Faut-il qu’il soit impur pour songer à l’Immaculée, à la femme la plus pure, d’une façon aussi révoltante... Comme il me fait pitié” (182). Marie-Paule nevertheless continued to help Georges in this impossible task of conversion.

In 1954, the Marian year marked by Pope Pius XII, Marie-Paule talks of having received a special revelation from God. During this period, Marie-Paule was impelled nightly to rise from bed and pray for her husband's salvation. According to her narrative, one night, after having risen from bed seven times to pray for her husband, Mary spoke to Marie-Paule saying, "*PARCE QUE TU AS ACCEPTÉ DE TE LEVER SEPT FOIS CETTE NUIT, AFIN DE PRIER POUR TON MARI, JE VEUX BIEN TE PRÉSENTER MON FILS*" (Demers and Giguère 1: 163). This particular revelation became a turning point in Marie-Paule's inclusion in the eschatological plan of God. To be presented her Son Jesus by the Virgin Mary meant that Marie-Paule was becoming more responsive to her inherent salvific role beyond simply saving the soul of her husband. These were the tokens of believing in her new role and accepting her suffering in silence. Marie-Paule claims that God spoke to her saying, "*JE T'AI DÉJÀ DIT QUE TU FERAIS DE GRANDES CHOSES PLUS TARD. EN REALITÉ, C'EST MOI QUI LES FERAI; TU SERAS MON INSTRUMENT*" (167). Here, God legitimizes Marie-Paule not through her actions based on personal volition, but through her self-understanding as a 'lowly instrument of God'. This way Marie-Paule was able to retain her gendered role valuing passivity, docility and humility, while still retaining the agency and power of speaking for God.

At this point in the narrative, the majority of priests to whom she disclosed the details of her marital situation had always counselled her to place her children in a boarding school and to leave her husband. One particular priest, Marie-Paule's uncle, approached Georges and told him that if he did not change his lifestyle, his wife was going to leave him. Georges replied wily, "Elle est trop catholique pour ça" (Demers and

Giguère 1: 190). Unfortunately, this was a true statement for Marie-Paule could not even think of leaving her husband and being separated from her children. She believed that seeking marital separation, an annulment or divorce was going against the will of God and undermining her role as a mother. Though Georges knew this of his wife, he could not help but become paranoid and embittered by the thought that his wife might leave him. According to her autobiography, Georges shortly afterwards came home late in the night inebriated and burst into their bedroom with empty suitcases, shouting at Marie-Paule: “Fais tes valises et va-t’en! Je ne veux plus te voir ici. Si tu ne bouges pas, je sors ma carabine et je me charge de te faire disparaître. Il paraît que tu veux t’en aller? Eh bien! je t’en fournis l’occasion” (190). Under the pressures of an unprecedented show of physical violence, this was the first real opportunity for Marie-Paule to leave the house and her husband. She instead chose not to go and continued to suffer for the sake of a higher order. Yet, she was very much upset by this event and spoke with emotion: “Seule, une mère sait les privations qu’elle s’impose afin de laisser aux enfants une piètre pittance qui leur apportera le strict minimum” (191). This is an interesting response and reflection of women’s roles and the importance of motherhood, for she was saying that motherhood is the secret protector of a family, especially for one in turmoil. Bearing this in mind, however, Marie-Paule does respond to this violence with a wish to die. At many intervals throughout her life with Georges she contemplates death through suicide, but this remained only a pretext showing what level of suffering she must achieve to be legitimately like Christ. Evidence of this comes at a particularly low point in her life when contemplating suicide, Marie-Paule uttered the paramount Christological

expression of despair: “*Mon Dieu, mon Dieu, pourquoi m’avez-vous abandonnée?*” (267).²¹

As evidenced in this narrative, Marie-Paule has suffered tremendously in her relationship to Georges. Yet God’s supposed plan for Marie-Paule went beyond the confines of her family and spoke of a greater social concern. In her narrative, God revealed the following to Marie-Paule: “**Toutes ces saintes femmes,**²² *mon enfant, qui désirent te rencontrer, n’ont-elles pas droit à notre reconnaissance? Remarque... chacune a son lot à supporter; elles avancent sûrement sous le regard de Dieu et de ma Mère qui les bénit*” (Demers and Giguère 1: 325). This was evidence that God was absolutely concerned with women’s acts of suffering for the salvation of souls. Yet, this was a silent suffering against oppression by their husbands, much like Marie-Paule and her mother. This revelation asserts women’s identities are enmeshed in a soteriological framework of suffering silently for the salvation of others, and God, through people like Marie-Paule, created a moral base for other women to appropriate. Essentially the message from traditional Catholicism to women was that the more you suffer in silence, the greater will be your reward in heaven if not on earth.

Eventually Marie-Paule was separated from Georges in 1957, and retained full custody of their five children.²³ They were separated due to the combined pressures of

²¹ This Christological expression is found in the Passion narrative of the Gospel of Matthew 27:46 and the Gospel of Mark 15:34. Both Luke and John have different Christological utterances at the moment of Christ’s death.

²² These are women referred to within the narrative who have similar problems to Marie-Paule, and seek her support and advice. Also, all bolded text within the subsequent quoted material is hers.

²³ As mentioned in the first chapter, Georges later recants his actions and joins the Army of Mary in the early 1980s. He died April 1, 1997, thus allowing Marie-Paule the freedom from marriage to pursue her religious vocation. On April 23, 1997, Marie-Paule was unanimously named mother superior of *les Filles de Marie* dawning a new name, *Mère Paule-Marie*. The inversion of her name as it appears here is a convention used by the Army of Mary to underline her changed status towards holiness. To avoid confusion, however, I will consistently use her legal name Marie-Paule throughout this thesis.

social services and Marie-Paule's confessor priest, but she never acquiesced to divorce. The following books in Marie-Paule's autobiography have Georges entering and exiting the narrative, but his role soon lost precedence to the larger events that unfolded in the foundation of the Army of Mary. In spite of the abuse and violence that Marie-Paule has had to face in her relationship with George, it clearly helped forge her identity. Ultimately, if it was not for this relationship, it is unlikely that Marie-Paule would have attained her level of spiritual enlightenment. It was through the trials brought on by this man that Marie-Paule was able to engage God and her life of suffering, and turn her towards God as a goddess herself.

d) The Lady of All Peoples: Religio-Political and Gendered Worldview

At the height of Marie-Paule's suffering in her relationship with Georges, she received a series of important revelations that would shape her destiny. One of these was on May 4, 1958, Marie-Paule said that God revealed the following: "*Tu sais, mon enfant, que ma Mère bien-aimée est passée sur terre et qu'Elle est montée au Ciel sans mourir! Je dois te dire aujourd'hui, qu'Elle s'est incarnée et son regard maternel s'est penché sur toi. C'est toi, mon enfant, qui souffres ma Passion et qui, au nom de ma Mère bien aimée, vas redonner le Christ au monde*" (Demers and Giguère 1: 326). As already stated, this was the single most important revelation that Marie-Paule has ever received from the transcendent. For the first time, Marie-Paule understands that she was the "incarnation" of the Virgin Mary. This was her greatest metaphysical legitimization claim and became the basis for all of the Marian theology that would later develop within the Army of Mary. But it also became the source of the Catholic Church's accusation of

heresy. The reaction to this accusation of heresy was met by the members of the Army of Mary with faith in the fact that Marie-Paule was an authentic source of divine revelation, as grounded in her hagiographic autobiography, Vie d'Amour. Marie-Paule's reaction to this revelation of her metaphysical identity has always been with humility and a youthful bewilderment. Even today, Marie-Paule purportedly struggles with embracing this reality (see Buyse, Le Livre Blanc 1: Grâces Eucharistiques). At the time of this revelation, Marie-Paule was confused as to its full implication and claimed to need further elaboration. However, a chance encounter with a little known Marian apparition called The Lady of All Peoples helped her make the necessary leap from confusion to embracing the reality of a divine eschatological plan.

In the fall of 1967, after what Marie-Paule wrote was ten years of separation from her husband, the upheaval of her family, and the continual torment of what she perceived were demonic forces trying to detract her from her destiny, Marie-Paule encountered a book on a little known Marian apparition from the Netherlands called *The Lady of All Peoples*. Marie-Paule writes how she was very intrigued by the cover which has the Virgin Mary standing before a cross with beams of light streaming down from her hands and with her feet on the globe. Upon reading the book for the first time, Marie-Paule noted God saying, "C'EST TOI, CELÀ" (Demers and Giguère 2: 530). Marie-Paule was astounded to hear these words. She quickly realized that the revelation of 1958 was beginning to unravel in conjunction with the messages of The Lady of All Peoples. Marie-Paule wrote of the relief she felt upon this realization: "C'est merveilleux! Il me semble que je sors enfin d'une longue nuit... Tout est donc vrai! Ce ne fut pas illusion [...] Ma joie est plus grande encore quand, le 15 septembre, je lis dans mon nouveau

missel, à la messe de Notre-Dame des Sept-Douleurs, l'antienne de Communion qui est la suivante:

« Heureuse la Sainte Vierge Marie qui, **sans mourir**, a mérité la palme du martyr, au pied de la Croix du Seigneur »” (531). These words of Mary’s immortality were the most pertinent for Marie-Paule could read the prayer of The Lady of All Peoples and see unambiguous parallels in her life. The prayer states: “*Seigneur Jésus Christ, Fils du Père, envoie à présent Ton Esprit sur la terre. Fais habiter l’Esprit Saint dans le cœurs de tous les peuples afin qu’ils soient préservés de la corruption, des calamités et de la guerre. Que la Dame de Tous les Peuples, **qui fut un jour Marie**, soit notre Avocate. Amen.*”²⁴

The notion that ‘The Lady of All Peoples was once Mary’ proved to Marie-Paule that she was herself, as The Lady of All Peoples, endowed with this same spirit of Mary that has ‘always’ existed.²⁵ For the faithful of the Army of Mary, Marie-Paule became inextricably linked to the characteristics and messages of The Lady of All Peoples. It is important, therefore, to explain the elements and messages of The Lady of All Peoples in order to see how they were appropriated into the religious worldview of the Army of Mary.

²⁴ The bolded text is mine. This is the original prayer that accompanies the icon of The Lady of All Peoples, which due to the controversial notion that ‘The Lady of All Peoples was once Mary’ these words have been forbidden in the official promulgation of the prayer by orders of Pope Benedict XVI imposed on Bishop Punt of Amsterdam. For more information, see Jozef Marianus Punt, [In Response to Inquiries Concerning the Lady of All Nations Apparitions](http://www.de-rouwe.net/english/index.html?d_May_31_2002_Approbation_of_the_Apparitions258.htm), 2002, Available: http://www.de-rouwe.net/english/index.html?d_May_31_2002_Approbation_of_the_Apparitions258.htm, June 17 2009. However, due to the slow and deliberate action taken by the church on this matter, Margry notes how the cultus to The Lady of All Peoples became “oculocentri”, turning the image into the main vehicle in promulgating her message that indeed this was a new type of Marian apparition; see Margry, “Paradoxes of Marian Apparitional Contestation” 190.

²⁵ A more elaborate discussion concerning the spirit of Mary is present in the following sub-chapter, “Theology of the Feminine Divine: Marc Bosquart.”

The Lady of All Peoples or *the Lady of All Nations*²⁶ appeared to a middle-aged and celibate Dutch Catholic laywoman named Ida Peerdeman a total of fifty-six times over fourteen years, in and around her home in the suburb of Harlem in Amsterdam, the Netherlands—between March 25, 1945 (one month before the cessation of World War II in Holland) and May 31, 1959. These apparitions were carefully noted by Ida’s confessor priest to be later transcribed into a book called The Lady of All Peoples, which was translated into French by Raoul Auclair in 1967 (Auclair). The Lady of All Peoples transmitted to Peerdeman three key messages: 1) reform the laws of the Catholic Church, 2) announce the eminent arrival of the apocalyptic “Marian Kingdom”; and 3) demand the promulgation of the fifth Marian Dogma of Co-Redemptrix, Mediatrix, and Advocate.²⁷ It must be noted that the eschatological view of The Lady of All Peoples serves primarily the socio-religious need to establish world order through Papal primacy, Christian unification under Catholic hegemony, and Marian supremacy. The icon contains all of the elements of her socio-religious discourse, and therefore an analysis of the icon will be the most direct way to unpack her message (see figures 1 and 2 below).²⁸

²⁶ The Amsterdam cultus to this apparition has chosen the name *the Lady of All Nations*, with a lower case on the article ‘the’. I have chosen to capitalize the article in *The Lady of All Peoples* in reference to her complete name as her official title. For more information, see Margry, “Paradoxes of Marian Apparitional Contestation” 194.

²⁷ The official Marian dogmas are: 1) Mary as “Perpetual Virgin” originating in the third century; 2) Mary as *Theotokos* (i.e. Mother of God) promulgated at the Council of Ephesus in 431; 3) Mary’s Immaculate Conception promulgated by Pope Pius IX in 1854; and 4) Mary’s Bodily Assumption promulgated by Pope Pius XII in 1950.

²⁸ For a very important discussion on the semiotic analysis of the image of the Lady of All Nations in Amsterdam, see Margry, “Paradoxes of Marian Apparitional Contestation” 185-88.

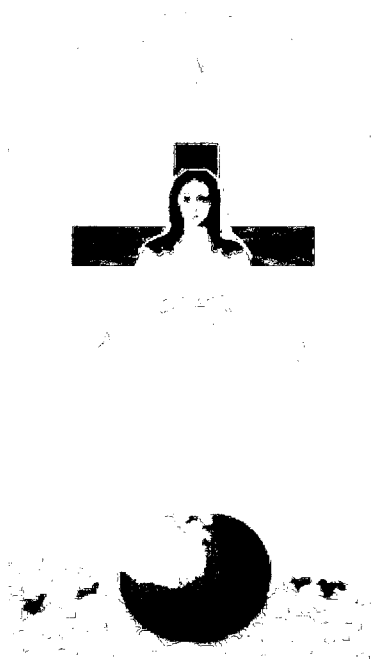


Figure 1 – The icon of The Lady of All Peoples widely used by the Army of Mary

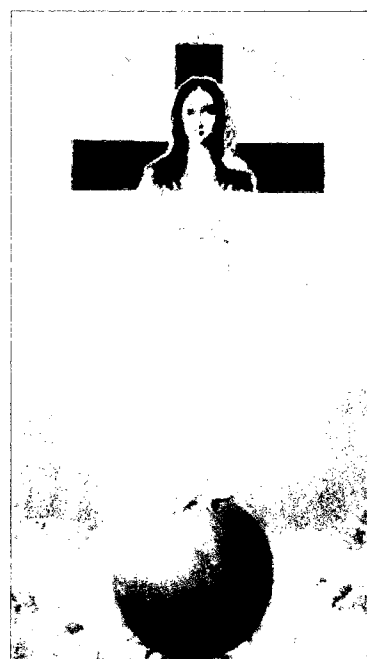


Figure 2 – The icon of the *Lady of All Nations* used at the main shrine in Amsterdam, the Netherlands

The icon of The Lady of All Peoples reveals the unprecedented power of the Virgin Mary in the popular religious imagination. It depicts Mary dressed in white with a golden sash and a golden veil slightly covering her brown hair. She stands before a large wooden cross with her hands outstretched below her waist facing out to the viewer. Beams of golden light stream down from what appears to be her bloodless stigmata. The cross and her bare feet are planted upon the earth as a globe, as she stands directly above Europe. Below the globe, in a panoramic vista, frolics a sea of white sheep with a few black sheep peppering in contrast. And finally, there is a dove that seems to be hovering above the cross as if descending from heaven.²⁹

²⁹ The icon of The Lady of All Peoples including the dove is the central image used by the Army of Mary; for more information, see The Army of Mary. 1998. Available: http://www.communaute-ame.qc.ca/oeuvres/OE_armee_AN.htm. May 4 2009. The concurrent image (which is the original description of Ida Peerdeman, painted by Heinrich Rempke in 1951), instead of the descending dove, has a declaration in

The white dove descending upon The Lady of All Peoples represents the Holy Spirit who traditionally acts as an intercessor between humanity and the Godhead. As perceived in the opening stanzas of the prayer, the dove endorses the apparition's link to Catholic tradition in order to promote Mary's project of promoting conservative Catholic values. In her revelation to Peerdeman, The Lady of All Peoples outlined four principles related to her overall purpose: faith, truth, justice, and love. These represent a fundamental basis for her apocalyptical and soteriological mission that endorses the view that without faith in the Roman Catholic Church and The Lady of All Peoples, you cannot access God's truth and justice and therefore cannot experience the one Christian commandment of love. This is a very exclusivist attitude that openly seeks the Christianization of *all peoples* as a primary mandate towards sole governance of religious matters centered on the Pope and the Vatican (Auclair).

Like Marie-Paule, The Lady of All Peoples stands in unwavering support of the Pope and his role as the authentic spiritual leader on earth. The Pope is depicted as righteously working towards Christian unification and human salvation. The Lady of All Peoples brings a message of reform (unlike the Second Vatican Council) that never questions the upper echelons of the Church organization, but rather antagonizes the 'liberal' theologians who promote progressive ideas. Her reform aims to keep the current doctrine and change Canon Law to suit a conservative consolidation of the church around authority at an especially calamitous time in a post-war, pre-Vatican II Western world. In her dialogue she stated: "The DOCTRINE is good, but the laws can and must be

Dutch that reads, "*de Vrouwe van alle Volkeren*" meaning *The Lady of All Peoples* (for more information, see Jozef Marianus Punt, *In Response to Inquiries Concerning the Lady of All Nations Apparitions*, 2002, Available: http://www.devrouwe.net/english/index.html?d_May_31_2002_Approbation_of_the_Apparitions258.htm, June 17 2009). Both images can be referenced above in Figure 1 and 2.

changed. I tell you this today because the world is prey to great confusion. No one knows which way to turn. That is why the Son charges me with a message” (Auclair 114). This ‘great confusion’ is understood to be the problem of satanic influences that spread dissension and fragmentation between all peoples. And, much like Marie-Paule, The Lady of All Peoples was mandated from God to fight this evil.

As presented in the apocalyptic Marian theology of St. Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort (1673-1716),³⁰ the Virgin Mary in the popular imagination was given a central role in the apocalypse leading the armies of good against the armies of evil.³¹ This understanding of Mary’s elevated role is based in a tradition of popular devotion informed by the Vulgate Bible interpretation of Genesis 3:15, which states “Je mettrai des inimitiés entre toi et la femme, et ta race et la sienne; elle-même t’écrasera la tête, et tu mettras des embûches à son talon” (Grignon de Montfort 49). As a retribution for the sin of Eve, Mary (the New Eve) is destined to defeat Satan in the apocalypse.³² Grignon de Montfort thus outlines a four stage progression of cosmic events: 1) the approaching reign of the Antichrist,³³ 2) followed by the victorious reign of Mary, 3) ensuing in the benevolent reign of Jesus Christ, 4) and concluding with the Second coming, the judgment of all souls, and the end of the world as we know it. Grignon de Montfort writes, “Enfin Marie doit être terrible au diable et à ses suppôts comme une armée rangée en bataille, principalement dans ces derniers temps [...] c’est entre Marie...et le diable,

³⁰ The alternative French spelling of his name is *Grignon* de Montfort. In this thesis, the English spelling will be used throughout.

³¹ Grignon de Montfort was very popular throughout the centuries after his death in shaping the vigour of Mary’s role in the apocalypse. His main eschatological premise undergirds the theological program of the Army of Mary as will be explained in the following sub-chapter, “Theology of the Feminine Divine: Marc Bosquart.”

³² This notion will be further developed and explained within the Marian theology of Marc Bosquart in the following sub-chapter, “Theology of the Feminine Divine: Marc Bosquart.”

³³ This is an era in which the Army of Mary believes we are currently engaged.

entre les enfants et serviteurs de la Sainte Vierge, et les enfants et suppôts de Lucifer” (48-49). While Jesus will not appear until the very end, The Lady of All Peoples and the Army of Mary are currently preparing for the most crucial stage in battling the anti-Christ. Ultimately, this highlights The Lady of All Peoples’ enormous role in salvation history and places her in intimate relation to the cross.

In the icon, the cross is placed solidly on the earth. It is purposed to stand at the centre as a rallying point for all peoples. Yet the cross is bare and without the body of Christ, which is usually prominent in Catholic portrayals of the Crucifix. Margry notes that “Since the corpus of Christ is not present in the painting, it creates the impression that Mary has in fact taken over the place of Christ, and, in a sort of commanding manner, takes the cross for herself” (Margry 185-87). Essentially, there is a deliberate replacement of Jesus by The Lady of All Peoples who stands as a mother before her Son in her new role as the Co-Redemptrix, Mediatrix and Advocate. Traditionally this intercessory role is attributed to the Holy Spirit as the third person of the Trinity, but The Lady of All Peoples posits herself as the “new Paraclete”³⁴ sent by God. She states:

The Son came into the world as the Redeemer of men. And the work of Redemption was the Cross. He was sent by the Father. Now the Father and the Son ‘wishes’ to send the Lady, to send her throughout the ENTIRE WORLD. For it was she who, previously, PROCEEDED from the Son; it was She who FOLLOWED him...Once again the Lady comes to take her place before the Cross, standing, as the Mother of the Son; the Mother who with Him, has wrought the work of Redemption. (Auclair 129)

She was sent to fulfill her role of ‘co-redeemer’ with her Son the redeemer by ‘mediating’ the prayers of the faithful and acting as the official ‘advocate’ for humanity in the time of judgement. In short, this becomes a reciprocal system of redemption where

³⁴ In Christian tradition, “Paraclete” is the title given to the Holy Spirit who acts as an intercessory element between the Godhead and humankind.

the penitent asks Mary to advocate their urgings for salvation to God while she acts as a spokesperson of God's will. What must be underscored in The Lady of All Peoples' salvific role is that she does not intend to subvert the authority of God or the Church, but seeks to fulfill her role only as an interceding factor between heaven and earth.

Nevertheless, this is an unprecedented attitude taken by a Marian apparition in which she stands before the cross of Christ's redemption as the co-redeemer with the open arms of a mother ready to embrace indiscriminately all who come to her.

The element of the globe and the sheep presents The Lady of All Peoples as a caretaker to all people on earth. As caretaker, she feels the need to warn her people of their problems. She is very dynamic in her discourse engaged in foretelling the dangers within the world, such as germ warfare and the risks of atheistic ideologies—all issues current in a post-war atmosphere. The Lady of All Peoples also speaks of the 'Christo-political' struggles, meaning the struggles of Christian unification with the Roman Catholic Church. She also highlights the social and political issues within countries like Korea, China, Ukraine, France, Germany, America, and the Netherlands. She casts her audience as widely as possible with the ambition to assemble all peoples under the hegemony of the Catholic Church. Symbolically it is her role as a shepherdess to bring all the sheep, black and white,³⁵ to the cross in the order of salvation. Thus the icon elucidates an image where the globe acts as the arena wherein Mary will lead these sheep into cosmic battle.

³⁵ The depiction of so few black sheep amongst a sea of white sheep was due to a miscommunication between Peerdeman and the German painter Heinrich Repke, who understood the black sheep to be religious apostates, though Peerdeman saw it as representing non-white ethnicities of the world—i.e., the Lady of *All Nations*. Again, see Margry, "Paradoxes of Marian Apparitional Contestation" 187.

Standing at the centre of the icon is The Lady of All Peoples herself. According to her revelations, The Lady of All Peoples' body symbolizes her transcendental and intercessory nature. Her feet, hands, face and hair are of this world while her body (including her robe and sash)³⁶ are divine. The icon portrays rays of light streaming from tiny slits in her palms falling down upon the sheep below her. She explains: "These three rays are those of Grace, Redemption, of [*sic*] Peace" (Auclair 136). According to The Lady of All Peoples, these were gifts for humanity, and they add a caring, compassionate and 'feminine' quality to her charisma. Grace is traditionally a Marian attribute typified by the church, but the inclusion of redemption and peace in this context lends a greater sense of power to the figure of Mary.

Though this is a very powerful icon that is unprecedented in her influence over redemption, The Lady of All Peoples does *not* endorse the view of equality between women and men. Like Marie-Paule, she actively promotes the traditional values of domesticity for women charging that one of the great evils in the Western world belongs to changing gender roles.³⁷ In addressing the "women of the world," The Lady of All

³⁶ The sash is claimed to be the cloth worn by Christ on Golgotha—which points furthermore to her Christological nature in relation to God. For more information, see their official website at [The Army of Mary](http://www.communaut-dame.qc.ca/oeuvres/OE_armee_AN.htm), 1998, Available: http://www.communaut-dame.qc.ca/oeuvres/OE_armee_AN.htm, May 4 2009.

³⁷ This conservative notion of gendered roles is strangely contrasted by the actions of the current Bishop of Amsterdam and leading advocate for the cultus of the Lady of All Nations, Bishop Jozef Punt. Punt sees in the *Lady* (i.e. the truncated form used by Margry to represent *the Lady of All Nations*) the strength and desire of women to expand their roles in the redemptive work of the Catholic Church and in the world. This view on the nature of the Lady has given credence to the more progressive elements of the Dutch church in the justification of women priests. However, Margry points out that Punt himself, who is particularly conservative in his Marian devotion, has not explicitly stated this as such. Margry writes that Punt "is trying to recruit support for 'his' controversial movement in the progressive Dutch Catholic milieu or within the Christian ecumenical movement, where the role of women is greater, in order to divert attention from the contentious aspects around the Lady" (Margry, "Paradoxes of Marian Apparitional Contestation" 197). As we have seen, those contentious ideas refer specifically to the unaccepted notion of Mary as Co-Redemptrix, but also to groups like the Army of Mary who, in Punt's view, are alienated from the 'true' message of the Lady. However, it would seem that Punt is minimizing the strictly conservative gendered values promulgated by the Lady, whereas Marie-Paule and the Army of Mary seem to understand and expand upon these values, thus integrating them as a central element to their religious worldview.

Peoples speaks: “Do you still know what your duties are? Listen to this: as the woman goes, so goes the man. You women, set the example. Return to your **ROLE OF WOMEN**” (Auclair 110). Clearly this is a plea from a conservative voice wanting women to turn away from ideas of gendered equality espoused most acutely by the feminist movement and by secular society. The Lady of All Peoples understands that such ideas of gendered social equality corrupts the very foundation of society and of the Catholic Church—i.e., the family.

In terms of influence, however, The Lady of All Peoples states that women are efficient role-models to men. The Lady of All Peoples connects this claim to the creation story where Adam follows Eve in eating the fruit thus causing the eviction of humanity into a world of ambiguity, corruption, and (especially for Catholics) sin.³⁸ Following this ontological precedent, The Lady of All Peoples became the new inculcator of values inversely related to Eve. She declares: “women of this world, do you know what it means to be woman? It means: **TO SACRIFICE**. Therefore, spurn all egoism and all vanity. Strive to bring to the central Point, the Cross, all the children and all those who loiter along the way, browsing here and there. So sacrifice yourselves, you also, along with me” (Auclair 137). Here The Lady of All Peoples speaks of the traditionally feminine value of sacrifice as a value of Christian humility. As previously observed this understanding of sacrifice is current throughout Marie-Paule’s narrative and remains the cornerstone of a conservative view of women’s roles in society. The Lady of All Peoples tells women to bring all those who loiter along the way into a co-redemptive salvation—meaning that women are called to proselytize with her. In fact she tells women to sacrifice themselves

³⁸ There is a further discussion of the Genesis story and the role of Marie-Paule as The Lady of All Peoples in the following sub-chapter, “The Theology of the Feminine Divine: Marc Bosquart.”

“as she is doing.” The power of this statement is due to the fact that elements of salvation and prosyletization are promoted solely from the perspective of women’s roles as mothers.

Throughout her fourteen year discourse, *The Lady of All Peoples* only emphasized her motherhood, and failed to mention any other composite relationship to the male Godhead.³⁹ Her role as mother is everything. It is the locus of her experience as co-redeemer, in relationship to her son Jesus, in how she gathers all of humankind to her with open arms, in her scorn of all corruptions and calamities in the world, in how she demands Christian unification under the Catholic *paterfamilias*, and lastly, the reasons behind her contempt of women in the Western world for not attending to their domestic and motherly duties.⁴⁰ *The Lady of All Peoples* speaks with halting severity to her ‘children’ saying: “I have said: ‘I will console’. Your Mother, peoples, is acquainted with life; your Mother is acquainted with sorrow; your Mother is acquainted with the Cross. All that you have to put up with in this life, your Mother, *The Lady of All Peoples*, has experienced before you. She has travelled this road before you” (Auclair 200). This

³⁹ This refers to her virginity, her daughterhood or her spousal relationship to God. These elements will be further discussed in the following section under the sub-chapter heading, “The Second Wave Feminist View of Mary and Marie-Paule” explicating a feminist view of the negative social construction of Marian devotion.

⁴⁰ Margry adds that “the organization in Amsterdam has written that through Mary and her universal motherhood and her children God seeks to combat universal evil” (Margry, “Paradoxes of Marian Apparitional Contestation” 197). He views that motherhood is the common element to all of modern “visionary and apparitional culture” and, moreover, that because these twentieth century apparitions are not witnessed by girls but by women, there is an inherent shift in the tone and voice of the messages themselves. Margry explains, “They are able to reproduce messages and images and give a personal interpretation of them. Because of their strong input into the interpretation of the messages and the future of the Church, female visionaries do impinge on the existing religious and theological discourses and narratives, as in the case of Amsterdam. Ida Peerdeman, an unmarried woman, was herself a Mediatrix, a channel for the messages. Although she emphatically kept herself in the background, her presence and her interpretations of the messages gave her a central importance” (197). Peerdeman like Marie-Paule, are thus instigators in shaping the contours of their own realities, even if they both affirm the value of self-diminishment in presenting their claims. Yet, Marie-Paule’s appropriation of the unambiguous power of motherhood creates for herself a medium upon which she is able to assert a personal divinity. For a complete discussion on this appropriation of gendered power and agency, see the following section “Gendered Power and Agency—A Gendered Analysis of Marie-Paule.”

reverence of the role of a mother speaks volumes about the value Catholic tradition places on the role of motherhood, but it also addresses directly Marie-Paule's experiences in relation to the transcendent.

From this position, it is apparent that conservative women's voices are speaking of a certain type of agency that is necessary in order to act in powerful ways.⁴¹ For these conservatives, that power is exclusively related to motherhood. Therefore, women who look toward these examples of the divine feminine can find self-assurance and an unfolding agency when interpreting their own lives as women and as mothers within the traditions of the Catholic Church. But the example of The Lady of All Peoples does not stop with the messages passed on to Ida Peerdeman in the 1950s, but is expounded upon in the unprecedented Marian theology of Marc Bosquart. It is in this theology that the divine feminine becomes reified into the "feminine divine" (the divine goddess herself embodying feminine elements).

e) Theology of the Feminine Divine: Marc Bosquart

In the second volume of Vie d'Amour, Marie-Paule outlined in a strictly conservative gendered voice her view of women's roles in society: "Le rôle de la femme est de former l'homme de demain et non de prendre sa place dans le contexte social, culturel ou autre. Redonnons au monde d'autres « Marie » et nous assisterons au triomphe du Christ par la médiation du Cœur Immaculé de Marie [...] la femme du monde rayonnera par sa pureté, son obéissance et son esprit de pauvreté; elle deviendra l'âme d'élite capable de remuer les cœurs endurcis et de les ramener par son exemple sur

⁴¹ Again, I will discuss at great length the notion of women's agency in the following section of this thesis, "Gendered Power and Agency—A Gendered Analysis of Marie-Paule."

le chemin qui mène à Dieu” (Demers and Giguère 2: 365). Marie-Paule is here endorsing the idea that woman should not aim to usurp man’s place in the public sphere, but should reassert their own place in the private or domestic sphere by emphasizing and embracing a gendered domesticity. Also through an example of ‘purity and obedience within a spirit of poverty’ women are capable of performing highly salvific acts. What is interesting to note here is that Marie-Paule uses Mary as the cornerstone of gendered behaviour that women should emulate because of her acts of obedience and passive submission to the will of God. As always, Mary is the symbol *par excellence* that women should try to emulate by embodying the discourse of The Lady of All Peoples. This also places these gendered characteristics within an apocalyptic framework giving them a sense of urgency as well as an elevated importance. This would eventually give rise to a theology that expounds upon these ideas.

By the mid-1980s, Marc Bosquart, a Catholic theologian from Belgium and lay member of the Army of Mary, began to outline a complete theology of Marie-Paule’s divinity and published his theological views in two important yet controversial books called De la Trinité Divine à l’Immaculée-Trinité published in 1985 and Le Rédempteur et la Co-Rédemptrice published in 1986. Bosquart’s most central idea for the theology of the Army of Mary is what he terms the *Quinternity*. This infuses a conservative notion of femininity into the Trinitarian doctrine of the Catholic Church by introducing Mary and Marie-Paule. The Quinternity hinges upon the notion of gendered symmetry or “complimentarity”⁴² that has always been at the base of popular devotion yet remained a problem for an ecclesiological understanding of women’s roles in the church. Bosquart

⁴² A discussion on the conservative Catholic view of gendered symmetry or *complementarity* is to follow in the sub-chapter heading, “New (Catholic) Feminism.”

summarizes this gendered symmetry as follows: *masculine + feminine = totality* (Bosquart, Trésors de “Vie D'amour”). He thus outlines the different aspects of the gendered complementarity of the divine in five different areas concerning a new understanding of Catholic doctrine now adopted by the Church of John.

The first area is *God + Immaculate = Divine Couple*. This is the view that God and Mary as the “Immaculate Conception” represent a divine marriage between the male God and his female counterpart. The Immaculate represents the spirit of the divine feminine that has always existed as the spouse of God. Bosquart writes: “nous croyons désormais que « *Dieu n'est plus seul au firmament de nos prières* », car nous savons à présent qu'Il partage tout ~ sa nature et sa puissance ~ avec une Autre que Lui : l'Immaculée, sa divine Épouse” (Bosquart, Trésors de “Vie D'amour”). This notion that God is not alone translates into the understanding that the Immaculate was present at creation. Bosquart describes a love affair between God and the Immaculate whose fecund energy created the universe. Even to the point that when God created man in His image, the female form was created in imitation of the Immaculate: “De l'homme à l'image de Dieu; de la femme à l'image de l'Immaculée, qui est Elle-même de la nature de Dieu” (Bosquart, Trésors de “Vie D'amour”). This alternative ontology forms a complementarity between man and woman as paralleling the divine couple.

Bosquart explains that, though the Immaculate was present at Creation, she is distinct from God.⁴³ Based on the notion derived from the second creation story of humanity in Genesis 2 that woman was created from the rib of Adam with an understanding that Eve is part of God's creation, Bosquart notes, in a parallelism, that the

⁴³ This notion is based on the eschatological theology of Raoul Auclair, the Army of Mary's major source for their apocalyptic theology. For a complete discussion, see Introvigne, “En Route to the Marian Kingdom”.

Immaculate too was born out of the side of God: “de même l’Immaculée, une fois sortie du « côté » de Dieu, n’était **plus** « Dieu » mais restait «DIVINE » : à tout jamais marquée par ses origines en Dieu de la « substance » de Qui est issue sa propre « substance »” (Bosquart, Le Rédempteur et la Co-Rédemptrice 37). This ontology offers women the unique position of having literally been created in the image of a ‘feminine’ divine. This notion is warranted in order to establish a relational complementarity based on monogamous heterosexual relationships of marriage that place the woman in an ontologically complimentary role with men, thereby reflecting that any other role for women would thus be unnatural.⁴⁴ It does not place women on an equal standing with men because men, like God, ontologically remain the point of departure and thus the more important element in this relationship.

The second area is *Divine Trinity + Immaculate Trinity = Divine Quinternity*. As stated above, Quinternity is the central theological notion of the Army of Mary today. In addition to Marie-Paule’s early revelations of divinity, she is also part of a “hypostatic union”⁴⁵ with God, which places Marie-Paule on an Christological level incorporating her in the Christian Trinity. Bosquart asserts this shift in Trinitarian reality as a matter of faith: “Nous sommes en train de passer, sans la renier d’aucune façon, de Trinité divine à une nouvelle Réalité divine, appelée Quinternité, dans laquelle, en plus du Père, du Fils et de l’Esprit, figurent également Marie-la-Divine et sa Fille Marie-Paule!” (Buyse, Le Livre Blanc 1: Grâces Eucharistiques 34). In this sense a gendered complementarity is again asserted: God as divine husband and the Immaculate as divine wife are joined by

⁴⁴ This notion is further emphasized by Marc Bosquart, Le Rédempteur et la Co-Rédemptrice, (Quebec, QC: Limoilou, 1986) chapter 3, in a discussion on the nature of sin with Adam and Eve, pointing to the sin of Adam for having blindly-trusted his wife.

⁴⁵ A theological term usually attributed to the divine and human natures of Christ in one person or the “consubstantial” union of three divine persons in the Trinitarian Godhead.

Jesus as the Son of God and Marie-Paule as the Daughter of the Immaculate. The Holy Spirit is the fifth element unifying all in a five-point Quinternity (see figure 3). For Bosquart, “[Marie-Paule] introduit la dimension féminine dans la compréhension que nous avons de la Divinité dans sa totalité” (Bosquart, Trésors de “Vie D'amour”).

Bosquart claims that only with the introduction of this feminine element can a balance be achieved that not only reflects the social convention of a conservative worldview, but has a larger impact in readying the world for the apocalypse in which only the redemption by both Redeemer and Co-Redeemer is acceptable.

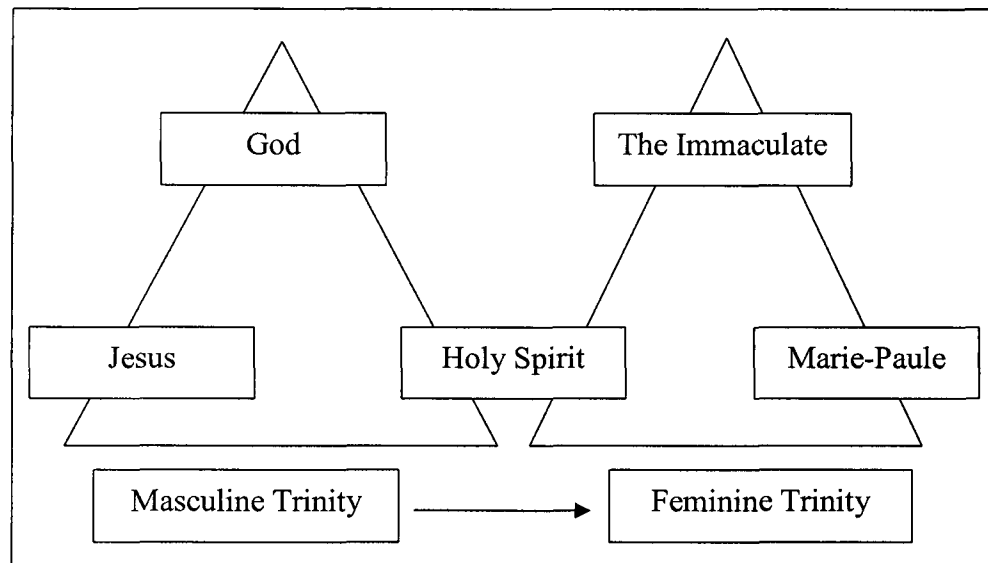


Figure 3 – Five points of the Quinternity emphasizing a gendered complementarity that favours masculinity over femininity

The third area is *Redemption + Co-Redemption = Total Redemption*. This is the notion that the redemption from Christ was only a first step necessitating co-redemption with Marie-Paule. This is compounded by the worldview that “la Création n’est pas le fait de Dieu seul, mais de la collaboration ~ de l’Amour ~ de Dieu Créateur et de l’Immaculée Co-Créatrice” (Bosquart, Trésors de “Vie D'amour”) and that Marie-Paule has a central role to play in the overall salvation of all. Bosquart outlines a clearer

understanding of the economy of a complimentary redemption based on the Genesis story of the Fall of Adam and Eve (see figure 4 below).

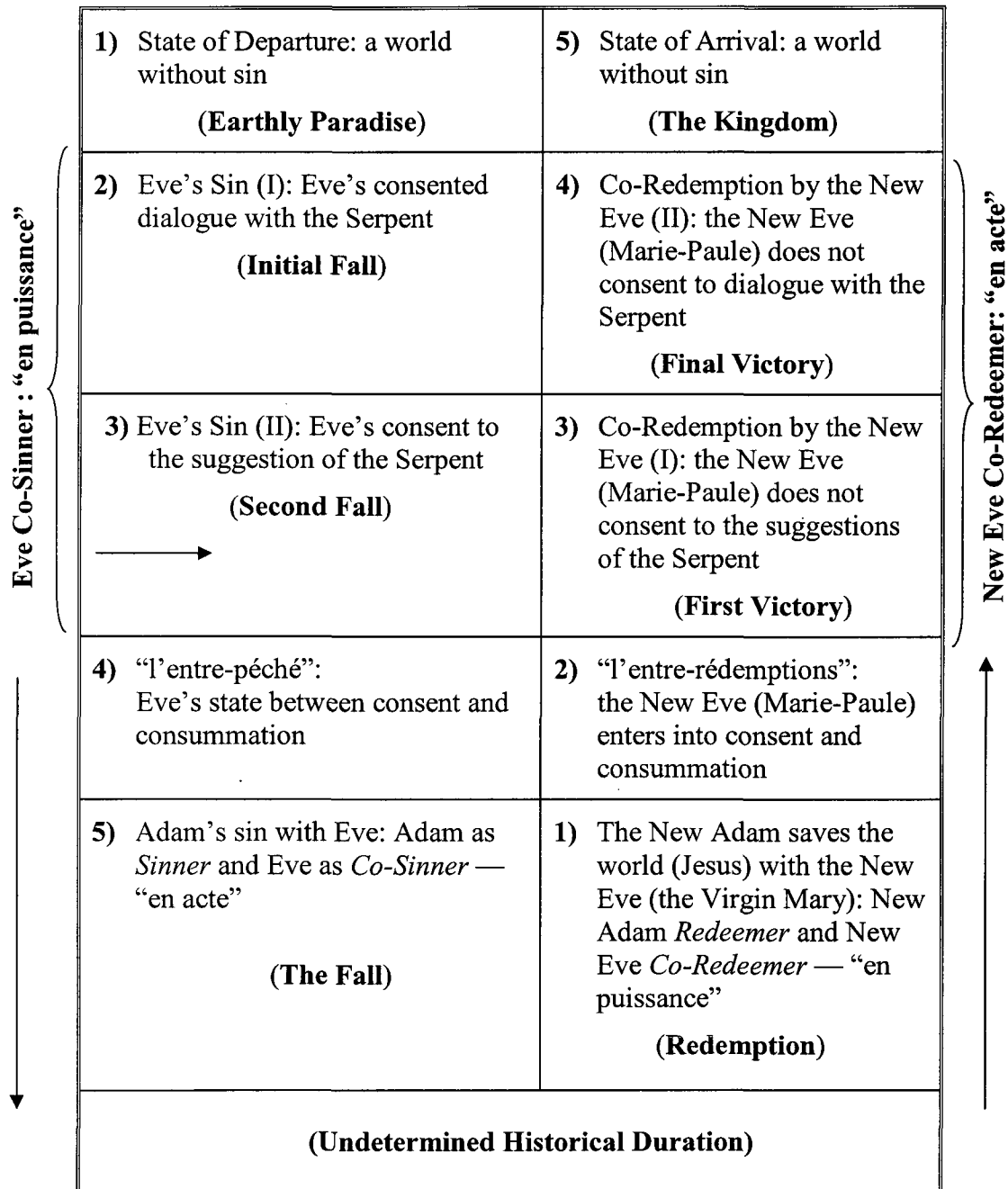


Figure 4 – Marc Bosquart's economy of complimentary redemption

Bosquart describes two parallel processes, one of expulsion from Eden because of Adam and Eve, followed by the return to Paradise through Jesus and Marie-Paule. The first part relates to the Fall in what Bosquart calls “Ève Co-Pécheresse « en puissance »” (Bosquart, Le Rédempteur et la Co-Rédemptrice 78-79): 1) the first stage is a worldly paradise without sin in the Garden of Eden, 2) Eve’s first sin (initial defeat) in her dialogue with the serpent, 3) Eve’s second sin (second defeat) of consenting to the serpent’s suggestion, 4) Eve’s consent and consummation of sin in what Bosquart calls “l’entre-péchés” (meaning between the sins of Eve and the consummation of the Fall with Adam), and finally 5) Adam sins with Eve thereby ushering in the Fall, thus Bosquart names them “Adam the Sinner” and “Eve the Co-Sinner.” This final sin is viewed by Bosquart as being an “act” of sin for only through the “full consummation” of Adam with his wife was the fall from grace initiated—essentially it was a joint effort based on unfettered acts of individual agency.

In contrast to the Fall is the restorative narrative of a redemption complex Bosquart calls “La Nouvelle Ève Co-Rédemptrice « en acte »” (Bosquart, Le Rédempteur et la Co-Rédemptrice 78-79): 1) the New Adam (Jesus as Redeemer) saves the world from sin with the New Eve (i.e. Mary as Mother of God) “en puissance”, 2) Marie-Paule’s consent and consummation of God’s will *not to sin* (warranted through Marie-Paule’s life of steadfast suffering) in what Bosquart calls “l’entre-rédemption” which is in a diametrical opposition to Eve’s “entre-péchés,” 3) the Co-Redeemer via the New Eve does not consent to the suggestions of the serpent (first victory of not succumbing to temptation), 4) the Co-Redeemer does not dialogue with the serpent (the final victory in ultimately defeating Satan), and 5) the final stage of a world without sin after the

eschaton. What is interesting to note in terms of contrast between the two diametrically opposed but parallel schemas is that Eve's actions (in the first and second defeats) are not taken into account by Bosquart as being acts in themselves, but related to power ("puissance") beyond herself (i.e. satanic influences), while Marie-Paule's actions (past, present and future in the first and second victories) are understood as individual acts that redress the universe. We can appreciate that the contrast between 'the powers' beyond Eve led to 'the joint act' of the Fall, while 'the individual acts' of Marie-Paule based in 'the redeeming power' of the collaboration of Redeemer and Co-Redeemer lead to an overall salvation. Marie-Paule retains a tremendous amount of power through her righteous actions informed by God, as opposed to Eve's deplorable actions informed by Satan.

The fourth area is *Jesus Christ + Marie-Paule = Total Eucharist*. Bosquart sees that Marie-Paule's role in the eschaton as co-redeemer stands to redefine the Catholic Eucharist and the notion of "transubstantiation": "Pendant près de deux millénaires, elle [the Eucharist] était cet état suprême atteint par Jésus-Christ seulement, mais aujourd'hui, grâce au fait que Marie-Paule, à son tour, a personnellement conquis cet « état d'Eucharistie », celle-ci s'est enrichie de la Présence réelle de la Dame à côté de la Présence réelle du Seigneur" (Bosquart, Trésors de "Vie D'amour"). In order to unpack this statement, it must be understood that Bosquart views Marie-Paule's role in salvation history as giving Christ back to the world. Bosquart claims that this notion does not imply that Christ will return in a literal sense through Marie-Paule (i.e. through her progeny or structurally within the Army of Mary organization), but that Marie-Paule's 'Christological nature' along side Christ himself will be the deciding factor in the

apocalypse. Bosquart summarizes it as follows: *Total Christ = Jesus Christ + Marie-Paule*—both are Christ but one cannot alone be “total Christ” without the other. Bosquart explains Marie-Paule’s Christology as “Marie-Immaculée s’incarne en Marie-Paule afin que celle-ci, progressivement, puisse conquérir l’état de Christ et se transformer en Christ pour le nouveau salut du monde” (Trésors de “Vie D’amour” 9). Similarly to Christ, Marie-Paule will ‘progressively’ bring salvation to the world in collaboration with Christ. In terms of “Total Eucharist,” Marie-Paule is thus seen as adding to the soteriological elements of the Eucharist in its transubstantiation of not only the real presence of Christ, but that of Marie-Paule herself. Akin to the notion of Christology where Christ is one person with two substances, the Eucharist is now viewed as possessing two people, but one ‘total Christ’ (i.e. Messiah or saviour). With this theological appropriation of the nature of the Eucharist, the Army of Mary have taken possession of a central symbol representing much of the power of the Catholic Church, thus gaining access to the church itself to fulfill the purposes needed of the Army of Mary in their apocalyptic worldview.

Finally, the fifth area is *Catholic Church + La Famille des Fils et Filles de Marie* (i.e. currently the Church of John) = *Complete Ecclesiastical Structure*. With this notion, Bosquart adds to his understanding of the structure of the Catholic Church (in its historical androcentrism) a femininity that summarizes his overall religious worldview of gendered complementarity. He writes, “il apparaît que l’Église, à la structure masculine, a été complétée par la Famille des Fils et Filles de Marie dont la structure est féminine. Et, dans l’avenir, l’une et l’autre agiront de concert” (Bosquart, Trésors de “Vie D’amour” 28). In this understanding, the basic structure of the Army of Mary itself (i.e. *la Famille*

des Fils et Filles de Marie) is the answer to a gendered imbalance in the church and in the world. Note that this is not a negation of the Catholic Church in their religious worldview, but a combination of both the Church of Rome and the Church of John in a ‘complete ecclesiastical structure’—essentially stating that one is incomplete without the other.

The femininity remarked in Bosquart’s statement refers specifically to the structure of the Army of Mary and how this eschatological period is indeed “**l’Heure de la Femme**, et qui est « en Dieu », **l’Heure de l’Immaculée** — qui est, « en humanité », **l’Heure de la Co-Rédemption** — et qui est, « en Église », **l’Heure de la Famille**” (Bosquart, *Le Rédempteur et la Co-Rédemptrice* 258). Here the family stands at the level of the church in terms of eschatological redemption and (according to Bosquart, The Lady of All Peoples, and Marie-Paule) the wife’s role is to save the family, which is understood to be the bedrock of society. Therefore women, through a ‘correct’ interpretation of femininity, are to save the world on three different levels of reality: 1) at the level of society as mothers, 2) at the level of humanity through a Christological Marie-Paule, 3) and at the metaphysical level through the Immaculate. This complex of female saviours perceives women in a system of gendered subordination to men in collaborative efforts that are not passive but active to the point of divinization. And, as reiterated again and again, the mother’s *modus operandi* is suffering. Suffering is the vehicle for a woman’s sanctity and piety. And it is only by the measure of one’s suffering that salvation can be accomplished. This has been the message of The Lady of All Peoples and has been expressed thoroughly in the life of Marie-Paule.

Section II. Gendered Power and Agency—Gendered Analysis of Marie-Paule

The Army of Mary regards motherhood as an important moral category and a central component to salvation history; and, most importantly, its members view Marie-Paule as the apex of these values. This perspective, however, illustrates a certain two-dimensional understanding of womanhood that seems to regard motherhood as being the only ethical category available, while ignoring other social and moral roles women have. It would appear that Marie-Paule and the Army of Mary are invested in what can be characterized as ‘negative stereotypes’ for women; meaning, they perpetuate a debilitating social construction through gendered norms stemmed solely in the concerns of men who wish for women to remain within a domestic sphere, well away from public discourses that shape the contours of culture. In the language of feminist critique, women’s freedom and equality are dependent on their access to tangible modes of power in order to negate androcentric and misogynistic social norms. On the surface, therefore, it would appear that the gendered framework of Marie-Paule and the Army of Mary denies women their agency.

However, this response to Marie-Paule’s gendered worldview is problematic for it fails to clarify the justifications behind the transgressive actions by the Army of Mary as well as explain Marie-Paule’s deification and the new theology of the feminine divine. As a result, this perspective elicits a more complex reading and analysis of, first, Marie-Paule’s gendered behaviour followed by a more global understanding of the culture in which she is located and positioned. Only from this vantage point will there be a clearer understanding of the purpose and power inherent to Marie-Paule’s actions and views.

In the first chapter of this second section, I will outline and explain two contrasting feminist discourses. The first is the Second Wave feminist perspective of gendered agency with regards to their understanding of women's freedom and power as well as providing their critical view of Marian devotion, and an analytical reading of Marie-Paule's actions and intentions. This will be followed by a discussion of the more conservative new (Catholic) feminist response to Second Wave feminism. Though the latter discourse is largely more rhetorical than critical, new feminism nevertheless outlines the basic values of the Army of Mary regarding the notions of domesticity, gendered complementarity and the roles of women in society.

The second chapter seeks to move 'past' feminist discourses by outlining the social and historical realities of Marie-Paule and the Army of Mary. Note that this gendered analysis does not negate Second Wave feminist discourse (i.e. moving 'beyond' feminism), but builds upon its foundational critical perspective in order to engage a more nuanced understanding of the socio-religious dynamics at play within the broader contexts surrounding Marie-Paule and the Army of Mary. Furthermore, new (Catholic) feminists also build upon the work of their predecessors, albeit in a more conservative way. Saba Mahmood presents a critique of Western liberal understandings of agency, and presents a more relativistic way in which to judge women's actions in different social and cultural milieus. Robert Orsi describes the social and historical contexts that inform a Catholic understanding of suffering. This discussion will look at the intersections of "meaning making" between the individual and the transcendent, and the power of overarching, moralistic narratives in shaping the Catholic religious and ethical worldview in a gendered light. Overall, this analytical framing seeks to understand whether Marie-

Paule's actions are in fact a tangible engagement with modes of gendered agency that lead to 'actual' power for women within a conservative socio-religious framework, or if it remains a vestige of a gendered complacency to patriarchal norms.

Chapter 1. Different Feminist Perspectives: Critical Views of Religious Women

a) Catholic Second Wave Feminism:⁴⁶

Second Wave feminism, from its inception, has always had a secular outlook in its focus on subverting patriarchy (see Beauvoir and Parshley). With its intention to dismantle a ubiquitous patriarchy in the goal to emancipate women within society, religion was viewed as a particularly oppressive and outdated system of meaning making. However, a large contingent of feminists stated that religion was too important to simply discard. Important Catholic feminists like Mary Daly, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Rosemary Radford Ruether understood “that religion is deeply meaningful in human life *and* that the traditional religions of the West have betrayed women. They are convinced that religion must be reformed or reconstructed to support the full human dignity of women” (Christ and Plaskow 1). For these feminists, religion was an important element to appropriate, yet there remained a sentiment and understanding that religion betrayed women. This heritage has had an effect on the feminist approach in generating distrust in androcentric systems of control. Their analytical lenses are therefore governed by this abiding sense of injustice, but they have been able to turn personal pain into a systematic

⁴⁶ I have chosen to focus on the Second Wave feminist perspective instead of elaborating on its counterpart paradigm, “Third Wave” feminism. The reasons are that Second Wave feminism outlines the initial premise for gendered equality and women’s emancipation. Third Wave feminism acts as an elaboration and/or critique of Second Wave feminist discourse (i.e. focusing on women of colour, on non-Western cultural contexts, Queer issues, etc.). Saba Mahmood, however, does represent a Third Wave feminist perspective that questions the fundamental misconceptions and presumptions of liberal, Second Wave feminism. For this discussion, see the sub-chapter below “Women’s Agency and the Liberal Feminist Enterprise: Saba Mahmood.” Furthermore, I have also chosen to specify the type of Second Wave feminism as being “Catholic Second Wave feminism” because, ultimately, it is from the Catholic perspective that this gendered analysis of Marie-Paule and the Army of Mary is being engaged. I will use the nomenclature “Second Wave feminism” when I am referring to the general epistemology, and the term “Catholic” when I am discussing the Catholic view of this epistemology. The reason I have decided on “Catholic Second Wave feminism” over “Second Wave Catholic feminism” is simply because these are Catholic feminists adhering to Second Wave principles and not Second Wave Catholics who are feminists.

critique of religion. It is from here that Catholic feminists began to look at the Christian tradition and see spaces where women were represented, and where they could find comfort, inspiration and justification in their identities and actions as women. The Catholic feminist enterprise thus became a matter of garnering spaces of meaning regarding women's experience.

i) Women's Experience:

Women's experiences became the operational element through which women can explore, interpret and critique religious traditions in the search for meaning.

For feminists, *experience* refers to the fabric of life as it is lived. The image feminists have in mind when they say *experience* is the consciousness-raising group, which was developed to enable women to 'get in touch with their own experience.' Because women have often shaped and understood their lives according to norms or preferences for female behaviour expressed by men, there is a sense in which women have not shaped or even known their own experience. What they *have* known is the false consciousness created by male ideology." (Christ and Plaskow 6)

What was most vexing for these Catholic Second Wave feminists when they looked at the Christian tradition was that women were denied the authenticity of their own personal experiences by male ideologies which, in a feminist critical view, wish only to keep women under the dominating control of men. These feminist thinkers sought to shift this power imbalance by emphasizing women's shared experience amongst women. In this way, they introduced a space of critical engagement in restructuring or reorganizing cultural fields and the symbolic world around them. They viewed that "Naming women's experience thus becomes the model not only for personal liberation and growth, but for a feminist transformation of culture and religion" (7). This description is unquestionably a

prescriptive feminist enterprise with the ambition to change society and religion as a whole.

According to Catholic Second Wave feminists, women's experience with relation to patriarchy is polarized in two categories: "(1) women's *feminist* experience and (2) women's *traditional* experience, which includes, but is not limited to, women's body experience" (Christ and Plaskow 8). In the feminist model of experience, personal liberation and freedom from the oppressions of patriarchy became a matter of primary importance. Many of the views taken on by Catholic feminist thinkers like Daly, Fiorenza and Ruether belong to this category. They recognized that, at the onset, feminism does not appeal to all women because many are misguided and do not see themselves as oppressed or within an oppressed group. Feminists maintained their sense of justification by basing their actions and views on the universalistic understanding that all women stand in solidarity due to their relative yet undeniable experiences of oppression. Due to the universal nature of their mainly ideological program, feminist views automatically became primary while traditional women's concerns remained secondary.

The second category refers to broader modes of experience for women that include social and physiological factors. Carol Christ and Judith Plaskow note that "women's traditional experiences, such as marriage and motherhood, although they have been distorted in patriarchy, can provide important clues for transforming patriarchal culture" (8). Some feminists see no recourse to emancipation through traditional modes of women's experience (e.g. Beauvoir),⁴⁷ but some do wish to re-appropriate women's physiological experiences, such as birth, menstruation, and menopause, and create

⁴⁷ For a greater discussion concerning the Second Wave feminist view of the body as a social construction, see the 'new feminist' critique in the following sub-chapter, "New (Catholic) Feminism."

“positive attitudes toward the female body [as] essential for women’s liberation” (9). The mould in which feminists view this appropriation, however, must maintain the shapes of the feminist ideological program and should negotiate, if not transgress and negate, social norms and traditions in order to break with the hegemony of patriarchy. Ultimately, the tension lies between these two modes of women’s experience, with feminism remaining the standard, idealized term as the goal of women’s emancipation.

ii) A Question of Freedom:

Second Wave feminism generally notes that, due to the polarization in a Western dualistic view, women are unfairly relegated to nature while men are assigned elements of culture, which are connected to empowered notions such as freedom and the transcendent. This becomes a point of great contention for feminists who strive towards both a freedom from oppressive systems based on gender and a freedom to govern and interpret the world around them as women. “A fully adequate feminist theology must express the combination of rootedness in nature *and* freedom that feminists experience in their lives” (Christ and Plaskow 12). This need to deconstruct inherited gendered dichotomies becomes problematic for Catholic feminists when they turn to the Christian tradition, whose basic language is irrevocably androcentric, dualistic and hierarchical. It is difficult in this manner to bring together feminist and traditional women’s experiences. Freedom as agency exclusively becomes the motivational factor for this epistemological endeavour.

Agency is the notion that a woman has an individual and personal right to act freely for her own self-benefit in breaking with the systems of a universal male hegemony. In this view, a feminist’s sense of agency seeks the actions and necessary

resolve to undermine, at all costs, male ascendancy in religious traditions (i.e. language, symbols, rituals, etc.) and revolutionize culture; “What is clear is that, if feminists succeed, religion will never be the same again” (Christ and Plaskow 16). It is feminism’s universal goal to band women together, regardless of their political affiliation and worldview, in order to change an outdated patriarchal society. Daly eventually negates the possibility of Christianity for a “feminist religion.” Some feminists, however, subscribe to different levels of radicalism through which they engage in this project for social change.

iii) Mary Daly:

Daly is a radical voice of Christian feminism who has sought uncompromising social change favouring female experiences and views, while categorically discounting male privilege. Daly looked at the intrinsic misogyny current to “God language” and purported to reformulate that language in a female-centric manner (Daly, Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women’s Liberation). Using a feminist lens, Daly critiqued the prevalent Christian discourse that has propagated patriarchy and perpetuated women’s oppression for all of social history. She writes, “The Judaic-Christian tradition has served to legitimate sexually imbalanced patriarchal society [...] the familiar mechanism by which the images and values of a given society are projected into a realm of beliefs, which in turn justify the social infrastructure” (Daly, “After the Death of God the Father” 54). Daly believes that feminism and its agenda of emancipating women into un-equivocated gender equality will come to undermine Christianity for its longstanding misogyny, which cannot remain unchanged in the face of a social paradigm of powerful women. Daly writes that women’s active orientation towards socio-religious equality

“will be a catalyst for transformation of our culture [...] Religious symbols die when the cultural situation that supported them ceases to give them plausibility” (“After the Death of God the Father” 56). This radical view of women’s recovery in the extermination of the patriarchal tradition, however, does not coincide with other Catholic feminist views.

iv) Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza:

Fiorenza differs from Daly’s radical view of a complete social overhaul by wishing to remain within the Catholic tradition. She aims, however, at producing a feminist spirituality that seeks to share in a human equality and not to oppress others. “Feminist spirituality proclaims wholeness, healing love, and spiritual power not as hierarchical, as *power over*, but as *power for*, as enabling power. It proclaims *the Goddess* as the source of this power, as the enabling context of human lives and of a non-hierarchical, nonauthoritarian, noncompetitive community” (Fiorenza 137). In contrast to Daly, Fiorenza understands that to adhere and to sustain a radical feminist deity is as oppressive and retrogressive as the androcentric ‘God the Father’. Fiorenza seeks an equalization of social gendered hierarchies that service a paradigmatic shift for both women and men. She sees the evidence of her views in the New Testament narratives of subversion and empathy for the downtrodden. But the problems emerged out of the institutionalized church, causing a polarization favouring male domination against a sense of gender equality.

Fiorenza understands that the early Christian community was innovative in terms of feminist principles with its unbiased call to discipleship and sainthood. The obstacle was the imposition of social and cultural values in a prescriptive dualistic anthropology that came to dominate the later institutional church. Fiorenza believes that the solution to

this problem lies only in a church that negates its sexist and misogynistic underpinnings. She writes, “Church leaders and theologians who do not respect the Spirit of liberty and responsibility among Christian women deny the church and theology its full catholicity. Only if we, women and men, are able to live in non-sexist Christian communities, to celebrate non-sexist Christian liturgies, and to think in non-sexist theological terms and imagery will we be able to formulate a genuine Christian feminist spirituality” (Fiorenza 147). Fiorenza endorses a paradigm shift that institutes self-reflexive recognition of a tradition’s sexist past, thereby informing the current patriarchy in order to generate a society of mutual respect between women and men harboured in the symbolic language of the Christian tradition. This view is not as radical as Daly’s call for complete social change, but it demands serious recognition of the long history of hurt imposed by the institutional church on women.

v) Rosemary Radford Ruether:

Like Fiorenza, Ruether’s overall work questions if Christian theology speaks to women’s experience (Ruether, Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology). Ruether notes that one of the problems women face generally is that within a Western tradition, women are polarized into alienated roles in a social dialectic that antagonizes women in order to glorify men. Ruether sees the evidence of this view at all levels of society, especially in the disparity between the social spaces of public and private (or the domestic). Ruether notes that it takes great privilege (i.e. material and social privilege) for women to occupy roles in both the public and private spheres. Ruether is of the opinion that in the movement towards women’s emancipation “the significance of our movement will be lost if we merely seek valued masculine traits at the expense of

devalued feminine ones” (Ruether, “Motherearth and the Megamachine” 51). This reevaluation asks for a nuanced appropriation of religious tradition in the restructuring of social values towards gendered parity.

Ruether’s view is about creating equality between women and men without undermining women themselves. Borrowing the language of Marxist historical materialism, she understands that “the new earth must be one where people are reconciled with their labor, abolishing the alienation of the megamachine while inheriting its productive power to free men for unalienated creativity” (“Motherearth and the Megamachine” 52). Basically, in other words, it is within the confines of our current social structures (including language, labour and tradition) that change will occur at a level of redefinition and re-appropriation (or paradigm-shift) towards a balanced and equal society for both women and men.

As we have seen, Catholic Second Wave feminists remained enamoured with the Christian tradition, and understood that women indeed had a role to play in shaping the contours of its discourse. One important area in which Catholic feminists are engaged in deconstructing and redefining current religious symbols is the place of the Virgin Mary in the lives of the Catholic faithful and how she shapes the lives of Catholic women in particular.

vi) The Catholic Second Wave Feminist View of Mary and Marie-Paule:

The Virgin Mary within the Catholic Church is a very powerful symbol whose religious identity is based on the confluence of scripture and tradition. The exegetical argument raised by Catholic Second Wave feminists, however, is that Mary has little to no significant foundation in the Christian canon, thereby bringing into question the

legitimizing source of the Catholic cult of Mary. They understand, therefore, that Mary is the combination of two thousand years of tradition and popular devotion where she has been emphasized time and again by different influential thinkers as an ideal purveyor of Catholic values. Feminists like Ruether and Fiorenza see Mary as the ideal type of social construction of male values superimposed on a central female religious figure and symbol. According to them, this imposition perpetuates negative social and ethical norms of gendered behaviour that, ultimately, oppress women in order to control them. Yet these feminists also appreciate the value Mary has as a central and esteemed female figure to the Catholic faithful. Fiorenza understands the importance of Mary in that she provides a “theological language which speaks of the divine reality in female terms and symbols” (Fiorenza 139). For Fiorenza and Ruether, Mary presents an opportunity in which to re-appropriate an established female religious icon in support of the feminist enterprise of women’s emancipation and empowerment. Therefore, asserting that Mary is a social construction permits them to engage in a process of deconstructing and reinterpreting a particularly important symbol into a more positive role model for Catholics to appropriate.

There has been a substantial amount of literature written on the feminist interpretation of Mary (for examples, see Johnson, Truly Our Sister: A Theology of Mary in the Communion of Saints; Johnson, “Mary, Friend of God and Prophet: A Critical Reading of the Marian Tradition”; Pelikan, Mary through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture; Ruether, Mary, the Feminine Face of the Church; Ruether, Women and Redemption: A Theological History; Warner, Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary; Zimdars-Swartz, Encountering Mary: From La Salette to

Medjugorje). Maurice Hamington, however, provides a concise summary of the multiple feminist concerns, views and conclusions. He presents and expands upon Mary's socially constructed pedagogical characteristics in the following three categories: sexuality, power and morality. Hamington explains that the majority of feminist theological scholarship situates its analytical theories of social construction, biblical scholarship, and psychoanalytical theory in correspondence with these categories. He notes that these epistemological "tools allow feminist scholars to challenge the source, the interpretation, and the message of Christian traditions" (Hamington 47). It is in this mode that Hamington presents the evidence garnered from the wide feminist discourse on the cult of Mary.

The first category that Hamington explores is Mary as "virgin." The church has delineated a perspective of Mary as perpetual virgin that is based in canonical and extra-canonical material, yet is deeply embedded in the systematic Christian discourse related to gendered norms of female purity and sexuality. Mary is held by the contemporary church as the forbearer of gendered moral fortitude. Hamington notes that "Mary's nonsexual imagery remains the ultimate model of alienation for Catholic women" (Hamington 87). In this mode of alienation, the church holds that Mary embodies both elements of mother and virgin. This creates a paradoxical and impossible role model for women to emulate, a heterosexist symbol of the church's conservative views against non-heteronormative relationships, and a complete disregard for the broader scope of female sexuality. This image of Mary as virgin/mother is problematic because it continually perpetuates women's uneven relationships with men.

Mary as “Mediatix” discusses Mary’s salvific powers to influence the judgement of God over humankind. Mary as Mediatix is noted by Hamington to be a source of power for Mary (and for women) as she appears as a close equal to God. Feminist scholarship has proven, however, that this power is not a power over the ultimate divine, but subordination under that male power. Hamington notes that “Mary’s ‘false power’ perpetuates gender inequality, particularly in family relationships” (Hamington 5). As the Mediatix, Mary is placed in an “asymmetrical familial relationship” where she does not seek justice as an agent under her own terms, but pleads with the male deity, her son and father, as a supplicant of mercy for the human penitent. The implied asymmetrical familial relation puts the mother not in an authoritative position with her son or in equal standing with the father, but beneath them both, thus perpetuating a patriarchal endeavour of glorifying men’s power absolutely.

In the last category, Hamington outlines Mary’s morality in relation to her role as “the new Eve.” Hamington notes how, over time, Mary’s moral goodness has become absolute. This perception is noted as being possible in a dualistic relationship with the perceived ‘evil’ of Eve. Eve of the Genesis creation story is the harbinger of suffering and sin in the world through her “disobedience,” while Mary is perceived as her antithesis, bringing into the world the saviour of mankind because of her “obedience.” Hamington observes that “this moral dualism meant that women were considered either good or evil by standards impossible to emulate” (Hamington 5). Therefore, men have created a moral framework that essentially forces women into compliance with patriarchal norms. Furthermore, Hamington clarifies that this framework allows for justification of violence against women “through the polarization of women in the

Eve/Mary dualism that objectifies women in oppositional characterizations [and] Mary's praiseworthiness is pure obedience to patriarchy" (154-55). Hamington notes, however, that feminists are especially adamant in reinterpreting this particular perspective—along with the above-mentioned categories—in order to construct a more positive image for women to emulate. He states that the “transformation of the Eve/Mary dualism into a continuum or spectrum that does not dualistically define morality can be a step in breaking down the objectification of women, and therefore lessening the existing rationale for violence” (155). This speaks directly to the feminist view that Mary, though she is a stronghold of conservative gendered values, can be salvaged and shifted to serve a better purpose.

Catholic Second Wave feminists clearly understand the elasticity and flexibility of Mary as a social construction, and thus endeavour to gain control of her symbol. It is important for them to elaborate the oppressive qualities of the traditional portrayal ‘ascribed’ to Mary by the male religious hierarchy by denoting, deconstructing and redefining Marian imagery into a constructive role model for women to appropriate. By virtue of this feminist critique of Marian imagery and need for transformation, this translates into a larger critique of Marie-Paule and the gendered worldview of the Army of Mary.

Catholic Second Wave feminists would view Marie-Paule and The Lady of All Peoples as a clear case of delusional belief sponsored and shaped by a patriarchal need to retain control over women's symbolic and social realities. The feminist deconstruction of Marian imagery speaks directly to their negative evaluation of the central symbol of the Army of Mary. For these feminists, Marie-Paule and The Lady of All Peoples would

clearly represent and propagate an emphasis on the sexual ambiguity inherent to the Catholic values of passivity, docility, modesty, and silence; an unequal power distribution of male rule over women in absolute terms; and the ontologically based moral dualism that places prominence on women's obedience, which in turn rationalizes violence against them. These feminists would argue that this evaluation is further justified by Marie-Paule's autobiographical narrative of personal suffering through victimization in relation to God's revelation.

Clearly, Catholic Second Wave feminists would interpret the conservative basis upon which Marie-Paule and the Army of Mary view their personal power as meaningless simply for the fact that it seeks to emphasize gendered imbalance over the feminist notion of agency. They would conclude that Marie-Paule is not in possession of the reality of her experiences because she is unaware of her actual options of personal freedom and individual action—in other words, she is not accessing 'constructive' modes of gendered agency. Though it is an astute evaluation of Marie-Paule's domestic situation, this critical view nevertheless devalues Marie-Paule's experiences, such as her troubled and abusive relationship with her husband, especially with regards to her choices, which she views are informed by God. Daly certainly would point to the underlying oppressive misogyny of a God who would wish to torment any women in this way, and conclude that Marie-Paule was a victim of a socio-religious delusion. Fiorenza's emphasis on the Goddess as a key to gendered equality and inclusion would furthermore seek to disavow the authenticity of Marie-Paule as The Lady of All Peoples due to the notion of gendered inequality in its emphasis on domesticity and

motherhood.⁴⁸ And finally, Ruether's notion of unequal social dialectics would interpret Marie-Paule's actions of suffering in silence in conformity to modes of misogynistic and androcentric power that wish only to support women in their absolute silence while men rule the discursive roles of shaping culture and society in their image.

One can conclude that Catholic feminists would have a strongly 'negative' evaluation of Marie-Paule and her understanding of the modes of gendered power and agency due to the aforementioned evaluations of her ideological proximity to patriarchal norms, but also based purely on the fact that conservative women like Marie-Paule do not support the socio-cultural transformative enterprise of women's emancipation, which is a central tenet to Second Wave feminism. In this feminist analytical framework, Marie-Paule's conservatism is a great impediment to actually understanding the social dynamics at work in shaping the social and religious reality of herself and the Army of Mary. The Second Wave critique of Marie-Paule, therefore, remains incomplete in trying to comprehend the reasons behind Marie-Paule's actions and in explaining the impact she has had on her adherents. Furthermore, Catholic Second Wave feminism cannot sufficiently explain Marie-Paule's claimed divinity or express concern over the value of her personal experience that has directly influenced the religious worldview of the Army of Mary.

⁴⁸ Furthermore, Fiorenza's perspective of the tangible avenues of gender equality through Christian discipleship and the call to sainthood would not be equivocal to the Army of Mary's perspective in the recent events of May 31, 2009, where Marie-Paule, through a purported revelation from God, was canonized as a "living saint." This action served to further elevate Marie-Paule's unique status in symbolic worldview of the organization and not, as Fiorenza speaks of, to engender "non-sexist Christian communities, to celebrate non-sexist Christian liturgies, and to think in non-sexist theological terms and imagery will we be able to formulate a genuine Christian feminist spirituality" (Fiorenza 147). For more information on the canonization process of Marie-Paule, see Payeur Raynauld, Sylvie. "L'alliance entre le ciel et la terre." *Le Royaume*. 197 (2009): 3-13.

This begs the question: are Marie-Paule's experiences and views as a woman disqualified simply due to her conservative socio-religious and political outlook that seeks to perpetuate the established norms of society? Is it sufficient to conclude that she is simply perpetuating an oppressive and misogynistic system due to a social delusion? That because she does not subscribe to the transformative process of the feminist enterprise, her actions do not count? Evidently, for this research we would need a comparable framework to Second Wave feminism that is socially and politically conservative in order to understand Marie-Paule more clearly. This framework is provided in a conservative Catholic voice that strikes a conscious break with Catholic Second Wave feminist ideas and ideals in an effort to safeguard Catholic tradition and express a view of womanhood within those parameters.

b) New (Catholic) Feminism:⁴⁹

A very significant response to the Second Wave feminist interpretation and critique of the conservative Catholic Church is embodied in what Pope John Paul II has boldly coined "new feminism" (Pope John Paul II #99).⁵⁰ New feminism elaborates conservative Catholic views of women regarding their gendered roles, responsibilities, and means to personal and social agency. It must be noted that, though there are critical

⁴⁹ The word Catholic in "New (Catholic) Feminism" is in parentheses is because it does not belong to the nomenclature of these particular feminists. The reasons for the parenthesis are to note they are indeed Catholic not to be misconstrued with Second Wave feminism or even Catholic Second Wave feminism. However, in favour of brevity I chose to use this title sparsely using the parenthetical descriptor only to connote difference between the two epistemological views. Furthermore, any discussion by new (Catholic) feminists regarding "Second Wave feminists" does not regard specifically Catholic Second Wave feminists.

⁵⁰ For a concise discussion elaborating Pope John Paul II's 'new feminist' paradigm with relation to gendered complementarity and the roles of women and men in contemporary society, see Card. Joseph Ratzinger, Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Collaboration of Women and men in the Church and in the World, (May 31, 2004. Available: http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20040731_collaboration_en.html. June 17 2009).

assessments of Second Wave feminism, new feminism remains a rhetorical vehicle for the Catholic Church to disseminate its social and moral views within a scholarly discourse. New feminism lays the groundwork wherein a discussion on the values of women and femininity can be understood from a conservative Catholic perspective.

New feminists' philosophical and theological views of women and culture are understood as being "primarily *theoretical*: the laying of a solid foundation from which there may proceed an intelligent and faith-filled praxis" (Schumacher, Women in Christ: Toward a New Feminism xvi). Their discourse is somewhat similar to Catholic Second Wave feminism—or what new feminists pejoratively refer to as "traditional feminism" or "old feminism"—for it asks the same questions concerning women: "to freedom, to rights, and to responsibilities, and thus ultimately to the connection between the personal and the social, or between the individual and the community, and ultimately...between theory and practice" (Women in Christ x). New feminism presents a need to recognize the saliency of women's experience within traditionally conservative roles, as reflected in John Paul II's perspective of the "genius of women" (Pope John Paul II #99). This notion is an elaboration of women's roles in society beyond what new feminists deem is the 'traditional feminist' imitation of male roles, which perpetuate domination and hegemony as well as discrimination and violence. New feminism seeks to establish a "Christian anthropology" within society where God is the measure of humanity and where tradition is not transgressed in the search for gender equality.

i) The "Genius of Women" in a Gendered Complementarity:

New feminists note that at the center of this new Christian anthropology of women is the concept of "Christian love." This concept informs the individual to move

past the conclusions of Second Wave feminism, which are based on a social constructionist paradigm that stresses the new “heroine of modernity” and subverts patriarchy “by the rightful refusal to play by its rules” (Schumacher, Women in Christ xii). New feminists view that ‘Christian love’ endows the person with a sense of autonomy similar to the Second Wave feminist view of individual freedom, but within a fettered yet reciprocal relationship with God. Michele Schumacher sees that “The authentically liberated woman is, therefore, one who experiences herself as eternally loved and forgiven, and thus as authentically free” (xii). It is in this mode that Schumacher explains the role of women within this new feminism to be endowed with a personal responsibility towards one’s complex of social and metaphysical relations “To the extent...that she gives herself to God, she is capable of loving her neighbour *without necessarily seeking her own good thereby*. Ironically, it is in fact by giving of herself without seeking in return that she actually fulfills herself in accord with God’s own manner of being and acting” (xiii).⁵¹ Interestingly this follows a traditionally conservative Catholic view of valuing women’s self-sacrifice in social and theological ways.

New feminists see self-sacrifice not as constraining as would Second Wave feminists. They understand that women engaged in self-sacrifice are actively engaged in their rights and responsibilities, which affect views of Christian freedom. “It is Christ, this new feminism teaches, who reveals *woman* to herself by inviting her to participate in his own mission of revealing the Father and his love. In the encounter with the beloved Bridegroom of the church—in union, that is to say, with Christ, who is both her principle and her end—woman (each and every woman) discovers her true identity: the true meaning of her humanity and of her femininity” (Schumacher, Women in Christ xiv). As

⁵¹ Italics mine.

an endeavour to claim women's active roles in the church, this perspective of 'union with the Bridegroom' orients women back to the structures of the Catholic Church (and society by association) and claims their roles as engaged and valuable. This stands against the Second Wave feminist approach of subverting all social and religious systems that represent the values of a historical patriarchy. In contrast to Second Wave feminism, new feminism is dominated by the notion of "gendered complementarity," which continually places women in collaboration with men within a heteronormative web of irrefutable relations—socially, politically and metaphysically. It is within this paradigm that the voices of conservative women retain their place within the structures of the traditional church, yet can claim levels of social and theological agency that moves them beyond what was critiqued by Second Wave feminists as being the confines of a male-only hegemony. Ultimately, this is their claim of authenticity as a 'new feminism.'

ii) Similarities between New Feminism and "Old Feminism":

Though Second Wave feminism and new feminism are diametrically opposed in terms of political views, their common values and concerns are for the wellbeing of women. Sr. Prudence Allen approves of the core values of feminism as a set of critiques and proactive responses to issues of discrimination and inequality that affect women in the world. She describes feminism as an "organized response...[that] aims at identifying factors which inhibit the flourishing of a woman's equal dignity with man, and it offers methods for transforming or removing those factors or obstacles" (Allen 80). Allen claims that John Paul II's new feminism also asserts these values and critical approaches by "affirming the true genius of women" so as to overcome "all discrimination, violence and exploitation" (Pope John Paul II #99). Based on John Paul II's perspective, Allen

outlines “three obstacles to women’s development” that new feminism holds in common with Second Wave feminism.

The first is discrimination, where John Paul II agrees with the feminist demand that women should have undeterred access to education so that they may directly engage in forms of social and cultural discourse so as not to “limit the options for choice and sharing of one’s gifts with society and culture” (Allen 81). Allen mentions how John Paul II goes further than Second Wave feminism, noting that women should be free to choose a husband without coercion. He uses this angle to then critique feminism for not focusing enough on the role of women as wives and mothers. John Paul II argues, using the critical and political language of Second Wave feminism, for a rightful domesticity of women on the basis of choice as opposed to the coercion of social and cultural conventions. This in itself represents a shift with the previous discourse in that John Paul II is advocating an end to discrimination based on gender not just in the public sphere, related to attitudinal perspectives concerning women’s many roles, but also with regards to advocating an uncompromising dignity for all in the domestic or private sphere. Overall, Allen sees this as being akin to the feminist discourse with the exception of the emphasis on the family unit and the social relations that it entails.

The second obstacle to women’s development is violence. Violence against women is especially denounced in John Paul II’s writings. Allen summarizes his views that “Violence reduces a woman from a person worthy of love to a thing to be dominated by the will of the man. While the exercise of her free will is inhibited, she still remains interiorly free but wounded” (Allen 82). Importantly, John Paul II claims that women must remain individual agents in the face of suffering brought on by violence. This

assertion of personhood is interesting and similar to the Second Wave feminist view. In contrast to a secular feminist view, however, John Paul II sees that violence against women is an outcome of original sin rooted in the Genesis story of the Fall. This event is seen as having ruptured the “fundamental equality” between man and woman, and becomes especially oppressive for women in that they have fallen under the dominion of man and not engaged in a “sincere gift” of mutual reciprocity, which is key to John Paul II’s new feminism. Overall, “Violence harms the potential soul/body development; it inflicts a wound into interpersonal relations. While both women and men are affected by this rupture of their fundamental equal dignity, both old and new feminists emphasize that women are ‘especially disadvantaged’ and ‘seriously impoverished’” (Allen 83). Again this allows for Catholic voices to harmonize with feminist discourse concerning women’s roles and positions in society. But differences are clear in the emphasis and elaboration of a conservative nuance which new feminism repeatedly deems of primary importance.

Finally, in terms of exploitation, John Paul II looks specifically at gendered attitudes that lead to mutual objectification and exploitation. John Paul II condemns what he calls a “subjective egoism” where men use women to satisfy their sexual desires and women use men “for sentiment.”⁵² Both Second Wave feminists and new feminists have focused on how women are exploited with regards to “a utilitarian or hedonistic goal rather than treated as an end in herself” (Allen 84). They both conclude that this form of objectification especially denigrates the woman, for she is discarded once the exploits of pleasure are over. John Paul II, however, sees this behaviour again in a religious context

⁵² For a greater discussion, see Karol Wojtyla, *Love and Responsibility* (Ft. Collins, CO: Ignatius Press, 1993) 143-66.

as an alienation of the body/soul complex where the person is dehumanized by virtue of an objectification of the body, which leads to the materialization of the body that permits the exploitation of, specifically, “human embryos and fetuses” as well as issues surrounding abortion. This logic and political rhetoric is a reoccurring theme for John Paul II and new feminists and is grounded in the notion of an uncompromising respect for all human life, no matter the social circumstances. However, the matter of similarity between Second Wave feminism and new feminism ends in rhetorical admonishments and rebukes of secular, liberal feminism for engaging in what new feminists would deem as immoral behaviour.

Allen summarizes that “John Paul II’s feminism in the areas of discrimination, violence, and exploitation builds on traditional feminism. In this sense it is not so much a new feminism as a *renewed feminism*” (Allen 84). It is in this way that new feminism claims its authenticity in connection with the broader history of the feminist discourse. However, this continual assertion of ‘old vs. new’ lends a sense of uncritical self-importance and imposed innovation to these ideas—i.e., new feminism is portrayed as a renewal of feminism from its stale or misguided direction. This is important in constructing the overall character of ‘new feminism’ as an attempt to engage and expand the public debate over women’s concerns and realities. New feminism, therefore, outlines three general areas in which conservative Catholic women critique Second Wave feminist discourse and are themselves engaged in forms of personal agency that are centered on culture, tradition and God: 1) reciprocity and self-sacrifice, 2) nature as “gift,” and 3) the foundational anthropology of Christian love. Though some of these notions have already been discussed, they will now be more fully explained.

iii) Reciprocity and Self-Sacrifice:

New feminism proves its major difference with Second Wave feminism by outlining its God-centeredness that lifts the individual beyond the concerns of the self towards broader categories of concern for the other. In order to strike the same cadence of gendered equality in Second Wave feminism, new feminism emphasizes gendered complementarity. Sr. Prudence Allen outlines John Paul II's complementarity model in contrast to two fallacies within the historical philosophical tradition that has informed Western civilization as well as Second Wave feminism.

The first fallacy is the "unisex model" that was elaborated in ancient Greek and reemphasized in Enlightenment thought. In the search to understand the mind/soul relation, Allen speaks of how Plato in his Utopia advocated a de-emphasis of the importance of the body in a metaphysical idealization and orientation to spiritual forms. This provided Western society with a basic philosophical premise in the negative view of the body. Furthermore, consistent with a Cartesian mind/body dualism, Allen notes that Cartesian feminists in particular advocated a sexless understanding of the body in order to strike equality within a cultural valuing of reason. Allen states that both ancient and modern views are misguided for "defending equality at the expense of real differentiation" (Allen 71). Instead Allen points to John Paul II's consistent assertion of gendered complementarity, which is perceived to be grounded in the reality of human physiology and human relations over the misconceptions of cultural idealizations.

The second fallacy is a "polarization distortion," which in many ways is a continuation of the first fallacy. Allen again looks to the foundations of Western civilization (both ancient Greek and modern) and identifies a gendered distortion of the

nature of women that has informed a gendered polarity, which oscillates from undervaluing to overvaluing the nature of women. This is also the view of Second Wave feminists, particularly Ruether. But the basis of these distortions, for new feminists, are perceptions of the body which draw from “a consequent imbalance with the soul/body relation” (Allen 72). Allen understands that diminishing and eliminating from the discussion of “human worth” the notion of the soul, Western secular values abandons humanity to a pointless rhetorical argumentation on gendered superiority between women and men.

John Paul II defends female/male equality based on the notions that 1) women and men are equally human beings created in the image of God, and 2) that woman and man are equal in their personhood. Herein, John Paul II advocates “phenomenology” or a philosophical deliberation of human experience. Allen underlines that “The appeal to human experience is an important foundation for new feminism. Experience draws upon the unity of body and soul through the operation of the senses and of consciousness” (Allen 73). What is important in this phenomenology, in contrast to the Second Wave feminist view of women’s experience, is that this experience can only be accrued and understood in a mind/body complex as opposed to the fallacies of a unisex model or polarized distortion. This is a direct critique of Second Wave feminism because new feminists believe that only when based on a complementarity model will one find the authenticity of self and personhood informed through women’s experiences of life, and thus garner the capacity for ‘true reciprocity.’ This leads to a further explanation of interpersonal relations.

Allen explains how John Paul II bases his philosophy on Catholic Thomism and twentieth-century personalism. Based on Thomistic/Aristotelian metaphysics, the body is the space in which we encounter the soul. Therefore, relations between people are an encounter of “complete persons” that “may be characterized both by potentiality in relation to act and by the act of one person in relation to the act of another person” (Allen 74). John Paul II uses this definition to integrate personalism, which emphasizes interpersonal relations, in order to establish and elaborate his phenomenology. Allen notes that the founders of personalism emphasized the altruistic giving of oneself in continual reciprocity, making a distinction between an “individual” who is self-involved and a “person” who is selflessly available to others. John Paul II recognized the value of this self-sacrifice and “integrates these particular personal actions in developing new feminism” (76). He introduced the “personalistic norm” outlining that “one ought to always act toward a human being (a person) as an end worthy of love. One ought never reduce a human being (a person) to a means not worthy of love” (76). This view implies a rigorous rejection of utilitarian values of an individual’s usefulness, which Allen claims can lead to the devaluation of the person for reasons of “perceived uselessness, weakness, intellectual impairment, ugliness, or lack of health [which] are used to support arguments for abortion or euthanasia” (76). Again, it is in a rhetorical mode that Allen proceeds to operationalize John Paul II’s view in response to many of the politicized issues within Western society today. Nevertheless, a laundry list of social problems at the end of Allen’s philosophical discussion on the body/mind complex acts more as a preface to the broader discussion on the intrinsic social value of new feminism beyond the political. It leads to the notion that nature is not to be dominated, but seen as a gift from God.

iv) Nature as Gift:

Michele Schumacher, like Allen, seeks to undermine the feminist dualistic conception of nature as being a perpetuation of androcentric values and the product of a social construction. Due to the Western approach to categorizing the world in dualistic opposites, maleness has been valued while femaleness has been diminished (i.e. nature vs. civilization, private vs. public). According to Schumacher, feminists have spent too much time deconstructing and critiquing male evaluations of nature as a female preserve as well as all feminine qualities of dichotomous thinking. Schumacher states that though feminists do well to deconstruct the androcentrism of this way of social thinking, “it has deprived nature of any ‘real’ (essential) content and thereby accepted the ‘patriarchal’ division of nature and culture which denies nature of its traditional metaphysical dimension. This is a consequence...of a larger cultural separation of nature and grace, which is to say that nature is no longer regarded as gifted at its creation...nor is it consequently perceived as the principle of meaningful actions” (Schumacher, “The Nature of Nature in Feminism, Old and New: From Dualism to Complementary Unity” 19). These actions, according to Schumacher, are intrinsically sourced in the self “and ordered...toward a more or less well defined end [that by definition are] freely chosen” (19).

Through an appropriation of the Christian theological conception of “nature as gift,” Schumacher seeks to defend a ‘natural’ femininity that informs a gendered complementarity intended to maintain the common good. Schumacher sees that this new feminism “ought...to accept and even welcome...sexual differences within a relational model of human nature” (Schumacher, “The Nature of Nature in Feminism” 20).

Through the conception of a reintegration of theological values over social values of nature, Schumacher emphasizes a complementary unity between dichotomous thinking that will attempt to paint a constructive picture of women and their roles in order to perfect the social fabric; “Nature both requires culture and contributes to culture” (20). This ‘conservative’ model, which is the claim that established socio-religious norms of gendered complementarity (with an emphasis on women’s domesticity) are valid and must remain an underlying force in the shaping of culture, are in contrast to the Second Wave feminist transgressive enterprise of challenging and reformulating society.

Schumacher outlines a reading of feminist systematic and historical denial of nature based in de Beauvoir’s statement “one is not born a woman; one becomes a woman” (Schumacher, “The Nature of Nature in Feminism” 23), which itself seeks to view nature as a complex social construction managed by men that ultimately impinges on women’s freedoms. Schumacher argues that the traditional Western definition of freedom and its relation to nature is seen as an individualistic enterprise that is based in a Lutheran view that nature (specifically human nature) is irrevocably oriented towards evil so that grace would have an absolute salvific role in shepherding people towards the good. Freedom for Luther is alone in the hands of God and because of human nature people are categorically dependant on grace (i.e. *Sola Fide* or justification by faith alone). Schumacher sees that Luther and modern secular humanists are estranged from viewing nature as having intrinsic value in building civilization. However, secular humanists undermined the Lutheran emphasis on grace, or that God reveals truth, in order to emphasize a scientific and philosophical interpretation of nature and culture. This in turn emphasized an androcentric interpretation of nature inadvertently in a continuum with

Luther, but within a secular interpretive framework. Therefore, the challenge for Schumacher in the forging of a new feminism is “to reintroduce grace into the natural realm and God into creation” (32); essentially re-establishing divine presence using a Catholic lens within secular social discourses with the goal of appropriating a constructive understanding of nature; in this case, to ‘reappropriate’ human nature.

v) Foundational Anthropology of Christian Love:

As already discussed, reciprocity and self-awareness are very important elements in this new feminism. Both elements add to what John Paul II refers to as an “anthropological foundation” that see women (and humanity in general) as ‘a gift from God’, unalienable and valuable; hence the reason behind this anthropological foundation also being called “the principle of human dignity” or “the law of reciprocity”.⁵³ Allen notes, therefore, that “Woman’s duty consists initially in being faithful to this search for truth and then making choices that are based on a true good” (Allen 88). However, new feminism recognizes that there are obstructions to people’s encounter in reciprocal relations with one another, especially represented by competitive values of Western secular society. New feminists see competitive attitudes (or what Schumacher understands is a Lutheran-informed view of ‘human nature’) as the ‘unfortunate’ dominating principle of Western society that continually posits people against one another in antagonistic relations. Essentially, it is this ‘moral bankruptcy’ or what John Paul II calls the “culture of death” (Cornwell 127) that interprets human freedom at a base level informing individual interest over the common good, which for Schumacher causes an alienated populace to be prone to objectifications and moral misconducts (e.g.

⁵³ For a greater discussion see Karol Wojtyła, Love and Responsibility (Ft. Collins, CO: Ignatius Press, 1993) 120-21.

unfettered sexuality and abortion). This is a society based on a form of selfishness where every interaction is measured on a utilitarian basis. According to Schumacher, Second Wave feminists work within this paradigm of competition by emphasizing women's independence from their social gendered roles (i.e. mother, daughter, wife, etc.); "she is thought of as related to others only by virtue of her *own choice*" (Schumacher, "The Nature of Nature in Feminism" 34). For feminists, women are not defined by their social relations, but by their choice of relations and the individual definition and pursuit for the 'true good'. For Schumacher, the reintroduction of the religious notion of God's grace in social relations would therefore "transform the seemingly static *relation* into a dynamic *relationship*" (36) by emphasizing the multiple relations in which people are enmeshed.

Schumacher sees that to overcome the alienation caused by this individualistic ethic, humanity's spiritual nature should be emphasized with God as the common point of reference through the notion of 'Christian love.' In terms of freedom, Schumacher claims that "it is an enabling power—a positive potentiality—to not only recognize oneself as a gift, but also to *become* one, to make of one-self a gift for the other, and in so doing to realize one's fullest potential: the potential that is love" (Schumacher, "The Nature of Nature in Feminism" 43). Love is the Christian *modus operandi* for ethics, orienting the individual beyond the concerns of the self towards being concerned with the good of the other (i.e. "love thy neighbour"). For Schumacher, these concerns are within a Catholic paradigm explaining that the common good can only be achieved through our participation with God (i.e. justification through one's good works and God's grace). This, in turn, leads to the collaboration between women and men in their pursuit of the common good; "Together they form a communion of persons which is also a community

of action” (45). This seeks not to erase gendered differences due to biological factors, but instead wishes to emphasize the ‘God-given’ complementarity of man and woman in what new feminism sees as their role (both women and men) of giving themselves completely to Christ, the Bridegroom of the church.

In defence of the importance of women’s roles in this view of gendered complementarity, Schumacher stresses women’s privilege over men in that they alone can fully comprehend the emotional and spiritual depth of “the love of a bride and mother for the divine Bridegroom and the infant Jesus” (Schumacher, “The Nature of Nature in Feminism” 47). This theological and social explanation clearly reflects the prerogatives of this new feminism claiming that women’s gendered roles be emphasized as a viable and valuable mode of power and agency for contemporary women. Schumacher concludes that “Rather than a form of divine determinism, the universal vocation to holiness in union with Christ is actually an invitation to direct freedom toward responsibility...that women really *are* responsible agents in charge of their own lives and not merely victims of oppression or creatures restricted by a patriarchal view of nature” (47). In this view, it is through one’s actions in orientation towards God that humanity’s greatest agency and freedom lie.

vi) The New (Catholic) Feminist View of Mary and Marie-Paule:

With an emphasis on the heteronormative value of marriage and the family, Schumacher in particular speaks for new feminism and comes to the defence of the Virgin Mary against the Second Wave feminist critiques of her gendered role in the Catholic faith. Schumacher explains that Mary is the primary example (or the archetype) representing the new feminist interpretation of the value of human freedom, choice and

agency. Because Mary is the symbol of the Catholic Church, Mary becomes the central representation of this gendered complementarity aiding in the orientation of the faithful to Christ; “In looking to Christ as a woman looks to her bridegroom, the church sees in him the same qualities she recognizes in Mary, her archetype and mother” (Schumacher, “The Nature of Nature in Feminism” 49). Thus Schumacher’s gendered complementarity of men and woman finds a metaphysical parallel between Jesus and Mary. This idea is not new, and feminists have been fervent critics pointing out that such views bar women from gaining full access to modes of power within the institutional male church (i.e. the priesthood).⁵⁴ But Schumacher is of the opinion that the Marian roles and characteristics (i.e. virgin-mother-spouse) are not contradictory or debilitating for women, but are valid so long as people give themselves completely to God or are valid so long as people value them.

Interestingly, the language used by Schumacher reflects an unbalanced image of male dominance over women—i.e., the feminine bridal gift that represents both women and men intended for Christ. Though Schumacher claims that Christ himself is beyond worldly categorizations of gender and culture, the language remains in a gendered imbalance of the bride in a unidirectional orientation towards the Bridegroom, thus perpetuating the age-old currency of androcentrism found in the symbolic language of the Christian tradition. Yet by keeping this gendered language, Schumacher is pointing to the overall need for gendered difference between women and men as an important part of our humanity and our human freedom. Her argument relies on the “fact that the human being can only realize himself in giving himself” (Schumacher, “The Nature of Nature in

⁵⁴ See Beattie on her critical discussion concerning both Second Wave feminism and new feminism, and specifically the challenges surrounding women’s access to the priesthood. Tina Beattie, New Catholic Feminism: Theology and Theory (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006).

Feminism, Old and New: From Dualism to Complementary Unity” 51). Here, poignantly written using the male voice, Schumacher makes her point: that the gendered traditions of society (i.e. language, ecclesiology, culture, etc.) should not be negated because tradition reflects an important reality, not of an individuality and/or a biological determinism, but rather a gendered complementarity of women and men who are different yet willing to cooperate in an orientation towards God and towards the greater good. For new feminists, complementarity is the key to establishing respect for women while remaining active members of tradition and society.

Gendered complementarity is the central theme and the overall motivating factor as evidenced in the first section of this thesis covering an exposition of the narrative, values and theological views of Marie-Paule and the Army of Mary. It is the notion of gendered difference in terms of roles and personal characterization that informs Marie-Paule’s relationships with her father, her husband and with God. As prescribed in new feminism, Marie-Paule also makes a point not to conflate women’s roles with male roles, both social and metaphysical. Complementarity is the way in which Marie-Paule views the world and the way in which she is able to safeguard her moral standing. Under all terms, Marie-Paule and the Army of Mary would be in full compliance with the stipulations and views of this new feminism.

Regarding reciprocity and self-sacrifice, Marie-Paule understands that experience can only be accrued by a person who is ‘whole’ in body and soul, and that self-sacrifice and reciprocity are the keys to human interactions over the ‘hedonism’ of self-motivation and a utilitarian worldview. This view was first propounded by The Lady of All Peoples who asks women to sacrifice themselves and their public role for a domesticity in order

to return strayed people to the Catholic Church. This self-sacrifice is further developed and deepened by Marie-Paule in her every intention and interaction—from the love for her parents to her relationship with her husband. Marie-Paule agrees wholeheartedly that only a woman willing to sacrifice herself is able to reciprocate fully with others and with God.

Marie-Paule would also agree with the new feminist understanding of nature as a gift and would state that Second Wave feminists do not emphasize the positive aspects of the nature of women over their emphasis on deconstructing social dichotomy and deemphasizing social values. Both Marie-Paule and *The Lady of All Peoples* have come to the defence of what they view as ‘natural femininity’ in the rightful domesticity for women. They have also appropriated a Catholic understanding of human nature that is not individually deterministic, but complimentary between humanity and God. Unquestioningly, Marie-Paule’s prerogative, like new feminism, is to bring God back into social discourse.

And finally, in terms of a foundational anthropology and Christian love, Marie-Paule also understands that human relations go beyond the utility of the other for the benefit of the self. Again, Christian love is at the center of all interrelations. Giving oneself completely to God is a selfless act that has tremendous social and metaphysical dividends, which for Marie-Paule and the Army of Mary are measured in eschatological terms. Also, like Schumacher, Marie-Paule would see that women have a greater propensity of embracing God due to their gendered predisposition, in metaphysical terms, as brides (to the Bridegroom) and mothers (to the Child Jesus). All would agree that women have a special role in society as well as in God’s greater design.

Essentially, it is difficult to assess if new feminists would have any critical views of Marie-Paule and the Army of Mary. Politically and ideologically they are very similar. However, there are two areas in which they may disagree: 1) the theological perspective of the Army of Mary concerning Marie-Paule's divinization, and 2) Marie-Paule's evaluation of suffering. First, new feminists would be very critical of Marie-Paule and the major thinkers of the Army of Mary for establishing a theology of Marie-Paule's deification. In terms of the social view of women's perceived worth and power in new feminism, this deification is unnecessary. The argument is that women, within their complementary roles and relationships, have access to the necessary agency through an established Catholic tradition in order to assert their social and religious values without having to elaborate a starkly different theology that aims at altering major Christian identifiers such as Christology and Trinity. The Army of Mary, on the other hand, would argue that on a metaphysical and teleological level, all of these added theological elements are absolutely essential based on the eschatological premise that undergirds their worldview as well as new revelations brought to light by Marie-Paule. In this case, the point of contention would be the validity and authenticity of Marie-Paule as a source of new revelation, in which new feminists would seek to deny her authenticity while adherents to the Army of Mary would claim faith in their foundress.

Secondly, new feminists would critique Marie-Paule for her approach to the traditional Catholic notion of self-sacrifice. For new feminists, self-sacrifice is a necessary component to the notions of reciprocity and engaging God and society through Christian love. However, self-sacrifice should never commend violence, discrimination or exploitation as a means to establishing one's authenticity. New feminists would be

very critical of Marie-Paule's choice of remaining within relationships that were not only detrimental to her personal health and safety, but to the lives of her children and her extended family. Because new feminism is based in a post-Vatican II framework emphasizing a moral relationship with the divine over a popular devotion to the transcendent,⁵⁵ they would possibly regard Marie-Paule's choice to stay in an abusive relationship as an outdated form of popular piety that seems to do more harm than good. Marie-Paule would strongly disagree. For her, this sacrifice has Christological dividends and aims towards the teleological salvation of all. As seen in the first section of this thesis, Marie-Paule had to suffer greatly in order to rightfully claim the soteriological mantle that she now wears as a key component of a universalistic salvation history. Ultimately, the debate between Second Wave feminists, new feminists and Marie-Paule surrounds the question of gendered agency and how women define and appropriate it differently.

vii) Agency (Un)Defined: A Feminist Problematic

Agency is a central theme for both Second Wave feminists generally and new feminists, and an important site of discourse and debate. Second Wave feminists see agency as the basis for an individual woman's action of necessary separation from the tangles of oppressive social and symbolic relations. For them, it is the mode in which an individual has the personal freedom to act for herself and, as a result, change society at large—i.e. to benefit the self in order to better society. Conversely, new feminists see that agency is not based in the will of the individual separated from her different relations, but

⁵⁵ For a discussion on the shift of Catholic religiosity in the Second Vatican Council, see the sub-chapter entitled "An Uncontrolled Site of 'Meaning Making'" concerning Robert Orsi's socio-historical elaboration and definition of Catholic culture in twentieth century America.

is governed by one's devotional proximity to God. They view that only God can dictate one's agency. This in turn informs women not to transgress set social norms, but to negotiate a perpetuation of the status quo for the greatest social good—i.e., to benefit society in order to better the self. Marie-Paule would unquestioningly agree with the new feminist conception of agency, but the difference lies in that new feminists see action mainly through the socio-religious operational value of Christian love, while Marie-Paule and the Army of Mary rely on direct revelation that is eschatologically motivated with an overall greater moral conservatism. The question that remains concerning agency surrounds the necessity and reasons behind Marie-Paule's divinity, and if it can indeed be understood as agency? For both schools of feminists, this metaphysical elaboration would most likely be considered misguided and/or unnecessary. Yet Marie-Paule and the Army of Mary's decisions are governed by a need for direct and decisive action that, let us not forget, has placed them in direct conflict with the Catholic Church, incurring an uncompromising excommunication.

In conclusion, both Catholic Second Wave feminism and new (Catholic) feminism are essential building blocks to a complex gendered analysis whose discourses are in no way negated, favouring one over the other. However, due to their highly politicized natures and rhetorical stances, they are both insufficient in offering a complete understanding of the social dynamics that explain the actions and unique elements that make up the Army of Mary, especially related to gender. This necessitates a broader discussion beyond these political elaborations in order to understand more clearly the Army of Mary. Therefore, in the following chapter I will continue to explore the debate over agency with Saba Mahmood who deconstructs the liberal feminist view of freedom

and underlines the political underpinnings at play with both feminisms in order to understand the dynamics of women's actions within conservative religious groups, such as the Army of Mary. I will also outline the religious and discursive context of the Army of Mary within a larger Catholic cultural discourse through the socio-historical and ethnographic work of Robert Orsi. Together they support a complex and complete gendered analysis of Marie-Paule and the Army of Mary.

Chapter 2. Moving ‘Past’ Feminist Discourses: socio-historical contextualization and analysis

a) Women’s Agency and the Liberal Feminist Enterprise: Saba Mahmood

Saba Mahmood presents a critique of liberal feminism from the standpoint of investigating the challenges conservative Islamic women face with regards to Western liberal values and its misperceptions. Mahmood seeks to question the feminist assumption that every woman is oppressed and that, if given the opportunity for emancipation, she will naturally shift towards values of individual freedom and a sense of boundless agency; the corollary insight being that if women do not agree with this view, they are simply part of the problem. As we have seen above, this is a one-sided and pejorative view of the women who choose to remain dedicated to set tradition and social convention—in other words, the women who retain an ethical conservatism. Mahmood writes: “I seek to analyze the conceptions of self, moral agency, and politics that undergird the practices of this nonliberal movement, in order to come to an understanding of the historical projects that animate it” (Mahmood 5). The liberal values that Mahmood is critiquing are characterized in a few “normative liberal assumptions” that speak of human nature “such as the belief that all human beings have an innate desire for freedom, that we all somehow seek to assert our autonomy when allowed to do so, that human agency primarily consists of acts that challenge social norms and not those that uphold them, and so on” (5). Based on her ethnographic fieldwork with conservative religious women in the Islamist mosque movement in Egypt, Mahmood witnessed a dissonance between Western feminism’s conception of women’s agency and power, and the powerful and self-assured women she met in the field. This encouraged her to critique

Western definitions of individual autonomy, human agency, and subjectivity in order to outline women's experience and concerns within particular socio-religious and political contexts that, in their telling, undermine the prescriptions of the liberal, Second Wave feminist project.

i) Questioning Women's Agency:

Second Wave feminists, when regarding women within social contexts of conservative values, begin their critical inquiry with a question that seeks to locate women's agency yet remains biased in issuing a negative value judgement: "how do women contribute to reproducing their own domination, and how do they resist or subvert it?" (Mahmood 6). This approach is problematic for it causes a distorted view of women's activities in the search for "feminist agency" based on the liberal feminist values centered on idealizations of human freedom, and the universalized need for women's resistance and subversion of systemic oppressions. Mahmood writes, "Feminism... offers both a *diagnosis* of women's status across cultures and a *prescription* for changing the situation of women who are understood to be marginalized, subordinated, or oppressed" (10). As we have seen above, agency becomes the embattled site of debate upon which feminism seeks to impose its critical and political enterprise, which Mahmood believes is "a tethering that has often led to the incarceration of the notion of agency within the trope of resistance against oppressive and dominating operations of power" (34). This is an imposition of values on the definition of agency and something deemed certainly uncritical and distorting in Mahmood's view.

Agency for Mahmood does not belong to the individual in a search for inherent modes of human freedom and personal legitimacy, but "is a product of the historically

contingent discursive traditions in which they are located” (Mahmood 32). Due to an historical and cultural relativism, “the meaning of agency must be explored within the grammar of concepts within which it resides” (34). Mahmood seeks to underline within different social and cultural contexts “emergent forms of subjectivity” that interprets cultural meaning within a relativistic framework and dispels any projected values that the liberal humanist enterprise might be imposing through its critique. Mahmood understands that emergent forms of subjectivity can be seen in personal and collective processes of ethical formation through embodied praxis. In relation to the political questions raised in feminism concerning agency, Mahmood suggests that within conservative socio-religious contexts “The political efficacy of these movements is...a function of the work they perform in the *ethical realm*—those strategies of cultivation through which embodied attachments to historically specific forms of truth come to be forged. Their political project, therefore, can only be understood through an exploration of their ethical practices” (35).⁵⁶ Mahmood contends that political transformation arises through an individual’s embodiment of the ethical in an attempt at “reforming the social and cultural field”. This allots agency to the work of conservative women who have often fallen victim to the critical gaze of feminism, who in their critique would immediately discount these women as being willingly subservient to, and perpetrators of, systems of oppressive misogyny.

Mahmood’s analytical goal “is more than ethnographic: [her] goal is to parochialize those assumptions—about the constitutive relationship between action and embodiment, resistance and agency, self and authority—that inform our judgements about nonliberal movements such as the women’s mosque movement” (38). Over and

⁵⁶ Italics mine.

above Mahmood's need to disclose the short-sightedness of liberal academia, she is clear to explain that these women's actions are not taken by individuals alone, nor are they informed solely by the community. They are linked to the notion of indoctrinating praxis that understands "bodily behaviour was...not so much a sign of interiority as it was a means of acquiring its potentiality [which is] linked to the abilities one acquires through specific kinds of training and knowledge. This usage of 'potentiality' implies that in order to be good at something one undergoes a teleological program of volitional training that presupposes an exemplary path to knowledge—knowledge that one comes to acquire through assiduous schooling and practice" (Mahmood 147). This discussion on "potentiality" refers to women's actions of literally embodying the ethical standards of their tradition through different socio-religious praxes (i.e. religious ritual, religious ordinance, modest dress, and ethical attitudes and behaviours), which comes to affect not only oneself but the people around them.⁵⁷ Mahmood affirms that "It is precisely this self-willed obedience to religiously prescribed social conventions—what is often criticized as blind and uncritical emulation—that elicits the critique that such movements only serve to reproduce the existing patriarchal order and to prevent women from distinguishing their 'own desires and aspirations' from those that are 'socially dictated'" (148). This view revolves around what Mahmood coins as "an imaginary freedom" that elicits a political theoretical view that "an individual is considered free on the condition that she act autonomously: that her actions be the result of her own choice and free will, rather than of custom, tradition, transcendent will, or social coercion" (148). Mahmood therefore states that agency is, on one hand, beyond the will of an individual by being set

⁵⁷ A greater discussion concerning the link between gendered agency and the embodiment of the ethical through religious praxis will follow in the sub-chapter entitled "Agency and Marie-Paule: Theoretical Implications and Conclusions."

within a complex social system of relations (i.e. family, social and cultural norms and conventions, God, etc.), yet emerges from the subjective actions taken by the individual within that system whose activities, in turn, do shape culture.

ii) Renegotiating the Conceptions of Freedom and Agency: Conservatives Considered

Due to the fact that liberal feminism has outlined an ‘imaginary freedom’ that is set in a particular epistemological and cultural setting, norms of freedom and action must be redefined in a more culturally nuanced and relativistic manner. As we have seen, agency within conservative socio-religious frameworks does not conform to the “politically subversive form of agency” (Mahmood 153), but instead seeks to secure their “attachment to patriarchal forms of life that...provide the necessary conditions for both their subordination and their agency” (154). Mahmood notes that agency cannot be a “synonym for resistance to social norms” but must be interpreted as a modality to action, viewing that “action does not issue forth from natural feelings but *creates* them” (157). Women are thus able to actively negotiate their place in patriarchal frameworks by understanding that these conservative discourses do not see “the body as a sign of the self’s interiority but as a means of developing the self’s potentiality” (166). With the means of an embodied praxis, as mentioned above, women are able to embrace conservative values and continue to shape their particular culture from within. This demystifies and rejects the feminist view of an ontological and universal misogyny, understood to be constructing oppressive frameworks that must be transgressed through women’s agency via critique, experience and individuation. This analysis is sourced in

Mahmood's ethnographic material through a discussion of women's experience of suffering and survival.

In the conservative framework of the Muslim women within the mosque movement, Mahmood wishes "to understand the practical and conceptual implications of a religious imaginary in which humans are considered to be only partially responsible for their own actions, versus an imaginary in which humans are regarded as the sole authors of their actions" (Mahmood 168). This implies that women are engaging the traditional interpretation of what God demands of them. One such relevant arena is in pious suffering or what Mahmood calls *ṣabr* (endurance of hardship without complaint). The initial feminist view of this notion would be negative because it "invokes in the minds of many the passivity women are often encouraged to cultivate in the face of injustice" (171). For feminists this is categorically deemed a negative mode of action. But Mahmood interprets *ṣabr* differently in pointing out that, for women of the mosque movement, "it is an essential attribute of a pious character, an attribute to be cultivated regardless of the situation one faces...*ṣabr* allows one to bear and live hardship *correctly* as prescribed by one tradition of Islamic self-cultivation" (172). In this context, God has a tremendous role in outlining how one must live life. Mahmood also underscores the fact that this view is not particularly fatalist or defeatist, but rather that "while God determines one's fate...human beings still choose how to deal with their situations...What we have here is a notion of human agency, defined in terms of individual responsibility, that is bounded by both an eschatological structure *and* a social one...[this is] a conception of individual ethics whereby each person is responsible for her own actions" (173). Mahmood concludes that we should not see notions such as *ṣabr*

as a failure or incapacity to act “under the inertia of tradition...[but] it is integral to a constructive project: it is a site of considerable investment, struggle, and achievement” (174). For Mahmood, it is a matter of recognizing suffering as a genuine mode of action for women that places them in a discursive field that influences cultural change.

The second arena underscores matters of women’s personal survival by upholding conservative religious values. Mahmood outlined a few interesting cases where women used their orthodox religious values to rectify harmful behaviours of their husbands at home, which were causing them great anxiety and suffering. One example was a woman who ascribed to the extreme understandings of modest dress by wearing the *niqab* (full facial covering) in order to motivate her atheistic husband into establishing a more pious attitude in life and at home. Mahmood also spoke of a woman who used her religious knowledge and her orthodoxy to shame her husband for his immoral behaviours (i.e. excessive socializing, drinking, womanizing, etc.), which was causing her and her family tremendous anxiety. Initially both men resisted their demands, but eventually embraced their wives’ ethical imperatives.

In providing this exposition of women’s actions, Mahmood concludes that “it is not enough to simply point out, for example, that a tradition of female piety or modesty serves to give legitimacy to women’s subordination. Rather it is only by exploring these traditions in relation to the practical engagements and forms of life in which they are embedded that we can come to understand the significance of that subordination to the women who embody it” (Mahmood 188). Therefore, in these cases, the personal does inform the political and actions do take place when needed. Overall, to solve the dilemma of defining agency, Mahmood suggests “that it is best not to propose *a* theory of agency

but to analyze agency in terms of the different modalities it takes and the grammar of concepts in which its particular affect, meaning, and form resides” (188). Mahmood views that to impose definitions of agency is to distort the unexpected variety of experience with people of different values than our own and deny the validity of women’s actions of power and engagement. This approach ultimately helps us better understand conservative groups overall and become critically engaged in a more balanced gendered analysis.

iii) Agency and Marie-Paule: Theoretical Implications and Conclusions

Mahmood’s methodological and theoretical perspective is invaluable to the gendered analysis of Marie-Paule and the Army of Mary. Mahmood’s view of the ethical motivation governing the behaviours and actions of conservative women within her fieldwork was strikingly parallel to the realities of groups like the Army of Mary. By first understanding that the Army of Mary are primarily motivated by the ethical and not the political, one can appreciate and understand clearly the reasons for their somewhat ‘subversive’ actions. Because they were following an ethical imperative directed from God through Marie-Paule, the Army of Mary were able to take decisive action and initiate political and theological change—in initiating their own church and delineating their own theological worldview—that resulted in their excommunication. In terms of Mahmood’s definition of agency that takes into account “the different modalities it takes and the grammar of concepts in which its particular affect, meaning, and form resides” (188), Marie-Paule is able to tap into forms of agency justifying the Army of Mary’s actions, which reflects their particular religious worldview and spiritual needs. Thus according to their religious perspective, in other words, God spoke to Marie-Paule and

she listened, interpreted and acted. It is clear that Marie-Paule was not acting to overtly transgress the dictates and warnings of the Catholic Church,⁵⁸ but found a resolve and self-sufficiency that nonetheless resulted in personal, political and cultural change. Marie-Paule, therefore, has agency in that her actions were informed by her ethical view.

Marie-Paule also conforms to the two areas of ethical engagement covered by Mahmood in her ethnographic analysis: 1) using orthodoxy to circumvent oppressive relations and/or unwanted behaviours, and 2) *qabr* or pious suffering as a mode to action. In terms of her orthodoxy, there are many separate occurrences where Marie-Paule seeks to change those around her based on her ethically motivated sense of agency. Examples abound throughout her narrative: how she founded her moral righteousness early in life as a basis for her later orthodoxy, how she reframed her sickness as a motivating factor to change her father's destructive behaviour, how she used her piety in the domestic sphere to guilt and encourage lifestyle changes in her husband, and how she used personal revelation to overcome the challenges of ecclesiastical restrictions and marginalization. Marie-Paule shares with her conservative counterparts the justification to act in bettering her life by subscribing to and utilizing the ethical imperative of socio-religious convention—meaning, in other words, if one submits to the will of God, God permits one's agency and actions become ethically viable.

In terms of pious behaviours as modes of women's agency, we can see a striking parallel between the women of the mosque movement and Marie-Paule. As it has been noted, Marie-Paule uses suffering in a pious mode as her main vehicle for sanctification.

⁵⁸ I must clarify that Marie-Paule has a reverence for the validity and irrevocable nature of social and historical webs of relations supported through the Vatican/church structure. Thus, it is clear that she was not acting to overtly transgress the dictates and warnings of the church, but out of a spiritual resolve that nonetheless resulted in personal, political and cultural change.

Up until this point, the gendered analysis based on the tools issued from different feminist discourses understood Marie-Paule's religious and moral values somewhat pejoratively as either a social delusion brought upon by a misogynistic social construction (i.e. Catholic Second Wave feminism), or seen possibly as an approach to agency outmoded by women's current proximity to conventional discourse and power (i.e. new (Catholic) feminism). Mahmood's consideration and definition of suffering as a site of personal endeavour and achievement for women, however, enables a critical response to Marie-Paule's seemingly idiosyncratic approach to suffering: as a site of personal achievement (Christological in nature) set within a certain type of culture (Marian and apocalyptic) based strongly on ethical imperatives (new revelations from God). Therefore, the suffering Marie-Paule has experienced in her life is justified and, as her many adherents view it, also praiseworthy. In the view of Marie-Paule and the Army of Mary, these actions are normative and necessary. However, this perspective on suffering is not unique to Marie-Paule or the worldview of the Army of Mary. It is actually part of a greater historical and cultural understanding of the Catholic religious imagination, which is the confluence of both authoritative prescriptions of gendered values from the church and the lived experiences of people interpreting these prescriptions.

There needs to be a clearer understanding of how the Catholic religious imagination came to harbour this interpretation of suffering as a mode of agency particularly for women, in order to understand how this element became central to Marie-Paule's soteriological self-understanding and the theology of the Army of Mary. This necessitates a greater understanding of the socio-historical dynamics at play in the larger Catholic culture in which Marie-Paule and the Army of Mary are situated.

b) Socio-historical and Discursive Contextualization: Robert Orsi

Robert Orsi is concerned with the intersubjective nature of the relationships between people and the “transcendent divine.”⁵⁹ Very much like Saba Mahmood, his approach is not about imposing his personal, socio-cultural values upon his subjects, but providing the analytical space in order to hear their voices. He writes that “One of the moral and intellectual imperatives [of his work] is to underscore the importance of studying and thinking about despised religious idioms, practices that make us uncomfortable, unhappy, frightened—and not just to study them but to bring ourselves into close proximity to them, and not to resolve the discomfort they occasion by imposing a normative grid” (Orsi, Between Heaven and Earth : The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them 7). Methodologically and theoretically, such an approach to this particular research subject, or what he poignantly calls ‘despised religious idioms’, allows for a precedent in which groups like the Army of Mary can be considered with a greater scholarly seriousness and analytical weight. Orsi, like Mahmood, is trying to admonish and destabilize the illusion of scholarly objectivity and the imposition of values of the researcher upon the subject by globally advocating an interpretive subjectivity that includes both the perspectives of researcher and research subject, in turn, affecting the overall analysis. Orsi wants “to eliminate the comfort of academic distance and to undermine the confidence and authority of the claims [...] The point is rather to bring the other into fuller focus within the circumstances of his or her

⁵⁹ The use of the term “transcendent divine” is deliberate in order to describe Orsi’s elaboration on the interdependent relationships between humanity and the divine, as well as to make a distinction with Marie-Paule’s highly reciprocal and intimate relationship with the transcendent. The transcendent divine alludes to a certain abstraction of God from liberally transcending metaphysical boundaries in interlocution with humanity. Marie-Paule, on the other hand, is in a teleologically transformative dialogue with the transcendent resulting in her deification and personal ascendancy to the metaphysical realm allowing her a place within the divine (i.e. the Quinterinity).

history, relationships, and experiences [...] we do not impose our wishes, dreams, or anxieties” (7-8). Akin to Mahmood’s critique of the judgements and prescriptions of liberal values inherent to Second Wave feminism, Orsi is aware that these prescriptions of liberal scholarship undervalue the activities of ‘despised’ groups, generating misinformed conclusions on the validity of their perspectives and actions.

Orsi’s socio-historical analysis provides the necessary structure for this research upon which a gendered analysis may be derived of Marie-Paule and the Army of Mary. By way of a delineation and exploration of the culture of suffering in the pious imagination and devotion of American Catholicism, Orsi engages American Catholic women in the way in which they negotiate religious devotion and cultural convention. Furthermore, Orsi’s discussion of the narrative fantasy of the American Catholic family creates an understanding of gendered norms in Catholic culture not as uniquely directed by a social construction of behavioural norms, but as a convergence of prescription and interpretation on the part of the church’s adherents. Overall, this exposition and analysis will add to the arguments already presented, and provide the necessary tools for the final analysis of the gendered worldview of Marie-Paule and the Army of Mary.

i) The Catholic Culture of Suffering:

Suffering has often been seen as a moral category of great importance for Catholics in shaping personal humility and generating pious actions. Orsi notes that “Pain purged and disciplined the ego, stripped it of pride and self-love; it disclosed the emptiness of the world. Without it, human beings remained pagans; in physical distress, they might find their way back to the Church, and to sanctity” (Orsi, Between Heaven and Earth 21). “Paganism” in this statement relates to a pre-Vatican II admonition and

contention against modernity based in Catholicism's "association between physical sickness and moral corruption" (23). The conservative Catholic Church (specifically the combined Tridentine and ultramontane church in the pre-Vatican II era)⁶⁰ was highly concerned with saving souls from the evils of secular modernity. A penitent's suffering, and the particular piety it produced, was the church's main vehicle through which the most ordinary person could effectively and directly engage the divine. Orsi remarks on the importance of suffering in Catholic culture: "Pain had the character of a sacrament, offering the sufferer a uniquely immediate and intimate experience of Jesus' presence" (22). In these terms, suffering was equated with the greatest of pious actions.

The Catholic Church also taught that a person's experiences of suffering could never be sufficient or be perceived as a point of pride. Orsi writes, "Jesus' suffering served the same purpose as Mary's virtue in devotional culture: to diminish the integrity and meaning of ordinary persons' difficulties and experiences" (Orsi, Between Heaven and Earth 27). The message was that one's suffering was always insufficient and necessitated even greater experiences in order to shape one's ethical character. That is why, in Catholicism, there is "only one officially sanctioned way to suffer even the most excruciating distress: with bright, upbeat, uncomplaining, submissive endurance" (26). Pious humility became the guiding factor in this endless cycle of suffering, always in a

⁶⁰ Tridentine Catholicism upheld the values of the counter-reformation Council of Trent in the sixteenth century, which included an emphasis on Catholic dogmas (such as emphasizing the sacraments, justification, original sin, and indulgences), an emphasis on Marian devotion, and the importance of the cult of the Saints. Ultramontanism was a conservative and insular political philosophy in reaction to secular modernity that emphasized the absolute power of the Pope. Ultimately, the difference between Quebec and American Catholicism is related to these terms. The Catholic Church in Quebec was more ultramontane for the church had a hegemonic political influence over a people's sense of identity and morality, while Catholicism remained mostly Tridentine in the US for the lack of political power and influence over forms of civil governance and American identity, which both reflected a Protestant hegemony. For a broader discussion on the history of Catholicism in America, see James T. Fisher, Catholics in America, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

mode of submissive action. Furthermore, “Devotional culture taught that to alleviate pain was to deny the Cross; to seek relief was understandable, perhaps, but still an instance of human selfishness, a denial of the soul’s superiority to the body and a rejection of the opportunity for saintliness” (39). Orsi notes how suffering and submissiveness offer the penitent access to ‘the Cross’, the central symbol of Christian soteriology. Herein, Orsi alludes to the underlying paradoxical view where the more one suffers, the closer he/she comes to the atonement experience of Christ; but the more one speaks of the greatness of his/her suffering in an attempt to utilize the symbolic wealth of one’s experience as a means of power, the less notable and salient those experiences become. In this soteriological framework, silence is valued and becomes the righteous avenue to one’s sanctification. Orsi argues that the women who adhered to this view did not remain completely silent in face of the relative experiences of anxiety and suffering in their lives.

ii) An Uncontrolled Site of “Meaning Making”: Mary and Popular Devotion

In his research concerning the devotional strategies of American Catholic women, Orsi focused a large part of his analysis on hagiography and popular Catholic magazines. The purpose of his research was to describe how the lives of saints and the lives of their devotees intersect. He first wanted to outline the elements of social construction within hagiography regarding the proposed assimilation of norms and values, but he also underscored how the people who lived their lives in pious imitation of saints had a variety of different experiences that did not exactly conform to the constructed projections from the church. In the understanding of this complex identity structure, Orsi adds that “devotional culture has a way of slipping the bounds of clerical authority” (Orsi, Between Heaven and Earth 119). Orsi underscores the subjective aspects of

experience that, at times, placed Catholic devotees of popular devotion in contrast and conflict with the inherited beliefs and norms of the church.

With respect to this dynamic of circumventing Catholic authority through narrative interpretation and appropriation, Orsi remarks that “narrative can only circle but never resolve. And this in turn raises the question of whether or not ‘meaning-making’ is the best way of thinking about religion” (Orsi, Between Heaven and Earth 112). Orsi, like Mahmood, sees that American culture places “too much emphasis on agency” (144) in a cultural context dominated by liberal notions of personal freedom that fails to recognize the relational bounds within these social dynamics, whose influence and effects are not unidirectional but multidirectional. In terms of the dynamic between the saint and her/his devotee,⁶¹ Orsi writes that they “were born into religious stories that existed before them and that there was a narrative waiting for them that had little to do with their agency or intentionality” (143-144). It is the concept that people are “held in the grip of available meaning” (144) and that individual volition (e.g. the dominating element of the liberal feminist definition of agency) does not determine how people generally engage the multiplicity of meaning in their lives. The methodological imperative is that we should always consider the greater picture and be aware of the imposition of values based in our subjective interpretations. The point that Orsi is underlining is that “meaning making” or the imposition of one’s values upon another’s reality (i.e. social constructionist paradigm) is a violation, and that meaning is not simply a matter of individual choice, but is dictated by a convergence of different relations, experiences and interpretations. This notion is best elucidated in the relationship between Catholics and the Virgin Mary.

⁶¹ In this specific case, the connection between St. Gemma Gagliardi and Orsi’s grandmother, Giulia. For specific details, see Robert A. Orsi, Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005) 110-45.

Orsi provides a detailed socio-historical analysis of the Virgin Mary and her effect on contemporary society, and notes that “Mary stands for peace and for divisiveness. She is not solely the creation of the theologians or of the masses, and she belongs completely neither to her devout nor to culture [...] she is a protean and unstable figure” (Orsi, Between Heaven and Earth 48). Akin to the ambiguous nature of the saints and their relationship with the devotees, Mary does not unilaterally present a social construction for the conservative values of the church, nor is she a vehicle for undermining its structural control. In reality she is an ambivalent symbol,⁶² yet her ubiquitous presence in the lives of Catholics makes her a focal point and primary identifier of Catholic religiosity. Thus Mary became a problem for the Catholic Church in the modern period, particularly for the Magisterium (i.e. the teaching function of the Catholic Church), in trying to circumscribe and control her symbolic value in the Catholic religious imagination.

Orsi speaks of how, with the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s, the church tried to shift people’s focus and dependence on Mary towards a focus on Christ: “theologians and liturgists presented [Mary] now as the model of Christian obedience, humility, and service, the exemplum of the church’s mission and identity on earth, and efforts were made to wean Catholics from Marian devotional practices. The impulse was to move from the devotional (associated with the premodern) to the moral (sign of a more mature church, in the language of the times)” (Orsi, Between Heaven and Earth 52). Though the church tried and somewhat succeeded in shifting the Catholic religious

⁶² The definition of the term “symbol” is that it holds multiple complex meanings, therefore making it more than a “sign”. Ambivalence can be read as complexity, as people can project onto the Virgin Mary what they need from her. The meaning of a true symbol cannot be circumvented for new “teachings” of its meanings, as if it was a “sign”.

imagination away from popular devotion, Orsi however recognizes a perpetuation of the cult to Mary (as well as, if less so, the cult of the saints) in modern times mainly through the material culture of popular devotion. He writes that the “conflict over presence [i.e. sacred presence in religious material culture] became more and more bitter because presence was not going to be easily uprooted, either in religious practice or in peoples’ imaginations” (56). The presence of the divine in the hands of the faithful was a powerful medium that was very difficult for the institutional church to undermine or control. In a discussion of the trafficking of religious artefacts and material culture in pilgrimage sites, Orsi explains that “Marian souvenirs connect moments and sites of experience... They are conduits of power. Such objects cannot be understood apart from the phenomenology of presence. What makes them desirable and valued, the reason that people want to give and receive them, is the experience, in and through these objects, of presence” (60). The resiliency of popular devotion, in the minds of modern Catholics, is linked to the highly experiential element of a personal encounter with the divine.

Orsi is clear that “The Virgin Mary exists in relationships... [and] cannot be found solely in psychological analyses of any single believer’s (or even community’s) experience of her because Mary and her devout alike find their being in culture [...] She is a cultural figure in that she enters the intricacies of a culture, becomes part of its webs and meanings, limitations, structures, and possibilities. She contributes to making and sustaining culture, and reinventing it, at the same time that she herself is made and sustained by culture, in dynamic exchanges with her devout” (Orsi, Between Heaven and Earth 60-61). Orsi explains that Mary, in people’s lived experiences, is not an ideal social construction set on “making meaning” (i.e. a pedagogical tool of morality for the

masses), but is caught in an interlocution between the divine and the devotee, seen more precisely to what I term as “negotiating meaning” (i.e. a joint venture with the divine grounded in a person’s relative experience). Orsi reminds us that not one single individual has control over Mary’s symbol, but that it is an interaction of give and counter-give. This interlocutive engagement, therefore, creates an opportunity for people to make decisions based on the information from the relative cultural context in which they are embedded. Ultimately this means that people are engaged in forms of action that are informed by a complex of inherited culture (i.e. sources of “available meaning”) as well as new directions sourced in the outcomes of their personal experiences.

Orsi’s view is explicated in the way in which Mary presents herself through different apparitions in times of crisis and need. Orsi writes, “She does not belong completely either to culture or to self, but to the spaces where the two are most intimately entangled. The Blessed Mother tends to make her most dramatic, public appearances...when social, political, and economic transformation disrupt the customary ways people have been connected to each other and to the social world” (Orsi, Between Heaven and Earth 61). Interestingly, Mary’s presence is felt in the spaces where the conventions of societal norms—in many cases instituted hierarchically or ‘top-down’—are disrupted or unsettled within ambiguous socio-cultural zones.⁶³ But Orsi notes that

⁶³ A brief discussion here that describes the socio-religious and socio-historical elements intersecting with each Marian apparition will help explicate Orsi’s view: *La Salette* occurred in a time of increasing change in European history with the de-emphasis of institutional religion concerning philosophical and epistemological secularism as well as the modern thrust of nation building; *Lourdes* was a site of mystical healing based on an older culture of pagan belief being overtaken by a Catholic hegemonic worldview, as well as a time of increasing ultramontanist in the Catholic Church who interpreted Lourdes’ statement “I am the Immaculate Conception” as justification for their conservative, anti-scientific and insular consolidation of values and worldview; and *Fatima* represented a fight against the agonistic and ubiquitous forces and influences of communism in the world, with a special fear of the corruption of Western civilization, which further undermined the power and influence of the Catholic Church. For a summary

“Given the deep social and psychological etiology of Mary’s presence, she is not always a benign figure” (61). This reasserts his observations that Mary does not belong to any one group or individual, but works within the webs of interrelation and interlocution. This is why Orsi writes that “Praying to Mary is not an activity that is easily controlled by others, or even completely controlled” (62). Therefore, from a critical standpoint, it is difficult to conclude that Mary is categorically a tool of oppression and subjugation, yet we also cannot account fully for the politicized voice of Marian devotees as being sourced in Mary’s words and actions. Orsi writes that “Because Mary exists relationally, it is impossible to read out from theology or iconography the quality of people’s experience of her or to anticipate its social implications. Devotional writers may have evoked a sorrowing, submissive Mary against the desires and aspirations of young women...But all this tells us very little about Mary’s place in real women’s lives” (62). This view speaks to the larger dynamics within Catholicism between the prescribed values of normativity and the relative experiences of the divine.

Nevertheless, the Magisterium of the pre-Vatican II church remained committed to elucidating their values of normative gendered behaviour directly onto women’s bodies. This was done primarily not only through ritual means of discourse (i.e. liturgy, prayer, sermons, etc.), but through narrative. The construction of a moralistic fantasy was intended to convince people of the validity of a certain gendered behaviour and its poignant connection to actual social relations and real world situations. In other words, the Magisterium sought to brand the Catholic masses with notions of proper and

discussion on modern Marian apparitions, see Sandra Zimdars-Swartz, *Encountering Mary: From La Salette to Medjugorje* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991).

improper gendered behaviour that either lead to moral righteousness or perdition, and they were not shy of using Mary in the process.

iii) A Summary of Catholic Gendered Values: Catholic Family Romance

The pre-Vatican II church was very critical of secular modernity as a corruptive influence on Catholics. Orsi writes that one way in which it would demonize secular modern values was to antagonize young women in narrative settings that appealed closely to the popular religious imagination. He writes that “American Catholic writers and moralists imagined young women as voracious creatures, always demanding and desiring something, never satisfied, and willing to work only in order to buy the very luxuries that were eroding the spiritual foundations of their homes and cultures. This was a Catholic critique of the American culture of consumption on one level, but it was always gendered: the criticism of consumption was the pivot for an attack against modern Catholic women, not their male counterparts, who seemed to want things like cars and refrigerators only at the instigation of their girlfriends and wives” (Orsi, Thank You, St. Jude : Women's Devotion to the Patron Saint of Hopeless Causes 73). The tone in which it embellished this drama concerning gendered norms of behaviour seems to the contemporary reader as bordering on misogyny. Yet women were not antagonized absolutely in these moralistic narratives—a distinction was made between young women and old women.

Orsi writes, “Young women are defined by their dangerous ambitions, discontent, and unmanageable desires; old women, now at the end of their days...looked back contentedly on lives of submission, loyalty, and devotion” (Orsi, Thank You, St. Jude 74). As an outcome of this fantasy, mothers became the more respectable category of

women in that they did not pose a threat to men as did young women. Orsi saw this gendered view as a theme that seemed to dominate all stories disseminated to American Catholics on the issue of the family and particularly womanly saintly behaviour. He calls it the *American Catholic family romance*. It was a “domestic dreamscape shaped by specific and identifiable (but not often conscious) desires and denials and presented by cultural authorities as historically authentic, morally imperative, and religiously sanctioned” (Orsi 78). In the devotional press, mothers were glorified for the amount of suffering that they had to endure at the hands of their husbands. They were morally evaluated by their level of submissiveness and quiet contention with their lot in life. Orsi writes, “In the logic of the American Catholic family romance, fathers were not really necessary members of the everyday life of the family [...] when they appear, they assumed one of two guises. They could be the dutiful, doting sons of saintly older women; more often they were mean, sexually demanding, inadequate husbands to victimized wives (who were also mothers) [...] husbands in these tales have a ‘tendency towards weakness’ and are ‘expected’ to fail” (79). Interestingly, Orsi notes that the men’s role “was the holiness they made possible for their wives” (79). But women were not valued for their actions of trying to escape from their disparaging lives, rather it was through their ability to endure and embrace greater suffering in a mode that appealed greatly to the Catholic imagination. Men, on the other hand, were largely demonized not because they were men, but to serve the emphasis of women in their institutionalization of saintly values and behaviours. The writing of these moral tales places men as the heroes for whom these narratives ultimately serve. Orsi remarks that men needed to

remain in a constructed relation to women in order to serve an overall moral setting that would have positive social outcomes.

Orsi speaks of these formulations within the Catholic family romance: “In the construction of the Catholic family romance, younger single women were structurally aligned with older married men, younger single men with older widowed (or unhappily married) women” (Orsi, Thank You, St. Jude 80). Within this narrative framework, young men are the central protagonist with others remaining in relation to them in declining order of importance, in a projection of moral behaviour. Holy old women (whose disposition and behaviours are unquestioningly moral) served pious young men who are inherently oriented towards moral behaviours; older married men (whose disposition and behaviours are questioned with relation to the forging of holy old women) are connected to young women who are inherently oriented towards immoral behaviours. It was in this taxonomy of gendered behaviour that the architects of the Catholic family romance sought to circumvent the bad influences young women might have in debilitating the family unit and society at large. Orsi reminds us that these authors believed that “bad girls...threatened the demise of Catholic culture, the stability of the family, and the integrity of Western civilization” (80). Orsi contends that this fantasy greatly influenced the Catholic imagination and influenced women’s harmful self-perception in a man’s world. Yet this perception of the family romance was not absolutely negative, for by seeking to exclude young girls, mothers are presented in salvific terms, thereby creating a category of positive self-worth which women could strive for.

The heroic ethic given to motherhood in the mother/son dyad was projected upon the relationship between Jesus and Mary. Orsi writes: “The paring of old woman/young man, in the form of mother/son, was at the center of American Catholic devotional culture and piety, which made the relationship between Jesus and his mother the model of the spiritual life, the clearest expression of the encounter between the human and the divine, and the pivot of Catholic cosmology” (Orsi, Thank You, St. Jude 81).

Motherhood became the central symbol of power available for women. This ethic of motherhood and the necessary demonization of young women were further polarized by the notion of suffering. “There were two categories of women in American Catholic devotional culture: old women who had been broken by time and labor, and young women who needed to be broken by time and labor. Pain was the hinge of the diptych” (87). In the process of creating the ethical woman, young women needed to overcome their ‘natural’ tendency towards moral degradation through suffering, and old women needed to continue suffering in a silent and pious reverence. This emphasis on safe women is directly related to generating safe relationships for men away from the potentials for sexual misconduct, which is always the concern for men in their relationships with women: “Through the disciplining of women, the inner terrain of devotionalism, alive with primitive desires, had become safe for men, but as a result, it could be quite unsafe for women” (87). Though we cannot outline here the psycho-social effects this view would have on women, it is important to note that suffering was understood to be the primary avenue for women’s engagement with morality and God: “Suffering defined the meaning of motherhood and turned ordinary marriages into the staging ground of sanctity” (87). Silence was the operational value of this sanctity. As

Orsi concludes: “The path marked out for women was clear: rebellion, autonomy, ambition brought terrible punishment, while suffering and pain made women beloved, graceful, capable of healing and helping. All women had to do is keep silent” (88).

Suffering might be the vehicle in which women could engage the divine, but silence was the key to unlocking its power and potential.

In this narrative framework, Mary was revered as the exemplar of silent women. But as we have seen above, her interlocution with devotees went well beyond the reach of socially constructed understandings. Orsi writes: “Mary was the model for this kind of silent suffering. The Virgin speaks in devotional culture, of course, and her devout have collected and pondered her words. But the Virgin’s chattiness in the company of women and girls she has visited has been the source of considerable unease among church officials, and the more garrulous the Virgin has been, the greater this institutional anxiety. Alongside the popular experience of a Virgin who comes with messages and secrets, consequently, there has been a more ecclesiastically comfortable emphasis on Mary’s taciturnity” (Orsi, Thank You, St. Jude 80). Orsi notes that, though these women and Mary know the ethical importance of silence, the verbosity of their interlocutions have been marked by ecclesiastical unease. The male church, therefore, did what they could to continue to bolster, especially with Mary, the importance of quiet women in their suffering: “The ‘Catholic family’ took up and elaborated one dimension of the family romance, its projection of a perfect moment of family harmony when there was no dissent, choice, or ambivalence, and the only pain there was good for women, and it redoubled injunctions to domestic silence and submission [...] Silence enclosed silence: the silent women took her place in the perfect home” (91). This reminded women that the

proper course of action—though they found their situations more complex than the Catholic family romance allowed—was to find resolve and refuge in the moral fortitude of engaging suffering with silence as did Mary. This was a strategy that tried, but in reality failed, to render women speechless.

In Orsi's analysis, women faced difficult circumstances that seemed to surpass the two-dimensional portrayal of familial situations in the Catholic literature on which his research is based. Ultimately, they went beyond the constrictions imposed upon them from the Catholic hierarchy. Orsi sees in his research on women's activities at the Shrine of St. Jude that "women were not passive consumers of devotions. They engaged their tradition actively: they took objects away from the Shrine in Chicago...and used them in ways unforeseen, and often unsanctioned, by the clergy in Chicago" (Orsi, Thank You, St. Jude 94). In their actions, women engaged in an informal discourse that ultimately affected and changed the devotional and religious culture around them. Like Mahmood's analysis pertaining to modes of women's agency, these women appropriated the means available to them within their given religious culture (e.g. the gendered norms projected within the Catholic family romance) to interpret their religious reality as women. This means that appropriating the available gendered power they hold specifically as mothers has enabled them to act without cognitive or moral dissonance.

iv) Representing Catholic Norms of Moral Behaviour: Marie-Paule's Story

In this research, it is uncanny how close Marie-Paule and the Army of Mary's views are to the descriptions and conclusions of Orsi's socio-historical analysis. Orsi's work is almost like a field guide for describing the conservative Catholic behaviour and worldview in a North American context. Though Orsi denotes the literary elucidation of

Catholic values based specifically on American immigrant concerns and values,⁶⁴ it remains relevant to the analysis of Marie-Paule within a Quebec context. Marie-Paule's story clearly adheres to basic Catholic views of gender and androcentric projections and concerns—from her emphasis and moral reasoning of suffering, to her gendered behaviour surrounding her relationship with her husband. The most striking parallel is that Marie-Paule's narrative fits perfectly into Orsi's understanding of the Catholic family romance. Furthermore, it is safe to assume that members of the Army of Mary, who were probably familiar with this literary genre,⁶⁵ saw in Marie-Paule's writings a genuine biography of a woman who was living a 'hell on earth' and indeed acting the part of a pious mother whose silence would save the world. In terms of Orsi's analysis, Marie-Paule is an ideal social construction of conservative values, whose actions nevertheless go beyond the church's prescriptions of gendered behaviour.

Marie-Paule and *The Lady of All Peoples* also characterize and project the ambiguities inherent to Marian apparitions throughout the modern period. Indeed, Marie-Paule can best be described as acting within "the grips of available meaning". Marie-Paule and the Army of Mary thus find resolve and justification for their actions—based on moral and eschatological imperatives—at the intersection between divine revelation and the inherited tradition of the Catholic Church. This is the type of agency spoken of by both Mahmood and Orsi. It seeks not an individual outcome (as advocated by Second Wave feminism), but relates to a greater convergence of divine and human action that

⁶⁴ This is especially true when speaking of the reality of absentee fathers in the American immigrant household. For a greater overall discussion on the element of immigrant concerns in American Catholicism, see both Orsi's works cited in this research. Immigrant identity is a major factor in his research and analysis, but also his own identity and personal outlook on the world.

⁶⁵ In fact this perspective of a gendered narrative construction of motherhood goes beyond the literature of a Catholic family romance by being sourced in the Christian tradition itself—e.g., the narrative of St. Monica and St. Augustine.

enables the Army of Mary to embrace their new identity without undermining their core conservative values. This is strongly based in what was discussed above as the moral normativity of the Catholic family romance.

As previously described, Marie-Paule's life story speaks as if it were written deliberately in the genre of the Catholic family romance. Orsi's summary analysis concerning the power of motherhood acts as a paradigm through which Marie-Paule views her life of teleological sanctification. The violence that she suffered from her husband was an exemplary case in which Marie-Paule transformed suffering into a piety that conformed to the gendered norms of the church. Based on her narrative, her sanctity as a woman is unquestionable; so much so, that she interpreted her femininity within *both* categories of womanhood, young and old. As seen in her story, her husband 'aided' in producing her sanctification in adulthood, yet her relationship with her father also spoke to a view of her moral completeness. Her father Ernest—whose actions and pious character placed him in relation to Marie-Paule within the typological connection between old men and young women—acted as a moral anchor for Marie-Paule in a 'dangerous' time of her youth. In terms of her readership, Marie-Paule's devotion and mystical relationship to her father provided a clear indication of her righteousness. Therefore, in a double sanctification her relationship with her father safeguarded her innocence and modesty in youth, while her relationship with her husband founded her saintliness in motherhood.⁶⁶ Yet, Marie-Paule was enticed by multiple forces (most of

⁶⁶ This is not to mention Marie-Paule's relationship to her oldest son André who also plays into the trope of the Catholic family romance narrative as the pious and doting son in a typological relationship to the suffering mother. I chose not to develop this relationship in my thesis because I wished to focus closely on Marie-Paule's more negative and/or destructive relationships to her father and her husband. This connection between the Catholic family romance and Marie-Paule's son is just a greater indication that she absolutely subscribes to the validity of this narrative fantasy, and that it remains an important element to the gendered analysis of Marie-Paule and the Army of Mary.

them divine) to go further than the confines of her domestic role in her family into a more universal role as Mary herself.

Orsi writes that due to the fact that young women were demonized for the sake of male morality, older women (mothers in particular) were given certain modes of power through their sanctity. Marie-Paule and *The Lady of All Peoples* use this role to engage in broader social and moral categories with an eschatological outlook. In their view, mothers are not a threat to society like young women, but just the opposite: mothers are the cure to social ills, ascribing to domesticity the moral high ground. Ultimately this is a discussion of popular devotional culture, one in which Marie-Paule is mired when interpreting humanity vis-à-vis salvation history. It is clear that this worldview has informed the institutionalization of motherhood in the Army of Mary (i.e. Church of John and a complementary theology) against an uncompromising Catholic Church. Women as mothers play central roles in the socialization of the household and thus should merit a metaphysical platform to save the world—i.e., 1) at the level of society as mothers, 2) at the level of humanity through a Christological Marie-Paule, 3) and at the metaphysical level through the Immaculate. Though Marie-Paule embraces broadly the ethical norms of the patriarchal socio-religious and symbolic system, she finds it difficult however to completely affirm gendered silence.

As we have seen throughout Marie-Paule's narrative, gendered silence is a strong value, especially in relation to suffering. She mentions it at multiple occasions in connection with ennobling her actions of piety and sanctity. However, her actions are in fact paradoxically different from her conservative value prescriptions. The imperative from the transcendent to speak, to write, and to engage the Catholic Church on ethical

grounds places Marie-Paule ambiguously outside of a self-understanding as a submissive character trapped in what Second Wave feminists might describe as the unheeded discourses of a 'domestic prison'. Marie-Paule is ordered to speak. This perspective is also embedded in the apparitional discourse of The Lady of All Peoples who, in her actions of speech, provides an example of engagement for women while remaining within conservative moral parameters—i.e., “women of this world, do you know what it means to be woman? It means: TO SACRIFICE. Therefore, spurn all egoism and all vanity. Strive to bring to the central Point, the Cross, all the children and all those who loiter along the way, browsing here and there. So sacrifice yourselves, you also, along with me” (Auclair 137). These calls to action are based on gendered specificity and add an unquestionable sense of agency that reflects not only a view of individual power, but of a broader connectivity with tradition and the divine. But, ultimately, what lends this statement value, authority and authenticity is the act of individual interpretation—and in this case, the interpretation of Marie-Paule.

Without question, the most important individual is Marie-Paule. She stands amidst inherited tradition, moral insights and normative prescriptions, and is able to embrace the seemingly contradictory ethical imperatives placed upon her by the transcendent that, however, does not cause her dissonance in terms of her moral self-awareness, but rather influences her to embrace an unprecedented role of being a goddess. These are all elements that, combined, legitimize Marie-Paule as being a powerful, conservative voice for socio-religious change as well as being an agent of the feminine divine.

c) Conclusion: A Gendered Analysis of Women's Power within a Conservative Framework

Marie-Paule is indeed a powerful woman who is in a unique, yet difficult position within Catholicism between *orthodoxy* and *heterodoxy*. It is clear that Marie-Paule and the Army of Mary adhere to a conservative worldview, which includes an assertion of a Tridentine and Ultramontane Catholicism, and a traditionalist view of gendered roles expounded as a universal complementarity. As mentioned above, these elements speak to the highest values of the conservative Catholic Church. Interestingly, however, Marie-Paule uses this orthodoxy as a platform to implement a tremendous shift in the religious outlook of the Army of Mary; one where women are given a central soteriological role through a complimentary theology that enables an ontological framework of motherhood to develop.

This ontological framework speaks directly to the modes of women's power by including women at the center of the Christian discourse on the divine transcendent, which in turn justifies women's actions. Yet, this idea of including women at the centre of Christian theology stands at odds with the orthodoxy of the church's male hierarchy, causing resistance and eventual institutional marginalization. Therefore, how does Marie-Paule's negotiation of Catholic orthodoxy translate into authentic forms of power for women? In relation to the different analyses mentioned in this thesis, women's agency and power must first be unpacked in order to understand the position that Marie-Paule and the Army of Mary have taken. From there, we will better recognize how Marie-Paule and the Army of Mary are able to negotiate their sense of orthodoxy in combination with

their ‘heretical’ actions, and appreciate the role that “femininity” plays in underscoring their heterodoxy and generating modes of women’s agency.

As discussed throughout this thesis, agency is the central notion in the feminist debate concerning the validity and authenticity of women’s experience. Second Wave feminists view agency contingent on the access a woman has to modes of personal freedom, which includes freedom of thought, movement and choice. What matters for feminists is women’s sovereignty and self-determination in defiance of the androcentric and misogynistic social constructions, whose purpose they view is to disavow women’s agency. Mahmood, however, critiques this view of freedom from the trappings of socio-cultural convention—or what she refers to as an “imaginary freedom”—as being unrepresentative of women’s reality in universal terms. Instead she advocates a subjective and relativistic interpretation of women’s actions as bearing witness to their actual engagement in society. Based on her fieldwork, Mahmood believes that women within traditional socio-cultural frameworks are indeed actively shifting social discourse, not as agents of social disruption, but within an ethical negotiation between the dictates of set tradition and relativistic personal experience.

Conservative women, like Marie-Paule, are able to elicit social and cultural change through an ethical imperative, which is the product of a dialogue between the individual and the transcendent divine. Both interlocutors are, in what Orsi notes, “held in the grip of available meaning” (Between Heaven and Earth 144). This implies that the dynamics of social construction do not dominate the furnishing of particular socio-religious perspectives, but that reality is informed by inherited tradition (in this case, a conservative gendered worldview) and personal interpretation. Essentially, this is how

overarching moralistic narratives such as the Catholic family romance inherently became the bedrock of Marie-Paule's worldview claiming motherhood as the primary ethical role of women. It is from this position of negotiated reality that motherhood became the key element for Marie-Paule and the Army of Mary in forging an ethical paradigm from which women could act. In order for motherhood to become an authentic vehicle for women's agency, however, suffering as an embodied praxis was absolutely necessary.

As seen throughout Marie-Paule's narrative and the new (Catholic) feminist discourse, as well as Mahmood's and Orsi's analyses, suffering is an essential element to the process of embodying conservative, traditionalist values that mitigates and undermines any claim of agency as personal power or individual volition. Through suffering, women maintain their place within the webs of social relations and cultural tradition. It is also the space in which women are actually engaging in shifting social discourse without undermining their values and beliefs. For Marie-Paule, suffering is crucial to forming her ethical character and, thus, becomes a dominating factor in her religious worldview.

In contrast to the new feminist perspective of suffering as a simple self-denial and orientation towards the other in reciprocity, however, Marie-Paule asserts the conservative gendered moral value of silence as the operational element to her motherhood. This silent suffering leads to valuing women's victimization as a basis for morality, which feminists—both Catholic Second Wave and new (Catholic) feminists—find problematic in the affirmation of women's agency in constructive terms. Feminists view the role of the silent victim as perpetuating gendered violence, an aspect they view has dominated women's reality throughout history. In other words, they see gendered

silence as an anachronistic attitude that is counter-productive to the improvement of women's reality. Yet for Marie-Paule, it is primarily through this paradigm of becoming a victim in rectifying the sins of the world that the greatest potential for women's agency becomes apparent. Like Christ in his own transformative suffering and victimization (i.e. the Passion and Atonement), Marie-Paule believes that becoming a victim is to embrace suffering beyond the breaking point, which for her meant a long-term psychological suffering expressed physically through chronic sickness. This is the way in which Marie-Paule enacted a complete embodied transformation and assimilation of the ethical imperative of the transcendent, which lead to the greatest possible empowerment—herself becoming the Co-Redeemer with Christ Redeemer. For the members of the Army of Mary, Marie-Paule is the greatest example of the atoning victim, like Christ. And like Christ, the dividends of having suffered the greatest are having access to the power of imparting forgiveness and salvation. Marie-Paule, therefore, clearly shows the privilege of her moral positioning through being able to forgive her transgressors their sins (i.e. the men in her life) and helping them towards 'the good'.

With regard to the gendered views of the Catholic family romance, these patterns of behaviour grant to all women, as mothers, the opportunity to be stronger than men through their capacity for forgiveness. Mothers thus become morally superior to men and gain a tremendous power and control over their social environments. And, as mentioned above, Marie-Paule was intended to suffer the greatest so that she can appear absolutely righteous when she rendered forgiveness to others, especially her father and husband. In these cases, Marie-Paule was able to challenge their behaviour while witnessing their repentance in asking for her forgiveness. This moral complex—i.e., suffering,

victimization and forgiveness—creates in Marie-Paule a prime example of a moral woman, according to a conservative and traditionalist gendered category, with tremendous power and control over the salvation of others. Henceforth, this view necessitates her ascension to a higher metaphysical level in order to provide a living model of divine righteousness on earth as was Jesus—that of the daughter of the Immaculate, the Co-Redeemer with Jesus, the living goddess in the Quinternity, and the feminine aspect of the transcendent divine.

Nevertheless, Marie-Paule could only assert her new role through a long and painful process of humbling self-diminishment. It is by becoming the paragon of gendered values in motherhood that Marie-Paule was able to claim being literally one with God. In this complementary model, her feminine domesticity is fundamental in relation to God's masculinity. Ultimately, motherhood is everything! As mentioned above, The Lady of All Peoples only recognizes her motherhood as the locus of her experience, and Marie-Paule interprets the actions and imperatives in her life exclusively as a mother. As a result, there is relevance in the Catholic Second Wave feminist critique of the misogynistic social construction of Mary. Whereas Catholic Second Wave feminism speaks accurately of the negative ambiguity projected onto Mary in order to confound women's roles in society and undermine their agency, it appears that both Marie-Paule and The Lady of All Peoples nevertheless embrace the constructed roles of women, but *unambiguously* as mothers. This assertion of unambiguous gendered roles lends them the power needed to act unhindered and without repercussion or cognitive dissonance. Through the prescriptions of socio-religious orthodoxy regarding gendered behaviour (i.e. motherhood), Marie-Paule is tapping into the available avenues of

unambiguous gendered power and agency, and thus transforming their social and religious reality. In other words, Marie-Paule as the silent mother, victimized by the brutal actions of others, is able to free the world from sin. Hence, it would be safe to assume that Marie-Paule would have gone unnoticed by the moral authority of the Catholic Church, yet she diverged from the androcentric social construction of gendered behaviour primarily through her lack of gendered silence or, better yet, her inability to remain silent.

Gendered silence remains Marie-Paule's greatest contradiction. On the one hand, she emphasizes the importance of women's silence on an ethical level with relation to humility and domesticity, which informs women's morality and agency. Yet, her actions with regards to the imperative from God to speak clearly oppose this social convention. In itself, this conflicting attitude creates a contradictory and ambivalent gendered model for women to appropriate, thus raising the possibility of perpetuating a 'negative' social construction. But the reality of Marie-Paule's conception of gendered agency relates to the subtle and intrinsic dynamics at play between upholding tradition and interpreting a personal experience of the divine. The line which Marie-Paule walks between orthodoxy and heterodoxy is related to how she portrays herself in tandem with her actions. The crux of her agency hinges upon the fact that Marie-Paule must speak and she does. Yet so long as she reiterates a rhetoric of self-diminishment (i.e. 'as the zero through which God works' or 'as the humble instrument of God'), she is enabled to act with vigour and perseverance as the transcendent purportedly wills her to become the Co-Redeemer in salvation history. This is a tremendous role for a living person to assume and it will always remain contingent upon how she presents herself. Ultimately for her and all

women adhering to this worldview, the practical approach to the moral ideal of gendered silence remains a delicate balance between using the 'proper channels' of male discourse via the means of a rhetoric of self-diminishment, and speaking from the subjective perspective as a woman interpreting social and religious meaning. It is in this dynamic negotiation that Marie-Paule captures the space between orthodoxy and heterodoxy, and therein claims her authenticity and the justification for her actions.

Overall, it must be noted that even though men remain the point of focus and the seat of power in conservative socio-religious paradigms, women are not categorically denigrated and powerless according to the Second Wave feminists' view. Women who adhere to a moral conservatism do have modes of power available to them that can effectively trump male ascendancy, especially if men behave immorally. In this view, ethical women who have suffered accordingly become the keepsakes of morality so long as they do not act like men. However, this perspective avoids discussing key problems of idealizing womanhood as motherhood. On one hand, through this idealization, mothers can gain unambiguous access to modes of agency without affecting cognitive dissonance of having behaved immorally. Yet, motherhood is not an absolute category due to the fact that not all mothers are moral beings. Evidently there are many individuals who may not subscribe to the terms or descriptions of these categories. Furthermore, there is the danger of motherhood in itself becoming an impossible category for women to emulate, which would eventually lead to its institutionalization, leaving motherhood bereft of its original elements of individual interpretation of experience. Overall, motherhood as the tethering point for women's moral agency in this conservative framework remains a problem in understanding women's roles and their actual place in society.

This thesis, first and foremost, seeks to expand our epistemological capacities in order to consider social and moral worldviews that are different from our own. It purports to break from a lingering dichotomous thinking that seems to plague our ‘critical analyses’, especially when discussing issues of gender and agency. The intention of this thesis is to undermine the notion of academic distance and to recognize the subjectivity of our interpretive lenses and actions. Ultimately, this thesis is designed to identify the negative and oppressive social factors that dominate Marie-Paule’s life and socio-religious worldview, but also to recognize how she transcends the social into the ethical and, therefore, yields personal and social transformations that carry with it meaning and an undeniable sense of power. In other words, in this case, rather than being a feminist in dismantling the negative aspects within the social plane, Marie-Paule is offering a spiritual solution to earthly problems. The central epistemological problem, therefore, is that by ignoring what conservative women are saying is ignoring what they are doing. By looking beyond the ‘strangeness’ of Marie-Paule’s ideas we can appreciate the dynamic value this worldview has on the realities of many conservative women. It is by opening our minds to the possibility that women do gain access to tacit forms of power no matter the stringent social conditions they are in. Therefore, the claim that “*C’EST PAR LA FEMME QUE LE MONDE SERA SAUVÉ*” is not a deception, but a reality for women who believe that they can make a difference from exactly where they stand.

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