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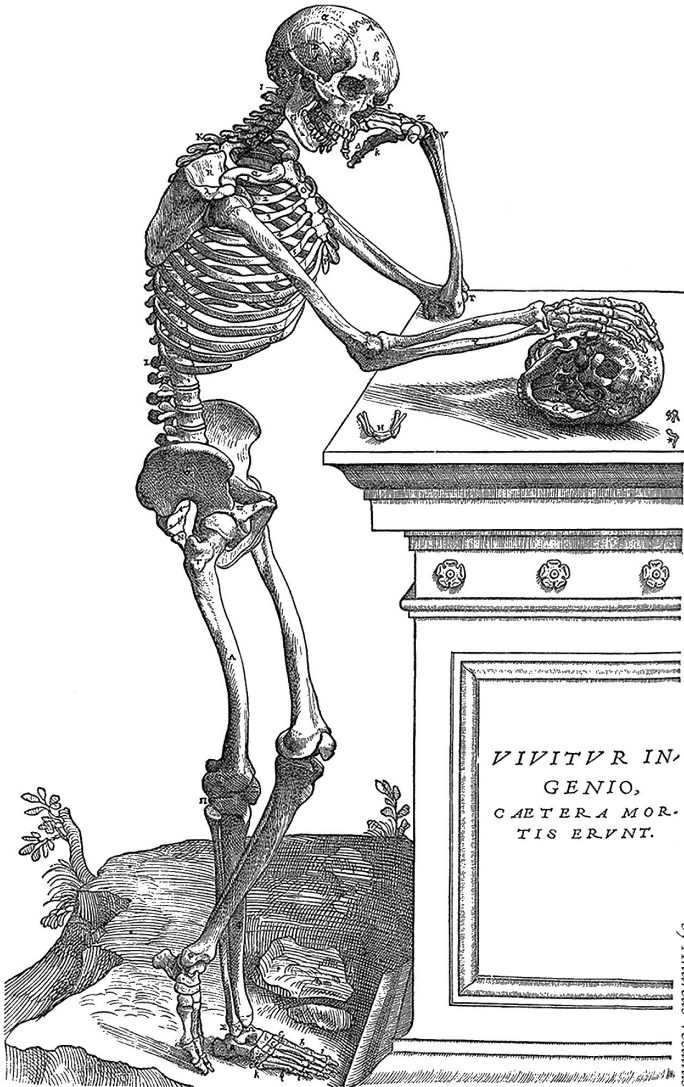
Volume 26, Number 1 & 2

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RELIGION & CULTURE

Volume 26, no. 1



The Journal of Religion and Culture is produced
by the Graduate Students of the Department of Religion at Concordia University.

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Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec.

ISSN 1198-6395
Journal of Religion and Culture Volume 26, no. 1 & 2 (2015/2016)

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JRC logo designed: Christopher Burkart
Book design: Joseph E. Brito
Front cover artwork: Noémie Jean-Bourgeault
The type face of this journal is Minion Pro,
designed by Robert Slimbach,
issued as a digital Open Type font
by Adobe Systems, Mountain View California, 2000.



RELIGION & CULTURE

A Canadian Graduate Student Journal

2016 Volume 26, no. 1 & 2

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Lynda Clarke, our very supportive department Chair;
Tina Montandon and Munit Merid, administrators extraordinaire;
The executive staff of the CRSA, for letting us drop by all their wine
and cheese events; all of our referees, readers and everyone else who
gave their time to the publication of this journal.

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Feminization and Authority in Thomas of Celano's First Life of Francis Assisi

Gina Froese

Abstract

Thomas of Celano's account of Francis of Assisi offers a beautiful example of an early twelfth century vita. It is a historical author's attempt to make sense of the memories he carries of his mentor as an author and on behalf of the early Franciscan community. The author displays a tremendous level of concern for the concept of authority in religious practice as it relates to the depiction of gender. The particular application of powerful gendered imagery along with the depiction of women in relation to religious authority, however, suggests that the memorialization of Francis' religious authority is not the only aim in this text. This paper will argue that the concept of authority as a religious exercise is just as prominent a focus in the account as the memorialization of the saint, and that the author's depiction of gender as it relates to his understanding of religious authority points to possible implications for how the author and his community may have viewed women.

Keywords: Thomas of Celano, Francis of Assisi, religious authority, gendered images, women in religion.

The use of gendered imagery in a twelfth or thirteenth century saint's Vita can suggest a directly or inversely proportional relationship to the concept of religious authority. An author's portrayal of sanctity as it might be manifested in men or in women may be a strong indicator of how they view various forms religious authority legitimately manifested in men or in woman. Strong masculine attributes in both male and female saints are perceived as directly proportional to the saint's moral influence and virtue. Qualities such as a warrior like character, prophetic or miraculous ability, ascetic discipline, and spiritual discernment are perceived as masculine traits regardless of which gender or sex they are ascribed to. These are qualities that connect the saint to the presence of divinity, which in turn increases the visible presence of their moral influence and religious power as they are portrayed in the saint's public ministry and exercise of their leadership.

Conversely, traits of femininity are more closely parsed, more carefully considered, and very often differently conceived in each of the sexes. Feminine attributes in men are used to emphasize Christological images of authority, further emphasizing their ability to engage spiritual or moral authority in public settings and spaces. In women, however, feminine traits are negatively depicted and act to restrict female engagement in the pursuit of visible religious power, suggesting perhaps that while masculine attributes of sanctity may be normative, feminine ones are not.

In Thomas of Celano's first account of Francis' of Assisi we find that a very similar trend can be discerned. Holy men and women both carry masculine or typically masculinized elements of sanctity and religious authority. The presence of femininity in holy men, defined in terms of vulnerability and maternal affection, is articulated as a purposeful movement away from sin and toward sanctity, while in women it is cause for fear eliciting the need for correction, and containment.

This paper will explore Thomas of Celano's definition of religious authority as it pertains to Francis' attainment and exercise of his sanctity. This standard will in turn direct the examination of gendered imagery as it is applied first to men and then to the women depicted in the account. The analysis will ultimately consider how those images inform the author's depiction of authority in each of the sexes and what the results of those outcomes denote for the expression of sanctity in men and in women.

I argue that Celano's understanding of authority in the text poses a question of difference between the sexes, and suggest that while masculinity remains normative in the pursuit of religious authority traits of femininity are applied differently to women and with varying effect than when applied to men. The analysis here is primarily textual rather than historical, and will focus on a close reading of the account rather than a historical contextualization of events. While a great deal of literature and even recent discoveries around this topic have been written, the approach here is not overtly comparative, but rather engaged with the imagistic features found in the singular account of Francis' Life.¹

I. Establishing Authority through Text, Conversion, and Asceticism

When Thomas of Celano begins the life of St. Francis, the account gives no indication that gendered language, imagery, or typology will provide an important source of affirmation for the saint's authority. The intro-

duction appears entirely pragmatic in function. There are no typological references to biblical texts, no metaphorical images or symbolic language, no theological flourishments. The author simply discusses his plan of action for the account by stating what he intends to accomplish.

He provides a description of the structure that is set in three parts, revealing how its inherent structure will follow the traditional biographical configuration normally used in such literature for the process of canonization. The first part “keeps to the historical order and is principally devoted to the purity of [Francis’] blessed conversation and life, his holy character, and his wholesome teaching,” a statement that is also later repeated and expanded on.² This section contains the early aspects of Francis’ brief childhood and young adulthood, as well as the development of his early ministry and the religious order that was built around it. The second part focuses largely on the events of the last year of his life including events that occurred around the time of “his happy death.”³

The third section contains a list of miracles performed largely at his burial site. Here, the acknowledgment of church legitimacy through the devotion of “Pope Gregory, and with him all the Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church,” intonates how deeply Francis was loved in life and venerated in death.⁴ This section acts like a ledger of miraculous events attributed to the saint, and recounts all the supernatural occurrences believed to have occurred between the time of the saint’s death and the author’s rendition of the saint’s vita.

In the introduction Celano presents his first version of the biography as an historical account built on the presence of authoritative sources. Celano purports to be a witness to the saint’s life, having himself heard things directly from “Francis’ own mouth.”⁵ He emphasizes that the stories told are either witnessed by or gathered from “faithful and approved” observers.⁶ The statement is included to provide the weight of historical authority to the larger narrative. It shows the events listed are not derived from the fanciful imaginings of an individual, but rather are the natural conclusions to the body of voices the author has “been able to gather” and glean for the purpose of authentication.⁷ The author combines his voice with the presence of the larger Franciscan community. By doing so he gathers the weight of this authority behind him in order to relay issues and themes that are pertinent to the foundation and existence of the community he writes for.

The introduction also underscores Celano's doctrinal mandate for the account given to him by the Holy See. This is another early indication of Celano's concern for authority in the biography.⁸ Constructed partly from the collective observations of the Franciscan community and partly by religious dicta, the account may be read as an attempt to determine the theological underpinnings and religious meaning behind Francis' life in a way that balances the biography between the pragmatic and political needs of the Franciscan order and the doctrinal demands of the Church.⁹ This combined emphasis on authority sets the foundation for the rest of the account, and leads quite naturally into the thematic discussions on conversion and asceticism as they are portrayed in the events of the saint's spiritual awakening and early ministry.

The discourse on conversion begins with a discussion on the role of parental authority in relation to the authority of the Church. The topic of conversion and how it is enacted by Francis' story appears at first a commentary on the need for a child's religious training. Francis' upbringing is negatively portrayed, describing it as "forwardly, [and] according to the vanity of the world" rather than by the values of the Church.¹⁰ The depiction questions the roles of parents and the place of childrearing values that are not in keeping with the religious expectations of the Church. Suggesting that Francis' "excessive" upbringing was rooted in "carelessness, and laxity" that later led to the suffering "of debauchery," the holy man's parents are depicted as inadequate instructors of the faith.¹¹ This is an argument in the instruction on conversion that will eventually prove crucial for Francis and provide him with the basis by which to shrug off his early inheritance.¹²

Within this same discourse, Celano also sets the theology of conversion squarely in the presence of physical and psychological pain, a foreshadowing of the importance of asceticism that will later develop in Francis' life. Experiencing God's call to religious life through the combined effort of "sickness" and the gift of prophetic "vision," Francis fights first against himself, his physical nature, his thoughts, and desires for "exploits of worldly glory and vanity."¹³ Then he struggles against his parent's and his community's resistance to his spiritual aspiration. He is unable to overcome his own moral shortcomings, as well as of those "persecuting his soul," until in "fasting and weeping" he learns to distrust his efforts and decides to "cast all his cares on the Lord" and escape the "perverse slavery" in which he lived.¹⁴

His determination, however, does not mean an easy path for the young religious. When he attempts to preach in his community he is pelted with “mire and stones.”¹⁵ Believing him to be acting erratically, Francis’ father physically captures him, kidnapping, starving, and forcibly confining him against his will to make him change his mind. While his mother does not agree with the choice for religious life, she decides through “maternal compassion” to release him and “let him go free.”¹⁶ In his belligerence, his father continues to pursue him until eventually they arrive in Church before the Bishop.

In a bid of defiance and renunciation, Francis literally takes off and casts aside “all his garments” giving his every worldly possession back to his father.¹⁷ The scene is visually remarkable; its starkness signifies the moment is a turning point for Francis in which he willingly gives up his previous life in order to accept only what God gives to him through the Church. Seeing the young man “stark naked” in front of all the “bystanders,” the Bishop in a moment of clarity interprets Francis’ nudity “as the actions of the man of God ... [who is] enfolded in mystery.”¹⁸ The prelate covers Francis with “the mantle he himself was wearing,” and by doing so takes on the role of “helper, cherishing and encouraging” Francis on his new path.¹⁹

The bishop’s response to Francis’ nudity acknowledges and accepts the young man’s choice for religious life in spite of his father’s displeasure.²⁰ The decision is sanctioned through the authority of the prelate’s office symbolized by the use of his cloak. The exchange in the scene becomes a tool in the author’s hands that both valorizes the holy man’s choice and exemplifies it as a model for others to emulate. This is the attitude expressed when Celano writes that “the hand of the lord [had come] upon [Francis] and the change wrought by the hand of the Highest, that through him assurance of restoration to grace might be given to sinners, and that he might become to all a pattern of conversion to God.”²¹ The moment foretells Francis’ eventual death and translation while underlining Francis’ progression from sinner to holy man, and eventually to saint.

The tempestuousness of the conversion experience, however, displays another theological aim in the text. By setting Francis up as a model by which to receive and accept the call to enter religious life, even through great personal difficulty and without family consent, the scene accomplishes two feats. First, it features how one might establish a practice of spiritual discipline in spite of a morally lapse upbringing.²² Secondly, it provides a natu-

ral break in the narrative between the holy man's early and later life as the author transitions the narrative from a focus on Francis' pre-ministry years and into his ministry where the theme of suffering is further developed.

This process points to a power shift that transfers Francis' loyalty from his father's authority to the purview of the Church. The physical hardship of the conversion process, which includes beatings, starvation, exile, kidnapping, and forcible confinements cultivates a link between the source of Francis' later spiritual authority as a holy man and connects it to the divine presence he first experiences in the call to religious life as a sinner. The intense physical manifestation of this later life is therefore derived from the suffering he experiences in coming to God that is extended from a haphazard moment in his life into a daily practice he willingly adheres to on a daily basis. This connection lays down the foundation for what will later become the standard of Francis' ascetic discipline until the end of his life.

The more Francis suffers for the call to religious life at the hands of others, the closer he moves toward God. The closer he moves toward God, the more he internalizes the need to suffer for the sake of discipline in religious life. As the text moves from the descriptions of captivity and abuse suffered at the hands of his father and neighbours to those he willingly enacts or submits to, the author progresses in a parallel direction from the topic of conversion to the topic of asceticism. Once verbally assaulted, abused and beaten for wanting to give up his former life, now he is beaten "and cast into a pit" for declaring himself a "herald of the great King."²³ The initially unwelcome physical torments Francis suffers in young adulthood for his early sins now become the torments he suffers eagerly for the cause, torments "exhilarated by great joy" in his search for God.²⁴

What begins as a depiction of struggle against "sluggishness and cowardice," now inverts the saint's emotional response to the effect of suffering.²⁵ Francis' pain does not end with conversion; instead it deepens, its purpose and effect changing in order to produce different results. Like Paul's exegesis on the concept of the inner and outer man, the passage initially implies that Francis' outer person corresponds to the internal changes reflected in his conversion experience.²⁶ This connection to Pauline theology later expands to include a partial reversal of this inner to outer directed change so that through the physical discipline in Francis' aesthetic practice the outer form can also affect the inner one. Francis is committed and "ready

to suffer every distress of mind and to endure every bodily suffering” now in the hope that God’s “will should mercifully be accomplished in him,” and that his vision for a lasting union with God should soon be fulfilled.²⁷

He who “formerly wore scarlet array was now in scanty garments” begging for his food and clothing, living with the lepers, “serving them... washing... and even wiping away the matter from their ulcers.”²⁸ The man who spent his time “in pomp vainglory” and as a “squanderer” of material possessions now teaches his followers to be content with few if any material things, “having nothing” and loving nothing so that they would have “no fear of losing anything.”²⁹ He teaches them to work diligently “with their hands,” and to live united among the poor and the sick.³⁰ Together they serve “all with humility and devotion,” while actively avoiding places where “scandal might arise.”³¹

Celano describes this as a time of great service for Francis and his followers, yet throughout this period they also sustain a severe level of ascetic practice. They rely on self-flagellation, cuttings, scrapings, and exposure to the elements to expand their disciplinary experiences.³² Such practices remain crucial to their mental and spiritual discipline throughout the account, as it both strengthens and deepens their ability to preach and teach. Without it they fear being outwardly influenced or softened in their mission to publicly exemplify their spiritual exercise to others. This is perhaps the reason why Celano eagerly presents Francis’ asceticism as the foundation for the order’s public mission to lead, preach, teach, and minister through care.

Celano gives many examples for occasions when such acts deepen their religious influence over those they hope to direct or convert. The Franciscans are not afraid “to draw blood” through piercings and scrapings “with macerations and thorns,” doing all of this to keep corporeal as well as psychological temptation away.³³ Taking on only the “barest of necessities” they “shrank not from any hardships” in order to part “from bodily comfort” in any form.³⁴ In sickness Francis abstains from food in order to give an example “for a better way of life” to both his religious and lay followers.³⁵ When Francis fails he punishes himself further even when it is apparent to his brothers as well as to the larger community that it would be unnecessary to do so.³⁶

He is tormented by a fear of eternal death whose greatest strength lies in attacking the “outward organs” in order to “enter the soul,” an allusion to the perceived danger of physical security, material affluence,

or even sexual desire.³⁷ For this reason Francis believes that the ability to resist evil lies in his capacity to control, deny, and ultimately punish the body with all of his will and strength. In all of this, Francis longs desperately “for the height of perfection,” a desire that appears only to heighten his ascetic determination and foster a deep-seated need to be physically and mentally united with God at any and all cost.³⁸

The force of these physical images initially make the passages appear to suggest Celano is espousing a lifestyle intended to drive out human failings brought on by physical desires of the body. These actions, however, are ultimately intended to draw the human spirit toward divinity in spite of desire, and likewise to draw divinity toward the human spirit in spite of its failings. Francis’ search for perfection is in the end simply a search for unity with God that manifests itself through the human experience of suffering. This is an acknowledgement by the author, however faint, that human beings are capable of rising above their physical constraints if only they can put away every desire except the desire for God. The only question that remains to be explored in this early Franciscan ontology is whether the connection with divinity through the subversion of human desire can be applied to women in the same way that it is applied to men, and whether it will yield the same results for women as it does for men.

II. Christological Typology and Francis’ Authority

Christological typology in medieval Christianity represents a doctrinal middle ground between God and human beings for theologians such as Celano to convey in their literary depictions. The figure of Christ is the divine bridge in medieval theology that link mortals to the salvation of God. Though saints begin and remain entirely human in form throughout their lives, they do act as Christ figures, role models to exemplify the path to God for others to follow. As a result, they are often depicted very similarly to the Christ figure, in manner as well as form. Images, linking metaphors and analogies of saint and the archetype of the Christ figure are repeated and consistently linked to the saint.

Celano traces this archetypal trajectory toward sainthood on Francis’ behalf throughout the account repurposing Christological traits of divine authority in order to attribute them to Francis. As the narrative progresses the author intensifies these connections. The more these images are attributed to Francis the more his desire for movement toward God heightens and intensifies, and the greater the holy man’s desire to remove himself from the world becomes.

Francis and his brothers live their lives to serve others. The role of servitude they take on consistently places them in a docile, Christ-like position.³⁹ The account stresses the holy man's internalization of this docility by repeatedly emphasizing how it shapes him into something greater than a man, and eventually into something greater than fully human. The repetition is meant to identify Francis as an archetypal redemptive figure, eventually going so far as to equate him with Christ as the defining parameters between the two figures become increasingly blurred.

Celano has already begun this process in earlier chapters by linking Francis to the images found in the Pauline epistles.⁴⁰ The presence of Gospel images and wording in the account associates Francis with the apostles and the Christ figure more closely. Celano notes that the "apostolic authority was strong in" him, but in the next chapter he makes this association stronger by directly describing Francis' metaphysical experiences closely rather than simply alluding to them.⁴¹ In one instance, a "chariot of fire" enters the room, and the brothers around the holy man notice that his countenance "shone with a dazzling radiance," like Christ's did on the mountain when he met with the prophets.⁴²

In a later event Francis is physically "raised up in the air, with his hands stretched out as on a cross," an indication of his authoritative association with the power of the crucifixion.⁴³ Francis' own emblematic crucifixion, linked with the chariot of fire in this passage, implies a relationship between the Old Testament typology of the prophet Elijah and the New Testament archetype of the Christ figure.⁴⁴ The symbols highlight the similarities between the prescribed role of each figure represented and Francis, the role saviour-role model and the prophetic visionary lend Francis their authority.

Francis is metaphysically and spiritually ordained by these experiences, he himself is now both saviour-role model and prophetic visionary. Everyone present is comforted, strengthened, and enabled for the purpose of their mission through these experiences. More importantly, however, Francis is empowered and legitimated by these experiences—his moral authority and religious power no longer in question, his virtue is publicly displayed by his miraculous ability, teaching and preaching until he is eventually "found worthy to rise to the rank of spirits on high" to join in union with God directly.⁴⁵

Celano portrays Francis as able to heal the sick, the lame and the blind with a prayer and a touch.⁴⁶ On some occasions his presence is not nec-

essary for a miracle to occur, passing his healing powers on indirectly through objects rather than through touch.⁴⁷ Notably, he casts out demons, turns water into wine, and reflects Christ's character through his deep emotion.⁴⁸ When Francis passes a dilapidated old Church in need of physical restoration, Celano recalls that Francis is "moved with pity for the church like Jesus," a reference to the Christ figure's emotional response when faced with the needs of those around him.⁴⁹

Celano gives numerous examples such as these continually re-emphasizing and portraying his visible authority through public display. When the priest teaches him about the Gospels Francis models the examples behaving just like the ones who hear the "word" in Jesus parable.⁵⁰ Staying up one night to pray, Francis exemplifies how to remain connected to God as Jesus did in the Garden of Gethsemany.⁵¹ Observing him pray, one of Francis' followers is heard saying, "truly this man is of God."⁵² The statement, unsurprisingly, is a very close iteration to the centurion's words in Matthew who similarly reflects at Jesus' own death, "truly this man was the son of God."⁵³

As the text moves on, the similarities between Francis and Christ become increasingly intersect until they are nearly, or in some cases entirely overlapping. The parallels make it increasingly difficult to separate the figure of Francis from the figure of Christ, except in one interesting aspect. Celano names Francis the "tender shepherd," but unlike Christ, Francis' loyalty to God moves entirely through the hierarchy of the Church.⁵⁴ Celano is very clear about the aim of Francis' authority. The holy man is concerned with confounding the sort of "heretical wickedness" that might lead the unsuspecting astray, understanding all the while and "above all else" that his work is to pronounce "the faith of the Holy Roman Church."⁵⁵

The holy man's asceticism becomes a reflection of the authority given to him by God, but only as it flows through the Church. The two sources of Francis' religious authority are so deeply intertwined in the account that it appears the one cannot exist without the other. In this way, Francis' divine power is made a function of his Christological authority, while the legitimacy of that authority remains tied to the Church and its doctrinal mandate. God may grant the holy man his vision, mission and ability, but the Church shapes its form and dictates its direction and purpose.

The author is, therefore, careful to show through numerous examples how Francis actively seeks out both sources of authority throughout his life-

time.⁵⁶ This is perhaps why Francis is eager to show how the authority of the church “must be kept, revered, and imitated,” and intimates that his relationship to ecclesiastical authority was a crucial aspect of his own legitimacy as a holy man in life and later as a saint in death.⁵⁷ Such concern for the role of the Church implies it is the institution of authority within the Church that ultimately decides who can define, use and maintain the religious power that God initially bestows through conversion, suffering, and anointment.

There is no question for Celano that Francis fully “embraced the whole hierarchy [of the Church] with exceeding affection,” and lived very closely to its directive before as well as after his death and translation.⁵⁸ The issue would undoubtedly have closely reflected Pope Gregory’s growing concern to maintain clerical authority over the Franciscans as the religious order expanded. When the biography was finally commissioned five years after Francis’ death, this concern appears to be transferred into the account. Along with other politically significant themes such as the process of conversion, the manner of adherence to religious life and the parameters of religious discipline, the account speaks to the concerns and issues of the community through the story of Francis’ life.⁵⁹

By the time Celano completes the biography the work is no longer needed as proof for Francis’ sainthood as the canonization process had already been completed.⁶⁰ Instead, the account serves an alternate purpose meant to solidify Francis’ now divine authority with the current Church hierarchy on behalf of the Franciscan community who sought to follow his teachings as they were remembered. With the endorsement of Pope Gregory and the Curia, the holy man’s life is validated through his canonization. The doctrinal unification with divinity is completed through the Church’s official recognition and celebration of the holy man as a divine figure, while the political struggle to follow his teachings continued on in his authority and the inscribing of his memory.

III. Gendered Depictions and the place of Authority in Holy Men

This far it would appear that Celano gives no indication of doctrinal concern for the relationship between gender and authority. However, the account has clearly indicated the legitimate progression of authority is significant in the development of sanctity and the authority that comes with it. The line of authority in Francis’ life moves from father to God, to prelate, all of which are male in aspect if not in form. He meditates on the experiences of his male predecessors and takes communion with his brothers. Clearly, the line

of religious accession for Francis has so far been an entirely patriarchal one. This not only highlights the dominance of a normative masculine presence in the text, but also proposes that like any binary where one part presents itself the other must follow. Teasing out the language and images within the relationships that underline what are representations of normative male religious authority in Franciscan medieval thought will also reveal an engagement of gendered binaries and imagery that is not necessarily male or normative.⁶¹ By returning to the descriptions of ascetic practice Francis and his male followers participate in, we may begin to expose how such practices act to defamiliarize the properties of masculinity in the male body.

The Franciscans punish themselves in order to dull all human sensibilities including traditionally masculine ones. They keep away from retaliation and violence. They keep away from various forms of physical comfort found in family life including material possessions, sexual pleasure, or romantic love and companionship with women. All of this is done to avoid the “taint of scandal,” and leads them to perform acts of Christ-like subservience and docility.⁶² They perform acts of service traditionally reserved for women such as cleaning, mending clothing, and take on traditionally feminine roles devoting themselves to the care of the other, the poor, the sick, and the lowly.⁶³

The asceticism the holy men perform both softens and hardens the expression of gender in their characters. Their attempts to embrace God cause them to blend masculinity and femininity together in a way that allows them to surpass and in some cases to subvert traditional any gendered expectations placed on them as men. As the connection with divinity is increasingly heightened, Francis and his friends begin to take on increasingly feminized as well as idealized masculine qualities. By enacting the de-genderizing process of the male body through self-mutilation and denial, Celano draws out the Christological typologies that simultaneously incorporates and surpasses idealized medieval gendered norms.

As Francis’ portrayal becomes more closely entwined with the Christological figure, he also becomes more visibly saint and less man. Celano juxtaposes several images onto Francis beginning with the image of the “spotless Bride of God,” a reference to holy man’s embodiment of the Church.⁶⁴ This not only places him within the Christological typography of the New Testament but also links him to feminine religious imagery. Celano then oscillates referring to Francis as the “bridegroom,” a title traditionally reserved for the Christ figure.⁶⁵ In this way,

Celano repeatedly personifies the authority of Christ and of the Church as he alternates between the embodiment of divinity and humanity.

Now the gendered metaphors become increasingly feminized. He makes himself humble to religious authority the way a woman might do for her “knight.”⁶⁶ He kisses the “priest’s hand with great faith, offers him the money he was carrying, and sets forth to him in order his purpose” with such zeal that even the priest is amazed at his docility and subservience.⁶⁷ In another instance Celano explains that Francis is “kindled with Divine heat” for God much like the desires of the Lover expressed by his Shulamite bride in Song of Songs.⁶⁸ This image calls forward the image of the bride once again rather than of the bridegroom, signaling a return to feminine associations before volleying once again.

In chapter fifteen Celano moves temporarily away from feminized language and applies the first of several knightly references. Francis’ “Apostolic authority” is now strengthened as he gains “greater confidence” in his ability to publicly preach and teach on the issue of “salvation and repentance.”⁶⁹ The language highlights the holy man’s violent mind-set as he verbally “pierces” and “smites” sinners with “sharp reproof.”⁷⁰ This is not unlike the treatment Francis received earlier from his father when the man “rushed at him like a wolf to a sheep.”⁷¹ Only this time the psychological violence being done is by Francis toward the unrepentant sinners with divine permission, apostolic authority, and Church sanction.

As Francis’ spiritual discipline deepens the gendered images begin to volley more frequently. While being a knight for God against sinners in one moment, he is in the next moment a “mother” who cares for those in need.⁷² Only at this point does the author engage in more pronounced, even mildly sexualized language. Celano explains that through their shared ordeals and purpose, the group’s begins to deepen and strengthen. We see that “their embraces were chaste, their feelings gentle, their kisses holy, their intercourse sweet, their laughter modest, their look cheerful, their eye single, their spirit submissive, their tongue peaceable, their answer soft, their purpose identical, their obedience ready, their hand untiring.”⁷³ They never attempt to choose one over another but rather focus their affection toward all for the good of the community, pouring “forth their whole affection in common.”⁷⁴ Their brotherly interaction is described as an issue of community pointing to a theological concern for the theme of com-

munion. They are deeply and openly engaged with one another in a way that suggests a profound level of emotional intimacy and collaboration.

Francis' "maternal" instincts and "simplicity" of spirit are even more distinctly showcased in his attitude toward animals.⁷⁵ In several places Celano repeatedly affirms Francis' "maternal affection."⁷⁶ Again and again Francis is described as "very tender and affectionate toward all the lower and irrational creatures."⁷⁷ Every animal Francis encounters, male and female, has emotional significance for him that is beyond measure. His "tender affection" is so great that even those who are not fully cognizant can still appreciate the "sweetness of his love" and maternal care.⁷⁸

The negative characteristics found in him before his conversion and ascetic discipline appear to have been removed with his material possessions, while only positive gendered images are now attributed to him. All of the positive traits Celano lists on Francis' behalf are described as though they are inherent to his being, emanating from him rather than through him. However, regardless of any changes in Francis' persona the binding aspect that ties all of these examples together remains in Celano's consistent engagement with positive gendered images, male and female, that repeatedly reinforces the Christological and ecclesiastical source of his religious authority expressed in his public ministry.

IV. Gendered Depictions and Authority in Women

When a critical eye is turned to the experiences of women in the account, the affection that Francis has for humanity and the creatures in the natural world fails to remain constant. His concern for the needs of the poor and the sick are not necessarily extended to all people. In spite of what emphasis the author places on such interactions Francis' displays an apprehension toward women that is not in keeping with the portrayal Celano has developed this far. In fact, we may even go so far as to say that Francis' interactions with women do not entirely exist.

While the author does provide descriptions of Francis' reactions to the idea of a woman, or the woman's reactions to Francis, there are no instances found in the account in which both are described as engaging directly with one another. Francis, it appears, fears the presence of women, he repeatedly attempts to avoid them, and where he cannot Celano interferes on Francis' behalf by providing only the brief-

est and most lacking reports of those interactions as possible. Celano is not confused by this fear. Rather, he presents these reactions to women as an example of Francis' "simplicity" of heart and earnestness of faith.⁷⁹

The examples provided, however, indicate that when the holy man is focused on women the narrative shifts away from a focus of care and concern to one of wariness, suspicion, and fear. On several occasions Celano intimates that Francis is wholly concerned with the needs and care for both men and women by the various miracles he performs even though on several occasions Francis is not present when the miracles occur. Yet, in spite of such reassurances the astounding fear he carries of "woman's deception" throughout his interactions with women cannot be easily ignored.⁸⁰

There are two particular occasions this juxtaposition between Francis and women is shown. The first example is the wife in Narni who is delivered from a demon at her husband's request.⁸¹ Francis leaves the woman's house immediately after the expulsion of the spirit. Only later, when he passes by the same place again the woman runs after him "begging that he would deign to speak to her."⁸² She acts out of a sense of desperation to see him, pouring out her gratitude by "kissing his footprints" wherever she finds them.⁸³ Francis, however, refuses to see her and decides to travel by another road in order to completely avoid her. Celano provides no further explanation for this reaction except to say that after being "urged and entreated" by his brother Elias, Francis is finally willing to relent and speak with the woman as long as it was "certified by many that it was she" who had been healed.⁸⁴

The scene is completed and nothing further is explained. The account is odd and perhaps badly told, but it stands out for its abrupt end. Whatever Celano's purpose for including the narrative may be, its presence tells us that in spite of having healed this woman and being in her presence once before, Francis is now anxious at the thought of seeing her once again. This reticence is not in keeping with Celano's earlier depictions of Francis as a maternal figure seeking to heal and care for those in need. Instead, the moment highlights a deep level of discomfort with the presence of young women.

A second similar episode follows immediately in the next chapter. Here we see Francis going to the Città di Castello where he finds another woman possessed by a demonic power. She is brought to the house where Francis is staying, but refuses to enter. Gnashing her teeth

at him, she utters “lamentable roarings” like a wild creature attempting to frighten off a predator.⁸⁵ The community begs Francis to heal the woman, as it would seem nearly everyone is disturbed by her torment.

Francis, however, is not convinced the woman is truly suffering, and takes a great deal of time to find out if the woman is indeed tormented by the “devil, or [if it was] only a woman’s deception.”⁸⁶ The language Celano uses to describe the object of fear in this instance is particularly significant. Nowhere else in the account does the author express fear for the nature of human “deception” except in relation to a woman.⁸⁷ Only after spending a significant amount of time in prayer does Francis eventually perform the exorcism, but once again Celano gives no other details about the contact between them.

Nothing else is written about the woman or about Francis’ actual interaction with her. Instead, Celano merely reaffirms that his purpose in describing the event is to showcase the “excellence of S. Francis’ life and the flawless pattern of his conversation,” providing only a slight hint to Francis’ concern with his engagement with women.⁸⁸ Celano, it appears, is concerned that Francis’ reputation with women remains beyond question. He is anxious to emphasize that these interactions with women leave no taint on the holy man. His need to further expound earlier maternal images of Francis is no longer an issue, intimating that perhaps Francis may be justified in his fears.

The text goes on to indicate that there are some women Francis does care for even in a limited capacity. He approaches one elderly woman after she requests to be healed, his concern for her reflecting the same compassion the animals have come to expect from him. In this instance, Celano is careful to cultivate a maternal image that also brings out Francis’ childlike innocence. The holy man is not afraid to remain in the presence of the elderly woman whose hands he heals, even waiting for her to bake him “a little token” of cheesecake in appreciation of her cure.⁸⁹

Francis also cares for the nuns’ at the monastery of St. Severino whom he entrusts with a live sheep they believe is “bestowed on them by God” through Francis’ generosity.⁹⁰ The women in turn are not only committed to raising the animal, but out of deep affection for Francis they weave him a tunic from the sheep’s wool. Francis receives the gift with such “reverence and exultation of mind,” in joy and innocence that he repeatedly “embraced” and “kissed” the tunic as witnesses

watched in amazement.⁹¹ All of this occurring once again with no descriptions of the direct interactions he may have had with the nuns.

The juxtaposition of Francis' innocence in these last two scenes is set against the fear he exudes in the previous examples. Together they indicate an odd disparity in the author's attitude toward women and the type of femininity they may represent. The manner in which Francis treats these women ranges from one extreme of genuine child-like joy to an expression of such profound distrust that it undermines the validity of the need for the woman in question. The character of the women themselves does not appear to be measured by Francis' reaction to them, as we find no condemnation or chastisement of the women given, not by Celano as the narrator nor by Francis himself. The author merely submits that he is concerned for the "excellence of Saint Francis, and the flawless pattern of his conversation."⁹²

I would suggest here that the lack of further explanation from Celano does not imply the absence of difference between the treatment of men and the treatment of women in the account. The stark contrast between his engagement with men and with women cannot be denied, but perhaps the presence of difference points to a further need to consider Francis' engagement with women a little more closely. Nowhere in the account does Francis run away from or display any fear or distrust of men, not with his father, not with the pope or the bishop or the priests, not with his Franciscan brothers, or his childhood friends or those in the community even when they jeer or throw things at him.

The only difference between the women and men that can be discerned in the account is the presence of a potential female sexuality. Perhaps Francis' perceives the possibility of scandal and displays his discomfort by avoiding the women or attempting to keep away from them. The last two women are either elderly or religiously cloistered and therefore removed from male society. Restricted from public spaces by age or physical restriction, the potential display of their sexuality is hindered. His brief but seemingly fearless interaction with suggests they are no longer a threat to his sense of purity.

The first two women, however, elicit the greatest response and as a result appear to pose the greatest threat to Francis' sanctity. They are portrayed in a morally loose manner, running freely and without restraint or decorum in public spaces, away from or against their husband or

family's judgement. They exist without any sense of shame over their inherent femininity or even the potential (or perception of) sexual misconduct that might arise from their freedom. The presence of their freedom points to their perceived sexual laxity, which remains present by their lack of restriction or containment. They pose the greatest threat to Francis even after the demons have been dispelled from them.

The women do not behave in an untoward manner toward Francis directly, but they also do not behave in a manner that suggests they respect the traditional societal expectations placed on them as women. One of them walks from house to house disturbing the neighbours with animalistic antics while the other refuses to go home to her husband walking the streets alone. Except for these behaviours Celano does not put forward any evidence of inappropriate behaviour on the part of the women. That Francis remains entirely fearful of them, however, suggests such evidence may not be necessary for Celano to show the validity of Francis' concerns. Francis' fears, after all, are not rooted in an existing danger, but in the potential danger. That Celano takes these fears into consideration and commemorates them in the account, however, may signify that the holy man's concern with purity around women may still have been a highly charged issue in the Franciscan order long after Francis had died.

Such concerns for purity appear to be in keeping with Francis' larger apprehensions over social interactions. Francis is often worried that his moral compass should not be tainted by his interaction with others. He is repeatedly said to wash "the intercourse of men off of him."⁹³ The author takes great care to highlight how in washing his body with water Francis is able to cleanse the negative effects of those interactions off of his soul. This, however, is not the case when it comes to women. There is no water purification ritual mentioned in connection to his interactions with the opposite sex. Francis merely remains on guard and distant from places where potential "scandal might arise," indicating that it may not be possible to wash away the taint of a woman.⁹⁴

Another subtle, but perhaps more revealing example of this dynamic with women can be observed in Francis' relationship to the Clares, or perhaps more accurately in Celano's portrayal of the Clares. In the period immediately after his conversion Francis encounters a young woman named Clara, that is the saint herself. Celano provides a very gracious description of the lady in her youth. Noble by birth and in demeanour, Clara is above reproach.

A “virgin in her flesh, most chaste in her mind, youthful in age, but hoary in spirit; steadfast in purpose and most ardent in longing after the Divine love.”⁹⁵ Celano emphasizes her masculine-like character, and the purity of her person. The description is most apt for a woman considered saintly in her own right and ability. She is set apart from the world by a “fabric of most precious pearls [that] arose over her,” a representation of the veil that separates her from others as well as to the order of nuns that later gathered around her.⁹⁶

The mention of the order is brief and contained within a single short chapter. Its significance is striking, however, as it presents Francis’ only continuous relationship with women. Yet, Celano can give no concrete impression of what the interactions between Francis and the women entails, or in what capacity he fulfills his function to the order. The passage merely reflects the extent of influence Francis’ teaching has on the women. Their desire to follow in ascetic practice results in a profound concern for “mutual charity” that makes “one spirit out of many.”⁹⁷ Like the Franciscan brothers, the women are intent on performing acts of ascetic humility and to follow the teaching’s of Francis.

They display a level of patience in enduring so that “no adversity or tribulation, no vexation or injury breaks or chants their spirit.”⁹⁸ The nuns restrict themselves in every act “of the flesh and...restrain their tongues” to such an extent that they often become unable to remember how to “use their tongues” when the need arises.⁹⁹ Their silence is praiseworthy, indicating that their perceived inherent tendency toward “female deception” is impeded by their religious practice.¹⁰⁰ Their potential for moral impropriety is kept in check through their commitment to moral uprightness expressed through repetitive disciplinary measures and in their desire to stay away from society.¹⁰¹

There is an indication that through such practices the religious women might also achieve a level of divinely ordained authority. They are celebrated even respected, however, such authority is attained only through moral discipline and religious practice. Their influence is entirely private and not expressed through public leadership roles. There is no preaching, or teaching, or living their spiritual authority through exemplary acts for others to see and follow. They are in every sense disengaged from the world in order to achieve this authority—“persevering night and day in prayer and praise to God”—leaving all questions of theology, public preaching, teaching, care for the sick, prophetic visions and miraculous ability to the men.¹⁰²

Their ministry is “engaged in poverty.”¹⁰³ Fixated on the practice of communing with God, their function is to be “forgetful of earthly thoughts, [and] to meditate on heavenly things alone.”¹⁰⁴ Their contemplation is “rapt in God [through] prayer and praise” that is performed constantly and continuously so they might know what they should do or “avoid.”¹⁰⁵

There is little surprise when much later Celano describes the Clares as the “Handmaids of Christ,” who are appropriately “dead and buried to the world.”¹⁰⁶ Unlike their male counterparts, the women remain hidden from male society and public spaces. They are mute and inactive except in prayer, seemingly unchanged by the religious development around them, remaining out of the way and falling short in the standard of religious authority set by Francis and his brothers.

V. The Femininity of Women vs. The Feminization of the Men

In spite of the praise Celano places on the Clares, there is no question that even the nuns cannot surpass the physical and psychological constraints placed on them as a result of their inherent femininity. Yet, the author remains intent on attributing feminine characteristics, or at the very least associating feminine imagery to Francis in a manner that suggests he is surpassing his own human limitations. This disconnection or difference between the type of femininity attributed to religious men and the femininity perceived to be inherent in women suggests that the femininity of women and the feminization of men are viewed as originating from entirely different moral sources.¹⁰⁷

The feminization of Francis and his male colleagues is emphasized as the account progresses into the third section. Francis’ health is in decline and he is nearing closer to his death. In the concluding chapters to the first two sections Celano describes Francis in the most feminized manner yet. He is “charming,” he is “ardent” in his “obedience,” “in willing submission, in angelic aspect.”¹⁰⁸ His countenance is delicate, his manner submissive, motherly, and gentle. His personality holds a “gentle disposition, easy in his talk; most apt in exhortation...sweet in temper, sober in spirit, uplifted in contemplation.”¹⁰⁹

Even his physical features appear soft and somewhat effeminate, “his shoulders straight, his arms short, his hands attenuated, with long fingers and nails; his legs slight, his feet small, his skin fine, and his flesh very spare.”¹¹⁰ Francis also remains simultaneously masculine and powerful in spirit. On several occasions Celano applies the descriptor of “valiant

knight” to Francis.¹¹¹ We see it first in chapter fifteen where the knight-hood of Francis is expressed directly in relation to his ability to preach in public.¹¹² We see the description applied again later in the same chapter to all the Franciscan brothers in relation to the depth of their obedience, and we see it next in chapter twenty-seven with Francis’ fearlessness in the face of temptation and demonic powers.¹¹³ This is an ironic juxtaposition intimating that Francis’ fear of women is greater than his fear of demons.

Francis is now a soldier in whom the ancient miracles of a warrior-like Christ “were renewed,” their full powers re-invigorated under the strength of his religious discipline and the example he takes from male predecessors.¹¹⁴ Francis is actively “guided by the spirit of holy and most perfect men” while in prayer.¹¹⁵ He meditates daily on the lives of earlier prophets and other similar figures, both biblical and contemporary. The “valiant knight” reinvigorated is once again prepared “to fight the Lord’s battles,” even as he nears the end of his life.¹¹⁶ His armour, fit for a “King alone” portrays an image of divine royal strength, his “surpassing dignity” now becoming a reflection of his near complete union with God.¹¹⁷

As Celano’s descriptions become increasingly focused on the holy man’s failing health, the author increasingly portrays the Christological images as emanating directly from him rather than through him. Francis now possesses the “stigmata,” and suffers “frequent infirmities,” but as Francis’ health declines the Pauline image of the inner and outer man is also reaffirmed.¹¹⁸ The genderizing characteristics are progressively split between his body and his spirit adding another dimension to the male-female binary present in the account. As his body gradually becomes increasingly weak, his spirit is portrayed in equally masculine and feminine terms.

The language in this section is focused first on the interactions of spiritual fathers and sons while intermittently touching on maternal images. Eventually the gendered binaries are interchanged and combined. Celano describes brother Elias as a “mother” to Francis, and someone who Francis entrusted to take on the role of the “father of the other brethren.”¹¹⁹ In a later chapter Elias becomes the “good son” who does what the “kind father wished,” while Francis becomes once again the “blessed father” praised by the people as he returns to Cella di Cortona.¹²⁰ When one of his brethren asks him a question regarding his illness Celano has Francis respond first by calling the monk “my son,” and then again later repeating the response in conversation with Elias one last time before he dies.¹²¹

Francis' fatherhood in the order, and his status as a patriarch to the monks, is clearly established. There are several more times in the passage where Celano refers to Francis directly as "father" or "holy father," but Celano also works to establish Francis' matriarchy.¹²² The text now amalgamates the female and male aspects applied earlier to Francis' character perhaps in an effort to show how Francis' authority can be "softened or complemented by something" gentler.¹²³ Here Celano coins the term "nursing-father" to describe what Francis has meant to him in friendship, and concludes the section by offering a touching prayer as an expression of affection to his mentor-mother.¹²⁴

Once Francis dies, Celano's descriptions of the holy man return to the typology of the Christ figure. This time the scene bears the weight of Francis' mortality, providing observations of what he looked like in death rather than in life. His body shines in ...wondrous beauty at the sight of all, and his flesh had become still more radiant, it was wonderful to see amid his hands and feet not the prints of the nails but the nails themselves formed out of his flesh and retaining the blackness of iron, and his right side reddened with blood... as though he died having suffered the crucifixion just like Christ.¹²⁵

This analogy is now further expanded with a return to feminized gendered descriptions. We see how Francis' interaction with the "King" is "sweet and tender... and full of love."¹²⁶ However, since Francis has completed his union with God the maternal imagery shifts to the next great source of religious authority. The pope, though grief stricken from Francis' death is proud that "his own son whom he bore in his sacred womb, cherished in his bosom, suckled with the word, and nurtured with the food of salvation" should be made a saint.¹²⁷ The image is formed out of a language that is fixated on the ability and authority of the man's office, and not on the mortality or limitations of the individual, a hint to Celano's view of Francis' role as first a holy man and then a saint.

Once Francis is canonized, Celano's emphasis on Francis' need for spiritual perfection is now more fully explained in his joining with God. Francis "above all things... longed to be dissolved with Christ... his chiefest study was to be free from all the things that are in the world lest the serenity of his mind might even for a moment be troubled by the taint of any dust."¹²⁸ The desire for asceticism that had grown out of his conversion experience is reflected in the typology of the Christ figure and emphasized through the use of gendered imagery.

The typology exerts its authority, engages binary gendered descriptions, and amalgamates them in order for Francis to surpass his limitations. He transcends his human constraints as he becomes god-like, both male and female in life while in death he is now spirit, neither male nor female. His body, being the weaker vessel, carries the stigma of femininity and Christ-like suffering, while his spirit transcends with masculine vigour and feminine concern for humanity. The translation of the Christ figure is applied to Francis and by extension reveals a theology of God that is incorporative of the human experience.¹²⁹ The de-masculinization of Francis' human form is stripped of the traditional aspects of his gender as he grows in interdependence with God, and through this embodiment of both Christ and the Church he completes his translation from sinner to holy man to divine saint.

VI. Conclusion

Throughout the account, Thomas of Celano connects Francis of Assisi's life and sanctity to two traditional sources of religious authority, those of divine ordination and those of the ecclesiastical order. While the first provides him with his religious vision, mission, and desire and for spiritual practice, the second provides him with the legitimacy and influence necessary to carry out a public ministry through preaching, teaching, and exemplification. Together these elements of spiritual life form the basis for his religious authority and ultimately provide the rationale for his translation from holy man to divine representation of God.

Celano also affirms the presence of religious authority through the language and symbolism of Christological typology. The characteristics Christ are at various points directly or indirectly attributed to Francis and his men. The parallels the author draws between the Gospel narratives and Francis in turn create a number of dichotomous literary depictions that become increasingly heightened as Francis nears the end of his life. This creates a fascinating literary and theological effect demonstrated through gendered language and imagery applied to the holy men throughout the account.

The acquisition of authority through conversion, ascetic discipline, and the effusion of Christological affinities act a de-genderizing process that highlights the subversion of traditional social expectations of masculinity. When Celano couples these elements of authority with increasingly pronounced gendered language rooted in biblical images, typologies, and discourses we begin to suspect that the author's systematic focus on the issue of authority manifests itself on a much wider scale. In this way the

account acts as a conduit for theological interpretations of gender and authority exposing how feminized and masculinized forms of biblical and religious images link men and women differently to the authority of God. Some scholars might suggest that such an incorporative approach to gender in the male saint points to the possibility of religious inclusivity for women or female religious authority. However, if the text is analysed for women's voices and experiences directly, a discrepancy in the author's treatment of the male saint and his male followers to the women portrayed suggests this may not be the case. While the male saint, and to some extent his male followers are able to overcome gendered restrictions placed on them through the process of conversion and asceticism, the women clearly cannot.

We have seen that femininity in men acts as evidence for their agency within the authority of the divine. In women the presence of femininity is interpreted as a sign of moral weakness. Its presence is perceived as an inherent sign of their flawed nature rather than a source of divine authority, and as such it remains in constant need of correction, something to be distrusted and feared. The presence of femininity in women, therefore, remains an active symbol of human failing they are eternally unable to overcome.

Independent actions in unholy women are therefore, interpreted as rebellious, demonic, or simply shameful, while those who are able to surmount their inherent natures as women do so by the inactivity of their holiness. Both types of women remain trapped in the limiting social and religious constructions of gender their communities and prelates enforce, inevitably reinforcing negative moral perceptions of women in general. By portraying them as tainted and irrevocably fallen in nature, this depiction suggests the femininity inherent to women is the reason they are (or perhaps ought to be) restricted or denied the exercise of public authority in religious contexts. This connection poses the question of difference between men and women in Franciscan thought, and implies that the manner in which a person is permitted to attain or express legitimated forms of moral authority in a public manner or space is largely dependant on the individual's sex rather than the presence of holiness.

While the general attributes of femininity and masculinity may be applied to men as well as women, the end result as seen in the quality of these gendered characteristics as they are applied to each sex are far from equivalent. In fact, the result of the application of these characteristics differs drastically between the sexes. There is no question that by attempting to

use authoritative and seemingly reliable sources for the account historians can suggest that on some level Celano may have been attempting to relay a historical picture by which to remember and venerate his mentor.

However, the real power in Celano's version of events does not lie in the historical accuracy conveyed in the occurrences of Francis' life, but rather in the author's ability to convey the authority of the saint relayed through the memory of the community. The engagement of the community combined with the author's voice suggests the account is conducted as theological exercise that outlines a successful model for human transcendence into divine form. The author conveys a powerful archetype of authority embodied by a champion who remains formidable even in death to sanction those who follow him, and to leave behind those who are not.

Notes

1. I am thinking in particular about Jacques Dalarun's body of work on the concept of the feminine in the accounts of Francis' vitae, which are well known, as is his recent analysis of a newly discovered Franciscan text. Delarun's work greatly furthers knowledge in the historical and textual analysis of Thomas de Celano's various accounts. The purpose of this paper is not discuss or further Dalarun's theories on the feminine, but simply to provide an analysis of gender and authority in this rendition through a close reading of the text. Jacques Dalarun, *La Vie retrouvée de François d'Assise* (Paris, France: Editiones Franciscaines, 2015).
2. Thomas of Celano, *The Lives of Saint Francis of Assisi: The First Life of St. Francis* (Lavergne, TN: First Rate Publishers, 2015), Introduction.
3. de Celano, *First Life*, Introduction.
4. De Celano, *First Life*, Introduction.
5. de Celano, *First Life*, Introduction.
6. de Celano, *Intro*.
7. de Celano, *Intro*.
8. de Celano, *First Life*, Introduction. Celano sights Pope Gregory's direction and order to write the account on behalf of the Franciscan community twice in the introduction.
9. Aviad Kleinberg, *Prophets in their own Country: Living Saints and the Making of Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992). See the chapter VI, "Francis of Assisi and the Burden of Example" for further discussion.
10. de Celano, chapter I, paragraph 1.
11. de Celano, I.1-2. This is particularly an issue when the concerns and values of parents believed to be in direct opposition to the vision and direction of the Church, or the divine call to religious life. The discourse presents a rationale by which to dismiss the natural authority of biological parents, thereby turning any family obligation obsolete in the face of a determined religious calling. Parents who do not adhere to religious values or religious authority are portrayed as morally inept. Their customary place in their children's lives is effectively nullified making them essentially unworthy to determine the future of an offspring who prefers to follow religious orders instead of a family calling or line of work.
12. de Celano, *First Life*, I.1.
13. de Celano, I.1, II.4. In chapter five of the account Francis' father kidnaps and forcibly confines him against his will to keep him from religious life.
14. de Celano, V.10., II.5.
15. de Celano, V.11.
16. de Celano, *First Life*, II.3, VI.13-15.
17. de Celano, VI.15.
18. *Ibid*.
19. *Ibid*.
20. *Ibid*.
21. de Celano, I.2.
22. de Celano, I.1.
23. de Celano, *First Life*, V.12-VI.16, VII.16. This passage also appears to reflect the martyrdom of Stephen in Acts 7:54-60. Though not exactly alike, the parallels between

the two narratives are quite prominent.

24. de Celano, VII.16.
25. de Celano, V.11.
26. 2 Corinthians 4:16-5:5.
27. de Celano, First Life, Part II, II. 92.
28. de Celano, VII.16-17.
29. de Celano, Part I, I.2., XV. 39.
30. *Ibid.*, XV. 39.
31. *Ibid.*, XV. 39-40.
32. de Celano, First Life, XV. 40.
33. de Celano, First Life, XV. 40-41.
34. *Ibid.*
35. *Ibid.*, XIX.52-53. Francis at one point in this passage also asks his followers to “revile [him] harshly and tell him the truth” so that he might move further in his discipline even while others are begging him not to.
36. *Ibid.*, XIX. 52.
37. *Ibid.*, XVI. 43.
38. *Ibid.*, XX. 55. Celano notes that Francis remains so committed to this extreme form of asceticism that he makes sure to do it especially when no one is present.
39. Matthew 20:28.
40. de Celano, First Life, XI. 26. Celano mentions a moment in which Francis is “caught up above himself, and wholly absorbed in the light.” This is a passage that resembles Paul’s conversion account in Acts 9:3, and in 2 Corinthians 12:4-5 where Paul discusses visions of heaven.
41. de Celano, First Life, XVI. 43. The chariot of fire is referenced twice in the Old Testament. First, in Genesis 5:24 in which Enoch is taken up to heaven; and secondly, in 2 Kings 6:17, when the prophet Elisha is taken up to heaven in a similar fashion.
42. de Celano, First Life, XVIII. 47. Luke 9:29.
43. de Celano, First Life, XVIII. 48.
44. Mark 9:2-28. The moment of Christ’s transfiguration in the Gospel of Mark similarly links Jesus to the power of the Old Testament prophets. II Kings 2:11 marks the moment Elijah is taken to heaven in a chariot of fire.
45. *Ibid.*, IX.115.
46. de Celano, First Life, XXII.64-XXV.69. The wording is quite similar to Jesus’ own description of his ministry in Matthew 11:4-5.
47. de Celano, First Life, XXII.63. Acts 19:11-12. There are numerous examples of Jesus’ miracles throughout all four Gospels, however, only Paul was noted to heal through objects indirectly as well as through touch. In XXI.58 Francis is seen healing even the animals with a touch of his tunic.
48. de Celano, First Life, XXVI.70, XXI.61. The water into wine miracle is also a notable miracle for Jesus in the Gospels as it marks his first miracle and the beginning of his ministry. Matthew 8: 28-34; Mark 5:1-17; John 2:1-11.
49. de Celano, First Life, IX.21. Matthew 14:14, Mark 1:41.
50. *Ibid.*, IX.22.
51. Matthew 26:38-40.
52. de Celano, First Life, X.24.
53. Matthew 27:54.
54. de Celano, First Life, XII.30.

55. de Celano, *First Life*, XXII.62
56. The passage in XIII.33 can be interpreted somewhat loosely. Though Francis ignores the behests of other Bishops, he is bidden and sanctioned by Pope Innocent III. However, the image of the tree bending toward Francis at the end of the passage implies that Celano viewed Francis as being above the Pope in some respects, though clearly Francis would not, or perhaps could not, move forward in his mission and ministry without the Church's approval.
57. de Celano, *First Life*, XXII.62
58. de Celano, *First Life*, XXII.62.
59. *Ibid.*
60. de Celano, *First Life*, Part III, I.119-126. Kleinberg, Aviad, (Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press), 1992. Celano describes the canonization process that places Francis into sainthood in this passage, which suggests that Francis' sainthood has been officially instated by the time the author has completed the biographical account. Kleinberg adds to this discussion further by providing historical details around this event.
61. Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender*, (New York, NY: Routledge), 2004.
62. de Celano, XV.39.
63. *Ibid.*
64. de Celano, *First Life*, III.7. Revelation 21:2 is one explicit texts that identifies the Church as the "bride."
65. John 3:29. The title of the "bridegroom" is implied in Celano's account (III.7).
66. de Celano, *First Life*, IV.9.
67. de Celano, *First Life*, IV.9.
68. de Celano, *First Life*, V.11; Song of Songs 7:10.
69. de Celano, *First Life*, XV.36.
70. de Celano, *First Life*, XV.36.
71. de Celano, *First Life*, V.12.
72. *Ibid.*, XXI. There are several maternal references in chapter twenty-one.
73. de Celano, *First Life*, XV.38.
74. de Celano, *First Life*, XV.39.
75. de Celano, *First Life*, XI.27.
76. de Celano, *First Life*, XXI.60.
77. de Celano, *First Life*, XXI.58.
78. *Ibid.*, XXI.59.
79. *Ibid.*, XXV.69.
80. *Ibid.*, XXVI.70.
81. *Ibid.*, XXV.69.
82. *Ibid.*
83. *Ibid.*
84. de Celano, *First Life*, XXV.69.
85. de Celano, XXVI.70.
86. de Celano, XXVI.70.
87. *Ibid.*
88. de Celano, *First Life*, XXVI.70.
89. *Ibid.*, XXIV.67.
90. de Celano, XXVIII.78.
91. *Ibid.*, XXVIII.78.

92. de Celano, XXVI.70.
93. de Celano, First Life, Part II, II.91.
94. Ibid., XV.39.
95. de Celano, First Life, VIII.18.
96. Ibid., VIII.19.
97. de Celano, First Life, VIII.19.
98. de Celano, VIII.20.
99. de Celano, VIII.19.
100. de Celano, XXVI.70.
101. During the medieval period the dominant theological view of women was focused on the gender's inherently sinful and fallen in nature following into the sin of deception that came from Eve eating the apple.
102. de Celano, First Life, VIII.20.
103. Ibid.
104. Ibid.
105. de Celano, IX.22.
106. de Celano First Life, Part III, I.122.
107. Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages*, 110-169. Walker Bynum explores this issue more generally during this period across Europe, and puts forward a very similar argument from the wider literature.
108. de Celano, First Life, XXIX.83.
109. Ibid.
110. de Celano, First Life, XXIX.83.
111. de Celano, First Life, Part I, XV.39, XXVII.72; Part II, II.93, IX.114.
112. de Celano, First Life, XV.36.
113. de Celano, First Life, XV.39, and XXVII.72.
114. de Celano, First Life, Part II, I.89.
115. de Celano, First Life, Part II, II.92.
116. Ibid., Part II, II.93, IX.114.
117. Ibid., Part II, IX.114.
118. de Celano, First Life, Part II, IV.97.
119. de Celano, First Life, Part II, IV.98.
120. Ibid., VII.105.
121. Ibid., VII.106-107.
122. Ibid., VIII.110- IX.112.
123. Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, 154.
124. de Celano, First Life, Part II, VIII.111.
125. Ibid., IX.113.
126. Ibid., IX.115.
127. de Celano, First Life, Part III, I.121.
128. de Celano, First Life, XXVII. 71.
129. Matthew 28:16-20. Jesus commissions his disciples after his resurrection so that they might be enabled to continue their ministry. Likewise, for Francis, it is not until after his death that so many other miracles are witnessed and aided by his followers in the third part of the account.

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