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**Meditating Hell: An Image of Satan from Loyola's
*Spiritual Exercises***

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In recent times, scholars have renewed their interest in the role of the Jesuits in the expansion and exportation of Judeo-Christian social and religious ideologies to Asia and South America, beginning in the sixteenth century and continuing through the twentieth century. Many recent writings, such as *The Jesuits: Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540–1773* (2005), a two-volume collection of essays edited by eminent Jesuit scholars John O'Malley and Gauvin Bailey, have explored a great variety of compelling perspectives on this phenomenon. These works present the elders (from the early stages of the Society of Jesus) as an essential medium and filter between the arts and the cultures of the Renaissance, the Baroque period, and the early Enlightenment. Notably, several of the volumes' contributors emphasize the Jesuit use of the visual arts in the evangelization of the New World. Their conclusions often emphasize how unique the Society of Jesus was, both in the exportation of religious representations, as well as in their efforts to present fundamental notions of the Catholic economy of salvation to the indigenous populations of Paraguay, China, and many other territories where the dichotomy of Heaven and Hell was not part of the collective imagination prior to their arrival.

The Hispanic world, the main focus of this volume, was deeply affected by representations of these opposite realms, and believers learned how to virtually project themselves into daring representations created by seventeenth century European Baroque artists and writers. The audiences of the colonial world seemingly required such persuasive imagery and ideology. As the Jesuit provincial, Manoel de Nóbrega, writes from Brazil in his *Dialogue on the Conversion of the Gentile* (1577), "as these pagans worship nothing, and believe nothing, all that you tell them amounts to nothing" (O'Malley 616). Indeed, the challenges of evangelization in the new lands soon forced the

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missionaries to re-examine their collective imaginary in order to find simplified approaches to the presentation of Christian necro-cosmology. At the source of the Jesuit motivation for visual simulation, one finds stimulation of the senses. Common representations of Heaven and Hell must be accompanied by a constant connection of the senses to the image contemplated, in the fashion of the Hindu Dharma. To solidify the linkage, the imagination must be trained according to a strict discipline, one that places the believer's soul in a mental projection of the two realms of the Catholic afterlife. In order to illustrate this particular parameter of a larger problematic—the representation of death in the early modern Hispanic world—I propose, in this essay, to return to the very source of the image reservoir that the Jesuit order brought to the conquered territories of South, Central, and North America: the Ignatian Exercises.

In the *Spiritual Exercises*, the four week training that order founder Ignatius of Loyola designed for the education of both Jesuit spiritual directors and believers as a whole, one finds a very strict succession of mental theaters, which exercitants must enter, in order to be confronted with the cosmological division of Heaven and Hell that characterizes the afterlife in the Catholic tradition. We know that this spiritual system had been very influential on architecture, painting, and even literature over the course of the seventeenth century,¹ as well as in the evangelization of the New World. Although I will not discuss these two early modern parameters directly, I will address an earlier representational precedence of Hell created before the *Spiritual Exercises*, right at the turning point between the Middle Ages and the rise of modernity, before they were recycled and exported to the New World by the Society of Jesus.

Before he became a religious man, Loyola was a soldier who constantly traveled and fought in a variety of different places and cultures. After his Pauline conversion experience, Loyola continued to travel, from Jerusalem to Paris, from Venice to Rome. For these two reasons, the Hell he represents contains a whole geography similar to the one we find in Dante's *Inferno*. The Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises* function like a flight simulator for a pilot in training: the believer moves through images and levels, in a fashion similar to video games that project players into another reality, through one realm of the cosmos after the other. In this simulated universe, death is not so much represented as a *game over* moment, but, rather, as an eternal state of being, in which the exercitant is trapped, *ad infinitum*, in order to understand the dynamics of the afterlife without risking one's existence in the process. The Protestant Reformation condemned these practices as deceitful; according to Luther and the doctrine of *Sola Fide* (Justification by Faith Alone) on which he spent most of his life lecturing, Christians are supposed to obtain salvation through faith

alone, without the use of any kind of visual support. Representing the visually unknown afterworld is, for this branch of Christianity, one of the worst offenses against God. Yet for Counter-Reformation Catholicism, led by the Jesuit order, there is nothing wrong in imagining, picturing, painting, sculpting, and feeling with all the senses, that, which, for others, seems to be forbidden and unimaginable knowledge: a curiosity at the origin of the fall from divine grace. Further, the *Spiritual Exercises* not only constitutes a daring world of meditation of its own, but it is also an intriguing text, since its often shocking and minimalist literary style has the miraculous power to create a multitude of images.

According to the French structuralist, Roland Barthes (in his famous essay "Loyola" published in *Sade, Fourier, Loyola* [1971]), the Ignatian spiritual method is an *image reservoir* that compels the mind to wander through the different spheres of the *más allá* in the fashion of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. Like Dante's *Inferno*, Loyola's method invites the exercitant to envision Hell as a place of eternal punishment. Whereas Dante offers a complex division of the Underworld, Loyola, instead, focuses on its very bottom only, as if no distinction of circles was to be made in the representation of his *Inferno* (Fig. 1). The text of the *Exercises* is, therefore, much more restrictive, and it skims the image-saturated Medieval universe in order to focus on its central element: the Devil. Finally, Loyola's text, itself, has no lyrical dimension to it whatsoever, as we would otherwise find abundantly in the Italian poet's masterpiece, a text that had become widely known in Renaissance Spain, as well as in Italy, where Loyola spent the last third of his life.

the image over the written word of Scriptures. As we can see in Nadal's *Jesus Descending into Hell* (Fig. 2), the Jesuit depiction of Hell is clearly inspired by the Dantesque, cosmological construction of the *Divine Comedy*. Satan stands at the very bottom of all the circles, while Jesus seems to dig his way to the Devil. The surface of the land and its background equates the center of the Earth with Hell. Moreover, the frozen, missing, Devil phallus is the very center of it all, both the world, and the universe, in this Dantesque-inspired Jesuit cosmology. This image echoes the Lacanian use of the Freudian concept of *Das Ding* (the lack, the void).

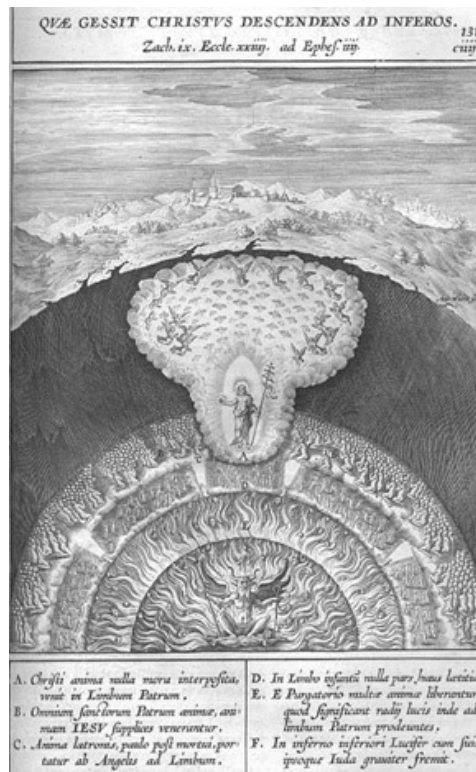


Fig. 2. *Jesus Descending into Hell*, from the 1594 edition of *Evangelicae Historiae Imagines*, a Jesuit manual of visual representation designed by Jérôme Nadal, S.J.

René Girard analyzes the dynamics of this void in *Le bouc émissaire*

[The Scapegoat], and argues that: “On pourrait dire que Satan incarne le désir mimétique si ce désir n’était pas, par excellence, désincarnation. C’est lui qui vide tous les êtres, toutes les choses et tous les textes, de leur contenu” (235) (One could say that Satan embodies mimetic desire if this desire weren’t *par excellence*, disembodiment. It is Him who empties all beings, all things and all texts of their substance). The Devil is the vertical element that unifies the world of temporal existence with the eternal punishment in death. In a contemporaneous illustration for Dante’s volume by Cigoli (Lodovico Cardi), Lucifer is frozen in ice and the world stands between his chest and his legs (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3. Cornelis Galle I. c. 1596–c. 1605/8. *Lucifer, from the Divine Comedy*. Engraving. 10 15/16 x 7 1/2 in. (27.8 x 19 cm). Courtesy of the William A. Whitaker Foundation Art Fund.

The Devil, himself, represents the worst form of physical torture attributed to eternal punishment. The Fallen Angel is the first condemned being of this part of the cosmos; he has no power of movement, and his physical existence is contained in ice, the only element worse than fire since it maintains pain eternally. In such Renaissance editions of Dante's Satan, the negation of movement is accompanied by the absence of sexual organs, which suggests the impossibility of feeling sexual desire or pleasure. The latter emotion is also the case for the rest of his body, since all other senses have been invaded by fire and ice. Interestingly enough, this representation of Satan/Lucifer at the center of the earth (*axis mundi*) reflects the hellish nature of the city of Rome, which was considered the New Jerusalem of the sixteenth century, when Loyola lived in the heart of this urban fabric. This *Roma putana* was often depicted as the Great Harlot of Revelation.³ In his *Inferno*, Dante's references to Rome as the earthly projection of Hell are numerous, and many corners of his infernal layers are connected to the *città eterna*. However, Loyola still does not propose that such a complex medieval system of circles surrounds Lucifer in his representation of Hell. Instead, in the *Exercises*, the constant presence of the figure of Lucifer at the bottom of Hell participates in the creation of the linguistic void defined by Barthes throughout his essay on Loyola's *Exercises*. The Devil is placed in a central position on a vertical axis from which he has control over all the other elements listed in this guided meditation. As a consequence, the surrounding elements of the vision progressively disappear, and the fire becomes a vacuum that swallows the exercitant.

From the visual representations found in the Middle Ages, Loyola preserves the verticality of fire that we see coming out of the mouth of Lucifer. Yet the *Spiritual Exercises* plays with the perspective quite a bit, and often places the exercitant in the middle of the fire, descending into Hell. This is seen in the *Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry* (*Very Rich Hours of the Duke of Berry*) (1416) (Fig. 4). This perspective is drawn from previous narrative traditions, superimposed in a multiple text, which points to the verticality of images believers have seen previously. The minimalism of the image in the *Exercises* often gives it a strikingly modern special effect. Loyola's exercitant, unlike Dante the pilgrim, is able to envision Hell as a whole vertical axis into which he is descending, instead of moving from one circle to the next. There is, in this sense, a quite admirable mechanism in Loyola's text: the coexistence of multiple images with a fundamentally minimalist nature of the different meditations proposed by the Spanish saint in his text.



Fig. 4. “How Hell was Depicted in the Middle Ages,” *Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry* reproduced in 1953 in *Pédagogie Pratique* (Paris: Education Nationale).

In the 1960s and 1970s, several linguists and philosophers paid particular attention to this rather paradoxical nature of the *Spiritual Exercises*. Georges Bataille, in his *Expérience intérieure* (*Inner Experience*), discussed notions central to Spanish mysticism and the

analysis of the spaces that it presents: he begins his argument with the elimination of the problematic word *mystique*, which he soon replaces with *intérieure* to make it more universal and inter-religious. According to Bataille, this text is a great example of a *dramatic* method that forces the disciple to represent places and people in his or her imagination, and to become part of this drama. Dramatic verticality enables the mystic to travel back and forth between the temporal reality and the eternal vision of horror. Beyond the multitude of ornaments always appears a minimalist vision that goes far beyond the capacity of signs.

Roland Barthes followed the debate on the *Exercises* by elaborating, in his essays on Loyola, on Bataille's observations. In addition to the notions previously mentioned, Barthes' structuralist interpretation invites us to distinguish another vertical communication made of four layers of textual exchange: the first one (literal) from the saint himself to the spiritual director (true recipient of the book). The second connection (semantic) happens between the director and the person receiving the guidelines to perform the exercises. Loyola explains it in the following fashion: "The person who gives to another the method and procedure for meditating or contemplation should accurately *narrate* the history contained in the contemplation or meditation, going over the points with only a brief or summary explanation" (*Exercises*, 121). Loyola's vertical narration passes on to a third and a fourth textual exchange: the third happens allegorically between the person receiving the method and the divinity in the mode of meditation, and the fourth is the reply of the divinity to this person in the mode of contemplation (anagogic relation). These layers of communication should not be considered circles of representation. We must underline, however, that this upward verticality is the continuation of a downward and negative vacuum connecting the believer with Lucifer at the bottom of Hell.

Michel de Certeau also generated some significant interpretation in this direction with the first volume of *La Fable Mystique (The Mystic Fable)* where he envisions Loyola as a mystic of the *orders of corruption*, in line with the practices of Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross. In other words, Certeau—who was a Jesuit and who had practiced the Spiritual Exercises—understood *orders of corruption* as a space for simulation where the believer had to project himself, with all his senses involved, and get a direct taste of the infernal world. Certeau describes this pseudo cyberworld *avant la lettre* as a vertical place of training and simulation, a heavily developed *ordre corrompu*, accessible from the visually saturated earthly existence and connected to the actual minimalist Heaven and Hell.

Without a doubt, Loyola counts on the death image reservoir that culture has already imposed on believers. In various representations of exorcisms performed by Loyola, we see how the founder of the Catholic

order is, himself, perceived as a spiritual director who goes after the devils and liberates his exercitant from their presence. Beyond these images, the minimalism of revelation gradually becomes, in his exercises, the center of the meditation. Only a few words are needed to trigger the instant creation of a mental territory. In his introductory guidelines to the *Spiritual Exercises*, Loyola imitates the mechanisms of many other texts of pedagogy: short and concise (in other words minimalist), with an obvious concern for the student-exercitant. The *Exercises* announce, in this sense, the model of the Baroque aesthetics and its detachment from the ideals of the Renaissance—its anxiety about a West now divided by the Reformation and its desire to return to scholastic models. Yet this process is realized through the design of death images that can be multiplied with just a single, initial meditation. The structuralist essays mentioned above suggest that, as critical readers of the *Exercises*, we need to make a clear distinction between the imaginary and the imagination. The imaginary has been defined—and redefined—by Bachelard and Lacan as a capital of internal representations unknown to the subject because of a separation operated by the symbol. Since the imaginary of Loyola's text is extremely flat and the style is fairly poor, the imaginary of the disciple should be like his language: focused on a central figure. This is particularly enhanced by the medium of print itself, which tends to be flat, and, most of the time, without color, as well as by the images themselves. The one that we are observing here also minimalizes any full development of the background that might be distracting. At least in this case, both medium, and lack of three-dimensional development, insure that focus is maintained on the illustrated subject.

Is the text supposed to take the place of this imaginary, or is it building up on the symbolical experience of the subject? I would argue that the relationship between text and the imaginary is symbiotic, as the text alone does not allow the exercitant to reflect on his/her personal experience, or even to get an existential dilemma involved in the structural development of the practice. In the Meditation on Hell, the image must penetrate (through sensual experiences) the vacant imaginary of the sinner, represented, here, by the many swords penetrating the flesh of the exercitant. The spirit of the imitated object must take total control of the believer engaged in the exercise, and by the same token, negate all voluntary acts of contemplation in the practice. The guidelines are phrased in the following fashion:

66. FIRST POINT. This will be to see in imagination the vast fires, and the souls enclosed, as it were, in bodies of fire.

67. SECOND POINT. To hear the wailing, the howling, cries, and blasphemies against Christ our Lord and against His saints.

68. THIRD POINT. With the sense of smell to perceive the smoke, the sulphur, the filth, and corruption.

69. FOURTH POINT. To taste the bitterness of tears, sadness, and remorse of conscience.

70. FIFTH POINT. With the sense of touch to feel the flames which envelop and burn the souls (Loyola 32–3).

Of all the senses involved in this meditation, it is sight that prevails in Loyola's hierarchy of the senses, and this was to be a crucial element of the aesthetics of the Counter-Reformation: that is, Jesuit imagery in the Baroque. No sword is thrown in the eye of the believer; on the contrary, the pain experienced increases the sight and the insights. The disciple of the *Exercises* is constantly asked to visualize a scene whose geometry systematically places him or her at and as the central point: "Upon awakening, I will imagine myself as a great sinner, *deserving death*, and brought in chains before the eternal judge" (Loyola 142). Loyola has a clear tendency to always place the divinity at the center of his worldview, and the believer as a gravitating dot around it, whose chances to get close to the center are limited. In this sense, the position of the believer in relation to salvation is not contrary to that advocated by Luther. It places believers in a position that forces them to perceive their centrality and uniqueness. In one of the most popular illustrated versions of the *Spiritual Exercises* (published in 1673 in order to help the Jesuit missionaries in the New World), the swords are metaphors for the physical pain that will transform the meditation into a direct experimentation of infernal suffering (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5. “**In puncto ad inferna descendunt**,” from the 1673 illustrated edition of the *Spiritual Exercises* (Paris: Society of Jesus). Permission to reproduce from the John J. Burns Library, Boston College.

We find in this image a projection of physical pain through forced immobility comparable to that of the Devil of the *Inferno*, as seen in

Figures 1, 2, and 3. Lucifer has ceased to be a punisher, and has, instead, been turned into a monstrous, punished body that exemplifies the potential afterlife of the sinner. The *Exercises* require the exercitant to occupy that very spot of the Devil. Interestingly enough in these illustrations, the erasure of the Devil's phallus reinforces the importance of vision as the primary vehicle through which knowledge is attained; sexual desire and sin have been replaced by virtue, a level that can only be attained if perceived as an *erasure of sin*.

The believer's gaze toward images is a key concept for spiritual guidance, as it also reflects the very space of confrontation between Lutherans who reject such spiritual methodology and soldiers of the Counter-Reformation who embrace it. It is important to underline that this could be the problematic of Baroque aesthetics in general—they never propose stability, but, rather, force the subject to envision existence as a constant return to the vertical vacuum that Michel de Certeau named “order of corruption.” It is a place of lack and absence, even when it is saturated with images, and only through this void can salvation be sought and obtained.

Christine Buci-Glucksman describes Ignatius of Loyola as the thinker responsible for the post-Trent visual imperialism (“apologie post-tridentine des images et de l'*impérialisme visuel*”) (97). In other words, Loyola combines dramatic and narrative elements gathered in anterior textual forms and narrative traditions in order to orient the imagination. He chooses, deliberately, to modify the modes of perception of the world and, thereby, establishes a system that uses imagination to give priority to representation over perception. The, the world according to the *Exercises*, then, needs to be envisioned as an immanent structure where vice is in a constant vertical struggle with virtue. Once sent into this vacuum, the exercitant will access the dramatic realms of mental theaters. Along with the Meditation on Hell, Loyola proposes a secondary contemplative act around the “Standard of Satan.” In this passage, we can see a great example of one of these mental theaters created in the text, as well as the dramatic mode built into its structure. These two aspects come to illustrate this passage of the *Exercises*:

THE STANDARD OF SATAN.

140. FIRST POINT. Imagine you see the chief of all the enemies in the vast plain about Babylon, seated on a great throne of fire and smoke, his appearance inspiring horror and terror.

141. SECOND POINT. Consider how he summons innumerable demons, and scatters them, some to one city and some to another,

throughout the whole world, so that no province, no place, no state of life, no individual is overlooked.

142. THIRD POINT. Consider the address he makes to them, how he goads them on to lay snares for men and bind them with chains. First they are to tempt them to covet riches (as Satan himself is accustomed to do in most cases) that they may the more easily attain the empty honors of this world, and then come to overweening pride.
(Loyola 155).

In this passage, Loyola chooses to come back to the outsider's vantage point that he had initially prescribed. The believer is no longer feeling the pain, but withdraws from the action in order to contemplate the tortures and reflect upon them in a very Dantesque mode; that is, creating a distance between his gaze and the contemplated act, he situates himself on the side of the hellish torments without the direct experience of pain.

The Jesuit pilgrims have to follow here the footsteps of Virgil and Dante in Purgatory, when the spiritual director shows his exercitant the statues on the walls. In Canto X, Dante observes the frescoes and comes to the conclusion that:

In front of us appeared so truthfully there sculptured in a gracious attitude, *He did not seem an image that is silent*. One would have sworn that he was saying *Ave* [. . .] Around about him seemed it thronged and full of cavaliers, and the eagles in the gold above them visibly in the wind were moving. [. . .] He who on no new thing has ever looked was the creator of *this visible language*, novel to us, for here it is not found. I delighted me in *contemplating the images* of such humility (56–7). [Italics are mine]

As we can hear in this quote, and often see in representations by Gustave Doré of the *Inferno*, Dante, the pilgrim, is intensively trained throughout the Divine Comedy in the art of contemplation, and only his constant visual exercising enables him to hear the sounds coming out of the statues and to see them moving. The space around the subject of contemplation is open and wide, in order to create a greater dramatic effect. This setting reminds the believer of the desert in which Jesus Christ faces temptation.

Loyola insists on the omnipresence of evil elements, all departing from Babylon to associate them with corresponding elements of creation. This multitude of devils mirrors the proliferation of evil in humanity. In fact, humanity saturates the Underworld in the Dantesque

vision. Vice versa, but following the same principle, Loyola's flying devils saturate the world. Again, Girard points out: "Les démons sont à l'image du groupe humain, ils sont l'images de ce groupe parce qu'ils en sont l'imitatio" (255) (Devils are a human projection, but they are the *imago* of the human group because they are also their *imitatio*). Lucifer himself is depicted as a presence that reaches the interior of the believer through the senses: "[The enemy] makes them imagine delights and pleasures of the senses" (Loyola 201). Consequently, the Devil and his agents now occupy the totality of the exercitant's mental territory, both during and after the practice of the *Exercises*. The only possible way to fight the enemy is, therefore, to use the same method of penetration of the senses, but one must replace his presence by that of Christ. Nonetheless, it is easier to start this simulation with Satan. This is what Loyola establishes in the narrative order of the Meditations, in much the same fashion that Alighieri guides his pilgrim through the circles of Hell *in preparation* for Purgatory and Paradise. Interestingly enough, the Fallen Angel prepares the ground for the Risen Son in an extremely regulated—and vertical—economy of salvation.

Since the contributors to this volume have established connections between Spain and the New World regarding the understanding and representation of death and the afterlife, I would like to conclude with some remarks about the influence of the *Spiritual Exercises* on Jesuit art in general, and particularly on seventeenth century church architecture. Given the importance of the Jesuit presence in the New World, and its role in developing a Catholic image reservoir on a continent where there was no previous representation of a vertical descent into hell, it is crucial to return to the *Exercises* to comprehend why this simulation method became a prescription for the building of its churches. With the discovery of the New World, Jesuit missionaries realized that the Dantesque image reservoir did not readily apply to the new population to be evangelized but, at the same time, it represented a great potential, in terms of using an image reservoir in order to simulate Hell and its torments. Since there is no such thing as a fallen angel frozen at the bottom of the Underworld in pre-Columbian art and the religions of the Americas, the first Jesuit churches remain completely deprived of the devil imagery. There were no Dantesque visions in the New World, which helps explain the frustration of Jesuit provincial Manoel de Nóbrega, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.

The poles of vertical opposition known as Heaven and Hell in the Catholic tradition do not agree with the complexity of deities found in the Inca, Maya or Aztec religions. The gods found in these religious traditions have a direct influence on natural elements and they participate in the seasonal cycles and phenomena. They are mostly ubiquitous and are rarely deprived of mobility. Their bodies, at times

monstrous, are never immobilized in another dimension, as we find Satan at the bottom of Hell. Missionaries often feel depressed by the impossibility to communicate the fundamental dynamics of their theological approach to death and the afterlife. Minimalism is, therefore, much needed in the difficult exercise of evangelization. Yet this will not last very long. The visual perspectives of the *Spiritual Exercises* will influence the later generations of artists working around Jesuit missions and churches in the Americas. But its progressive recycling of pre-Columbian representation of evil into the Catholic figure of Lucifer will be served by the minimalist approach of the *Exercises*.

As Lauren Kilroy points out in the following chapter, other Catholic imagery, such as the Sacred Heart, will find greater harmony with the communities in New Spain. Conveying the verticality of eternal damnation, though, will be a more challenging exercise for the Jesuit missionaries. We can find a motivating desire to universalize the perception of the infernal underworld in the Meditation on Hell, and a capacity to adapt its minimalist structure to a variety of cultures throughout the world. This is a dimension of Loyola's text that does not undermine the initial mission of the method to become a pillar of the endangered Catholicism. On the contrary, it makes this text and spiritual method all the more intriguing and modern, for its atemporal capacity to invite the soul into the void of its vertical axis connected to Heaven and Hell.

Notes

1. See Conrod.
2. The most famous are in the frescoes of Andrea Pozzo in Rome, in the Casa Professa, the building next to the Jesuit mother Church of Il Gesù. For its precedence in the "art of memory" [*ars memoria*] and its Classical roots see Francis A. Yates, *The Art of Memory*. For the integration of the "art of memory" into 16th c. Mexican exconventos, see Samuel Y. Edgerton, *Theatres of Conversion: Religious Architecture and Indian Artisans in Colonial Mexico*.
3. Contemporaries of Loyola often depict the *axis mundi* for Christendom as the "*Roma putana*." In the seventeenth chapter of the book of Revelations, the city of Babylon is described as "the mother of the harlots and the abominations of the earth" (17:5). John the Evangelist invite the gaze of his reader to face the horror of his vision: "Come here. I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who lives near the many waters. The kings of the earth have had intercourse with her, and the inhabitants of the earth became drunk on the wine of her harlotry" (17:1–2). Anyone who has read or performed the *Spiritual Exercises* would be familiar with this rhetoric of forced horrific vision. The important factor here, however, is that the Christian image of the Great Harlot is applied to the city of Rome, the Holy City of Christendom. The image of Babylon not only indicates the ongoing prostitution in the Holy City, it also

points to its economy and political circumstances in general. Various religious figures, such as Dominican leader Girolamo Savonarola, encourage the diffusion of this comparison and see the Apocalypse originating in Rome. In 1520, Luther publishes an essay titled *On the Babylonian Captivity of the Church* that theologically justifies these visions and marks his official rupture with Rome. Such images are also commonly found in secular texts of Spanish literature such as Francisco Delicado's *La lozana andaluza* (1524) or Alfonso de Valdés' *Diálogo de las cosas ocurridas en Roma* (1527).

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