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THE MAGIC OF BRAZIL: PRACTICE AND PROHIBITION IN THE EARLY COLONIAL PERIOD, 1590–1620

INTRODUCTION

Beginning in 1925 and continuing through the 1980s, Brazilian scholars have uncovered, edited, and published the official records of the Visits of the Portuguese Inquisition to colonial Brazil. These invaluable records permit us an extraordinary glimpse into life in the early colonial centuries in Latin America, suggestive of the complex personal, social, and religious lives of the colonists, their servants and slaves, and the imperial and ecclesiastical powers that still sought to control them. The published accounts include over 700 confessions and denunciations made between 1591 and 1620 by padres, landowners, carpenters, teachers, and maids who came before the visiting Portuguese Inquisitors to confess and denounce their own and their neighbors' sins; among the records are forty-two statements detailing their use of magical powers, powders, and enchantments.[1] As the confessants and denunciants explained the forms that magic took among the colonists, many also justified their use, offering

[1] The texts currently available are João Capistrano de Abreu, ed., *Primeira visitação do Santo Ofício ás partes do Brasil: Confissões de Bahia, 1591–1592* (Rio de Janeiro: F. Briguiet, 1935); João Capistrano de Abreu, ed., *Primeira visitação do Santo Ofício ás partes do Brasil: Denunciações da Bahia, 1591–1593* (São Paulo: Homenagem de Paulo Prado, 1925); José Antônio Gonsalves de Mello, ed., *Primeira visitação do Santo Ofício ás partes do Brasil: Confissões de Pernambuco, 1594–1595* (Recife: Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, 1970); Leonardo Dantas Silva, ed., *Primeira visitação do Santo Ofício ás partes do Brasil: Denunciações de Pernambuco, 1593–1595,* 2d ed. (1929; reprint, Recife: Fundação do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico de Pernambuco, 1984); Eduardo D'Oliveira França and Sônia A. Siqueira, eds., "Segunda visitação do Santo Ofício ás partes do Brasil: Livro das confissões e ratificações da Bahia, 1618–1620," *Anais do Museu Paulista* 17

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a wonderful range of reasons and circumstances that drew the practitioners to magic. The texts also provide, in occasional questions and admonitions, the response of the Lord Inquisitors to the denunciations and confessions they heard. Not surprisingly, the position of the Roman Catholic Church was unwavering: magical cures, herbs, and other works of magic were prohibited, and severe penances were owed to the practitioners. Consistent in its distinction between the works of the devil and the works of God, between magic and religion, the Portuguese Inquisition nonetheless tended to diminish or even dismiss the import of the magical acts, reducing them to transgressions of canon law or of common sense.

This article will examine the confessions and denunciations of magical practices among Brazilians in the late 1500s and early 1600s, focusing on the place and meaning of magic in that context. Of particular importance is the apparent relationship between magical practices and the Roman Catholic religion, to which all Brazilian colonists—at least nominally—belonged. I will begin by examining the role of the Inquisition itself in the Brazilian colony and the authoritative definitions of magic or magical practices to be found in Catholic Church documents. Using the Inquisition records, those lengthy tomes transcribing the processes of inquisitorial courts, I will continue by relating the details of the magical practices themselves, as well as the perspectives brought by the Inquisitors and the confessants and denunciants who came before them to speak of magic.

Based on my reviews of the Inquisition records, I will propose that there exists no simple distinction, no clear dichotomy between religion and magic in this colonial context. The Roman Catholic penitential and inquisitorial manuals of the early modern period reveal a rather complex understanding of magic, as I will describe below. For the Church, the practice of magic was sinful because it sprang from Satanic or human initiative against God, was immoral because it represented rebellion against God and the Church, and was forbidden according to canon law and edict. The power that magic evoked was, however, still linked to divine power, and Roman Catholic metaphysics subsumed the differences between the two, reducing magical practitioners to mere interlopers in the divine or priestly domains. The practitioners similarly constructed and unraveled the difference between magic and religion, distinguishing their own acts as harmless remedies while drawing ritual words and objects as well as ritual interpretation from the dominant Catholic religion. Because

(1963): 121–547; and Rodolfo Garcia, ed., "Livro da denunciações que se fizerão na visitação do Santo Officio á cidade do Salvador de Bahia de Todos os Santos do estado do Brasil, no anno de 1618," *Annaes da Biblioteca Nacional do Rio de Janeiro* 49 (1927): 75–198. All passages quoted from these and other Portuguese sources are my own (rather literal) translations.

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of the complex nature of the various perspectives on magic found within the Inquisition documents, traditional definitions of magic and contemporary theories of ritual allow us some, but only some, additional insights into magic, its uses, and its purposes. Understanding magic and its relationship with religion in this Brazilian case study begins and ends with the words of those involved, with the supporters and opponents of magical practices. The relationship between magic and religion in the records of the Brazilian Inquisition—expressed in the terms of the Inquisitors and of the men and women who confessed their own sins and denounced others'—is not transparent in those documents. The discourse of the Inquisitors and the laity reveals, instead, a landscape of shifting boundaries of belief and rival claims.

BRAZIL AND ITS INQUISITION

Before reviewing the statements concerning magical acts and the disparate understandings of them, let me introduce the context—the visits of the Inquisition—and provide an overview of the so-called magical acts described in the Inquisition's records. The documents relevant to this study emerged from two visits of the Portuguese Inquisition to the Brazilian colony; never resident there, the imperial Inquisition visited at least three and possibly four times between 1591 and 1650. From 1591 to 1595, the Visitor General, with his notary, bailiff, and secretary, heard confessions and denunciations in the colonial capital of Salvador, Bahia and the agricultural center of Pernambuco; in that first visit, they encountered a territory that had only been claimed by Portugal ninety-one years before and that had only seen successful and intensive colonization for forty years. Because of the practice of exiling criminals and undesirables to the colony and because of the opportunity for fugitives and hidden Jews to find quiet refuge there, missionaries and government officials had requested a special visit of the Inquisition; before 1591 and between the later visits, local bishops oversaw ecclesiastical courts, and a few persons accused of more serious crimes were sent to Lisbon for trial. Of particular importance in understanding the presence of the Inquisition in its first visit is the political situation in Iberia: because of lack of direct descendants, the Portuguese Crown had passed to the Spanish kings in 1580. The Spanish domination lasted until 1640, and hence this Inquisition visit was directed—at least distantly—by a Spanish concern for social and political control in the newly won colony.[2] The inquisitorial visits were not undertaken for hegemonic reasons alone: the target of the scrutiny of colonial religious habits was "hidden Jews," the so-called

[2] Patricia Aufderheide, "True Confessions: The Inquisition and Social Attitudes in Brazil at the Turn of the Seventeenth Century," *Luso-Brazilian Review* 10 (Winter 1973): 212; and Abreu, ed., *Confissões da Bahia, 1591–1592,* pp. iv–v.

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new Christians (Jews forced to convert to Christianity) who might still be preserving their religious traditions there. The second visit for which records have been recovered was that of the inquisitorial tribunal to Salvador, Bahia, in 1618. While no documentation reveals the reasons for that visit, it has been suggested that the looming threat of the Dutch naval power and an increasing trade with Protestant countries harboring exiled Jews inspired the Portuguese crown to assert its social and political dominance through what was, in effect, its religious arm.[3]

At the start of each of these two Visits to Brazil, the Inquisitors published an edict for their Visit, proclaimed thirty-day grace periods for confessions, and called on the devout to denounce the blasphemous, sacrilegious, and otherwise inappropriate acts of friends, neighbors, and acquaintances. The results were volumes of confessions, denunciations, and ratifications of statements, six of which have been discovered and published; they contain over 750 individual statements made between 1591 and 1620.[4] Each published volume includes the public declarations of the Inquisition, proclamations of grace periods, and the transcribed oral statements of the men and women who appeared before the Inquisitor. The earlier volumes omit the oaths standardly taken before each statement and other formulaic repetitions to be expected in the original documents.[5] Still, all furnish ample biographical information in each statement, as well as lengthy if not rambling accounts of the sins con-

[3] Eduardo D'Oliveira França and Sônia A. Siqueira, "Introdução," pp. III–XXVI, and "Origem da visitação de 1618," pp. 123–29, both in França and Siqueira, eds.

[4] There has been some speculation that there was another Visit of the Portuguese Inquisition to Rio de Janeiro in 1608, but no records have been found to confirm the solitary reference to an Inquisitor's presence in that year. The first verified visits brought the Inquisition to Salvador and Pernambuco between 1591 and 1595, and four publications of records have emerged to date, including the books of confessions and denunciations from each region. The second Visit took another Inquisitor to Salvador, Bahia, in 1618, there being two modern publications of the confessions, ratifications, and denunciations from that Visit.

[5] Although the Inquisitors' transcribers systematically rendered the confession statements into the third person, it is unlikely—given the idiosyncratic and repetitious content—that any further substantial editing was then done. This assumption is based on my review of other published and manuscript copies of Inquisition proceedings, and on the fortuitous discovery of the manuscript notes apparently used to prepare the published text of the Denunciations of 1591–1593, in the archives of the Biblioteca Nacional in Rio de Janeiro ("Livro de depoimento de visitação do Santo Ofício, Salvador, 1591," Seção de Manuscritos) during my Fulbright-sponsored research trip in 1990. This appears to be the handwritten copy, undoubtedly by a paid copyist, of the text of the "Livro de Denunciacões" from the first visit. The copy ends on fol. 747 with its manuscript source in Lisbon affirmed—"Copiado do Codice no. 16 do Arquivo Nacional da Torre de Tombo—Primeiro livro de denunciações: Brasil"—and is heavily marked in pencil and pen for editing. My comparison of this with other manuscripts suggested that the editing is in the handwriting of the historian João Capistrano de Abreu himself and of the series editor, Eduardo Prado, Júnior.

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fessed or denounced, the contexts and company in which they occurred, and, often, some rationalization for the commission. Many statements also indicate some unrecorded promptings by or questions from the Grand Inquisitors, Heitor Furtado de Mendoça in the 1590s and Marcos Teixeira in the second visit, and some add concluding instructions. My past studies of the men and women who came to speak to the Inquisition suggested that they were neither the elite of Portuguese colonial society nor its most marginalized members; instead, a rather broad spectrum of society is represented—from officials and padres, to artisans and their respectable wives, to working men and women, to slaves.[6]

The circumstances of the statements were regulated by the Inquisition, and these require a brief preliminary explanation. First, most of the statements were freely given: those individuals appearing before the Inquisition—with a few exceptions—were not called to testify nor were they responding to any accusations from the tribunal.[7] It may be conjectured that confessants and denunciants alike took advantage of the opportunity provided during the grace period to demonstrate compliance with the religious authorities, receive absolution, and perhaps escape incarceration or severe penalties. Second, the statements were of a standard format. All begin with personal identification and the repetition of an oath averring a truthful account, continue with a statement of the sin and its circumstances, and, in some cases, conclude with an affirmation of Catholic faith. Many of the statements used the phrasing of the published list of sins to describe the offense. Third, the great majority of the statements were from Portuguese immigrants of middle or higher social status: there are references throughout to relative prosperity in the descriptions of property, housing, and servants.

As noted above, the primary motive for the Inquisition's visit in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries was the discovery and eradication of hidden Judaism; that was not, however, the only sin that the Inquisitors sought to eliminate. In the edict made prior to their arrival on Brazilian soil in the 1590s and used again for the second visit, the officials specified the following eight categories of sins: (1) not fearing God, including crimes of heresy and apostasy; (2) Lutheran errors; (3) Jewish ceremonies, including special observances on Friday night or Saturday,

[6] Carole A. Myscofski, "Heterodoxy, Gender and the Brazilian Inquisition: Patterns in Religion in the 1590s," *Journal of Latin American Lore* 18 (1992): 79–94.

[7] In the 1590s, e.g., only the confessant Baltezar Camelo was apparently responding to (otherwise unrecorded) denunciations. Among the denunciants, five were called—Catherina Quaresma, Ernesto Gonçalves, Domingas Allegre, Thomé Pires, and Jeronimo Barbosa—to verify events to which they were reportedly witnesses. (Abreu, ed., *Confissões de Bahia, 1591–1592,* pp. 23–24, and *Denunciações da Bahia, 1591–1593,* pp. 554, 563, 565, 569, 570.)

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butchering animals by cutting their throats, special eating practices, fasting in September, fasting for Queen Esther or for other celebrations, Passover rituals, Jewish prayers (including any prayers with no reference to the Trinity) and oaths, mourning practices (including special foods, burial cloths, and spilling out household water), and untoward reactions to Christian baptism or secret circumcision; (4) Muslim fasts for Ramadan or other Muslim practices or eating regulations; (5) heretical opinions on sin, articles of faith, or the priesthood; (6) more than one marriage; (7) magical or demonic practices; and (8) possession of a vernacular Bible.[8]

In this edict promulgated by the Inquisition, magical practices were thus strictly distinguished from the religious, and, in fact, were counted under two categories. The first category is evident in the edict's own words: the Inquisition required reports of any "magical and demonic practices," so listed without further details. The second was under the general rubric of heresy. While not specified as such within the Inquisition's edict, this connection had been established in the most widely known manual for the Inquisitors concerning the nature of sin, the *Manual for Inquisitors* of Nicolau Eymerich, first printed in 1503.[9] That source provided the details of beliefs and practices defined as heretical, including heretical magic, which consisted of sorceries using sacred materials, as well as adoration or invocation of the devil.[10]

MAGIC IN BRAZIL

Within this historical and literary context, the colonists came before the Inquisitors to reveal their knowledge of magic—according to the conceptions of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Brazil. As noted above, among the 774 statements in the Inquisition records were forty-two separate statements concerning magic or magical practices. For this study, these were distinguished from other reports of unusual religious acts according to Roman Catholic precedent, using three criteria: practices were "magical" (and hence appropriate for the current study) if they included,

[8] Abreu, ed., *Confissões Bahia, 1591–1592,* pp. xxxi–xxxv. I have here abridged the original, keeping its words for each category. Apparently, no separate edict was promulgated for the later inquisitorial visits, but rather the tribunal relied on this first proclamation being read again from pulpits and posted at church doors.

[9] The *Manual for Inquisitors* (Nicolau Eymerich, *Le manuel des inquisiteurs,* ed. and trans. Louis Sala-Molins [Paris; Mouton Éditeur, 1973], pp. 49–50, 74) was a systematic guide to sin and its variations, replacing an earlier guide by Bernard Gui. Francisco Peña edited the text for reprint publication in Rome in 1578. In it, author and editor characterized heresy, after Thomas Aquinas, as the free choice of opposition to an article of faith; heretics opposed Roman authority by their acts, were excommunicates in their doubt or contradictions, and necessarily belonged to dissident sects. Simple blasphemy, that is, blaspheming Mary or the saints, simple divination, and palm-reading were not considered to be in the province of the Inquisition and thus were not considered to be heretical.

[10] Ibid., pp. 66–71. Again, the acts of "simple diviners and seers" (p. 66), including palm-readers, were considered blasphemy and were not subject to the Inquisition.

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first, the use of one of the Portuguese terms for magic, witch, or witchcraft; second, any descriptions of practices recognizable as common European magic; and, third, an account of extraordinary occurrences or powers.[11] Most of the statements about "magic" were identified by the first criterion, that is, by use of Portuguese terms that signal such classification, that is, *feiticeira/o, feitiçaria,* and *feitiço, encantimento, embruxado* and *bruxa/o.*[12] The derivations of these terms shed some additional light on the contemporary perspective on magic. The first set of terms, based on *feitiço,* is derived from the Portuguese word for "fashion," "make," or "craft," and it identifies human artifice in cultural creation. None of the terms has ancient parallels in Greek or Latin, but similar words and usage occur in other Romance languages; it may be that Christian authorities thus distinguished the work of human creativity from the work of God. *Encantimento,* along with similar words, is derived from "call" and "chant," and again, this is a set of words apparently reserved for practices that were not Christian. The word *bruxa* or *bruxo*—for witch—has no Latin derivation, but it is found in other indigenous Iberian languages; its etymology is still mostly a matter of guesswork, and its use in early colonial Brazil was limited. The identification of magical practices with these terms already suggests their distinction from orthodox religion, but that connotation was not universal, as I will discuss further below.

The magical acts described in the confessions and denunciations provide us a window—albeit a narrow one—onto the imaginative world in which the colonists lived. Their use of such acts during the colonial period suggests the persistence of a European tradition of magic, carried

[11] None of the forty-two statements indicates influence from indigenous Brazilian Indian or African religions: the vocabulary used in the incantations was Latin or Portuguese, most of the formal practices can be traced directly to European magical practices, and the practitioners were predominantly Portuguese immigrants. Only in the documents from the early 1600s does one begin to see a place for Brazilian Indians and African slaves as healers using unspecified means. In this context, "European magic" will be used to refer to magical and forbidden practices (divination, incantations, protective spells, and curses) identified as such, primarily by the Christian authorities, but still used by Western Europeans; "Christian magic" refers to a subset of European magic that incorporates some recognizable element of Christian origin, such as Latin words, divine or saints' names, ritual objects, etc.

[12] As far as can be discerned in these texts, there is no difference between the use of the terms *feiticeira* (sorceress) and *bruxa* (witch), pace E. E. Evans-Pritchard (*Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1973]); Keith Thomas (*Religion and the Decline of Magic* [New York: Scribner's, 1971]); and Gustav Henningsen ("'The Ladies from Outside': An Archaic Pattern of the Witches' Sabbath," in *Early Modern European Witchcraft,* ed. Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Henningsen [Oxford: Clarendon, 1990]). Geoffrey Scarre remarked, in a similar study, that the religious and civil courts did not differentiate the supposed inborn powers of the witch from the learned operations of magic for the sorcerer/ess. See Geoffrey Scarre, *Witchcraft and Magic in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Europe* (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press International, 1987), pp. 3–5.

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piecemeal by individuals into their New World home; the popularity of these acts suggests their irrepressible place in Iberian culture. In the forty-two statements describing magic, two types of magic were most popular and most important, magic for the purposes of gaining love (twelve statements) and divination for discovering the unknown (eleven statements); both have the lengthiest descriptions in the records and the most discussion with the Inquisitors. There were, in addition, descriptions of four other types of magic: that for harming or controlling an enemy (nine statements), that for curing illnesses (five statements), that for causing transformations (four statements), and that for inspiring awe with marvelous powers (eleven statements). Notably, a significant number of denunciations failed to specify the ritual actions of the person suspected of magic and simply reported that she or he was "widely known" in the "public report" to be a *feiticeiro* or *bruxa.*

The confessions and denunciations of love magic describe a variety of means undertaken with the specific aim of gaining or securing the love of one's heart's desire; these were usually performed by a wife to gain and keep her husband's affections. Most often reported was the use of the words of consecration from the Roman Catholic Mass, *hoc est enim corpus meum* (this is my body), which was employed as an enchantment for the lover; the words were to be whispered into the lover's mouth while he or she was sleeping or was otherwise distracted during sex.[13] Another favored means to secure love was through a concocted potion; women admitted to adding a variety of substances to their husband's food and drink, as did Guiomar d'Oliveira in her 1591 confession. D'Oliveira had learned of the use of hazelnuts or pine nuts stuffed with her own hair and nails, ground into a powder, and put in a pot of chicken soup; of ground bones put into wine; and of her husband's own semen collected after sexual intercourse. Similarly, another woman, surnamed Nobrega, was denounced for her knowledge of special powders that might bring love.[14] And Lianor Martins was denounced in 1593, having told her denouncer of her use of a root shaped like a woman, a wolf's claw, a "card of Saint Arasmo," and seeds collected on the eve of the feast of Saint John to "make men love women or women love men as she wished."[15] A few confessions and denunciations indicate that a set of words and gestures would be sufficient to effect the desired end; d'Oliveira also confessed that she had learned an "enchantment" to improve her "bad marriage," and had, in the morning and evening, faced her husband and spoken the words

[13] Abreu, ed., *Confissões da Bahia, 1591–1592* (n. 1 above), pp. 49, 61, and *Denunciações da Bahia, 1591–1593* (n. 1 above), pp. 311–12, 339, 373, 488.

[14] Abreu, ed., *Confissões da Bahia, 1591–1592,* pp. 59–60, and *Denunciações da Bahia, 1591–1593,* pp. 423–24.

[15] Silva, ed. (n. 1 above), p. 109.

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calling upon the power of "the wood of the true cross, and the angel philosophers" to secure her husband's affections. Other methods to gain a husband or keep his love employed stolen baptismal oil, touch-cards (tokens empowered by the crafter), unspecified charms or powders, or simply the power of the witch to influence the intended and the intention.[16]

Divination, or magical practices to discover the unknown, was not only to tell the future but also to locate missing persons, uncover theft, or recover misplaced objects. Six statements report that powerful *feiticeiras* glimpsed episodes in the confessant's future or aided in the discovery of missing men and women.[17] Maria Vicente—old and "nearly blind"—was denounced for her clairvoyance: she had announced one day that "great events were occurring in Portugal," and her neighbors later learned that Castilians had invaded Lisbon on that day "or some such thing."[18] For finding lost or stolen objects or discovering the answers to simple questions, two common forms of European magic recur, one using a key inserted into a book and the other a scissors inserted into a boot or shoe. Thus, Felicia Tourinha was denounced in 1594 for using scissors-and-boot divination for foretelling a man's future path; Domingas Jorge reported that Tourinha "took a scissors and stuck it into a boot and then with both index fingers below the rings of the scissors lifted the boot into the air." Tourinha then chanted her request: "Devil with disheveled hair, devil with big ears, shaggy devil, tell me if João is going on such-and-such a road." Jorge recounted that "the scissors with the said boot moved in a half-circle to one side," confirming the missing man's route.[19] When stolen goods were sought, the recitation of the thief's name would cause the suspended book or boot to swing wildly. Another means of divination—described piecemeal in two separate accounts—used a bowl that rocked or moved in the direction of a missing object.[20]

The remaining accounts of magical acts—of harms, cures, transformations, and awful powers—are dispersed throughout the Inquisition records, there being few repetitions of the methods and participants. The

[16] Abreu, ed., *Confissões da Bahia, 1591–1592,* pp. 49–50, 59–60, and *Denunciações da Bahia, 1591–1593,* pp. 394, 432–33, 460–61, 477.

[17] Silva, ed., pp. 98–99, 121–22, 170–71, 321–22; França and Siqueira, ed. (n. 1 above), pp. 451–53.

[18] Abreu, ed., *Denunciações da Bahia, 1591–1593,* p. 396. It is interesting that Padre José de Anchieta, one of the most influential early Jesuit missionaries in the Brazilian colony, also reported clairvoyant visions of events back in the mother country, for which he received only admiration for his saintly powers. Simão de Vasconcellos, *Vida do veneravel Padre Anchieta,* 2 vols. (1672; reprint, Rio de Janeiro: Imprensa Nacional, 1943), 2:156; and Sebastião de Rocha Pita, *História da America Portuguesa* (1730; reprint, São Paulo: Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 1976), p. 94.

[19] Silva, ed., p. 187.

[20] The book-and-key ritual is described in França and Siqueira, eds., pp. 447, 449–50; the bowl "with a fury to move" is described in Abreu, ed., *Denunciações da Bahia, 1591–1593,* pp. 295, 548.

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nine confessions and denunciations of magic done to control or hurt an enemy are singular, local acts. In one of the two denunciations recalling the use of magic to kill an enemy's newborn child, for example, Isabel Antunes denounced her neighbor Anna Jacome, who was said "by the good and bad of this land" to be a witch and who had bewitched and killed Antunes's newborn daughter.[21] Two accounts detailed the use of a magical charm or *feitiço* against a disliked son-in-law and a demanding landlord. Other statements reported a chant intended to inflict pests on a neighbor's herd and claims made by witches of control over others.[22] Most of the statements concerning magical cures involve confessions of consultations with a *feiticeiro* or denunciations of others who had done likewise. In 1618, Pero de Moura confessed that he had searched out a witch to heal his brother because he didn't trust doctors, and Antonio da Costa confessed to having consulted two healers, one to heal his daughter, another to cure a friend's ailing slave.[23] Only one clear description of a cure—for a toothache—may be found in the Inquisition records: João Poré Montafaux explained that "some Italians" had taught him to relieve the pain of a toothache by touching the tooth with a nail that was then nailed into the first '*a*' of the word "Machabeus" inscribed on a wall.[24] The four descriptions of magical transformations were odd incidents recounted in denunciation records by those who purportedly saw sorceresses in the form of a cat, a butterfly with large eyes, or other suspicious forms; one account notes that the woman in question identified herself after the fact, in an effort to scare the denouncer.[25]

The final cluster of statements—that of marvelous powers—includes various claims of familiars, secret powers, or the ability to control the world. Found almost exclusively among the denunciations, all accounts describe magical powers claimed by the witches themselves to the denunciant or broadcast through "public knowledge." For example, Magdalena de Calvos denounced her neighbor Lianor Martins, who had told her that a powerful spirit came from a scar on her hip, while seven different individuals denounced Maria Gonçalves for her apparently widely known magical practices and proclamations.[26] Gonçalves had purportedly mocked the local bishop, claiming to have her own miter and chair from which to

[21] Silva, ed., pp. 25–26.

[22] Abreu, ed., *Denunciações da Bahia, 1591–1593* (n. 1 above), pp. 303, 349–50, and *Confissões da Bahia, 1591–1592* (n. 1 above), pp. 53, 59, 121.

[23] França and Siqueira, eds., pp. 453–54, 447–49.

[24] Montafaux at first calls his practice a "remedy," then amends it to "superstition," and is curtly informed by the Lord Inquisitor that "the Holy Mother Church had prohibited superstitious remedies." (França and Siqueira, eds., pp. 457–48).

[25] Abreu, ed., *Denunciações da Bahia, 1591–1593,* pp. 349, 342, 479, 540.

[26] Silva, ed., *Denunciações de Pernambuco, 1593–1595* (n. 1 above), pp. 108–10; Abreu, ed., *Denunciações da Bahia, 1591–1593,* pp. 287, 298, 395, 400–401, 424–25, 432.

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preach, and had carried the bones of hanged criminals to protect herself from the authorities. Exiled from Portugal or Pernambuco (the claimants differ) for witchcraft, Gonçalves was "known to speak with demons." Among the other statements were the assertions that one woman could cause ships to founder, that another could compel victims to act as she wished by means of a magical table, a so-called touch-card, or other undisclosed means, and that still others kept magical objects for divination or manipulation.[27]

This brief review of the statements concerning magic and magical practices hints at the complex world of the Portuguese colonists—a world built of fragments of Europe tied together in fragile new lives in Brazil. The accounts of the two predominant forms of magic, for love and divination, indicate that social relations at the turn of the sixteenth century were, in a word, tense; the dangers of the newly created community in the colony—poverty, theft, broken marriages, and abandonment—afflicted many, and precautions were taken to lessen their impact. Some colonists even resorted to forbidden practices in the hopes of easing their marriage difficulties or finding a precious object. These statements and their abundant detail also reveal a range of motives for the practice and even popularity of magic in the colony; because of the nature of confession in the early modern period and the direct questioning by the Inquisitors, the records often include the explanations from the confessants, and even from the denunciants, about their use of magic and its place in their lives. Together with the questions and comments from the Inquisitors, these records provide the basis for understanding both the relationship between magic and religion in the Brazilian colonial society and the differing perspectives that the Roman Catholic authorities and the practitioners of magic brought to the Inquisitor's tribunal.

MAGIC AND MEANING: THE INQUISITORS' PERSPECTIVES

In their penitential and inquisitorial manuals and edicts, the representatives of the Roman Catholic Church condemned the magical practices of the colonists, especially those relying on demonic forces or defying Catholic hegemony. The *Manual for Inquisitors,* as I noted above, carefully distinguished most magical acts as either heresy, that is, defiance of the teachings of the holy Mother Church, or apostasy, that is, abandonment of its protective aegis in this lower realm. Thus, the acts rightly confessed and denounced were outside the boundaries of religion and properly defined as a separate realm of belief and practice. The distinctions were significant for the Church and the state: the extension of

[27] Abreu, ed., *Denunciações da Bahia, 1591–1593,* pp. 385, 412–13; 400, 311–12; 53–54, 425–26, 432, and *Confissões da Bahia, 1591–1592,* pp. 60–61.

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religion to the control of the freelancers presented a challenge to both institutions, constituted both sin and crime, and smacked of treason. Yet the very distinction began to unravel as the Inquisitors defined magic according to Catholic theology, thereby bringing it into the Catholic system. Its identification as the work of the devil did not exclude it from their purview but, indeed, did the reverse: because it was deemed sinful, magic became part of Catholic belief if not practice. The first Visiting Inquisitor, Heitor Furtado de Mendoça, for example, chastised Guiomar d'Oliveira after her rather lengthy confession, admonishing her "that she not believe in these magic-spells and things, for they were all superstitious abuses with which the devil fooled weak people."[28] Maria Villela, who had taught another confessant much of her magical lore, "was reprimanded and ordered to confess [to a priest for absolution] and warned not to use these superstitions again."[29]

Similar inclusive statements connecting magic to Catholic belief were made in comments to diviners. After Antonio da Costa confessed to consulting and translating books of fortunes, the Inquisitor took him to task for his several transgressions: "And [he] was asked whether the said Book had information about future events, or of other things that could not be known except by divination, and if he knew that it was forbidden and that knowledge of the future was reserved to God alone."[30] The Inquisitors, in this and other questions to confessants, condemned magic because of the prohibition by the Holy Mother Church, but they did not deny the power or efficacy of divination. Their denial rested on a legalistic or moral interpretation of the act: magic was sinful, as their publications declared. But divination could indeed provide a glimpse into the future or the unknown, that is, into the realms of divine knowledge. Thus, their repeated remonstrance to diviners and their clients that knowledge of hidden deeds or the future was for God alone linked Catholic theology and ontology to the mundane expectations of divination.

This blurring of the boundary between religion and magic defies the definition of the two as dichotomous, as has been seen in too many previous efforts to understand the place of magical practices in religious life. Scholars in the nineteenth century drew sharp boundaries between "higher" religions and "lower," and between "religion" and "superstition" or "magic." Sir James George Frazer expounded one of the better-known dichotomies in his argument that religious prayers were characterized by the heartfelt pleas of supplicants beseeching divine intervention, while magical spells were the formulaic demands of ritualists compelling oth-

[28] Abreu, ed., *Confissões da Bahia, 1591–1592,* p. 62.
[29] Ibid., p. 50, n. 1.
[30] França and Siqueira, eds. (n. 1 above), p. 448.

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erwise inanimate spirits to do their bidding.[31] Advancing the work of Edward B. Tylor, Frazer homologized magic to primitive science, based in misunderstood resemblances and parallels and the human effort to control the environment.[32] The dichotomy that Frazer constructed may find its earliest foundations in Old Testament condemnations of the "false religion" of magicians and idolators, but its more likely roots are, as Stanley Tambiah has cogently argued, in the writings of early Protestant theologians seeking to reform or discredit Roman Catholic ritualism.[33] Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Ulrich Zwingli thus depended on the polemical claim that "there was a fundamental distinction between prayer and spell, the former belonging to true religion, the latter to false religion."[34] Martin Luther, for example, availed himself of that distinction when he challenged the Roman Catholic assertion that the sacramental acts of the Mass were valid in and of themselves and not diminished by the diminished capacity or immorality of the priest and, again later, when he defined meaningful sacrament as necessarily containing an element of God's intervention or necessarily being connected with God through his word.[35]

Ancient and theological precedents notwithstanding, the dichotomy that Frazer offers has little correspondence with the categories created by the Catholic authorities. Other, similar dichotomies derived from Frazer take us no further in understanding the ecclesiastic view. In the Inquisition records, magical practices were not—as Mischa Titiev has proposed—distinguished from religious rituals as "private" rather than "communal or broadly social" acts.[36] Indeed, the Catholic Church supported a variety of religious activities, and did not challenge individual religious acts that responded to "a private or personal emergency."[37] And while the Inquisitors marked the differences in the sources of magical

[31] James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough,* 2 vols. (1890; reprint, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1966) 1:52–54.

[32] Edward B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art and Custom,* 6th ed., 2 vols. (New York: Putnam's, 1920), esp. 1:112–44. Tylor calls magic "one of the most pernicious delusions that ever vexed mankind" (p. 112), based as it was on misconceptions of natural law.

[33] Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah, *Magic, Science, Religion, and the Scope of Rationality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

[34] Ibid., p. 19.

[35] From Martin Luther, "Treatise on Baptism" and "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church," in *Works of Martin Luther,* ed. Henry Eyster Jacobs and Adolph Spaeth, 6 vols. (Philadelphia: A. J. Holman, 1915–32), 1:56–63, 2:216, quoted in *A Compend of Luther's Theology,* ed. Hugh Thomson Kerr (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1943), pp. 164–66, 175–76.

[36] Mischa Titiev, "A Fresh Approach to the Problem of Magic and Religion," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology,* 16 (1960): 292–98, reprinted in William A. Lessa and Evon Z. Vogt, eds., *Reader in Comparative Religion* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), p. 334.

[37] Ibid.

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and religious power—as Karen Jolly has suggested in her studies of medieval magic in Anglo-Saxon England—they were not consistent in their ascription of magic and its practice to demonic influences.[38] Many modern scholars, I suspect, believe that the modern use of the distinction between "magic" and "religion" is based in the trials of heretics before the European Inquisition. This, as the Inquisition records demonstrate, is not possible: the Roman Catholic perspective through the sixteenth century was not dichotomous, and the Inquisition's definitions of sin are sometimes perversely complex. Thus, the distinction between magic and religion formulated by Frazer and other scholars after him would be unrecognizable to the different speakers in the Brazilian religious context, and to any others beyond the reach of modern discourse.

While the manuals and edicts indicate that the Church relied on historical tradition, especially concerning the nature of sin, to define and distinguish magic and religion, the statements from the Inquisitors add other dimensions to the official view. First, the Inquisitors challenged the authority of the practitioners to perform their acts, whether the acts were magical or not; the men and women practitioners had no part in the ecclesiastical lineage, no dispensation from the hierarchy, no title to the roles of ritual leader or teacher that they claimed. Despite the presence of the materials sanctified by the Church—printed texts, Latin phrases, and consecrated objects—the practitioners' use of them was not sanctioned. In this, the Inquisitors upheld not only the elitist standards of the contemporary church and state, but also the trenchant theological understanding of the Church that ordination alone conferred the sacramental powers of the priest.[39] Those powers descended to each ordained man through the priestly line of the Church—through the papal claim to Petrine authority—and, ultimately, from its divine source. The power contained within the sacramental rites was under the unwavering control of the Church and might be available only to those free of mortal sin according to the laws established by the Church and—in the Brazilian colony—maintained by the Inquisition. On those grounds, the Inquisitors further admonished the practitioners of magic that their remedies and words were not from God but from his enemy, Satan. Whether fool-

[38] Karen Jolly, "Magic, Miracle, and Popular Practice in the Early Medieval West: Anglo-Saxon England," in *Religion, Science and Magic,* ed. Jacob Neusner, Ernest S. Frereichs, and Paul V. M. Flescher (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 166–82.

[39] The popular *Manual for Confessors and Penitents* explained the meaning of sacramental power or grace, and its limits. After the summary section, which declared that a sacrament "produces grace *ex opere operato,*" the author explains that "sacrament is the visible sign that signifies and produces in the soul the invisible divine grace, by command of God," and that the sacramental power is instrumental, producing grace according to its creator's mandate. He adds that the Council of Trent had declared denial of its power *ex opere operato* (that is, out of the very doing of the act) to be heresy. Martín de Azpilcueta Navarro, *Manual de confessores y penitentes* (Valladolid: Fernández de Cordova, 1570), pp. 385–86.

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ishly misled or perversely unfaithful, practitioners of magic were in thrall to the demons subverting God's dominion, and they had disobeyed the divine law of (true) religion. Their reliance on demonic power, however, brought them into a realm that was not essentially opposed to God's but rather subordinate to it, and practitioners had thus failed in their human role of obedient and trustworthy servant to God and the Church. And the Inquisitors condemned them as heretics, that is, as members of the Church who had violated the ecclesiastical command to accept all Catholic teachings.

MAGIC AND MEANING: THE PRACTITIONERS' PERSPECTIVES

While the inquisitorial tribunal thus distinguished magic from religion and sought to eradicate its practice in the colonial society, magic maintained a stubborn presence in Brazil, according to the records from the 1590s to the 1620s. The accounts of magical practices offer us not only the details of the rituals and beliefs but also a sense of how and why magic was done by its practitioners. In the statements made by those who confessed or denounced magic, we find their interpretations and justifications for its use.

As with other confessions and denunciations, those of magical practices were probably done to ease the conscience, to prove compliance with the teachings of the Catholic Church and support for the Inquisition, or to mitigate the penances that some offenses required. For these reasons, we might expect the statements to cohere carefully to the inquisitorial condemnation of magic. Several statements do, in fact, offer evidence that the practitioners had concluded that the magical practices they reported were wrong or ineffective. Paula Siqueira, for example, ended her lengthy confession about her use of several kinds of love magic by saying that she did not recall the effect of chanted words, had not used the touch-card that might bind her husband, and that after giving her husband powdered altarstone in his wine, she "did not sense an improvement."[40] Similarly, Magdalena de Calvos ended her denunciation of a friend for love magic by adding that she had not wished to participate and knew that her friend had tricked others.[41] Gaspar Manuel reported the claims to magical power made by Gaspar Gonçalves but dismissed them, admitting that "he took him for a liar."[42]

Despite the confrontation that might be expected from the Inquisitor, statements about love magic and divination, in particular, endorse these magical practices and emphasize their widespread use and effectiveness.

[40] Abreu, ed., *Confissões da Bahia, 1591–1592* (n. 1 above), pp. 49–50.
[41] Silva, ed. (n. 1 above), pp. 108–9.
[42] Abreu, ed., *Denunciações da Bahia, 1591–1593* (n. 1 above), p. 461.

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This astonishing challenge to ecclesiastical authority may be seen in confessions from individuals in the higher ranks of society as well as from those in the working and lower strata. The confession texts also record the verbal chastisements from the Visiting Inquisitors, but they do not reveal any subsequent penalties that might have accrued to those who not only practiced but believed in such magic.

Evidence of the widespread use of magic emerges from the very number of confessions and denunciations. Although few in relation to the overall number of confessions and denunciations in the six collections of records, the statements concerning magic indicate that—across a significant span of geographic and temporal distance—European magical practices persisted in recognizable forms. Several of the statements specifically confirm the prevalence of individual magical practices, especially love magic. Sermons were preached against the use of sacramental words for that end, as Simão Pinto reported during his denunciation. Similarly, divination was widely known: the use of book-and-key divination was "a thing much done in this land," according to one confessant; it had been done by a carpenter's wife, and it had been witnessed by the wife of the clerk of the exchequer in the colonial capital. Another confessant's book of fortunes had been employed "on many occasions" for many different people, and yet another explained that the diviner he chose was "well known" with a good reputation.[43] When Pero de Moura was questioned about his motives for consulting the *feiticeiro,* he replied that it was "the custom" in the city to consult the magical healer and that his brother had indeed recovered.[44]

Like Moura's bold response, a surprising number of denunciations and confessions persisted in assuring the Inquisitors of the efficacy of the magical practices, even in the face of questioning. At the end of her confession concerning love magic, Guiomar d'Oliveira responded positively to the questions of the Inquisitor. When he asked "whether she found that the said *feitiços* . . . were of use to her," she replied that "according to her experience the said acts worked well . . . as she wished" and that following her use of magic, she had found her husband "improved."[45] The other reports of successful love magic were at second hand: Margarida Carneira, denounced by a number of different men and women, had bragged that her touch-card for love had worked for her, while a daughter described her mother's successful "remedy" for a bad marriage. And

[43] Ibid., p. 339; França and Siqueira, eds. (n. 1 above), pp. 448, 452; Abreu, ed., *Denunciações da Bahia, 1591–1593,* p. 170.
[44] França and Siqueira, eds., pp. 453–54.
[45] Abreu, ed., *Confissões da Bahia, 1591–1592,* pp. 59–62.

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Bernardo Pimental seemed to struggle against affirmation while denouncing his lover for magically entrapping him.[46]

Nearly all of the confessions and denunciations about divination hint at or confirm their efficacy. Futures were accurately foretold and lost objects recovered, according to the various accounts. Even reluctant participants were convinced: Francisca da Silva asserted that she had not believed Brisida Lopes since she had heard that she was a witch, but she acknowledged that her predictions had come true. Domingas Jorge informed the Inquisitor that she had disapproved of the scissors-and-boot divination performed by Felicia Tourinha (coincidentally the daughter of a priest) and had reprimanded her, but she claimed that the identification of the thief had proven correct.[47] The denunciants' simple reports of unusual sights and sudden deaths similarly indicate their belief in the powers of the practitioners to transform themselves and harm others. Thus, Dona Lucia de Mello disclosed that she had hidden her children from a woman who she believed could transform herself into a butterfly, and Padre Balthesar de Miranda, a Jesuit, reported that after a cat had appeared in his family house—apparently sent by a known "witch"—his infant brother died suddenly.[48] Francisca Roiz similarly supported the efficacy of magic when she denounced Joanna Ribeiro because the latter had "bewitched" her child using the caul that had covered the child's head at birth and salt from a church baptism; her son had died within a month of the curse.[49]

These unexpected affirmations before the Inquisitors suggest that magical rituals were part of an accepted tradition carried to the colony by the European colonists and that their widespread availability and evident efficacy contributed to their continued popularity. Magic might have provided an alternative religious dimension in the colony, alongside of the highly structured and often poorly understood rituals of the Catholic Church. Indeed, given the missionary focus on conversion of non-Christian natives and the accompanying disorganization of the ecclesiastical dominion in the region, magical practices and practitioners may have formed a network within colonial society, offering a new strategy for the ordering of social relations in a new world. As Catherine Bell has suggested, ritual activity, or "ritualization," provides "a strategic way of acting in specific social situations,"[50] and the "deployment of

[46] Abreu, ed., *Denunciações da Bahia, 1591–1593,* pp. 311–12, 479–80, 487–89.

[47] Silva, ed., pp. 321–22, 187. Other affirmations of successful divination are found in ibid., pp. 98, 121; and França and Siqueira, eds., p. 452.

[48] Abreu, ed., *Denunciações da Bahia, 1591–1593,* pp. 342–43, 349–50.

[49] Ibid., p. 303.

[50] Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 67.

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ritualization, consciously or unconsciously, is the deployment of a particular construction of power relationships, a particular relationship of domination, consent, and resistance."[51]

The magical rites of love magic and divination may be viewed, then, as part of a wider complex of ritualization within the Brazilian colonial context and as part of the resistance to the hegemonic power of Portuguese religious and political authority. As independent activities, the magical practices offer participants the opportunity to embody a set of power relations created outside of the rigidly demarcated colonial power structure. Magical practitioners may thus be offering new modes of ritualization, privileging their own activities as if they were sacramental rites and elevating their own powers to do so. At the same time, because all of the magical rites use elements of Roman Catholic rituals, whether in language, objects, or gestures, their participants are appropriating the power and authority of church rites for their own ends. This strategy might not only undercut the hegemony of the Church but also present dramatic resistance to the monopolistic efforts of the Catholic Church. In the context of the ongoing process of constructing new lives and a new society in Brazil, colonists used magic as a means for bringing a new sense of power and order. Because, as Bell claims, ritualization is "closely involved with the objectification and legitimation of an ordering of power as an assumption of the way things really are," it presents the opportunities for "the embodiment of power relations," both for the ritual experts—who seem to create and manipulate the rites—and for the participants—who exercise a certain degree of control over their own roles in the ritual experience.[52] In this light, the contentions of the denounced sorceress Maria Gonçalves are fundamental challenges to the powers in the colony; her claims to a miter and preaching chair may best be understood as her appropriation of the power that the royal appointee might otherwise wield over her.

Bell's argument concerning ritualization and social power focuses primarily on the dominant power relations within a society and the ways in which the religious rituals generated and perpetuated by the dominant powers support the manifest hegemonic power of the ritual specialists—in this case, the Roman Catholic authorities. Thus, rituals may "empower those who may at first appear to be controlled by them," and individual participants may resist the ritualization, or appropriate meaning or power from it, as they participate.[53] Use of this interpretation, however, does not allow us to guess why magic rather than sacrament is the preferred means for affecting Brazilian life and what distinctions practitioners

[51] Ibid., p. 206.
[52] Ibid., p. 170.
[53] Ibid., p. 207.

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made between magical rituals and the rituals of the Catholic Church. The latter, through the sacraments of matrimony, confession, and the Mass itself, provided regular, traditional, and powerful rituals through which participants might call upon God, saints, and coreligionists in hope of an improved marriage or recovered wealth. Why would anyone turn from the magnificently ritualized actions within the baroque churches of colonial Brazil to whispering Latin in bed? How do we understand the place and meaning of magical rituals for the practitioners and their choice of one ritualization over another?

The descriptions of magic by the practitioners suggest that the magical rituals provided an alternative to the Roman Catholic rituals but their use still drew upon the power of rituals to ameliorate social and religious relationships. The significance of this dimension of ritual has been further explored by Jonathan Z. Smith in his investigations of ritual anomalies and paradoxes. In particular, Smith considers the accomplishment of ritual activities when the practices clearly contradict ordinary expected behaviors, and he concludes that ritual "represents the creation of a controlled environment where the variables (the accidents) of ordinary life may be displaced precisely because they are felt to be so overwhelmingly present and powerful."[54] Ritual performance, then, is the completion of a perfected set of gestures and words, done in conscious tension with the way things are ordinarily; the ritual agent accomplishes the perfected behaviors that are impossible elsewhere but that are, nonetheless, deemed fundamental to existence. And because not every act or speech may be meaningful, not every gesture or object representative of the perfected order that rituals generate, each ritual community exercises an "economy of signification,"[55] that is, chooses which ordinary acts, words, objects, and people may best carry the information condensed during ritual time and space.

In the Brazilian context, one might expect the Roman Catholic rituals to meet the purposes Smith has proposed. So the Mass should have provided the means for demonstrating and enacting the understanding of the ideal relationship with the divine and the ecclesiastical in Brazilian colonial life. And the sacrament of matrimony, so recently reconstrued by the Council of Trent (1545–1563), should have displaced the wildly multiplying variables encountered in the colonial context. But the magical rituals, especially the love magic described above, similarly represented the creation of a controlled environment—in this case not only removed from the ordinary world of everyday contradictions but also from the

[54] Jonathan Z. Smith, *To Take Place: Toward Theory in Ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 109, and *Imagining Religion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 54–56, 63.

[55] Smith, *Imagining Religion,* p. 56.

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religious contradictions of colonial Roman Catholicism. Central among these, for the women who turn to magical practices, were the contradictions of marriage.

Portrayed by the early modern Catholic Church as a union of two souls blessed before God by the priest, marriage in the Brazilian colony was, in fact, one of a number of common cohabitation patterns controlled by politically and economically more powerful men. The Council of Trent had paid special attention to the reform of the sacrament of matrimony, decreeing it ordained by the "divine Spirit" to be an "indissoluble union" whose essence was the perfection of "natural love."[56] Struggling with the problem of clandestine marriages, especially those performed without parental consent, the theologians of the council inaugurated the publication of banns and the requirement of the public marriage ceremony before the church door or before stipulated witnesses. Notably, the synod included strongly worded exhortations against premarital cohabitation, abduction for marriage, and concubinage. In Brazil, not long after the close of the council, women of the upper classes faced arranged, clandestine, and even bigamous marriages, while women of the lower strata (including Native-American and African women) found cohabitation and concubinage their only experience in the place of the sanctioned marriages.

Extending Smith's theory, I would suggest that the religious practice of Roman Catholicism itself—in the sacrament of marriage and its concomitant theology—created new contradictions in the colonial situation that its own religious rituals could not address. The theological concept of "natural love" was rooted in biblical texts, whether derived from Adam's vow to "cleave to his wife" or from Paul's admonition that "husbands love their wives," but it was singularly rare in Brazilian life.[57] Canonical law may have mandated that marriage was sacramental, indissoluble, and subject to ecclesiastical decrees, but that law could not mandate its successful enactment in the lives of women in the Brazilian colony. Whether clandestine or public, the sacrament of matrimony left too many married women in infelicitous marriages and still more unmarried women bound for condemned relationships.

Here, magical practices can be seen to displace at least two contradictions in colonial society in the social and religious dimensions of colonial life. First, love magic displaced the societal contradictions concerning marriage. Its practitioners conjured up an image of ideal love-

[56] So stated in the introductory paragraph to the "Doctrine on the Sacrament of Marriage," preceding the reformed canons and chapters on matrimony, in *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent,* trans. J. Waterworth (New York: Catholic Publication Society, [1848]), p. 193.

[57] Ibid.

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centered marriage for an ideal society—an image of true and steady devotion of one man to one woman. But, given the evidence of relatively infrequent and unstable marriages in the documents of the Inquisition and other court records, it was an ideal apparently seldom realized in colonial society. Second, love magic displaced the religious contradictions concerning marriage. Although the sacrament of matrimony had been created by the Catholic Church to constitute and sanctify the marriage relationship as an equal union of two souls, the unions that might have been so sanctified apparently did not live up to the ritual. Those few who were married in Church ceremonies only rarely found the married life to achieve that sanctioned state. The Catholic ritual itself thus created new contradictions—religious contradictions that later magical rituals might overcome.

Where the accepted religious rituals disappointed, the magical practices offered requital—a reconstitution of the ideal relationship, not only recognized by society but also expressed in love between the partners. The very use of elements from Catholic rituals in love magic suggests that the creators and practitioners of love magic were seeking control over the dissonance created by the religious ideals, seeking to displace the nearly overwhelming contradictions of their ordinary lives and of the religion that no longer met their needs. We can see the same factors at work in the divination rituals, which addressed the contradictions between the evangelized ideal of a just and equal Christian society and the dreadful reality of conflicted life in the colony. The creation of small groups—new communities—using divination displaced those contradictions, as the recovery of lost objects and control over their lives empowered the ritual agents. In those rituals, too, elements of Catholic liturgy may be seen, from the use of authoritative texts for consultation or ritual manipulation to the chanting of prayerful requests for revelation of the truth.

Still, not everything in Brazilian religious life might signify the successful displacement of commonplace contradictions. Ritual choice, the exercise of what Smith calls the "economy of signification," may be seen in magical practices and in the Inquisition's stance on magic. The practitioners of magic restricted their acts and words, keeping their rituals hidden and brief, as if the deliberately spare rites might thereby enhance the considerable power of ritual enactment. The Inquisition, too, engaged its "strategy of choice," in choosing to deny any ritual meaning to the magical rites. Instead, the Inquisitors renamed those rites, calling them superstitions, demonic deceptions, or simple foolishness.

Using Smith's perspective on ritual, we may understand some of the reasons for the continuance, even the flourishing, of magical practices in the Brazilian colony. But the greater challenge to our understanding,

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beyond the possible meanings or functions of these magical rituals, is grasping how the participants themselves classified their acts. What, in fact, did they think they were doing? Did they distinguish magic from religion and turn to magic when religion failed? The answers to these questions are not easy, but some may be found in the words of the confessant and denunciant themselves. These statements revealed the presence of a perceptible continuum between religious and magical acts, and they show that the practitioners believed that their magic was either deeply rooted in Catholicism or was as legitimate as the rites in the dominant religion.

As noted above, both confessants and denunciants proclaimed the efficacy of the magic they witnessed. These claims of efficacy are matched in the records by declarations from confessants and even from denunciants that they believed the magical activities to be appropriate, whether taken as first or last resort. Some termed their activities "prayers," "devotions," or "remedies," terms that denoted religious activities—and terms that the inquisitors hastened to amend. Others stated their views directly to the Inquisitors in unambiguous assertions. Maria Villela's affirmation of love magic appears first in Paula Siqueira's confession. Siqueira reported that Villela had "used many things so that her husband would love her and that first she called on God about this; however, after she saw that God did not want to improve her husband," she turned to the use of a magical potion.[58] Guiomar d'Oliveira explained that she had been offered love magic as remedies by women who knew that she "had a bad marriage," a description to be found in a number of similar cases. And d'Oliveira found that at least one of the remedies worked. Finally, Maria de Espinhosa offered a concluding statement that may represent the views of many confessants concerning magic. After her careful description of her key-and-book magic to uncover thefts and her denial of any pact with the devil, the Inquisitor asked "whether it seemed to her that the [magic] was done by the work of the Devil or by Divine miracles, and if she knew that the Holy Mother Church forbade such fortunes for being a thing that the Devil might help? She responded that it seemed to her that to uncover the thefts was a work of God."[59]

When viewed as a group, the statements concerning magic often portray the deeds as religious practices, as extensions of the teachings of the Christian church, or as familiar—even ordinary—efforts to affect the course of daily life. The borrowing of sacred phrases and articles from the Catholic Church—from the words of consecration to holy oil to churchyard stones—suggests that many magical practices simply extended the recognized power of the church to other, personal ends. This

[58] Abreu, ed., *Confissões da Bahia, 1591–1592*, p. 50.
[59] França and Siqueira, eds. (n. 1 above), p. 450.

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extension of Christianity did not result in a realm of practice antithetical to medieval theology and theurgy but rather, as Keith Thomas has argued, added a repertoire of independent deeds parallel to the mysterious blessings, protections, and transmutations that the Church itself regularly performed.[60] The touch-cards, powders, and other magical objects were regarded as charms as potent as the crucifixes, home-shrines, and medals that the same documents describe, and the power of written formulae echoes the power of the unavailable (because untranslated) words of the Bible or Mass. Indeed, the invocation of demons relies on the very powers that church fathers denounced but did not deny, and simply recalls the forces usually renounced and dismissed in the sacrament of baptism. Neither confessants nor denunciants, finally, conveyed any great sense of urgency or terror in the description of magical acts. While fear is evident in the few accounts of "demonic witches" who harmed others, more statements reveal the confessant or denunciant to be unsurprised by the presence of magic. The extraordinary feats of magic had become ordinary to the Brazilian colonists—the claims of magical powers over demons, cobras, and all the chaos of life were no more distant from their lives than the teachings of the Church. (If one may extrapolate from the contemporary history of the scarcity of clergy, magical practitioners may have been more common and more reliable in some areas.) With this evidence, one might conclude that the colonists did not always separate magic from religion, or that the boundary between the two was, from their perspective and in their words, rather more fluid than those two terms suggest.

Where the sanctioned methods failed, alternative methods were readily available, and this is how magic was viewed in the confession and denunciation statements from Brazil. Colonists attributed failures of life and love to forces that might be addressed with Latin prayers or private devotions; God, the saints, the "angel philosophers," and devils were within the reach of the faithful, and they might improve spouses and circumstances. Faced with arranged marriages, and—as is evident in other confessions and denunciations—bigamy and abandonment, women procured potions and chants to win the love of their husbands. Those who lost scarce and precious worldly goods not only prayed, but also used book, boot, and bowl to discover thieves and their own futures.

Thus, the enchantments of d'Oliveira, the witchcraft that killed Isabel Antunes's daughter, and the magical healing on which Moura relied placed the power of religion in the hands of new practitioners. Rather than give even tacit assent to the power structures enacted in the sanctioned rituals of the Roman Catholic Church, the supporters of magic established new rites or perpetuated old ceremonies that were more

[60] Thomas (n. 12 above), pp. 25–37.

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directly responsive to the new situations of the colony. Magic provided the opportunity for resolution of growing problems and a response to the sense that Catholic rituals fell short of their expected accomplishments. We can see similar patterns of displacement in other Inquisition records, as confessants admitted to missing Mass, participating in Jewish or indigenous rituals, or creating elaborate private devotions at home. Both confessants and denunciants rebuffed the inquisitorial efforts to minimize or deny the shifting power, as they repeatedly characterized these extraecclesiastical practices as devotions, religion, and significant ritual. With Maria de Espinhosa, they affirmed that they, too, could create significance; they, too, could enact "a work of God."

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