

The Unmaking of a Pedophilic Priest: Transnational Clerical Sexual Abuse in Guatemala

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David Roney knew that he wasn't right. "I always felt kind of on the outside," he wrote in 1987. "Maybe it was a genuine vocation, but it wore out" (1987: 4, 8). Ordained a Roman Catholic priest in 1945, Roney served the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, Minnesota, for over fifty years, but it was a struggle for him. "I really want to feel a closeness to God," he admitted, "[but] I have not so far experienced it" (*ibid.*: 8). He confessed all of this (and more) as a resident of Foundation House. This was a treatment facility for priests and monks struggling with a range of psychiatric disorders, including pedophilia. Perched atop 2,000 rambling acres of New Mexico desert, Foundation House treated more than six hundred clerics before closing its doors in 1995. Founded by a Roman Catholic order known as the Servants of the Paraclete, this facility allowed priests such as Roney to enter and exit therapy while pastoring congregations, but the "program," as priests came to call it, did not always work. Its mix of psychotherapy, medication, and moral theology could not always correct the most incorrigible of these men. "You're God's chosen one," Roney told a six-year-old girl in 1967. "He has a special job for you" (Kaminsky 2007). All said, by 2016, residents of Minnesota had filed more than eight hundred claims of child sexual abuse by Roman Catholic priests (Olson and Hopfensperger 2017).

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Roney's case is particularly haunting because he sexually abused children for decades, and then he vanished—not into thin air but to Guatemala. After a career of accusations and payouts, with Roney doing his part to make Minnesota number one in Church bankruptcies, Bishop Raymond Lucker retired this notoriously predatory priest to Central America in 1994.¹ Roney died of an aneurysm almost ten years later in Guatemala, but not before working intimately with a Church-run orphanage for victims of Guatemala's genocidal civil war (1960–1996).² He even adopted one of the orphans, eventually raising the six-year-old girl in a private residence located just across the street from the Church's elementary school. A handful of missionaries worried about the arrangement, writing at one point to Bishop Lucker in the United States about how the little girl “spent her days inside Father Roney's home” (Kaminsky 2007), but their letters had little effect. Because David Roney had already vanished. He had disappeared. Poof.

To suggest that Roney disappeared is not to discount the trauma that he inflicted on any number of Guatemalans or to ignore the unease expressed by concerned Catholics in the United States.³ Instead, it is to confront two deeply interrelated points. The first is clerical sex abuse's global footprint. Despite all the books written on this troubling topic, exceedingly few flag the fact that bishops did not move priests just between parishes but also across borders, with facilities such as Foundation House often serving as principle points of transfer for suspected clergy from the United States to Latin America. The second point is that priests such as Roney did not just travel across international borders but more importantly between incompatible psycho-juridical domains. Guatemala has never had a program, let alone a Foundation House, and so the country has never had a pedophilic priest. This last point marks the dark underside of a well-established philosophical position that, in Ian Hacking's words, “a kind of person

¹ The 2013 Minnesota Child Victims Act set the conditions for an unprecedented wave of litigation by eliminating civil statutes of limitations for sexual abuse of minors and by establishing open courthouse doors for adults sexually exploited by clergy.

² Indigeneity is critically important to this extended research project and will be pursued at length in a separate article and eventually a book-length manuscript. Here, it is important to stress the extensive violence wrought against indigenous communities during Guatemala's civil war. The conflict pitted a militarized government against the country's indigenous majority population. Numbers vary, but there is general consensus that the army murdered roughly two hundred thousand people, disappeared fifty thousand, and displaced one million indigenous men, women, and children (CEH 1999; REMHI 1998).

³ There continue to be instances of denial by those clergy accused of sexual abuse, but it is important to note that the tone of the Church's response has become strikingly confessional, with Roman Catholic communities across the United States publishing lists of credibly accused priests. The Roman Catholic Diocese of Tucson, Arizona, released the first of these lists on 21 June 2002. With its fifteen names, it aspires toward transparency. Several more gestures have followed over the years, with 146 dioceses and twenty religious orders across the United States releasing their own lists.

[comes] into being at the same time as the kind itself [is] being invented” (1987: 165). Hacking call this process “making up people” to mark those moments when modes of description “create new ways for people to be” (ibid.: 161). To which this article asks, can the inverse also be true? Could it be the case that, removed from a context in which there are established categories of personhood such as pedophilia, somebody might, in a certain sense, cease to be?

Answering this question provides the study of clerical sexual abuse with a much-needed comparative perspective. The phenomenon is already well-documented in the United States, with scandals affecting more than fifty U.S. cities (John Jay College of Criminal Justice 2004), but similar scandals at comparable scales have begun to arise in such Latin American countries as Argentina (BBC 2009), Brazil (*Guardian* 2005), Chile (Bonney 2015), Mexico (Mexico News Daily 2017), and Peru (Reuters 2013). There is also evidence that Pope Francis obstructed the litigation of clerical sexual abuse when he served as the Archbishop of Buenos Aires from 1998 to 2013 (CBC 2013).⁴ Given these developments, it is important not only to appreciate that each of these Latin American countries has culturally specific understandings of such key categories as consent, sexuality, childhood, and abuse but also that the Roman Catholic Church exploited this comparative insight to evade a host of responsibilities.⁵ This includes the moment when Bishop Lucker retired Roney to rural Guatemala, not simply to cover up his pedophilia but rather to unmake it.⁶

Engaging the unmaking of Roney also provides critical leverage on the study of subject formation. Foundational scholarship announces that the

⁴ The extant literature on clerical sexual abuse does not address the transnational movement of priests suspected of the crime. Journalists have identified the general contours of this phenomenon, but academic research largely maintains a nationalist framework, with a commitment to domestic matters of church and state. For work in the United States, see John Seitz (2011) and Robert Orsi (2016). For critical research on a Latin American case, see Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1998).

⁵ See the work of Heather Montgomery on cross-cultural attitudes toward sexual abuse. Her overarching perspective is prescient: “Both anthropological and historical approaches to child sexual abuse must refrain from projecting contemporary social concerns and anxieties onto others, whether or not they are separated by time or geography” (2007: 319).

⁶ Journalistic accounts of clerical sexual abuse in and beyond the United States tend to deploy the metaphor of the “cover up” to describe those efforts by Church leadership to hide or disguise malfeasance. This has been a productive line of investigation, especially for those who demand accountability from the Church, but the more provocative analytic explored in this essay exceeds the dynamics of appearance and surface politics to explore more ontologically robust efforts at remaking and unmaking problematic people. The work of Maya Mayblin has been important on this point. She writes: “Catholic ordination is said to impart an ‘indelible mark’ on the soul. The change to the self of the ordained is henceforth permanent in character; once done it cannot be undone. A Catholic priest, validly ordained, is ontologically altered and thus becomes a direct successor of St Peter, who in turn is imagined as the rock (*kipha*) upon which the Church is figuratively built. St Peter, however, is not only the foundation but himself an echo of Christ, the ultimate originator of priestly DNA” (2019: 135).

subject is not a transhistorical or transcultural phenomenon but rather a historically contingent construction produced through practice (Bourdieu 1990), performance (Butler 2005), play (Goffman 1959), and power (Foucault 1977). Indeed, Hacking's "Making Up People" (1987) provides an important moment of reflection for those scholars interested in the modes of description that make possible new ways of being people: for example, the making of the homosexual (Plummer 1981), body (Gallagher and Laqueur 1987), self (Taylor 1992), child (O'Malley 2003), and refugee (Gatrell 2013). Given that the Roman Catholic Church has long been an empirical point of reference for such studies of subject formation—from pastoralism (Foucault 2007) and mysticism (Bynum 1982) to ritual (Bell 1992) and the confession (Burrus 2008)—this article adds that the Church also provides ample evidence of an opposite process: of unmaking people; of, for example, moving predatory priests to places where pedophilia as a disease and the pedophile as a diseased person do not exist in any kind of ontological sense.

TRANSFERRED AND TRANSFORMED

The unmaking of David Roney began some two hundred years ago in Guatemala. In the early 1820s, as the Guatemalan government restructured its economy towards the cultivation of coffee, notions of order and progress guided efforts at liberal reform (Handy 1984; Smith 1990; McCreery 1994).⁷ These included large-scale infrastructural projects such as the construction of roadways and ports, but also the implementation of anticlerical programs that seized church property, expelled foreign clergy, and abolished religious orders (Hernández Sandoval 2018). Guatemala's government carved out a clear division between Church and state by systematically undercutting the Roman Catholic Church's power and authority (Sullivan-González 1998). Guatemala's president went so far as to recruit Protestant ministers from the United States to "civilize" the country, not only with a Protestant work ethic but also with a biblically infused theology that prized basic literacy. Reverend Edward Haymaker, a graduate of the Yale Divinity School, arrived in 1887 to "crush Romanism ... which subject[s] the masses to pauperism, illiteracy, superstition, and bestiality" (quoted in Garrard-Burnett 1997: 40). Because, Haymaker continued, "when the people of Guatemala begin to develop along modern lines, when they learn sanitation, motherhood, education, thrift, ... [Guatemala] will be one of the greatest little countries in the world" (ibid.: 40–41).

⁷ The study of Guatemala's liberal era includes important insights on the country's violent transition towards modernity (Arias 1990) and church-state relationships (Miller 1976), each emphasizing the intense struggle over land and power between these two stalwart institutions and the role that the Church played in consolidating power in a time of stark changes.

These anticlerical programs radically reduced the number of Roman Catholic priests in Guatemala;⁸ by 1870, there were only ninety-four for a country of two million people, and fifty years later there were just eighty (Miller 1976). With one Vatican diplomat describing the state of Roman Catholicism in Guatemala as “deplorable,” the most dramatic disparity crested along the lines of city and country (Hernández 2014: 255). Most of Guatemala’s clerics lived in the capital city, while the rural highlands eventually carried a priest-to-parishioner ratio as low as one to eighty-eight thousand (Samandú, Siebers, and Sierra 1990: 9). This raised concerns for the laity. A Dominican friar toured the countryside in 1914, remarking that many couples lived in “concubinage” for the simple fact that Guatemalans had limited access to the sacrament of matrimony (Monroy 1973: 363–64, quoted in Hernández 2014: 30). Neither were there enough priests to perform baptisms, confessions, and first holy communions, and hardly anyone observed last rites. The Church also proved incapable of reproducing itself, with Guatemala’s seminaries ordaining just eight priests between 1914 and 1920 (Hernández 2014: 31).

Pope Pius XI (1922–1939) intervened by transferring priests from the United States to Guatemala.⁹ This was not a one-time deployment. With seminaries across North America brimming with young aspirants, U.S. bishops forged a set of social relationships that quickly connected the two countries. These sometimes took the form of full clerical placements, with U.S. priests pastoring Guatemalan parishes, but the church’s endeavors also included more informal arrangements, such as mission trips, clerical exchanges, solidarity movements, sponsorship programs, volunteer opportunities, and, as in the case of David Roney, semi-active retirements. Pope John XXIII (1958–1963) then doubled down on this intervention by calling on the U.S. Church to send a full 10 percent of its clergy to Latin America. In Guatemala, as elsewhere, the intention was to recruit and train a new generation of local seminarians, but the net effect was near dependency on the sacramental labor of foreign clerics. Priests from the United States staffed Guatemala’s seminaries and schools while performing baptisms and confessions at increasingly expansive scales. While this reliance frustrated bishops in the United States, Guatemala’s numbers did improve. A little

⁸ The point to stress here is the decapacitation of the Church as a sacramental institution and its waning abilities to perform its most fundamental liturgical acts for Guatemala. This clerical weakening appears throughout the literature, with the number of priests often used to illustrate the Church’s broader challenges in this era (Bendaña Perdomo 2001; Calder 1970).

⁹ For histories of the Roman Catholic Church’s transnational capacity, especially how the Church in the United States participated as a relatively new outpost for the Vatican, see the work of Peter Agostino (2004) and Stephen Andes (2014). The scholarship of Bonar Hernández Sandoval (2018) has proven especially important for my work on transnational clerical sexual abuse in Guatemala.

more than twenty years after the first U.S. priests arrived in Guatemala, this relatively small Central American country boasted 530 clerics, with 434 of them foreign-born (Adams 1970).

Clerical transfers from the United States allowed the Roman Catholic Church to cultivate a pronounced political voice during Guatemala's civil war, with several U.S. priests becoming stalwart defenders of human rights. One young man from Oklahoma named Stanley Rother settled only a few kilometers from where Roney would eventually retire, ultimately dying at the hands of the military in 1981 for his solidarity with Guatemala's indigenous communities. "Father, they are looking for you" was the last thing Rother heard before paramilitaries murdered him in his bedroom (Rother 1984). Yet there is also incontrovertible evidence that the Church transferred U.S. priests to Latin America to avoid scandals at home. Some of these transfers took place for political reasons. In 1965, Cardinal Francis Spellman of New York sent Father Daniel Berrigan to Latin America to curtail his criticism of the Vietnam War. While the intricacies of this story played out on the front page of the *New York Times* and on the cover of *Time Magazine*, U.S. bishops also moved priests to Latin America for reasons that never made the headlines (Allen 2006).

Throughout the second half of the twentieth century, Latin America became something of a dumping ground for U.S. priests suspected of sexual abuse, with Guatemala quickly becoming a particularly attractive destination. The country's civil war, for one, created a context in which acts of genocide obscured suspicions of sexual abuse. U.S. priests in Guatemala also enjoyed irreproachable respect. Heroic men such as Rother created a nearly impassable cover for predators like Roney. To date, there have only been a handful of priests arrested for sexual abuse in Guatemala, with some of this impunity having to do with the country's laws (Cardona 2016). The sexual abuse of a male minor was not a criminal offense until a reform of Guatemala's penal code in 2009 (Código Penal de Guatemala 2009, Decreto No. 17–73). Prior to this change, the most proximate crime was the production of pornography, which carried a Q350 fine (approximately US \$50). Even today, after considerable reform, sexual abuse in Guatemala carries a 6 percent conviction rate (International Justice Mission 2013).

Yet one of the most important reasons for the transfer of U.S. priests to Guatemala was neither political nor juridical but rather ontological. For if one follows the work of Thomas Aquinas, with his synthesis of Aristotelian philosophy and Christian theology, one must recognize—as does the Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church—that the sacrament of Holy Orders does not signify a change in a man's status so much as a transformation in his very being (John Paul II 1998; see also Bennett 2014; and Mayblin 2019). The sacrament permanently assimilates a man to Christ (*in persona Christi*). Aquinas announces in his *Summa Theologica*: "The

priest, during Mass, precisely in the prayers, speaks *in persona Ecclesiae*, on the unity of which he takes his stand” (quoted in Martimort 1977: 82). While appreciating this theological fact demands an understanding not simply of ontology but also of sacramental theology and moderate realism, it is sufficient to know that Roman Catholic theology understands the priest as an icon of Christ. The priest represents (literally re-presents) Christ to the faithful, and this necessitates a fundamental change in the priest’s very being—in his soul, his essence, his nature. It is an ontological transformation that ultimately allows the priest to mediate between the human and the divine as well as to perform the sacraments: confer baptisms, forgive sins, and consecrate bread into Christ’s sacrifice.¹⁰ Through ordination, the priest takes on not just a new social role but also a new state of personhood, an extension of Christ himself, that is permanent.

For much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, on the coattails of industrialization, the Roman Catholic Church systematized its seminaries with the language of priestly formation, in ways that often read like an extended epilogue to Michel Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish* (1977). There are timetables and confessions, self-examinations, and spiritual directors, but all these disciplinary efforts take place (theologically speaking) irrespective of the sacrament. The ritual alone changes the man. So irreversible is the transformation that the popes and the Vatican curia have long considered the act of forced laicization an abhorrent violation of Catholic theology, with annulment often the only acceptable means to extricate a man from Christ, because annulment announces that ordination was invalidly conferred. For an ordained priest will always be a priest, complete with sacramental powers, regardless of what he has done. This is one reason why bishops rarely worried about what to do to a priest (for there was often very little one could do) but instead thought very carefully about where to put him.

MADE

This was Bishop Lucker’s problem exactly in the spring of 1987. He had just received a letter written by a woman whom I will call April. “I’ve composed parts of [this letter] in my head many times in the last decade,” April writes. “The letter is long overdue” (1987: 1). She then apologizes for her tone (“It took 20 years to get angry”), but her note is less a rant than an exceedingly thoughtful account of her devotional life as a ten-year-old girl. “My best friend and I planned to become missionary sisters in Africa,” April writes. “We received the monthly magazine from the Sisters of St. Peter Claver. We would write letters to the sisters but would not mail them before having the

¹⁰ As Kessia Reyne Bennett quotes from the Congregation for the Clergy: “[The priest’s] very being, ontologically assimilated to Christ, constitutes the foundation of being ordained” (2014: 105).

letters blessed by [our parish priest] Father John Cooney” (ibid.). Refracted through the eyes of her childhood self, April presents a vision of unbound piety. “We had a shrine of The Blessed Virgin in a hedge behind [my friend’s] house where we said the rosary,” she writes. “We also went to church frequently to pray, light votive candles and straighten the missalettes” (ibid.). But this seriousness of purpose ended up attracting the attention of Father Cooney’s predecessor: David Roney.¹¹

Bishop Lucker received several letters from survivors by the spring of 1987, but this uptick in mail should not obscure the fact that the bishop already knew about Roney. Most everyone did. In the spring of 1970, seventeen years before April’s letter, a parent asked to speak with the principle of St. Mary’s elementary school, a nun named Sister Virginia McCall. The parent’s six-year-old daughter had been sitting on his lap when she said: “Daddy, your thing doesn’t get big like Father Roney’s!” (McCall 2007: 1). Sister McCall struggled with what to do. “Father Roney was always around the little children,” she admitted, “and I never liked the way he put the children under his cape, but I would say to myself, ‘Oh, don’t be such a prude!’” McCall then said: “Because back then you would never suspect a priest of that kind of conduct” (ibid.: 2). This is one reason why suspicions of Roney never formed anything more than a “public secret” (Taussig 1999), albeit one that radically reordered the affective terrain of St. Mary’s Church.¹² “After getting up the courage,” April writes, “[My friend and I] would sneak into the church and make sure that Father Roney was not there. We were as quiet as possible, for fear that he would hear us. ... [But] sometimes he would come into the church and see us” (1987: 2).

The details of these encounters are difficult to read. They are graphic, potentially triggering, but they are important. They help to establish a pattern of abuse that would eventually appear in Guatemala. April wrote to Bishop Lucker in 1987 about events that took place in 1967, but she might as well have been describing an account from 1997. “Father Roney would be at the church organ,” April writes. “He would call us over to the choir area to talk to him. He would then take our hands in his and start swinging them” (ibid.: 1). The tone of the letter then changes, with nostalgia giving way to forensics.

¹¹ Leading the study of childhood survivors of clerical sexual abuse has been Robert Orsi (2016). His work with adult survivors of clerical sexual abuse to understand how these men and women try to remake their lives and religious identities has been insightful for this study, especially how the project engages childhood in American Catholic parishes from the 1930s through the 1970s.

¹² Anthropology has long maintained an ethnographic interest in the secret’s ability to generate social relationships (Simmel 1906; Jones 2010). The most provocative research on this topic addresses the secret within the context of colonialism (Taussig 1999), nuclear proliferation (Masco 2006), and postwar countries (Theidon 2006). Each sub-literature demonstrates how a structural tension between concealment and revelation constitutes the body as a repository of secret knowledge.

“He would turn us around, backs to his front and put our hands through the zipper opening in his pants. He wore no underwear. He then made us touch his penis and testicles. If we tried to pull away and remove our hands, he held them there—until he decided we could remove them” (ibid.). Having broken April and her friend’s young worlds apart, Roney would then try to piece them back together again. “We were escorted to his office in the rectory,” April writes, “and treated to a handful of M&M candies from his giant brandy snifter” (ibid.: 2).

The two girls tried to speak up. They even hatched a plan. Back at the hedge, behind her friend’s house—where they said the rosary—the two drafted a letter to their bishop. “[But] after we read it over,” April remembers, “we took some matches from my house and burned it, afraid our parents would find out” (ibid.). McCall was also hesitant to say anything. “At no time did [anyone] ever suggest to me that I should arrange for psychological treatment for Father Roney,” she later argued. “I would have had no authority to do so in any event” (2007: 2). Roney also proved to be eerily quiet on the matter, or at least this is what McCall eventually testified. When McCall instructed Roney never again to go to the playground, “he said nothing, but complied” (ibid.). When McCall told him never again to attend the school’s lunch hour, “he said nothing, and he complied” (ibid.). And when McCall insisted that Roney never again wrestle with the little girls, “he said nothing” (ibid.: 3). A priest from a neighboring congregation named Francis Garvey also advised Roney to avoid the playground altogether. Garvey’s testimony reads:

Q: And what did Father Roney say?

A: Nothing.

Q: Nothing?

A: Nothing verbally. His emotional expression was very bland. Not expressive. The encounter was very short. He didn’t respond ... so I left (Garvey 2007: 19).

This silence was not absolute. There was public knowledge of Roney, with ten-year-old girls knowing enough to look both ways before entering their church.¹³ McCall also chastised herself for quietly thinking what everybody already knew. As early as 1970, at least one concerned parent stepped forward while multiple clerics spoke directly to Roney himself, each proposing a boundary for the man, but nothing ever really came of these conversations. Even Garvey fell silent after his only encounter with Roney:

¹³ Michael Taussig writes on the effervescence of evidence within the context of the public secret: “that which is generally known, but cannot be articulated” (1999: 5).

Q: Did you [Garvey] report the information to the bishop?

A: No, I didn't.

Q: And why didn't you?

A: I don't know. Outside the fact that—I don't know. It didn't seem to be the thing that we did in those days. I confronted the priest and I figured I did what I had to do (ibid.: 21).

McCall might have said it better when she noted that “sexual abuse just wasn't ever talked about” (2007: 2). By this, McCall concedes not just knowledge about sexual violence but also a resistance to enunciating it.¹⁴ But she also must have meant that the people of St. Mary's elementary school did not have the right mode of description to create the right possibilities for action (Hacking 1987: 166). They did not have the right expertise. Everyone knew that Roney had appetites, that he was abusive and calculating, but none of this made Roney into anything other than what he already was: a priest. Roney might have been “made” as early as 1967, but only in the colloquial sense of “having been found out” or “discovered.” Roney would not be “made up” ontologically until he arrived at Foundation House in the spring of 1987. There, a team of pastoral psychologists deployed everything from medication to machines to make David Roney a pedophilic priest.

MAKING

“I think I developed a great tolerance for human beings,” Roney confessed while at Foundation House. “Maybe too much [of a tolerance]. Eventually one begins to accept everything as normal” (Roney 1987: 5). Throughout the program, therapists encouraged him to narrate such foundational points of psychotherapeutic reference as his relationship to his mother and his earliest memory. “Coming home from the dentist's office at about age three, maybe four,” he recalled, “my mother pulled me in a coaster wagon and bought me a pack of gum—five sticks. I put them all in my mouth at once” (ibid.: 3).¹⁵ Psychologists also coached him on how to write about his sexuality, with an avalanche of description breaking decades of silence. Perhaps predictably, Roney's therapeutic confessions quietly evidenced Michel Foucault's now

¹⁴ Slavoj Žižek writes, “What emerges via distortions of the accurate representation of reality is the Real—that is, the trauma around which social reality is structured.” His remarks concern Claude Lévi-Strauss's analysis of dual organization. “Distortion and/or dissimulation is in itself revealing,” adds Žižek (1999: 79). The tension between the known and the obscured creates the conditions for knowledge.

¹⁵ Roney's rapprochement with therapy invokes the work of Nikolas Rose (1990) and his appreciation of the links between political power, expertise, and the self. This governmentality perspective has important implications for the case of Roney because his own treatment tried to empower this priest with the ability to govern not simply himself but also his soul.

familiar observations about sexuality and subject formation: “One had to speak of [sex] as of a thing to be not simply condemned or tolerated but managed, inserted into systems of utility, regulated for the greater good of all, made to function according to an optimum. Sex was not something one simply judged; it was a thing one administered” (Foucault 1990: 24). In therapy, Roney found himself learning how to adjudicate his sexuality: “I never knew if I was normal or abnormal. From occasional remarks and jokes, I knew that [my fellow seminarians] were sexual beings, but I never thought of anyone as bad as I” (1987: 8).

Father Gerald Fitzgerald would not have approved of all this talking. Born in 1894, this hardnosed Boston priest founded the Servants of the Paraclete in 1947 to assist clerics struggling with substance abuse. But he soon began receiving priests who had been accused of sexually abusing minors. Even as the latter began to outnumber the former, Fitzgerald maintained that the program was spiritual rather than psychological, and he staffed his facility as such. “There is a training program for Paracletes,” Fitzgerald once boasted. “It is a very fine and wide-spread kind of program: on-the-job training” (Doyle 2011). Not a single staff member had a graduate degree in psychology, psychiatry, or social work. Instead of these notoriously soft sciences, the very disciplines capable of making up people, Foundation House trafficked in a wandering constellation of moral judgements that included “intimacies with the youth,” “abnormalities of sex,” and “aberrations” (ibid.). Often rejecting the disease concept altogether, Fitzgerald argued that these “appetites” could not be cured because they were not sicknesses so much as “weaknesses” (ibid.).¹⁶

As anachronistic as all of this may sound, it is important to understand that Fitzgerald was not entirely out of step with the times. The term “pedophilia” first appeared in 1886 with the German publication of *Psychopathia Sexualis* (Krafft-Ebbing 1965).¹⁷ The intricacies of its genealogy aside, pedophilia pattered about the fields of psychotherapy and psychiatry in near obscurity until gaining traction with English-language psychologists in the 1950s. But this was well after Fitzgerald had already achieved unanticipated levels of professional success. He opened his first retreat center in 1947 in New Mexico, and by 1950, priests from thirty-five dioceses and nine religious orders had filled the facility well past capacity (Doyle 2011). The Servants of the Paraclete opened two more centers in New Mexico and then others in

¹⁶ The conspicuous lack of expertise in these religious contexts provides something of a photographic negative to studies of subject formation that explore the power of soft sciences to create new ways of being people. Father Fitzgerald could certainly muster moral discourses to construct some problematic but insufficient psychological expertise to render anyone a pedophile.

¹⁷ Ian Hacking’s “The Making and Molding of Child Abuse” (1991) provides an insightful approach to the shifting conceptual boundaries of what defines child abuse.

Minnesota, California, Vermont, Ohio, Iowa, Illinois, and Missouri. They then opened more in England, Italy, Mexico, Scotland, the Philippines, France, and two in Africa (*ibid.*). Pope Paul VI (1963–1978) requested an audience with Fitzgerald along with a report on “the problem of the problem priest” (*ibid.*). While this report demonstrates that the Church knew full well about clerical sex abuse nearly half a century before it acknowledged as much, Fitzgerald and his facilities took the lead on how the Church problematized the problem priest.

The interest here is not in whether these priests were or were not problems but rather how the so-called problem priest came to be understood as *problematic*—how, per Foucault, therapeutic centers such as Foundation House “constituted [the sexuality of priests] as an object for thought” (1988: 257). A major moment in this process of problematization occurred in 1965, when the Archbishop of Santa Fe removed Fitzgerald as superior and installed Father Joseph McNamara, a priest who advocated for lay therapy programs. McNamara worked with local psychologists, hired resident psychiatrists, and, by 1976, offered a “holistic approach” to spiritual rehabilitation that largely mirrored the work of sexual disorder clinics found in secular settings. This included prescriptions for Depo-Provera to quell the desires of men with so-called abnormal sexualities and the use of a plethysmograph. This is a machine with an inflatable cuff that secures to the base of the penis; it measures changes in blood flow while the subject listens to or watches sexually explicit material. But the program’s most generative technique was something called bibliotherapy. In the form of self-evaluations, Roney wrote about the darkest corners of his soul in ways that signaled atrophied levels of faith. “My spiritual life has never been satisfactory,” Roney confessed. “My lack of piety has always distressed me” (1987: 7).

The medication, machines, and morality—it all pathologized Roney. No one ever denied that Roney was a problem, but never did a psychologist, psychiatrist, or social worker diagnose him until the spring of 1987, and so no one ever treated Roney until that spring. The implementation of expertise here is important for Hacking as well as other scholars of subject formation, ultimately providing the grounds upon which individuals become certain kinds of people. “Hence if new modes of description come into being,” Hacking reasons, “new possibilities for action come into being in consequence” (1987: 166). That is because making up people is intimately linked to control (*ibid.*: 164). In 1967, prior to his diagnosis, Fitzgerald spoke generally about “sins with the young” while Father Garvey asked Sister McCall to “keep an eye” on Roney. Twenty-five years later, well after his diagnosis, a 1993 report described Roney with psychological precision: “His behavior [is] more in the nature of exposing himself, although reference has been made by victims of direct sexual contact by touching. The

paraphilia of Exhibitionism is clinically distinct from Pedophilia, especially of the fixated type” (New Ulm Diocese Review Board 1993: 1). And this new mode of description created new opportunities for discipline. Another report advises:

We recommend that you [David Roney]

- 1) meet regularly (at least once a week) with a qualified therapist, psychologist, or psychiatrist;
- 2) keep in regular contact with Bishop Lucker concerning the progress of this therapy;
- 3) share the contents of this evaluation with your therapist;
- 4) meet monthly with a qualified Spiritual Director;
- 5) attend regularly a priests’ support group in the Diocese (Perri 1987: 1).

From afar, these recommendations can read like progress. Psychology transformed a onetime retreat house into a treatment center, with a priest becoming subject to the kind of control that a sexual predator might warrant. But when one studies Roney’s case history against the backdrop of not just a global Church but also an equally global pattern of sexual abuse, these five recommendations mark little more than an ecclesiastical challenge for Bishop Lucker. The challenge and its subsequent solution go something like this: David Roney became a priest on 18 August 1945, and then he became a pedophile in the spring of 1987, with the Church preferring Roney to be either a priest or a pedophile but certainly not both. And so, Bishop Lucker made the strategic decision that a pedophile would be easier to unmake than a priest. It was an ingenious idea, but not an entirely original one. Father Gerald Fitzgerald had come to a similar conclusion almost a half-century earlier.

UNMAKING

In 1948, Father Fitzgerald insisted that problematic priests should live “far apart from civilization” (Doyle 2011). He wrote in 1957, “It is for this class of rattlesnake that I have always wished an island retreat—but even an island is too good for these vipers who, the gentle master said—it were better they had not been born” (ibid.). Unflinching in his condemnation of these men, Fitzgerald invoked the moral and spatial efficacy of radical isolation. With distant echoes of Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (2007 [1719]) and subtle premonitions of Aldous Huxley’s *Island* (1962), Fitzgerald fantasized openly about setting these sinners out to sea. The promise of an island was not just its isolation but the potential for a self-mastery so complete that it could become a civilizing force. Given Fitzgerald’s outright contempt for these men, it is not surprising that he daydreamed about such a radical approach. And yet nothing about this talk

turned out to be fantasy. In the 1950s, Fitzgerald wrote bishops across the Americas to ask whether any of them had an island for sale. Several responded. While Fitzgerald would go back and forth with Archbishop James Peter Davis of San Juan, Puerto Rico, about one opportunity, he eventually struck a claim on a small landmass located just off the island of Carriacou within the Diocese of Grenada. It cost the Servants of the Paraclete US\$5,000 (Doyle 2011).

This island grounds the practice of unmaking people. For decades, Foundation House sorted priests into such categories as exhibitionist and pedophile. And, to quote Ian Hacking, “once the[se] distinctions were made, new realities effectively came into being” (1987: 163). The problematic priest became the pedophilic priest but only, Hacking continues, “at a certain time, in a certain place, in a certain social setting” (ibid.: 167). The cultural and historical specificity of making up people is why the island proved to be such a clever idea. Its remoteness effectively stripped away the psychological and juridical infrastructures necessary to sustain the diagnosis of pedophilia, ultimately relocating these priests to a different time, a different place, and a different social setting. So diabolical was this plan that it does not matter that the island endeavor was short-lived. The Servants of the Paraclete sold it in 1965 when McNamara replaced Fitzgerald, but none of this undermined the idea. For why would Bishop Lucker need an island when David Roney had Guatemala?

Roney first visited Guatemala in 1974, having organized a small group of parishioners to visit a diocesan mission in San Lucas Toliman. This is a secluded, indigenous-majority town framed by active volcanoes and located on the banks of Lake Atitlan. Most of its residents speak Spanish as a second language and travel by boat to the nearest town. Without electricity until the mid-1970s, without a phone line until the early 1990s, San Lucas Toliman is not an island, *per se*, but it has always existed beyond the reach of psychologists and psychiatrists. This kind of radical isolation first attracted Father Gregory Schafer of Minnesota. Inspired by liberation theology’s preferential option for the poor and driven by Pope John XXIII’s mandate to engage Latin America, Schafer founded the Mission at San Lucas Toliman in 1963 to combat illiteracy, malnutrition, and poverty amid the country’s civil war by building an elementary school, a hospital, several small businesses, and an orphanage. His reward was a status nothing short of saintly. Dozens of devotional murals and statues of Father Schafer now decorate this small town, and parishioners still cry at the thought of his death in 2012. He was eighty-one years old.

Roney rode Schafer’s coattails in traveling to Guatemala every year. Roney, in his own words, fell in love with the people and with the mission program, but none of this inspired him to retire to Guatemala (1987: 7). The truth is that no one knew what to do with Roney, and Roney did not know

what to do with himself. Only six months before Roney moved to Guatemala in 1994, Father Gene Burke of Minnesota reported: “One of the options [Roney] mentioned [to me] was living and working in St. Peter [Church in Minnesota], but he mentioned that there was a school there and wondered whether I thought he should rule out going there because of his former difficulties. I told [Roney] that I thought it would be better if he could find some other alternative, one without a school” (Burke 1993: 1).

Roney did Burke one better: rather than a church without a school, he found a town without pedophilia. This is not to say that the residents of San Lucas Toliman did not have their own understanding of consent, sexuality, childhood, and abuse.¹⁸ Rather, it is to stress that Roney’s move to Guatemala successfully released him from every system of control that Foundation House had triggered. In Guatemala, there were no therapists, psychologists, psychiatrists, or spiritual directors: everyone in San Lucas Toliman, from parishioners to police officers, knew Roney as a priest, not as a pedophile. At the time, very little about his criminal past seemed to have traveled from Minnesota to Guatemala, and this oddly delivered a sense of relief to nearly everyone who knew Roney, including a Church review board on sexual misconduct in Minnesota. The board speculated around the time of Roney’s retirement that in his case, “it could reasonably be concluded that enough has already been done and continues to be done” (New Ulm Diocese Review Board n.d.: 3).

The review board’s confidence came from placing Roney on “administrative leave without faculties to celebrate any of the sacraments” (Nienstedt 2002: 1). The board also asked Father Schafer in Guatemala to “keep his eye on Fr. Roney” just as Father Garvey in Minnesota had once asked Sister McCall to “keep an eye” on him (Burke 1993: 1). The strategy did not work in 2002 just as it had not worked in 1970, not least because Guatemala presented an entirely different context than Minnesota. Father Burke reported on a conversation that he had with Father Schafer about Roney: “When [the indigenous women] speak their own dialect, [Father Schafer] assumes this is a private conversation and he respects that. He has never heard the women say anything at all about Fr. Roney’s conduct. Still, he says they may view Fr. Roney as [Schafer’s] friend and that might deter them from saying anything negative about [Roney]” (1993: 1).

If Fitzgerald’s island grounds the idea of unmaking people, then Burke’s report reveals some of its tactics. The unmaking of people, for one, demands

¹⁸ Cultural understandings of consent, sexuality, childhood, and abuse among the residents of San Lucas Toliman would make for a powerful ethnography, but this article is more concerned with the ethnographic fact that San Lucas Toliman did not have the requisite juridical and psychological infrastructure to recognize, sustain, and enforce a diagnosis such as pedophilia.

self-conscious moments of unknowing. Schafer never learned to speak Kaqchikel and his Spanish was notoriously weak. His ability to overhear a conversation in any language other than English would have been unlikely at best. Unmaking people also involves exertions of power. The murals and the statues of Schafer would have certainly deterred these indigenous women from offering any criticism of a foreign cleric.¹⁹ One must also not forget that Schafer built the school, hospital, and orphanage while also selling the community's coffee at above-market rates to sympathetic Catholics in Minnesota. What would critique have looked like here? Finally, the unmaking of people demands tactical moments of disconnection. Again, the island is illustrative, but so too is a moment between Father Douglas Grams of Minnesota and David Roney. Grams called Roney on 20 June 2002, to tell him about the review board's decision to place him on administrative leave. From Grams' account, it is unclear whether Roney ever got the message. "Our telephone conversation was very poor," Grams admits, "and [Roney's] hearing aid was sounding" (2002: 1). Amid broken speech and bursts of noise, with two old men yelling at each other from opposite ends of a continent, Roney effectively vanished. He disappeared.

UNMADE

"What could it mean," Hacking asks, "to say that possible ways to be a person can from time to time come into being or disappear?" (1987: 166). Hacking, to be clear, does not believe that there is "a general story to be told about making up people. Each category has its own history" (*ibid.*: 168). The same can be said about unmaking people. The only amendment is the expectation that unmaking not only marks the end of one way of being but also the start of another. People can be made into different kinds of subjects again and again. The Servants of the Paraclete made David Roney into a pedophile, and then his move to Guatemala unmade this diagnosis. This is not to say that Roney's behavior changed, that he somehow found God in the highlands of Guatemala. On the contrary, San Lucas Toliman may have always been a place of transgression for him. The priest and psychologist Kenneth J. Pierre worked with Roney as his therapist in Minnesota, and during their sessions Roney admitted to backsliding. "Dave did have one incident while he was in therapy with me," Father Pierre notes. "He did touch a woman in Guatemala in an inappropriate way. We considered canceling his subsequent trip to Guatemala. [But] he went through with it

¹⁹ Here the work of Kathleen Holscher provides a powerful point of reference, especially her observation that media coverage has emphasized white survivors of Roman Catholic clerical sexual abuse in the United States, which fundamentally "obscures the ways race and colonialism have structured the crisis in other communities" (2018).

and set boundaries for himself and observed them” (1990: 1). Pierre then participated in the unmaking of Roney, with all its colonial ethnocentrism, when he admitted: “Because of cultural differences and [Roney’s] role in the Guatemalan mission, I was not sure of the seriousness of this incident” (ibid.: 1).

Father Pierre’s tactical appreciation for cultural differences—his own comparative approach—helped Roney to remake himself. In Minnesota, during the early years of his ministry, Roney often played the part of the amusing uncle—gathering children to his side, sliding a few under his cape, and then rewarding them with candy. Foundation House spoiled the act with its diagnosis, but then Roney quickly rebooted the performance once he moved to Guatemala. One woman from San Lucas Toliman remembers Roney as always surrounded by children, handing out candies, and inviting them to the lake for a swim. This, too, seemed familiar. “In the summer, [Father Roney] would call my mother to take [us children] swimming,” April explained in her letter to Bishop Lucker. “I did not want to go, but I couldn’t tell my mother why, and I was not going to let him take my sisters alone” (1987: 2). On those warm summer days, as children crawled in and out of the lake, April recalled that Father Roney “wore white trunks (boxer shorts?), and after he had gone in the lake and gotten wet the trunks clung to him and were completely revealing. Almost like he was wearing nothing at all” (ibid.).

Unmade and about town, Roney’s newfound freedom in Guatemala allowed him to upgrade his earlier act as an amusing uncle into that of a doting father, by adopting a six-year-old orphan whom I will call Justina. Approaching thirty years of age at the time of writing, Justina’s mother died from an illness while Justina was a toddler, and then her biological father claimed that he could no longer care for her. Roney then volunteered to raise Justina as his own, and she remained with him until he died in 2003. Justina’s memories of Roney include numerous trips to the lake and a seemingly bottomless bowl of candy; she also remembers Christmas mornings with stacks of presents, cakes, and cookies. For a girl born into abject poverty and then left at the steps of a church, Justina counts herself lucky for having had a childhood complete with not just one but two bicycles. Her gratitude extends into adulthood since Roney left his entire estate to her upon his death, an amount of money totaling about US\$15,000 (Roney 2001: 1–2). Modest by North American standards, this is roughly ten times the average annual income of San Lucas Toliman residents.

Knowing that the Mission in San Lucas Toliman presents an exceedingly difficult context in which to criticize U.S. priests, it is not necessary (at this time, for the sake of this article) to detail the extent to which Justina suffered, but simply to stress that the unmaking of Roney placed her in the position of suffering. By 1970, fellow clerics had asked Roney never again

to go to the playground, attend the school's lunch hour, or wrestle with the little girls. By 1987, Foundation House had also advised Roney to meet weekly with a therapist, psychologist, or psychiatrist, to engage a spiritual director, and to attend a priests' support group. But by 1994, once he moved to Guatemala, he lived next door to an elementary school, worked nearly full-time at an orphanage, and had adopted a six-year-old girl. To this day the most consistent memory of Roney among residents of San Lucas Toliman is of him walking the edges of town with a gaggle of children.

Before outrage completely eclipses insight, it is important to consolidate what the unmaking of David Roney says about the unmaking of people. Each case may have its own history, but they all seem to share some basic plot points. Again, unmaking people demands self-conscious efforts at unknowing, explicit exertions of power, and tactical moments of disconnection. Yet one more characteristic is important: the unmaking of people tends to be far more deliberate of an effort than is the making up of people. Unmaking people tends to be agentive, calculating, and conniving, which are characteristics that appear to set the process apart from making up people. The latter has generated a thick literature largely defined by unintended consequences, as when new modes of description make possible new ways of being people. Foundation House, as one example, set out to solve the problem of the problem priest but in the end made hundreds of pedophiles. In contrast to these accidental inventions, unmaking the pedophilic priest has proven to be a far more tactical effort that has involved sending pedophiles to places where pedophilia as a disease does not exist in any kind of ontological sense. It is this scheming, calculating, and conspiring that ultimately makes possible not just new insights into clerical sex abuse but also the possibility of a new literature on the unmaking of people, centered on dramatic and sometimes desperate attempts to expunge the kinds of people that people have become.

REMADE

In 2004, Rigoberto Chopén Pérez joined the Order of the Bethlehemite Brothers, a small religious community founded in the mid-seventeenth century by a Spanish saint. The friars, as Guatemalans call them, live pious lives anchored in the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and they distinguish themselves from other religious orders not only by their commitment to the poor but also by their process of ordination. It takes ten years to become a Bethlehemite priest, with each novice completing extensive theological and philosophical training as well as years of ministerial studies. Two years short of this transformation, his own permanent assimilation to Christ (*in persona Christi*), Rigoberto committed a crime in Guatemala. "I raped a very young girl," he explained as we walked

the perimeter of Granja Modelo de Rehabilitación Cantel. This is a vast prison farm in the mountains of Guatemala. Cows graze just beyond the prison walls. "We were walking back to the convent [where I lived], and I raped her behind a house." Rigoberto had already served seven years of a sixteen-year sentence. I asked him for more context of his crime, but he had none to offer. "I really do not know why I did it," he said. "I do not know why I thought I had the right to rape her. The lawyer asked me if I had been drinking, or if I had been doing drugs. I told [the lawyer] that I do not drink, and I do not do drugs. I told the lawyer that I do not know why I raped her." As penance, Rigoberto keeps canonical hours inside this overcrowded and radically underfunded prison, often reciting matins, lauds, and vespers on his knees.

Rigoberto was born and raised in San Lucas Toliman. Equally fluent in Kaqchikel and Spanish, he attended the elementary school that Gregory Schafer built, and he once received medical treatment at the hospital that this U.S. priest founded. All the while, Rigoberto's father labored in Schafer's fields so that sympathetic Catholics in Minnesota could buy coffee at above-market rates. "Father Gregory encouraged me to become a priest," Rigoberto explained, and so too did David Roney. "Father David was always at our house," Rigoberto remembered, "but not for me. He had a very special relationship with one of my sisters." With nine siblings, Rigoberto sometimes questioned why Roney paid so much attention to a sister whom I will call Diega. He remembers him taking Diega on trips to the lake, feeding her bags of candy, and one day even buying her a bicycle. All these years later, the bicycle still seemed to sting Rigoberto the most. "I was jealous [of the bicycle]," he said. "We were very poor, and I couldn't understand why Diega got all of [Father David's] attention." Rigoberto reasoned that it was probably because Diega was (and still is) a very devout Catholic, attending Church services every Sunday and at one point thinking very seriously about joining the Order of the Bethlehemite Sisters. "I wanted to become a priest," Rigoberto explained, "because I wanted to become like Father David."

Rigoberto never became a priest. Instead, he became a convicted sex offender, which proved to be a far less complicated matter for his superior than the decision with which Roney presented Bishop Lucker in Minnesota. There were of course a number of factors that made Rigoberto more vulnerable to condemnation by the Church than Roney, not least the fact that Roney, unlike Rigoberto, was white, financially secure, and from the United States. But more crucial here is the theological and ontological difference between an ordained priest and a seminarian such as Rigoberto. Again: Roney became a priest in 1945, and then a pedophile in 1987. The Church could not countenance him being both, and decided that it would be easier to unmake a pedophile than a priest. Rigoberto's superior, on the other hand, did not need to think so strategically. "My superior told me that he would find a lawyer for me," Rigoberto told me, "but that was the last time I ever

heard from him.” The Order of the Bethlehemite Brothers effectively abandoned him as he entered pretrial detention, leaving him with an overworked and underpaid government-appointed attorney. Rigoberto not only received the maximum sentence for his crime, but also entered prison without any financial support. Given the system’s fee-for-service structure, meaning that prisoners must pay for nearly everything, Rigoberto, with no money for a bed, has slept on the floor for the last seven years, and he has had to clean prison bathrooms in order to afford food. He has also lost touch with his family. They live much too far from the prison to visit and are far too poor to travel such a distance with any regularity. My first visit was only the third he had received. “I don’t have any money because my family is poor,” he said, “and the prison is very far from where they live. Before my father died, he removed me from his will because I was a friar. He thought that the brothers would take care of me.”

The brothers did not take care of Rigoberto, but there is, of course, no need to play on anyone’s sympathies. He is a convicted rapist and does not deny any of the charges. But it is important to note that this poor, indigenous man is living the hell that Roney evaded with the help of not only Bishop Raymond Lucker but also a veritable rogues’ gallery of saints qua sinners: Sister Virginia McCall, Father Francis Garvey, Father Gerald Fitzgerald, Father Joseph McNamara, Father Gregory Schafer, Father Gene Burke, Father John Nienstedt, Father William Perri, Father Douglas Grams, and Father Kenneth J. Pierre. At the head of this lineup also sits Father Thomas Aquinas. His *Summa Theologica* helped set the theological conditions for distinguishing at an ontological level such men as David Roney from other men such as Rigoberto Chopén Pérez, a sacramentally codified difference violently exasperated by colonialism, racism, and ethnocentrism. So theologically different was Roney from Rigoberto that a worldwide institution leveraged not only its vast resources but also its tremendous acumen in comparative studies to unmake the least desirable element of the priest, while letting the friar scrub the very prison floors upon which he sleeps.

CONCLUSION

Papal concerns about the vitality of the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America set the institutional conditions for the movement of U.S. priests to Central America. Throughout the second half of the twentieth century, young celibates from across the United States—from Oklahoma, Minnesota, and Wisconsin, for example—moved to the highlands of Guatemala to minister to historically disenfranchised indigenous communities. On the surface, it is an important moment in church history, with hagiography often telling a story of humility and heroism as some of these priests ultimately died in defense of not just the Church but also the communities they served amid a

genocidal civil war. Some of these men became martyrs and saints. The brutal counterpart to this devotional narrative, however, is the largely untold story of dioceses from the United States assigning so-called problematic priests to countries such as Guatemala because the region did not have the psychological and juridical infrastructures necessary to support such diagnoses as pedophilia. In the United States, David Roney was a priest and a pedophile. In Guatemala, he was only a priest.

What does this moment of unmaking David Roney evidence? Or, to ask the question in a slightly sharper tone: to what effect? There are at least four consequences worth highlighting. First, this historical ethnography of Roney encourages scholars of clerical sex abuse to sharpen their comparative analysis so as to match the Roman Catholic Church's own abilities to understand the world as not only intimately interconnected but also radically uneven when it comes to psychological, juridical, and even theological notions of consent, sexuality, childhood, and abuse. Second, the unmaking of Roney accentuates the racial hierarchies within the Roman Catholic Church, with the lives of indigenous men, women, and children essentially sacrificed for the sake of a white, middle-class cleric from the United States. To which one must concede that the Roman Catholic Church may be a global institution, but its commitment to Catholics around the world can vary tremendously. Third, Roney's unmaking foregrounds the material effects of this worldwide unevenness since it becomes painfully clear that the intimate violence that he wrought throughout his life now extends into the indigenous communities that he abused, leaving behind not only an untold number of survivors but also a new generation of sexual predators. Only time will tell how many other impressionable children wanted to grow up to be just like Father David. Finally, the case of Roney provides a broad conceptual insight into the study of subject formation, which has long centered on such industrial metaphors as construction, creation, production, and making. To read this literature is to imagine a skyline of subjectivities cobbled together one discourse at a time, and yet the dastardly tactics of the Roman Catholic Church reveal that these historically contingent ways of being people can be knowingly and willfully disassembled, brick by brick. Given the right psycho-juridical domain, a pedophile such as David Roney can disappear. Poof.

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Abstract: Throughout the second half of the twentieth century, Latin America became something of a dumping ground for U.S. priests suspected of sexual abuse, with north-to-south clerical transfers sending predatory priests to countries where pedophilia did not exist in any kind of ontological sense. This article, in response, engages the case of Father David Roney of the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, Minnesota. After a career of accusations and payouts, with Roney entering and exiting Church-mandated therapy programs, Bishop Raymond Lucker retired this notoriously predatory priest to rural Guatemala in 1994. By placing Roney beyond the reach of psychiatrists, psychologists, and spiritual directors, the Roman Catholic Church leveraged a psychological and juridical difference between two geographical settings in order to render the pedophilia of this priest effectively non-existent, thereby insulating itself from further reputational damage and additional litigation. Given that the Roman Catholic Church has long been an empirical point of reference for studies of subject formation—from pastoralism and mysticism to ritual and the confession—this article adds that the Church also provides ample evidence of an opposite process: of unmaking people.

Key words: Roman Catholicism, clerical sexual abuse, pedophilia, ontology, subjectivity, psychology, transnationalism, Guatemala, United States, Servants of the Paraclete