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S. Billie Mandle *Reconciliation*

Texts by Dorothy Day, Kirstin Valdez Quade

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Confessionals as metaphorical spaces, suggesting the complexities of faith and forgiveness

For ten years S. Billie Mandle photographed confessionals throughout the United States. She visited churches in small towns and large cities, creating images that depict the visible – and invisible – traces of people, communities, histories and dogmas. The images speak to the beliefs that define these dark rooms and shape this intimate yet institutional ritual. Photographing from the perspective of the penitent, she used a large format camera and available light, creating images that are more metaphorical than typological. As a queer woman raised Catholic, Mandle has long had a complex relationship to the Church; these photographs are part confession, part reconciliation.

»When you go to confession on a Saturday night, you go into a warm, dimly lit vastness, with the smell of wax and incense in the air, the smell of burning candles, and if it is a hot summer night there is the sound of a great electric fan, and the noise of the streets coming in to emphasize the stillness.«

– Excerpt from *Confession* from *The Long Loneliness* by Dorothy Day

»Forgive me, Father, for I have sinned. It's been seven years since my last confession. Eight months, no, nine. One week. I fought with my brother, three times. I punched him in the arm, but only once. Forgive me, Father. I cheated on my wife, Father. In the Radisson in Nashville. But the lady hit on me, and I was drunk and tired, and Susan can be so hard.«

– Excerpt from *Reconciliation* by Kirstin Valdez Quade

S. Billie Mandle is an artist based in Los Angeles, CA, and Amherst, MA. Her work is internationally exhibited and published, including exhibitions in Korea, Israel and France, and features in *Aperture* and *Cabinet*. She is the recipient of fellowships from the Massachusetts Cultural Council and the New York Foundation for the Arts and was a finalist at the Hyères Festival de Photographie. She earned a BA in biology from Williams College and an MFA from Massachusetts College of Art and Design. Mandle is an assistant professor of photography at Hampshire College in Amherst.

www.billiemandle.com

Kirstin Valdez Quade is an American writer. She is the author of *Night at the Fiestas*, which won the John Leonard Prize from the National Book Critics Circle, the Sue Kaufman Prize for First Fiction from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, a 5 Under 35 award from the National Book Foundation, and was a finalist for the New York Public Library Young Lions Award. It was a New York Times Notable Book and was named a best book of 2015 by the San Francisco Chronicle and the American Library Association. Quade is the recipient of the John Guare Writer's Fund Rome Prize from the American Academy in Rome, a Rona Jaffe Foundation Writer's Award, and a Wallace Stegner Fellowship at Stanford University. Her work has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *The Best American Short Stories*, *The O. Henry Prize Stories*, *The New York Times*, and elsewhere. She is an assistant professor in the creative writing department at Princeton University.

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