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Religion, Ideology & Violence

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# Here at the Edges

*An introduction by the Editor*

Violence. It seems that everywhere we turn we can't stop reading about violence, or witnessing its gratuitous display on our televisions, computer screens and mobile phones.

Oversaturation has the effect of rendering us blind at times. The more something confronts us, the more it either consumes us or becomes ambient; and ambience as a way of becoming just that: something that blends itself along the peripherals of our vision, inciting us to inaction and casual indifference. Violence in the media and media of violence have seemingly become as common place as bagels on Montreal breakfast tables, and re-runs of the Simpsons and Seinfeld.

I suppose one obvious intention of this publication is to jar us from this monotony, and call attention once again to violence; only, this time we approach it not as consumers or bystanders or witnesses, but as scholars.

That being said, violence, of course, comes in many forms and need not be of the physical or material variety. In this past year, North Americans have heard more than their fair share of violent speech; and speeches directed against both people and facts. Semioclasm, is suddenly ever-present, as is a war on meaning and scientific inquiry itself. Demonization of the "other" is rife, whether that other be Muslims, Hispanics, Syrian refugees or any variety of uncertain, undefined and largely unformed (but often alien) entity.

It seems that binaries are being put up and reinforced by powerful voices on the Right before the academy and more nuanced voices of moderation can tear them down. Manichaeism might have done out in thirteenth century South China, but its dichotomized cosmos has yet to elude us.

After a year like 2016, we as scholars certainly have our work cut out for us. Rather than risk even the chance of becoming yet another voice decrying radical Islam or some other twenty-first century boogeyman, I'm pleased to announce that the bulk of this volume of work approaches the topic of violence in a more nuanced manner and from refreshingly different angles.

In volume one of our twenty-seventh edition of the JRC, we have selected the following three articles from our initial submissions list:

*Once the Buddha was Aryan: Race Sciences and the Domestication of Buddhism in North America*, by Ryan Anningson of Wilfred Laurier University, examines the ways in which early 20th century North American Buddhists employed the language of "race sciences" in order to present themselves as the heirs to a superior religious tradition. The paper traces elements of Asian agency at the end of the colonial era, connecting North American Buddhist historiography to the broader global network and movements of scientific racism.

*The Trouble with Whorephobia: A Contemporary Re-evaluation of the Myth of Mary Magdalene with Special Reference to Marlene Dumas' Magdalena Series*, by Rosanna McNamara of King's College London, revisits the Christian conceptualization of Mary Magdalene as the penitent whore who renounced her life of prostitution to embrace one of chastity and virtue. The paper re-thinks the role of Mary Magdalene as prostitute and deconstructs binaries of virgin/whore and other whorephobic attitudes within Western Christianity.

*Privileging the Lens: Framing Islamic Violence and the Creation of Authoritative Discourses*, by Jeremy Cohen of Concordia University, examines how colonialist photographic knowledge can produce particular forms of power. In particular, the paper discusses how photographic narratives surrounding images of "Muslim barbarism" and "helpless others" can blur and transform racial, ethnic and religious truths against specific others.

In addition to the above listed peer-reviewed articles, we have also included the following reviews of recent publications:

- *Veiled Figures: Women, Modernity, and the Spectres of Orientalism*, by Teresa Heffernan. Review by Georgia Carter.

- *Does God Make the Man? Media, Religion, and the Crisis of Masculinity*, by Stewart M. Hoover and Curtis D. Coats. Review by Alexander Nachaj.
- *Mary Wept Over the Feet of Jesus: Prostitution and Religious Obedience in the Bible*, by Chester Brown. Review by Anthony Easton.
- *Canadian Women Shaping Diasporic Religious Identities*, edited by Becky R. Lee and Terry Tak-Ling Woo. Review by Purna Roy.
- *Mythologizing Jesus: From Jewish Teacher to Epic Hero*, by Denis R. MacDonald. Review by Joseph E. Brito.
- *Sacred Objects in Secular Spaces: Exhibiting Asian Religions in Museums*, edited by Bruce M. Sullivan. Review by Bui Dieu Linh Mai.

In volume 2, we have included the following articles:

*Tragic Violence, Hate Crimes and Grieving Within Sacred Geographies of Faith: Sikhs and the Oak Creek Gurdwara Shootings, 2012*, by Doris Jakobsh of the University of Waterloo, explores how notions of Sikh religious identities and spiritual meaning are negotiated in America. By revisiting the 2012 mass shooting of a Milwaukee gurdwara by gunman Wade M. Page and the responses from the community, this article examines issues of space among a grieving community and in wider multicultural America.

*The Epistemology of Violence and the Conception of Otherness: The Case of The Islamic State (Daesh). A Mutation of Contemporary Islamism, or a Prolongation of it?* by Amany Fouad Salib, member of the Centre de recherche en immigration, ethnicité et citoyenneté (CRIEC) de l'UQAM, analyses perceptions of "otherness" within Islamic State literature. The author examines what criteria are used by the Islamic State to define "in-groups" and "out-groups" and how these criteria affect its relationship with "traditional" Islam.

*Maintaining Multiculturalism: The Muting of Anti-Syrian Refugee Sentiment in Canadian Public Discourse*, by Georgia Carter of Concordia University, examines Canadian attitudes towards Muslims and Arabs in Canada since 9/11 – with a focus on the recent Syrian refugee crisis. The author underlines how in order to maintain a perceived atmosphere of tolerance and multiculturalism, anti-Muslim and anti-Arab sentiments towards refugees and citizens alike have often been muted or ignored from wider attention.



In addition to the above listed peer-reviewed articles, the second volume also included the following reviews of recent publications:

- *Key Terms in Material Religion*, edited by S. Brent Plate. Review by Alexander Nachaj.
- *Is Islam an Enemy of the West?*, by Tamara Sonn. Review by Georgia Carter.
- *Hagiography and Religious Truth: Case Studies in Dharmic and Abrahamic Traditions*, edited by Rico G. Monge, Kerry P. C. San Chirico, and Richard J. Smith. Review by Alexander Nachaj.
- *The Jews of Harlem: The Rise, Decline, and Revival of a Jewish Community*, by Jeffrey S. Gurock. Review by Lindsey Jackson.
- *Golem: Modern Wars and their Monsters*, by Maya Barzilai. Review by Elliot Mason.

As parting words, I have the following lists of thanks and acknowledgements.

On behalf of the JRC, I would like to thank: Ethel Gamache, the Religion Librarian at Concordia University who ensures that copies of our journal are always welcome in our library; all our readers and editors; our peer-reviewers in the department who have consistently (and willing) lent their time to participate in our double-blind review procedure—the journal would not be what it is without you. And lastly, everyone else who expressed interest when it was needed, chipped in when asked, donated their time when it was not even asked, or who otherwise went out of their way to support and aid this publication and its staff over the course of another hectic year of publication.

I would like to acknowledge the financial support the JRC received this past year which has made our current publication possible: Concordia's Department of Religions and Cultures for both helping fund this project, as well as the generous allocation of office space; the Concordia Council on Student Life (CCSL) Special Projects Committee for their ongoing financial support; and the Graduate Student Association (GSA) for their generous Special Project Funding allocation.

I would also like to personally thank and acknowledge two of our executive editors, Georgia Carter and Elyse MacLeod, who are both in the process of wrapping up their final term with the JRC. Your workaholic tenacity and

zealous attention to detail have helped make this journal what it is—reviving it from an intermittent student-run project into a modern publication.

Finally, I would also like to extend my gratitude to our newcomers on the staff: Daniel Santiago Sáenz, Laurel Andrew, and Lindsey Jackson. I'm looking forward to witnessing the coming years and the direction you will help steer this publication.

And, of course, let's not forget Joseph E. Brito, our ever diligent publication editor, who organized and assembled these pages you are about to dive into. For all our readers who privilege the paperback over the digital medium as much as I do, you know who to thank.

Alexander Nachaj  
JRC Editor-in-Chief, August 2017