

JR | RELIGION & CULTURE
C

Volume 27 Number 1 & 2

Religion, Ideology & Violence

JR
C

The JRC would like to acknowledge the support of sponsors
from within the Concordia University community:

Dean of Students
Concordia Council on Student Life Special Projects Committee (CCSL)
The Department of Religion and Culture
Graduate Student Association

We would also like to offer our special thanks to:
Lynda Clarke, our very supportive department Chair;
Tina Montandon and Munit Merid, administrators extraordinaire;
all of our referees, readers and everyone else who gave their time to
the publication of this journal.

A Peer-Reviewed Graduate Student Journal

2017 Volume 27, no. 1 & 2

Journal Committee

Executive Committee

Alexander Nachaj
Elyse MacLeod
Lindsey Jackson
Joseph E. Brito
Georgia Carter
Laurel Andrew
Daniel Sáenz

Editor-in-Chief
Article Editor
Article Editor
Publication Editor
Book Review Editor
Book Review Editor
Art Editor

Editorial Board

Jocelyn Beaudet
Dalia Ramirez Cote
Anthony Easton
Scarlet Jory
Laura Jurgens
Amanda Mormina
James Quinn
Purna Roy
Daniel Santiago Sáenz
Praveen Vijayakumar

Faculty Advisors

Lynda Clarke
Marc Desjardins
Cimminnee Holt
Marc Lalonde
Leslie Orr
Marcel Parent

The Journal of Religion and Culture (JRC) is proudly produced
by the Graduate Students of the Department of Religions and Cultures
at Concordia University.

© 2017 Journal of Religion and Culture,
Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec.

ISSN 1198-6395

Journal of Religion and Culture Volume 27, no. 1 (2017)

Journal of Religion and Culture Volume 27, no. 2 (2018)

All rights reserved. No part of this journal may be used or reproduced in any matter
without the express written permission of the editors except in the case of brief quotations
embedded in critical articles and reviews.

For more information:
Journal of Religion and Culture
Department of Religions and Cultures (FA-101)
Concordia University
1455 de Maisonneuve O.,
Montreal, Quebec
H3G 1M8

JRC logo design: Christopher Burkart
Book design: Joseph E. Brito
The type face of this journal is Minion Pro,
designed by Robert Slimbach,
issued as a digital Open Type font
by Adobe Systems, Mountain View California, 2000.

Content

- 9 *Here at the Edges*
An introduction by the Editor
Alexander Nachaj

Articles

- 17 *The Trouble with Whorephobia:*
A Contemporary Re-evaluation of the Myth of Mary Magdalene
with Special Reference to Marlene Dumas' Magdalena Series
Rosanna McNamara
- 40 *Privileging the Lens:*
Framing Islamic Violence and the Creation of Authoritative
Discourses
Jeremy Cohen
- 57 *Once the Buddha was an Aryan:*
Race Sciences and the Domestication of Buddhism in North
America
Ryan Anningson

Art Interlude

- 78 ***Revisiting Religion and Violence in Contemporary Art***
Étienne Camille Charbonneau, Artist.

Book Reviews

- 83 ***Mary Wept Over the Feet of Jesus:
Prostitution and Religious Obedience in the Bible***
Anthony Easton, reviewer.
- 85 ***Veiled Figures:
Women, Modernity, and the Spectres of Orientalism***
Georgia Carter, reviewer.
- 88 ***Does God Make the Man?
Media, Religion, and the Crisis of Masculinity***
Alexander Nachaj, reviewer.
- 90 ***Canadian Women Shaping Diasporic Religious Identities***
Purna Roy, reviewer.
- 93 ***Mythologizing Jesus:
From Jewish Teacher to Epic Hero***
Joseph E. Brito, reviewer.
- 96 ***Sacred Objects in Secular Spaces:
Exhibiting Asian Religions in Museums***
Bui Dieu Linh Mai, reviewer.

“Collective fear stimulates herd instinct, and tends to produce ferocity toward those who are not regarded as members of the herd.” — Bertrand Russell

JR | RELIGION & CULTURE

Volume 27, no. 1



Book Reviews

Mary Wept Over the Feet of Jesus: Prostitution and Religious Obedience in the Bible. Chester Brown. Montréal: Drawn and Quarterly, 2016. 270 pages. \$24.95 CDN (Hardcover).

Chester Brown wrote one of the best studies of Louis Riel, more than 10 years ago: it was a work that took religion seriously. His only major work after this, *Paying for It*, is a polemic in favour of legalizing sex work, and a personal memoir of his experiences with sex work.

His new book, an eccentric adaptation of scriptures about prostitution in the Bible, extends the religious seriousness of his Riel work, but also provides an argument about both his politics (Brown has run several times for the Libertarian Party of Canada) and his personal life. To put it crudely, Brown's central post-Riel project has been to justify his taste for sex work, and this volume—though less explicit than *Paying for It*—continues to pursue that goal.

There have been recent efforts to complicate how sex in the Bible can be seen as transactional (see especially Ipsen's *Sex Working the Bible*, but also Reid, Hollywood, and recent scholars of medieval prostitution). However, Brown's work functions more as literary criticism, or confession, than theological exegesis. Even more so, it is a polemical essay in exegetical drag.

Brown's work could be considered in this new radical sexual exegesis if his theological practice was less maladroit. Brown's explicit framing provides a formal structure for biblical texts, which are ambivalent at best. Each page has four panels, with the exception of pages that introduce characters or stories. The exception to this is the story of Job near the end of the book. There is little excess decoration; the work told in simple line drawing.

These framings tell the story through simple vignettes (Cain and Abel, Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba from Jewish Scripture; and Mary, the Mother of God, Mary of Bethany, the Parable of the Talents, and the Parable of the Prodigal Son in the Christian scripture, with an afterward telling the story of Job). Some of the vignettes are very much about sex work, some are thought to be about sex work by certain scholars, while some seem not to be about sex work except in the mind of Brown.

Brown conflates the orthodox and heterodox. He makes the same common mistake as many amateur theologians in assuming Christ is a figure recognizable to progressive, contemporary Westerners; and in blaming Paul for sex negativity while ignoring some of the gospel's prohibitions against divorce, or Christ's words against the Syro-Phoenician woman. For example, he seems to include the Cain and Abel story in order to talk about Yoram Hazony's *The Philosophy of Hebrew Scripture*, which posits that God wishes to seek challenge rather than obedience. But Hazony's Philosophy is largely derided by more conventional theologians and religious historians.

Brown leans on Hazony because he is useful. This is an ongoing pattern, leaning heavily on the liberal John Dominic Crossan, and not mentioning any of the 19th century German scholars that allowed Crossan to do the work that Brown pillages.

The cherry-picking of scandal and blasphemy here has a strange rhetorical power. It makes an argument about inclusion—and the problems of gender—that more nuanced forms might lack. The most effective blasphemy, he argues, is the possibility of Mary, the mother of God, being a prostitute because of her age and her financial station. He justifies this by quoting Jane Schaberg's haunting work, *The Illegitimacy of Jesus*. Schaberg argues that Mary was raped, and Christ as child of rape explains some of the taboos around his birth. There is a violation in how Brown uses the work of Schaberg, dismissing careful scholarship, without careful argument, in favour of a position that matches his polemic taste. One of the marks of some libertarian criticism in favour of sex work is the underplaying of rape. The misuse of Schaberg is the most obvious, but it is a continued pattern of Brown.

In his discussion of Bathsheba, he does not mention the culture of women as war trophies. In the story of Ruth, it becomes more of a metaphor for the positive power of entrepreneurship. In arguing in favour of sex work, the recognition that the sexual ethics of the Bible are often confusing, and have to be read within the tradition of both ancient times and current usage, is occasionally absent.

This does not mean that there are arguments not worth making. Making Rahab the saviour of the Israelites, even though she was a foreigner and a sex worker, is a story not told often enough. Brown's work on her manages to be tender, sensitive and inclusive. Even some of his leaning on other sources and other histories provides a useful corrective. The Parable of the Talents

structure did not work in the same way as other parables. Peter Cresswell argues for an early Matthew in his editing and translating of *The Book of the Nazarene*, folding in discussions of historical prostitution that seem to line up with his understanding of the text. It is a nice piece of historical detective work. Indeed, Brown reads widely, but without the rigour of an academic.

All caveats aside, serious artistic and personal engagement with scripture seems rare these days. I am reminded of the Anglo-American comic artist Basil Wolverton, who found a particularly apocalyptic Jesus in the late 1960s, after almost half a century of drawing pop grotesques. Wolverton was a bad exegete, but a brilliant artist—like Brown.

Brown's brilliance shines through in the paranoid, bodily closeness of David in his bedchamber, and the three pages of Ruth getting her courage up to ask to glean—and even how he draws a ladder in the story of Rahab. Wolverton's biblical work was for a magazine called *Plain Truth*, and worked as a tract. I wonder, considering the social and political nature of Brown's work, if it might have been better in the ephemeral middle ground between tract and comic.

Anthony Easton

Veiled Figures: Women, Modernity, and the Spectres of Orientalism. Teresa Heffernan. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016. 240 pages. \$55.00 CDN (Paperback).

Teresa Heffernan is a Professor of English at Saint Mary's University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. In her most recent work published by the University of Toronto Press, *Veiled Figures: Women, Modernity, and the Spectres of Orientalism* (2016), Heffernan traces the history of Western perceptions and understandings of the veil in Islam. Indeed, by exploring how the clash of “Eastern” and “Western” civilizations is perpetuated by the rhetoric of “veiling” and “unveiling” women, Heffernan argues that women's bodies have been unjustly used to exacerbate the divide between religion and rationality, and Islamism and global “secularism” in the contemporary period. In particular, she looks to the legacy of Orientalism, and how it has come to inform the ways in which perceptions of Muslim women and the veil have been constructed in Western, secular societies. Heffernan seeks to demonstrate the ways in which Orientalist perceptions of the veil have foundationally contributed to its contentiousness in today's society—