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Religion, Ideology & Violence

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

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Overall, though this work does succeed in the continued problematization of the apparently “traditionalist” notion that religious identities can provide an element of stability to masculine identities, it does fall short in a few select areas. Firstly, one has to wonder whether there is much left to question about the so-called “crisis of masculinity”. Over the past fifteen years, numerous scholarly studies have already problematized the notion that masculinity undergoes select periods of crisis. Second, one cannot help but notice many parallels here with the observations found in James Gilbert’s 2005 monograph *Men in the Middle: Searching for Masculinity in the 1950s* (which happens to be absent from this monograph’s bibliography). Though Gilbert’s monograph focuses on a different period in American history and with a broader area of study (and not just television media), Hoover and Coat’s remark that “there was a ‘crisis’ of the domestic sphere” (186) and the perceived loss of power in different domains of society ring equally similar to themes pulled from Gilbert’s study.

This criticism, however, is not meant to detract the reader from the overall worth of this monograph. Hoover and Coats succeeded in delivering a meticulous and thoughtful study with careful attention to detail, even if this monograph is not necessarily ground-breaking. Perhaps a wider chronological reach of study or a broader comparative approach among different masculine identities would be well-suited as a future undertaking in men, media and the construction of their masculinities.

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Canadian Women Shaping Diasporic Religious Identities.

Edited by Becky R. Lee and Terry Tak-ling Woo. Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2016. v+pages. 371. \$36.00 CDN (Paperback).

This interdisciplinary collection of essays examines the intersectionality of religion, gender and transnationalism by focusing on the ways in which women of diasporic communities in Canada shape, formulate and (re) claim distinct cultural and religious identities. The significance of this study becomes apparent if we take into consideration the socio-cultural context of multiculturalism in Canada, where, with the passing of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act in July 1988, “government officials expected

religious groups to define their own identities, especially when it came to the incorporation of temples or societies that could receive non-taxable status" (273), thereby promoting individualism and gender equity for all citizens. One gets the impression that the editors carefully chose religious traditions which are inherently patriarchal; where women had to challenge and subvert gender norms to create their own niche as ritual specialists.

The different pieces succeed in the difficult task of capturing the complex mosaic of women's religiosity, demonstrating that "the religiosities of the women represented serve as locations for both the assertion of self-identity in diaspora and resistance to institutions old and new within and without their faith traditions" (x). Here "religiosity" is defined according to cultural anthropologist Mayfair Yung's definition of the term, as "the religious feeling or experience of individual believers" (x), thus emphasizing the lived experiences of the female practitioners of cultural and religious traditions at a collective and individual level.

The book is divided into three sections: 1) religious communities of European origin, 2) new religions that developed in the nineteenth century, and 3) new immigrant populations that arrived after World War II. The first section consists of four articles studying the ethno-religious communities of European descent that settled in Newfoundland and Toronto. The first two articles of this section focus on "embodied religious practice," with Marion Bowman investigating Irish Catholic women from Newfoundland and their devotional practices to St. Gerard Majella, approaching it from the perspective of vernacular religious theory. Bonnie Morgan additionally highlights the voices of Anglican women working as midwives, exploring the "extent to which religious rituals of childbirth were informed by class and gender" (36). In the third article of the segment, Becky Lee uses feminist scholarship to examine three Roman Catholic feminist movements. By situating them in their respective social, historical and religious contexts, Lee pays special attention to gender roles and norms as set down by the Roman Catholic Church and the Victorian culture of English speaking Canada. The last essay of the section focuses on North American Judaism, with Aviva Goldberg using the ethno-hermeneutical approach of participant observation. She examines non-denominational feminist Jewish worship groups where Orthodox Jewish women assume leadership roles in ritual performances, despite continued opposition from the patriarchs of the traditional community.

The second section—on “new religions” in Canada—consists of three articles, all of which centre on identity and self-representation among marginalized communities. Katherine Power’s article looks at Mormon women, and examines how they construct their own religious identities by categorizing themselves “as ‘belonging to’ and/or ‘separate from’ specific religious groups” (xv) in rural Southern Alberta. Gillian McCann examines the Toronto Theosophical Society from a historical standpoint, investigating the reasons behind the appeal of Theosophy in the minds of Canadian women. Lynn Echevarria closes the section with her study on the Baha’i faith. Using a symbolic interactionist sociological perspective, she examines women’s understandings of the Baha’i teachings and subsequent “expressions of their religiosity, individually and collectively” (255).

Focusing on recent immigrant communities that have strong ancestral ties to South Asia in their recent memory, it is the third and final section of the book that emerges as the most significant to diasporic studies. Both Anne Pearson and Preeti Nayak highlight the voices of first and second generation Hindu women as ritual leaders in Southwestern Ontario’s Hindu communities. Pearson and Nayak demonstrate the emergence of a trend they term “individualized Hinduism,” due to the observation that “most of the younger women interviewed felt at ease either rejecting certain practices or transforming their usual meanings to suit their views” (270). In other words, these women were observed to be constantly negotiating between the desire to assimilate and integrate into mainstream Canadian culture, and the desire to retaining their own traditional values. In the second article of the section, Nanette Spina illustrates how women’s ritual authority and their collective style of worship “have offered a revised definition in worship patterns from traditional priest-mediated ritual performance to a communal style of ritual participation” (xvii). She contextualizes her study by examining the Adhi Parasakthi temple society, situated in the Tamil religious tradition of Toronto.

This collection uses Paul Bramadat’s concept of “diaspora” as an inclusive term encompassing “all communities of people who harbour deep emotional ties to some other place” (x). This usage acts as an important reminder that all Christians of European descent, even if they have been residing in Canada for generations, belong to migrant communities—communities that are actively striving to keep the memories of their own cultural traditions alive as they themselves deal with issues of displacement (forced or unforced). Unfortunately, this anthology falls short in developing

theoretical implications for migrant/diasporic studies. Instead, it makes great contributions to existing scholarship on gender studies and rituals of religion by examining diasporic communities.

The strongest features of this anthology are its immense diversity and its impressive coverage of Canada's lesser-known religious traditions. A major achievement of this book is that it brings the topic of religion to the forefront of diaspora studies by using a range of theoretical approaches, opening the gateway to potential new areas of research in this field. Another striking point is the reflective comments made by informants while sharing their personal narratives, which makes the study rich in ethnographic data and an interesting read for academics and non-academics alike. It is worthwhile to mention the exhaustive bibliography included at the end of the text on women and religion in North America, which demonstrates a clear aim to promote further research in this field. However, it was disappointing to see that Islam as a religious tradition did not find a place in this collection, specifically when a section was dedicated to South Asian Religions [in Southwest Ontario]. For someone interested in a systematic analysis of the role of religion in forming diasporic social organization and identities in South Asian migrant communities, one could only wish that more attention could be given to that particular section instead of limiting it to only two articles. Nonetheless, the work as a whole is highly recommended not only as a classroom text, but for anyone interested in gender and ritual studies in a diasporic setting against the backdrop of Canadian multiculturalism.

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Mythologizing Jesus: From Jewish Teacher to Epic Hero.

Dennis R. MacDonald. Lanham/Boulder/New York/London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015. 178 pages. \$36.00 USD (Hardback).

Mythologizing Jesus, by Dennis R. MacDonald, is a brief introduction to Greco-Roman influences on the canonical Gospels, attempting to demonstrate the literary similarities between Homer's *Iliad* and *The Odyssey* with the Gospels of Mark and Luke. In doing so, MacDonald casts light onto the literary background in which the mentioned gospels emerged, as well as the literary techniques employed at the time. Using Mimesis Criticism as his sole methodology, MacDonald elaborates on