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Religion, Ideology & Violence

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

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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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in which these stories emerged. Although the Status Questionis regarding the composition of the canonical Gospels is overly simplified, it presents a detailed literary comparison of particular Markan and Lukan episodes of the life of Jesus with Homeric episodes. For those interested in Mimesis as an analytical tool, this book explores the depth and richness of its methodological claims and applicability. It therefore serves well as an introductory work to the topic of Mimesis and its traces in the canonical Gospels.

Joseph E. Brito  
Concordia University

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***Sacred Objects in Secular Spaces: Exhibiting Asian Religions in Museums.*** Edited by Bruce M. Sullivan. London/New York: Bloomsbury, 2015. 256 pages. \$34.55 USD (Paperback).

In the past two decades, scholars such as Gregory Schopen, Ronald Grimes, Richard H. Davis, Crispin Paine, John E. Cort, and Carol Duncan have published influential studies on material cultures in general, and religious objects and images in particular. *Sacred Objects in Secular Spaces*, edited by Bruce M. Sullivan, makes a valuable contribution to an important dimension of this field: the exhibiting and viewing of Hindu, Buddhist, and Sikh religious objects in secular spaces of museums. The volume brings together art historians and religious studies scholars with expertise in Asian arts and religions to explore the following questions: How do we understand, describe, and exhibit religious objects in museums? Should we still see them as sacred objects or simply as objects of art? What are “sacred objects” after all? And do they represent cultural heritage, and to what extent? This highly readable, ethnographically and historically well-informed and well-written volume, will be of interest to researchers and museum curators who seek to understand religious material culture, museum studies, and Asian religious studies.

This book consists of eleven chapters divided into three sections on the challenges and experiences of displaying Hindu, Buddhist, and Sikh religious objects in museums. Richard H. Davis opens the discussion by arguing that “objects have life stories, just as humans do” and thus, “biographies highlight the ways that identities can be reframed in different settings and renegotiated in encounters with different audiences” (11). When examining a religious



Gospel of Mark or Luke in the following centuries at times contrasted these episodes with Greco-Roman literature.

McDonald's argumentation is driven by assumption of literary competition, suggesting that the Gospels of Mark and Luke had to "create a rival to Greek and Roman superheroes" (10). He therefore argues that the authors of the Gospel of Mark and Luke enhanced their narratives in order to "compel readers to life-changing decisions to follow Jesus" (10). In doing so, McDonald suggests that the Gospel narratives and Greek mythology served the same purpose and function. Furthermore, by contrasting the literary parallel he confines the interpretative possibility to a comparative approach. The author also assumes a unidirectional and exclusive Greco-Roman influence as well as the overarching conventions of the ideal audience. While MacDonald's strength relies on Greco-Roman literature and genre, his observations could have accounted for the possibilities that other sources outside of the Greco-Roman influence could have influenced the compositions of the canonical gospels, including apocryphal narratives, Syrian or Egyptian myths, as well as Roman myths and deities.

The reader should also be aware that several assumptions are made in the introduction, which comes to influence how the rest of the work advances—such as "the seven authentic letters of Paul of Tarsus" as well as "a lost Gospel, often called Q, or sometimes the Logoi of Jesus" (2). Although there is an academic consensus regarding the two mentioned points, they should be underlined as theories rather than stated as a fact. He also concludes that "the Markan Evangelist...created most of his characters and episodes without the help of antecedent traditions or sources; instead, he imitated the Homeric epics," and that "Luke rightly read Mark as a historical fiction and expanded its imitations to include even more Homeric episodes" (2). Although there is little evidence based on papyri to support the argument, one cannot commit to absolutism on the base of "lack of evidence," let alone assume that Luke perceived the Gospel of Mark as a fictional work. It is also important to note that what MacDonald refers to as the *Lost Gospel* is his reconstruction of the sayings of Jesus that he has labeled Q+, and is different from what is traditionally understood as Q (see *Two Shipwrecked Gospels: The Logoi of Jesus and Papias' Exposition of Logia about the Lord*, 2012).

In conclusion, this book presents MacDonald's overall work over the past decades regarding Greek influences in the narratives of Jesus as found in the canonical Gospels, as well as the socio-cultural and literary context

twenty-four cases in which the Gospels of Mark and Luke imitated the Homeric tales. The purpose goes beyond the scope of underlining the literary motifs borrowed from Greco-Roman literature, attempting instead to situate the literary world that influenced the composition of the Gospels of Mark and Luke. He therefore focuses exclusively on these two gospels and contrasts their narratives to Homeric tales in order to demonstrate the literary allusions and inherited interpretative nuances that would have been apparent to the immediate audience.

MacDonald argues that modern readers frequently miss allusions to Greek poetry or literature because the names of biblical characters are often transliterated as opposed to translated (139). In doing so, literary references and allusions are not only obscured, but their interpretative possibilities also become limited to the reader's imagination as opposed to the literary context from where they emerged. To correct these missed references, McDonald applies the six rules of Mimesis Criticism presented at the beginning of his work; 1) Accessibility, suggesting that a given author had access to an earlier alleged model, 2) Analogy, which seeks to uncover the possibilities of other authors imitating the same alleged model, 3) Density, stating that the more parallels one can find between two texts the more likely it is that they used a given text as a literary backbone; 4) Order, examining the order of sequence between the two texts; 5) Distinctiveness, underlining the dissimilar literary traits that also come to connect the two texts; and 6) Interpretability, arguing that "ancient authors emulated their antecedents to rival them" (6). Following this he proposes a seventh criteria which argues that up until the 11<sup>th</sup> century, readers were aware of the similarities between the New Testament and "their putative classical Greek models," claiming that they have thus influenced the "original composition of the Gospels" (6). Following his introduction and methodological exposition, he proceeds to uncover in great detail twenty-four Homeric narrative models that the Gospels imitated.

The diction and tone is simple and easy to read, and avoids details that can derail his argumentative agenda. He refers to other academic sources throughout his book, but in general his footnotes serve as references to primary literature as opposed to developing side arguments, contrasting points of view, or referring to other academic suggestions. His literary examples and comparisons are constantly rendered in English, and seldom does he include the Greek text. Moreover, he often refers to either Christian apologists or Church Fathers so as to demonstrate that the reception of the

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.

Purna Roy  
Concordia University

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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

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

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.

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.

Alexander Nachaj  
Concordia University

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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



society, other genders, and so forth. However, to the media-consuming men in this study, they see their manhood as made up of basic elements such as provision, protection and purpose. While some of these elements would seem to come from their faith and scriptures, we soon discover that there is a stronger tendency to identify with them through other media.

The second chapter, “The Media that Matter”, places more stress on the ambiguity of male identities and the complex, and often contradictory, ways gender is negotiated through society—particularly in the sources where these men find their role models. Interestingly, rather than dive into Biblical literature for model masculine behaviour, these men prominently find imitation worthy behaviour in secular media. Though the media is stereotypically perceived to be anti-Christian, or to solely posit values at odds with Christian society, the Christian men interviewed consume secular media as much as their secular male counterparts. In these media, these men find and create role models from which to emulate their behaviour very much the same as the rest of society—but not wholesale. Therefore, rather than create their identities in opposition to secular media, we can see traces of a careful selection process.

In the third chapter, “Elemental Masculinity, the Domestic Ideal, and Everyday Life” we see how these elemental qualities are understood and acted out—with a notable emphasis on the domestic sphere. This chapter also follows up on some intriguing questions about the relationship of these elements to secular media. For instance, what is it about largely fictional characters, such as William Wallace—or even Mel Gibson, the actor who plays him—that captivate Christian men so much? It would appear that through these avowedly secular figures, Christian men identify with the traits they feel they share with these characters: married, heterosexual, a sense of justice, strength of character, and so forth.

Ultimately, it seems that Christian men view the same programs that secular men view, but engage with them in different ways. Thus, through the media, religious men participate in the broader culture, engaging with its values and negotiating their own identities in the process. While these men’s Christian background and faith do contribute to their alleged self-understanding as men with regards to values, one cannot help but notice the similarities between their perceived ideals of Christian masculinity and the characters from secular media who embody them. The answer to the question phrased in the title of this monograph “Does God make the man” is: “not quite.”

***Does God Make the Man? Media, Religion, and the Crisis of Masculinity.*** Stewart M. Hoover and Curtis D. Coats. New York and London: New York University Press, 2015. x + 223 pages. \$27.00 USD (Paperback).

*Does God Make the Man? Media, Religion and the Crisis of Masculinity* is part of an ongoing series of scholarly work referred to by the authors as inquiring “into meaning making among audience members” (vii) within the contemporary United States. Where prior studies have examined specific demographics (women, the elderly, etc.) or units (families, individuals, etc.), our authors are seeking to address a number of perceived gaps. The first is the examination of men as men and how a man’s gender affects their experiences of meaning-making in the media; and second, that the academy (which in this case, one would suspect is specifically media studies) has traditionally had a “blind spot” for religion and undervalued its potential worth as an area of inquiry (viii). Therefore, this study seeks to answer how man’s religion affects not only his self-understanding as a male, but also to what extent it affects his engagement with the media in his society as a whole.

Relying on a large pool of interviews conducted in the years prior to this publication, Hoover and Coats ground their observations in first hand data. Importantly, they are clear to state that this study focuses on a particular demographic of religious men (white, Christian but mostly Protestant, nominally heterosexual). The study is therefore not intended to speak for all religious men in the United States.

The book is divided into three main chapters, along with introductory and concluding sections. In the first chapter, “The New Christian Patriarchs”, we witness two predominant viewpoints extricated from the interviews. The first is the perceived loss of male authority in both the public or domestic sphere. Growing gender equality and changing societal norms have given the appearance that men are no longer in authority (though appearances are often just that—appearances). The second is the apparent lack of a “masculine” character in contemporary religious institutions.

The question is then raised, that if the sources of their faith are not also the sources for their masculine identity, then from where do they derive it? The prevailing attitude appears to be that masculinity is somehow inherent in a man’s body; that there is something essentialist about manhood—although it is in danger of being overpowered. We of course know that masculinity “does not operate in a vacuum” (40), but through the negotiation of culture,

presents a solid and clear path for readers to follow, while also allowing for Heffernan to substantiate her arguments from multiple angles within various contexts. While Heffernan's agenda is immediately made clear, she makes certain to appeal to the reader by speaking to the difficulty more or less intrinsic to discussions regarding the veil. Indeed, what makes these discussions especially difficult to navigate, according to Heffernan, is that as soon as the veil is perceived as pitted against unveiling, there is a refusal to acknowledge the presence of an alternative modernity in Islam. By this, Heffernan means that with the rise in Orientalist scholarship in the eighteenth century—scholarship that marks the formal inception of these Western perceptions of veiling—it has since been a conceptual struggle to argue for an understanding of the veil (and Islam in general) that diverts from this clear-cut bifurcation. Certainly, Heffernan stands firmly against this unfortunate trend in understandings of veiled Muslim women, arguing that understandings of veiling have always involved interpretation, and therefore are open to multiple and dynamic readings that can never be complete. Indeed, the veil is often perceived in the Western imagination as a fixed symbol with an unchanging set of meanings. However, such approaches to the veil are not only erroneous and problematic, but extremely limiting.

Though Heffernan's thorough and thoughtful examination of perceptions of the veiled woman may, at the outset, leave the reader feeling frustrated and cynical, this is not Heffernan's ultimate intent. Indeed, the book's final ring is that of surprising optimism—the aspect which most lends itself to establishing this work as unique to contemporary discussions of the veil. Heffernan argues that the very divisions between East and West which she examines—divisions in which the veiled and unveiled woman are oft placed at the centre—paradoxically create the possibility for the very women under scrutiny to engage with one another to resist and break down these divisions. While a more fully bodied explication of this aspect of Heffernan's argument would not have gone amiss, its presence remains poignant, and makes *Veiled Figures* an important read for those who seek examinations of the veil's role in the contemporary context that present a hopeful alternative to the common narrative.

Georgia Carter  
Concordia University