

JR | RELIGION & CULTURE C

Volume 28, Nos. 1 & 2

Religion, Activism, & Social Change

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:
Dr. Carly Daniel-Hughes, 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.



RELIGION & CULTURE

A Peer-Reviewed Graduate Journal

2019 Volume 28, Nos. 1 & 2

Journal Committee

Executive Committee

Joseph E. Brito
Lindsey Jackson
T. Scarlet Jory
Laurel Andrew

Editor-in-Chief
Article Editor
Article Editor
Book Review Editor

Editorial Board

Maryam Amirdust
Taylor Roberts Carleton
Kelly Norah Drukker
Elyse MacLeod
Alexander Nachaj
Purna Roy
Ana Mota de Souza

Faculty Advisors

Rachel Berger
Carly Daniel-Hughes
André Gagné
Hillary Kaell
Marc Lalonde
Steven Lapidus
Leslie Orr

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

© 2019 Journal of Religion and Culture,
Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec.

ISSN 1198-6395
Journal of Religion and Culture Volume 28, no. 1 (2019)
Journal of Religion and Culture Volume 28, no. 2 (2019)

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 *Change and Transition: An Introduction by the Editor*
Joseph E. Brito

Articles

- 15 *Religion in the Art of Colonial Resistance: Hinduism
and the Struggle for Indian Sovereignty, 1870-1920*
Katja Rieck
- 50 *Twenty-First-Century Looting, Academic Ethics,
and The Antiquities Market in Egypt*
Chance Bonar
- 81 *Take it Like A Man: The Marriage Commissioners Reference,
Masculinity, and Law's Private/Public Parts*
Connor Steele

In Conversation

- 105 *Emily Suzanne Johnson, Ball State University*
By Lindsey Jackson

Book Reviews

- 113 *Paranormal America: Ghost Encounters, UFO Sightings,
Bigfoot Hunts, and Other Curiosities in Religion and Culture*
Alexander Nachaj, reviewer.
- 116 *Practices of Selfhood*
Elliot Mason, reviewer.

Content

Articles

- 123 « *Se changer soi pour changer le monde* », *entre spiritualité et innovations sociales: Le cas des créatifs culturels*
Julia Itel
- 139 *Black Femmes Black Gods: Magic as Justice*
Marcelitte Failla
- 156 *Monster Theory and Anti-Judaism in the Gospel of John*
Tyler Smith

In Conversation

- 178 *Melissa M. Wilcox, University of California*
Laurel Andrew

Book Reviews

- 186 *Jewish Radical Feminism: Voices from the Women's Liberation Movement*
Lindsey Jackson, reviewer.
- 189 *The Unbound God: Slavery and the Formation of Early Christian Thought*
Joseph E. Brito, reviewer.

Book Reviews

Paranormal America: Ghost Encounters, UFO Sightings, Bigfoot Hunts, and Other Curiosities in Religion and Culture. 2nd edition. Christopher Bader, Frederick Carson Mencken, and Joseph Baker. New York City: New York University Press, 2017. 310 p. \$28 CND (Paperback)

It's a rare delight when a book comes my way from a publisher that is both engrossing and intellectually stimulating. *Paranormal America: Ghost Encounters, UFO Sightings, Bigfoot Hunts, and Other Curiosities in Religion and Culture*, is one that ably checks both columns and will likely soon be nestled on my shelf next to Glen Chilton's *The Attack of The Killer Rhododendrons* and Gregory L. Reece's *Weird Science and Bizarre Beliefs: Mysterious Creatures, Lost Worlds and Amazing Inventions*. Written by three collaborators, Christopher Bader, Frederick Carson Mencken, and Joseph Baker, *Paranormal America* flows well, transitioning seamlessly between nine chapters of varied subject matter, the authors' own first-person narrative accounts, and a plethora of charts and data. While this reviewer was unable to get his hands on a copy of the first edition for comparison, as it stands I wholeheartedly recommend this second edition as a strong entry point for anyone interested in the paranormal, whether as a curiosity or academic pursuit.

In contrast to the never-ending supply of popular non-fiction and television programs that seek to sensationalize the so-called "weird" or "deviant" beliefs among us, the authors of this monograph are careful to outline that they are not concerned with proving or disproving the beliefs of the people they interview or examine (much to the chagrin of both the believers and the debunkers). As a scholarly pursuit, yet one that is still accessible to the general reader, the main interests of this inquiry are anthropological and sociological. The book does not so much question why people believe in the paranormal, but instead seeks to understand who believes, what they believe, and how their beliefs influence their actions (or, as the case may be, the actions of the wider society).

The authors survey a wide range of activities and beliefs that fall under the larger umbrella of “the paranormal,” here defined as anything that falls outside of the “normal”. This includes bigfoot, ghosts, ghouls, UFOs, satanic forces, angels, etc. Inevitably, due to the wide reach of their scope, certain sections from individual chapters can feel terse, reading almost like small sprints - exhilarating, but over all too quickly. The feeling that the reader is often left with is a desire for more, however one cannot fault the authors too much. This is indeed a massive undertaking for one book - which includes nine chapters along with a modest appendix detailing methods and more statistical findings in just 310 pages (including notes and bibliography). That they have managed to make such a wide range of topics come together in a manner that is cohesive, careful and collected is itself an accomplishment.

In terms of organization, the chapters are arranged rather broadly, either focusing on specific inter-related subcultures (such as the paranormal investigators and ghost walks of chapter 4, the UFO *contactees* and abductees of chapter 5, the bigfoot believers and Sasquatch hunters in chapter 6, etc.) or overarching topical considerations (the inward and outward experiences of chapters 2 and 3, statistical findings on paranormal people in general in chapter 7, Judeo-Christian influenced worldviews and cosmologies chapter 8). One will inevitably notice that there is a large amount of overlap throughout, not only between the topics (Sasquatch believers appear intermittently, as do the psychics) but also thematically (elements of religious beliefs blending with paranormal ones). Fortunately, rather than come across as repetitive, these moments serve as insightful reminders that the same phenomena manifest themselves in diverse settings and are interpreted rather variously by different segments of the American population. The Sasquatch is not always a simple North American Wood Ape, he / she / they are also telepathic, otherworldly beings to some.

While the largest share of paranormal participants report experiences or beliefs in a single subculture, participating in one does not necessarily preclude one from also experiencing and believing in

other paranormal activities, practices or encounters. In chapter 7, we are introduced to Laura, a paranormal generalist, who refuses to limit herself to any set of beliefs or experiences broadly related to both New Age and UFO circles. While the majority of “paranormal people” do not hold such an eclectic range of experiences and beliefs as her, they nevertheless have a tendency to ascribe to multiple cultures (such as prescient dreams and psychic powers, or angels and satanic influences).

Some of the statistics are quite eye-opening, going against what one might consider common knowledge or conventional wisdom. Notably, across several recent surveys, more than half of all Americans report believing in one or more forms of the paranormal, a sizeable portion having experienced one or more paranormal encounters themselves. This finding suggests the paranormal and its related experiences are, statistically-speaking, quite “normal” (163).

Our first reaction upon hearing this statistic might be to scratch our heads and wonder how this can be, or who these people are. The answers, it seems, are not so clear cut. The authors take the time to dispel any notions that belief in the paranormal is demarcated across class and/or education lines (debunking the Marxist notion that beliefs are coping mechanisms for the socially disenfranchised). Beliefs and interests in the paranormal cut across traditional social divides of economics, education, and even political allegiance. As well, it is not simply a matter of being religious vs non-religious, as secular atheists are among the highest percentage of people reporting not only some beliefs in the supernatural but also having experienced it as well. Of course, if we were really looking for signs of the growth of paranormal beliefs and interest, we would have noticed this long ago. Indicators of the growing popularity of the paranormal continue to abound in popular culture and entertainment media (notably in the mounting number of reality television programs).

In the end, it is quite clear from the authors’ findings that the paranormal has a certain power over us. People are simultaneously “fascinated and repulsed, intrigued and dismissive” of the paranormal (2), and are willing to seek out both answers and entertainment

related to it in growing numbers. If this is an ongoing trend, then it is one that is unlikely to be reversed any time soon, and also (if our authors' predictions come true) one that we will see in increased frequency in the coming years.

Alex Nachaj
Concordia University

Practices of Selfhood. Zygmunt Bauman and Rein Raud. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015. 153 p. \$22.52 (Paperback).

Written following a productive exchange at a conference, Zygmunt Bauman and Rein Raud's *Practices of Selfhood* embraces a conversational format that allows for an accessibility not typically associated with academic works. The object of the text's inquiry, the formation of self in the contemporary digitally-saturated world, is meaningfully and skillfully articulated without recourse to disciplinary jargon. This renders the text approachable to both specialists and non-specialists alike. Individual chapters could easily serve as primary readings for upper-level undergraduate seminars in methodology and critical theory, while Philosophy and Sociology departments may find this work to be of use in undergraduate and graduate classrooms of all levels. Occasional dips into religious philosophy (particularly Eastern traditions during some of the earlier chapters) make the work a useful addition to graduate seminars in Religious Studies, while flirtations with quantum theory may also make *Practices of Selfhood* of interest to scholars of the philosophy of science.

An interest in the ways in which technology, particularly social media and the internet, have come to dominate our time and our self-understandings forms a thematic thread throughout *Practices of Selfhood*. The authors' discussion of this theme is a particular strength of the work, anchoring Bauman's description of modern life as "liquid modernity" in an understanding of that modernity as simultaneously digital (10). Along these lines, Raud and Bauman