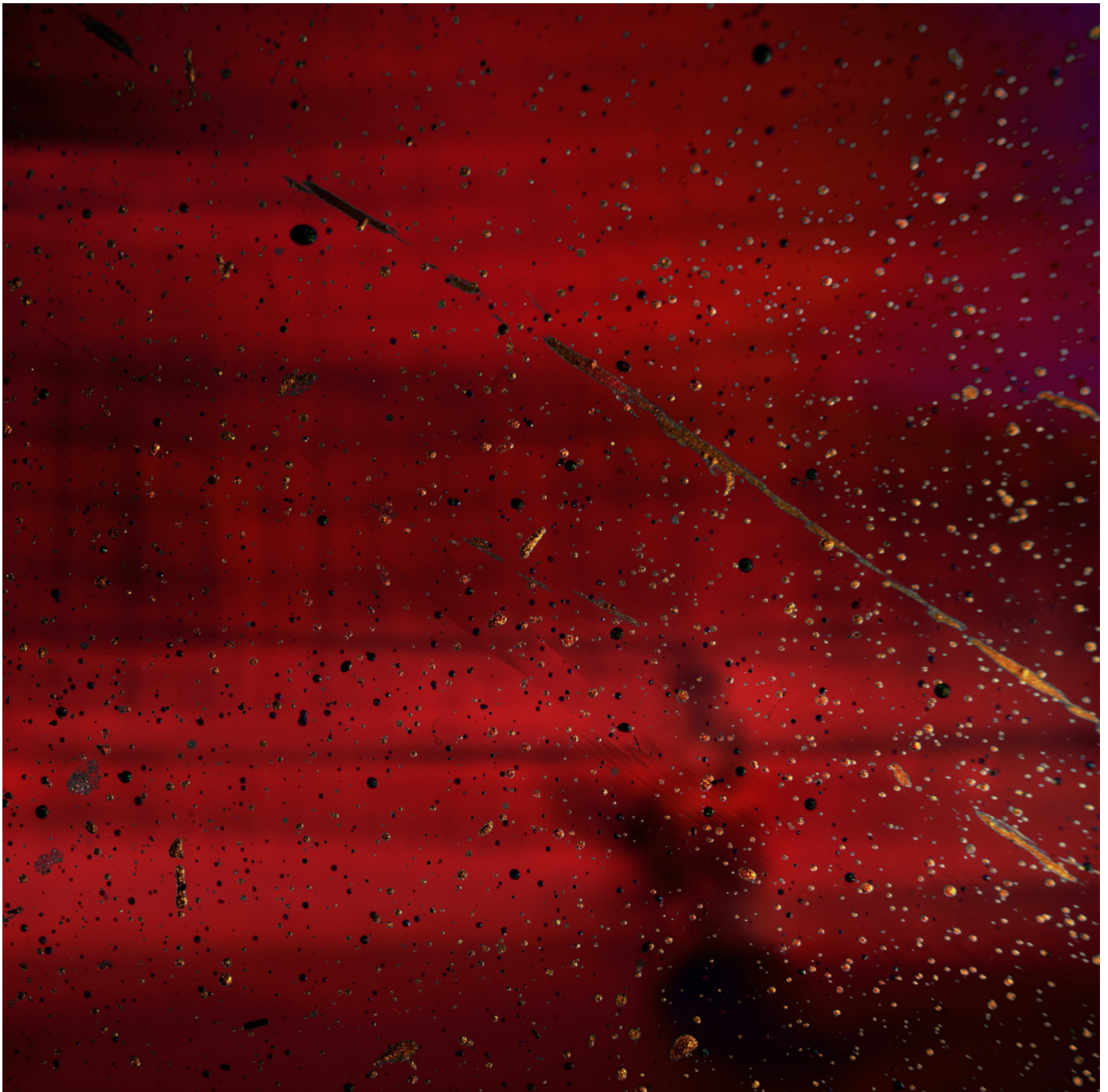




# RELIGION & CULTURE

*2021      Volume 29*





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# *Diversity in the Academy*

## *An Introduction from the Editor*

Throughout the last couple of years, there has been a lot of talk within my networks about diversity in the academy—diversity in publishing, conference panels, editorial boards, and within departments. The language of “manels” and “manthologies”<sup>1</sup> have become common parlance, and it appears as though folks within academia are becoming aware of the dominance of white men within its walls. In the field of Jewish Studies, for example, a recent anthology published by Princeton University Press composed of an entirely male author list caused an uproar and received major criticism from some scholars within the field. In the spring 2019 issue of the Association for Jewish Studies’ monthly magazine, aptly titled “The Patriarchy Issue,” Sarah Imhoff and Susannah Heschel contributed a piece outlining the ways in which one can be more inclusive in their own scholarly activities and research.<sup>2</sup> Imhoff and Heschel urge readers to “Practice inclusion in your own scholarly spaces and research.”<sup>3</sup> Although considerable work must be done by scholars to diversify our respective fields, conversations about this issue are percolating and actions taken to start seeing progress.

The seemingly simple advice offered by Imhoff and Heschel to “practice inclusion” is easier said than done. Lack of diversity runs deep, and it can be difficult to practice inclusion within academia, which is such an exclusive and male-dominated environment. This is the trouble we encountered with the publication of our current issue of the *Journal of Religion and Culture*. As editor-in-chief, I am troubled that we were unable to provide a strong model of inclusion and diversity through this edition. We did several things to try to encourage

more diverse authorship (extended our submission deadline several times, abolished our initially proposed theme and did an open call for papers), to no avail. This brings us back to Imhoff and Heschel’s advice—how can one practice inclusion when women, BIPOC, and non-binary people are not given the opportunity to enter the spaces within which to be included? How can we, as an academic community, better encourage a diverse range of scholars to submit their work for publication? I am wholeheartedly dedicated to practicing inclusion in my scholarly spaces, but it feels impossible to practice such inclusion when the only people operating in my scholarly orbit are men.

I am (slightly) comforted by the fact that our editorial board is representative of the inclusion I desire for the rest of the journal. I am also (slightly) comforted by the scholars featured in the In Conversation section. In Conversation is a space where we share interviews with scholars about their recent research and publications. Although we feature two female scholars and one male scholar, all are tenured faculty. I am aware that this section, while more gender inclusive than the remainder of the journal, is not inclusive of BIPOC, contingent, or non-tenured scholars, and we need to strive to do better.

All this to say, there is work to be done. Advisors need to encourage their non-male, non-white, and LGBTQ+ students to submit their work for publication and departments need to hire non-male, non-white, and non-binary faculty. Only then can “manels” and “manthologies” truly become a relic of the past. Only once considerable cultural shifts take place and diversity at the top echelons of academia is fully embraced will small journals, such as ours, be able to reflect the diversity of the field. Until then, our journal, and others, will continue to serve as a reflection of the lack of diversity in academia.

I do not want the message of this introduction to distract from the quality of the pieces in this volume. We are extremely proud of the entire contents of the journal and the work the authors have put into their pieces. Readers may notice the majority of the articles in this edition are thematically related. We originally sought articles connected to the theme of “Monsters and the Monstrous,” but we eventually decided to abandon this theme and do an open call for submissions. Therefore, we have committed to a themeless edition of the Journal of Religion and Culture. After nearly one year of hard work creating this volume, we are excited to share it with our readers. The Journal of Religion and Culture is committed to providing graduate students and early career scholars with a space to share their work, and we are proud to be able to uphold our mission. We hope you enjoy this edition as much as we enjoyed putting it together. Happy reading!

Lindsey Jackson  
*Editor-in-chief*

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### Notes

1. “Manels” and “manthologies” refers to conference panels and anthologies that are composed entirely of men. It is interesting to note that the Association for Jewish Studies has a mandate for diverse panels at their annual conference and outlines this clearly on their website. I could not find a similar statement or mandate by the American Academy of Religion. For AJS’s statement on diversity, see: “Diversity and Inclusiveness,” <https://www.associationforjewishstudies.org/2020-annual-conference/submit-a-proposal/submission-participation-requirements>
2. Sarah Imhoff and Susannah Heschel, “Gender Inclusivity: A Preliminary Guide for Jewish Studies Scholars,” *AJS Perspectives: The Magazine of the Association for Jewish Studies, The Patriarchy Issue* (Spring 2019): 34-36.
3. Imhoff and Heschel, “Gender Inclusivity,” 34.

## Articles



