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The Journal of Religion and Culture (JRC) acknowledges that our work takes place on unceded Indigenous lands. The Kanien'kehá:ka Nation is recognized as the custodians of the lands and waters on which we meet today. Tiohtià:ke, which has been settled as Montréal, has long served as a site of meeting and exchange amongst many First Nations, including Kanien'kehá:ka of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, Huron/Wendat, Abenaki, and Anishinaabeg. This place continues to be the home of many Indigenous peoples, as well as settlers and immigrants representing different cultures, languages, and worldviews. As uninvited guests who call this place home, we respect the continued connections with the past, present, and future in our ongoing relationships with Indigenous and other peoples within the community, and we are grateful for the opportunity to live here. We hope to honour the relational values that Indigenous peoples have centered in their connections with human and ecological worlds, and aim to centre consistent and persistent labour rooted in decolonial and antiracist practices while recognizing and working to change ongoing colonial practices of institutions of higher education.



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# ***The Complexity of Connection***

*An Introduction by the Editor*

The Journal of Religion and Culture (JRC) is proud to be returning after an extended hiatus of five years. Like many other important student-run projects and programs, the COVID-19 pandemic seriously impacted our capabilities. Being unable to meet, train each other, and facilitate connections between graduate students of religion meant having to put the journal on hold as we focused on other pressing social and academic issues. When we were finally able to reconvene and re-launch the journal in December 2023, we reflected on the fragility of the programs, institutions, and norms we had all previously taken for granted, but also on the incredible resilience demonstrated by all those who struggled to keep reconstituting community through such disruption. The interconnectedness that undergirds every aspect of our lives means that while one major disruption can impact every strand of our existence, so too can those connections stitch things back together.

Along with our partners, the executive committee of the Annual Graduate Interdisciplinary Conference (AGIC), we chose the theme “Interconnected Realities: intersections of religions, cultures, and contemporary social challenges” for our first volume since our last publication in 2020 to reflect the complexity of connection and disconnection that we had all experienced while living and working through the pandemic. The following volume offers insight into some of the intersecting belief systems, cultural backgrounds, and social issues of this moment.

The first article of this volume, “How Anti-Atheist Prejudice Keeps Non-Believing Clergy Silent: The Clergy Project Participants Share Their Pain,” by Alexandr Zamušinski, explores the challenges faced by clergy who undergo deconversion from religious faith, focusing on the social, familial, and professional consequences of adopting atheism or nonsupernaturalism. Using case studies from participants of The Clergy Project, the author highlights how the ability to express nonbelief is shaped by geographic, cultural, and religious factors and demonstrates that atheism remains a

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marginalized identity, with many clergy members choosing to live as covert apostates to protect their social standing and emotional well-being.

The second article, “Navigating the ‘New Normal’: Layers of Relation in Ruth Ozeki’s *A Tale For The Time Being*” by Fabrizio Lacarra examines constructions of temporality and spatiality in Ozeki’s work, highlighting how postquantum writing can explore various levels of relation between the text and its characters, its author, and its readers. This examination is particularly significant in the present moment of recovering from a worldwide cultural trauma in that it explores how postquantum literature allows a connectivity between the reader and the wider world that is much needed during transitional periods following great upheaval, when we are all navigating the ‘new normal’ of our post-COVID world.

The final article of this volume, “Art of Ethics: New Materialism and the Affect of Religion in the Post-Graffiti of Montréal” by Devan Morrell, analyzes cases of Greco-Roman style post-graffiti in Montréal, investigating how this subversive use of the “classical” art conventions demonstrates the autonomous nature of post-graffiti and how it demands a re-contextualization of the spaces in which it is created. The author posits that the use of figures of antiquity in street art reveals the complex levels of connection to and habitation of the land we call Tiohtià:ke/Montréal.

For our first volume back, we are also resuming the *In Conversation* section, where we interview contemporary scholars about their recent work and issues that pertain to their research to profile innovative and exciting research while providing an alternative way for our readers to connect to current scholarship. In this volume, we interviewed Dr. Chantal Fiola from the University of Winnipeg about her project and upcoming book, *Expressions of Métis Spirituality and Religion Across the Métis Homeland*. This interview explores the initial project designed and facilitated by Métis scholars Drs Chantal Fiola, Emily Grafton, and Paul L. Gareau, its goals of understanding and defining the full breadth of Métis spirituality/religion, and some of the ways in which religious studies and Indigenous studies may intersect and overlap with each other.



The final section of this volume is our book review section. This edition features a review produced by Jordan Molot of *The Threshold of Dissent: A history of American Jewish Critics of Zionism* by Marjorie N. Feld, and a review by Sean Remz of the book *Patriots without a Homeland: Hungarian Jewish Orthodoxy from the Emancipation to Holocaust* written by Jehuda Hartman (translated by Shaul Vardi).

Finally, I would like to thank our small but determined executive committee, who worked tirelessly to re-launch the journal. I thank Alyssa Putzer and Christian Robillard for all their hard work on this volume, and I want to give special recognition to Thomas Siebel and Jingyan Wang who not only worked on this volume, but also served as co-chairs of the Annual Graduate Interdisciplinary Conference (AGIC). We all want to express our gratitude to former editors-in-chief Joseph Brito and Alexander Nachaj who answered our questions whenever we needed their help, and extra special thanks to Lindsey Jackson (former editor-in-chief from 2019 to 2021) who recruited our current executive committee, provided us detailed training in our roles as editors, and offered incredible guidance to us as we navigated this re-launch. Thank you also to Munit Merid, who helped us with every administrative issue we came across, and to Sophie Charest, our designer, who helped us (literally) put this volume together. This publication would have been possible without the support of everyone who came together to guide us through this endeavor.

We are excited to present you with this current issue, our first since 2020, and we hope you enjoy it. Bonne lecture!

Ellen Dobrowolski  
*Editor-in-Chief*