

# JR C | RELIGION & CULTURE

Volume 25



## Then & Now

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# Then and Now

*An introduction by the Editor*

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The year is 1990. The Berlin wall has just fallen the previous summer, and Concordia University, after the official merger of Loyola College and Sir George Williams University, is celebrating its 15th birthday (but fast going on 16). Oversized plaid shirts, jean jackets and overalls mark the genesis of a very curious decade of youth fashion. Sinead O'Connor and Wilson Phillips dominate the radio airwaves and Home Alone will go on to become the year's highest grossing movie in domestic North America. The next ten years in Canadian politics would be helmed by Prime Minister Jean Chretien and the Liberal Party swinging the country to the left, followed by a brief Martin interregnum, and then dominated by Harper for the next ten pushing the country to the right. We would have wars in Iraq, Europe, Afghanistan, back in Iraq and, arguably, are in the midst of another one in that same area. Sweatpants seem to be making a comeback.

Culturally, we've travelled quite the distance (and in many ways, returned to some of the destinations to which we briefly sojourned along the way). All the while, the academy of religion hasn't sat idly by. New approaches and methodology, notably embodied cognition, are now finding themselves being applied to the study of religion. We're seeing papers exploring new elements of popular culture, including the use, imagining and presence of religion in video games. Queer theory and masculinities became become a viable, acceptable and ultimately engaging fields of gender studies, along with all of the many ways these bodies practice and experience religion. We've even brushed the dust off the covers of old books long forgotten, put them away on the shelf, and brought them back out for a second reading. The Nag Hammadi collection in particular has become revitalized, as had research and interest in ancient (and long misunderstood) Manichaeism. Biblical studies shifted from diachronic and historical queries towards Synchronic readings, giving new voice to the "reader" over that of the "author". We can't stop seeing the ghost of Foucault everywhere we look.



A lot can change in 25 years. And justly so, the 25th edition of the Journal of Religion and Culture (JRC) is being released with the special honour of having witnessed the shifting tides of culture, religion, and everything in between these last two and a half decades (and slightly more).

We've gone through a number of changes of our own. The editorial staff has experienced a complete turnover no fewer than five times, and we've enjoyed the privilege of working with more editors, readers, scholars and other volunteers than I can keep track of. We've had ups and downs, moving from print only, to web only, now to a mix of web and print publications. We lost a website along the way, and made a new one.

We still work from a small office on the top of floor of little old brick building on MacKay Street overlooking a parking lot and Concordia's brand new glass complex for the John Molson School of Business. We're not bitter. Most of the time it's nice and quiet except when we argue over our limited desk space.

In this edition, we're offering a selection of peer-reviewed papers and non-refereed book reviews, some of which cover subjects and material which wouldn't have been possible 25 years ago.

"Freeing the Muslim Other to Conform: Spiritual Group-Based Affiliation and the State in Québec & France" by Anelynda Mielke-Gupta of Carleton University proposes that the widely claimed threat to secularism and *laïcité* is really a perceived threat from "different", non-Christian religions - notably Islam.

"Maskilim in the Mishpuche: The Changing Family Structure as Portrayed Within Yiddish Literature" by Lily Chapnik of McGill University examines Yiddish literature portrayal of the paradigm shifts occurring in Eastern European Jewish families in the previous century.

"The Study of Religion as an Exercise in Problematization: Some Meta-Theoretical Considerations" by Elyse MacLeod of Concordia University argues that problematization is indeed a useful way to conceptualize the types of historical shifts Charles Taylor outlines in his 2007 work, *The Secular Age*.

“Analyse structurelle du récit de la Pentecôte: Pour une interprétation des « *langues comme de feu* » (Actes 2,3)” by Joseph E. Brito of Concordia University examines the meaning and use of language and repetition in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

“Disciplining Yoga: Foucauldian themes in Sivananda yoga practice” by Mark Eaton of Kingsborough Community College applies Michel Foucault’s theoretical framework of discipline to yogic practices at the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre in Toronto.

We also have also included a brief selection of reviews, the majority of which cover recent scholarly publications, and one which returns to a pivotal 1980s publication which has recently begun receiving fresh attention. Accompanying these will be a number of complementary book reviews found exclusively on our website, and which should be available by end of spring 2015.

As one final note, the current executive staff at the journal would also like to extend our special gratitude to Cimminnee Holt, the outgoing Editor-in-Chief, for keeping the JRC safe and dry above the rising waters of administrative troubles, financial uncertainty and the other toils of academia.

The torch has been passed and it’s still burning. I’m not sure what you used to light it with, but by God it’s bright.

Alexander Nachaj  
*JRC Editor-in-Chief, April 2015*