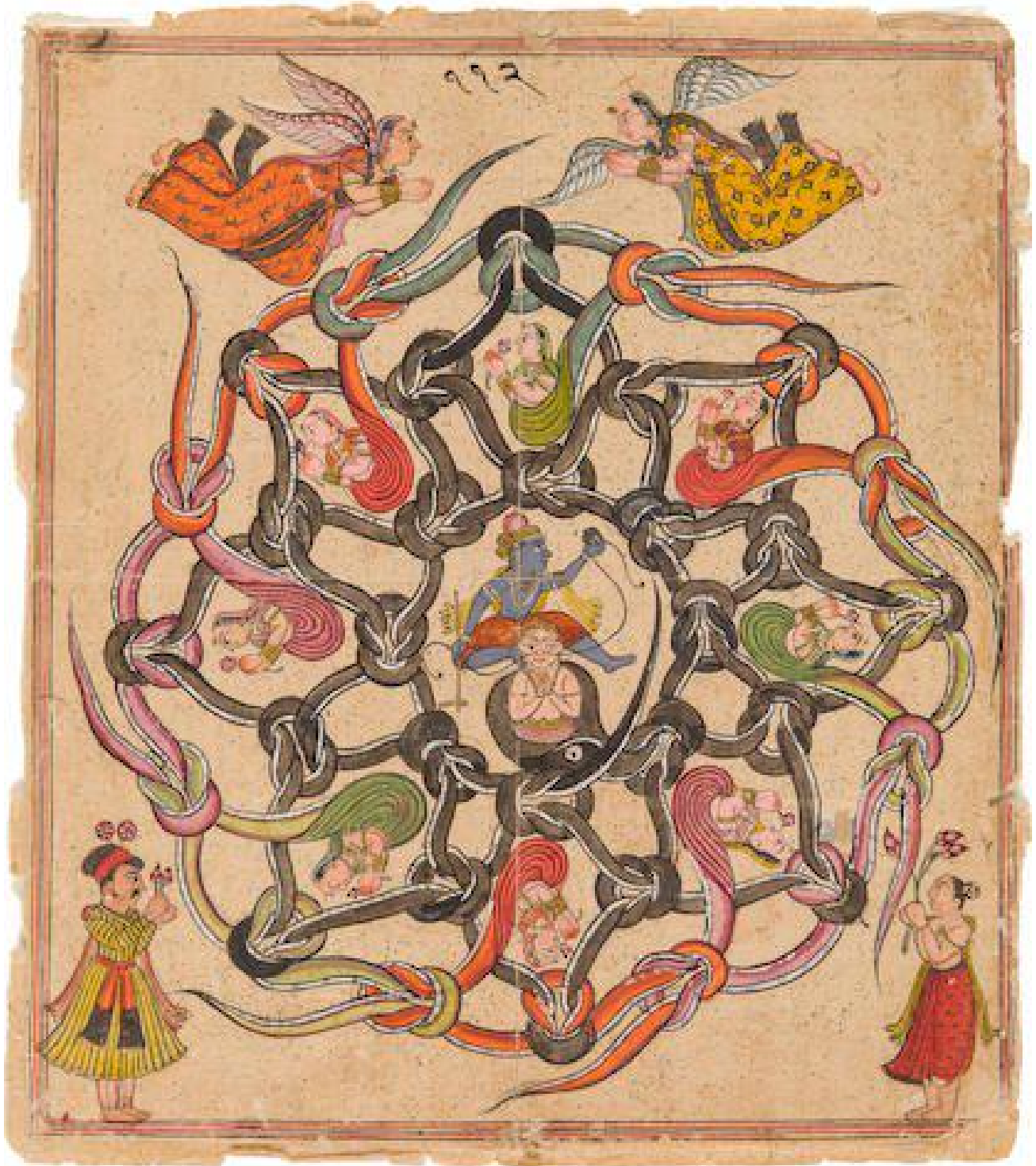




bulletin

British Association for the Study of Religions



140: June 2022

contents

EDITORIAL	2
NEWS, ETC	3
FEATURES	
REFLECTIONS FROM REF21	6
RUNNING A FIELDWORK MODULE ONLINE	10
A RESPONSE FROM IAHR	12
BOOK REVIEWS	14
THE OCCULT IN MODERNIST ART, LITERATURE AND CINEMA	
LOST ECSTASY: ITS DECLINE AND TRANSFORMATION IN RELIGION	
THE PROBLEM OF INVENTED RELIGIONS	
RECENT PUBLICATIONS	19
OBITUARY	
JAMES A. BECKFORD	23

WWW.BASR.AC.UK

ABOUT THE BASR

The British Association for the Study of Religions (BASR) was founded in 1954. It is a member association of the International Association for the History of Religions (founded 1950) and of the European Association for the Study of Religions (founded 2001). The object of BASR is to promote the academic study of religion/s, understood as the historical, social, theoretical, critical and comparative study of religion/s through the interdisciplinary collaboration of all scholars whose research is defined in this way. BASR is not a forum for confessional, apologetic, or similar concerns. BASR pursues its aims principally through an annual conference and general meeting, a regular Bulletin, and a Journal of the British Association for the Study of Religions. Membership of BASR is open to all scholars normally resident in the United Kingdom.

All correspondence concerning the BASR should be sent to:

Dr Stephen E. Gregg,
Department of Religion and Philosophy,
MC234 Millennium City Building,
University of Wolverhampton,
Wulfruna Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1LY

COMMITTEE

President and Chair

Dr Stephen Gregg - s.gregg@wlv.ac.uk

Secretary

Dr Suzanne Owen
- s.owen@leedstrinity.ac.uk

Treasurer

Dr Christopher R Cotter
- c.cotter@lancaster.ac.uk

JBASR Coordinating Editor

Dr Suzanne Owen - s.owen@leedstrinity.ac.uk

Bulletin Editors

Dr David G Roberson
- david.robertson@open.ac.uk
Dr Theo Wildcroft - tw36@soas.ac.uk

All rights reserved. Edition, selection, arrangement and original material © BASR 2017. The rights of the original authors are reserved by those individuals and are not affected by the above copyright.

editorial

Welcome to issue 140 of our bulletin, especially new members who have joined in this academic year. Theo has asked me to write a quick update for members, which I hope will keep you in the loop.

The major news, already communicated through the email list of course, is that the location and dates of this year's conference changed. Unfortunately, King's were unable to host after all, and so we moved to the Open University, who have been incredibly supportive, and whom we thank heartily. This move necessitated a change in dates, and we will gather from 30/08 to 01/09.

There has also been a change in personnel in one of our volunteer positions. Angela Puca is stepping aside as our Web and Social Media Officer, and Aled Thomas is coming onboard. We are very grateful to Angela for all of her contributions, and look forward to working with Aled.

You will also have seen that we posted a Statement of Intent on equality and diversity onto our website a few months ago. That was a part of our work to make E&D a priority over the next few years. As promised, a questionnaire for members has been produced, and that is being sent out now. Thank you to Mel Prideaux particularly for the work in this.

Turning to this issue, we have the usual mix of announcements, book reviews, responses, and updates for members. In addition, Bettina Schmidt has written up a reflection of the REF process, the results of which were published just a few weeks ago. We are grateful for her insider insight into what was a mammoth task for all of us submitting, and for all those on the panels.

As well as the REF, the QAA Benchmarking Statement for TRS has been released since our last issue, about which I have written a short piece reflecting on the exercise as a member of the working group. It raises a few questions as to the role of SoR/RS in relation to TRS branding, and wider issues concerning the voice of SoR/RS in the future.

In our Teaching and Learning section, Suzanne Owen reflects on the practice of undertaking study visits / fieldwork online, which may well have been challenging for many of us over the last couple of years.

Finally, we include a remembrance of our much-missed friend and colleague Jim Beckford. So many of us will have happy memories of Jim, and there will be even more who's own work will have been informed and enlightened by his extensive body of writings.

Stephen Gregg,
BASR President

news, etc



inform

BASR ANNUAL CONFERENCE (HYBRID EVENT)

30 August – 1 September 2022



Online and In-Person at The Open University, Milton Keynes

Keynote Address: Jasjit Singh, University of Leeds

“Becoming an accidental activist: Religion, Academia and Community Engagement”

This year the theme of the British Association for the Study of Religions (BASR) conference focuses on Religion and Public Engagement. We want to explore the many ways in which religion engages with various specific publics, and various publics engage with religion (however construed).

Religion can be used to motivate and inflame ‘the public’ – from encouraging support or opposition to war in the Ukraine, storming the US Capitol building in support of freedom, or to accept or refuse a vaccine. Although relevant aspects of current events may seem obvious to scholars of religion, we must proactively work to justify our subject of study as important and relevant to others. We are also increasingly expected to engage specific publics and demonstrate impact from our research. Reflections on how, why, where, when, and with whom we engage are very welcome.

Fittingly, this year’s conference is co-sponsored by Inform (www.inform.ac) which exists to prevent harm based on misinformation by bringing the insights and methods of academic research into the public domain.

Proposed papers might consider:

- how religious organisations and individuals have engaged with specific publics, both in recent times and historically
- the exchange of knowledge and approaches between schoolteachers and scholars of religion
- the results of the recent REF and its consequences for public engagement and impact
- how new and minority religions have engaged publics for their aims, as well as how scholars researching these groups have navigated their relationships with relevant groups

Organisational matters

The in-person conference will run from lunchtime on Tuesday 30 August to lunchtime on Thursday 1 September at the Open University in Milton Keynes. There will be accommodation reserved for conference participants within walking distance to the venue.

Panels will be either in-person or online— we cannot accommodate hybrid sessions. However, there will be a dedicated room at the venue where online panels will be broadcast for those attending in person, and selected sessions will be streamed online. We will group all the online papers together into online-only panels.

All papers and panels will contribute to the remit of the BASR as a member organisation of the International Association for the History of Religions: to advance research and education through the academic study of religions by providing a forum for the non-confessional, critical, analytical and cross-cultural study of religions, past and present. We plan to publish selected papers in the peer-reviewed Journal of the BASR.

Costs for the conference are still being finalized but will be posted as soon as possible on the BASR website and updated call for papers. We will make several bursaries available for students and early career scholars.

REFLECTIONS ON THE SUBJECT BENCHMARK STATEMENT FOR THEOLOGY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES

As many members will already know, the new version of the QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for Theology and Religious Studies was released on the 30th of March. As a part of the working group, I thought it might be helpful to offer a reflection of the process and outcomes.

The group consisted of eighteen members, in addition to two external advisors supporting environmental and equality issues. The make-up of the committee is my first point of reflection. Two of us were BASR members and, with perhaps a generous interpretation of who else might be considered SoR/RS, our number totalled four. That was disappointing. I am aware of other applications by members, or non-members representing SoR/RS, that were not successful. Of course, not all applications will be accepted, but the make-up of the committee was numerically dominated by Theologians and Biblical scholars. Indeed, representatives from ministerial training institutions (or those that specifically worked in partnership with such institutions) equalled the SoR/RS representation alone.

In a previous opinion piece (Bulletin 131) I argued that SoR/RS had become a 'muted voice' in national discourse, and my worry is that this QAA exercise is a further example of this. It is important, however, to say that dialogue was good within the group, and much positive discussion arose in the attempt to include a diversity of approaches to T/RS. The Chair, Prof. Mike Higton of Durham, was highly effective in his steering and organisation, and he and I worked closely together on several phases of drafting.

I think there were numerous positive steps to develop the approach and content of the Statement. There was a strong push from the SoR/RS members to frame discussions around religion as-lived, which was supported by numerous theologians who looked at contemporary issues, or who aligned themselves with practical theology. In addition, the text now more robustly highlights the importance of studying diverse communities, includes non-religion and atheism more fully, and extends examples of student learning beyond lecture-room settings. De-colonisation was addressed, but I must admit I was disappointed that it was framed within aspirational terms ('providers of courses within TRS increasingly take a decolonising approach to both content and pedagogy') rather than as a definitive statement of the necessity of this in designing and delivering our teaching and learning.

Text referring to course content was changed in many specific ways, of course, but it isn't possible for me to provide commentary on the rationale for each one here. Instead, I would like to focus on the largest issue that was raised during the working process.

Throughout the meetings and emails, the relationship between Theology and Religious Studies was the central concern, framing as it did every aspect of the text. This affected the language of the document considerably. Discussion was most often collaborative but differences in motivation and starting point for different working group members impacted considerably on the task in hand. The understanding and use of terms such as spirituality, the discussion of truth claims, and inclusion of issues around personal student development and beliefs all highlighted some of these differences most clearly.

To address this issue, phrases such as 'the broad area of TRS' or 'courses within the TRS area' were used. Phrasing such as 'the study of TRS' was still used in the document, however. The issue of the diversity of approaches to the relationship between T&RS was foregrounded in sections 1.3 and 1.4, which I saw as a positive step, no matter where we individually stand on the matter.

This issue continued to be the single-largest discussion point of the public consultation. Consultation replies numbered fifteen, and represented both individuals and subject-associations. Of the fifteen, eight raised the TRS brand/relationship, with the majority finding it problematical, both in their own academic approach and in the proposed wording of the document. I have sympathy for this position.

This speaks to a much wider conversation regarding the suitability of the use of the term TRS, which includes voices that argue that it is useful to have a 'brand' in challenging times, to those who seek a complete divorce. The major shift in SoR/RS academics away from traditional TRS departments will also play into this conversation going forwards. Around half of current BASR members are not aligned to a TRS/RS branded department, and I expect this percentage to increase in the coming years. The final part of the process was to provide the QAA with feedback on our writing of the document. This was organised by the Chair, but again done in collaboration. As before, the make-up of the working group and the discussion around TRS relationships were the two issues raised.

One possibility going forwards is the separation of T&RS into two Statements. This would be a radical change, and I appreciate members will have very different opinions as to whether this would be positive or negative. Such a change would require close consultation with the QAA, and no doubt other associated partners, but Mike Higton raised the issue in feedback as a signpost for possible future discussions. That is certainly a discussion which the BASR should have internally in the first instance, to garner member opinions.

Members will hold a wide range of views as to the robustness and helpfulness of the statement. I was pleased to have been given a substantial voice in the discussions, but of course much of the final text is based on compromise, as happens in any collaborative exercise. Going forwards, the most important task for the BASR is to ensure that our members, at all stages of their careers, engage with national-level bodies so that our voices are heard as often as possible.

Stephen Gregg, BASR President

features

REFLECTION ON REF2021

Bettina Schmidt, deputy chair of the sub-panel 31 of REF2021, in consultation with Naomi Appleton and Sophie Gilliat-Ray

The result of REF2021 have been published now (<https://results2021.ref.ac.uk/>), as well as reports from each sub-panels and the main panels (<https://ref.ac.uk/publications-and-reports/>). The work is done, and the time to reflect has started. While the discussion in the HEIs and the funding bodies will focus on achievement and sustainability, the BASR needs to reflect on the future of our area of study in light of the results. This report will highlight some points that need consideration though I will start with a more personal reflection.

When I agreed to be nominated for REF2021 and accepted the invitation to join the sub-panel, I thought it would be similar to REF2014. However, while the rigour of the assessment process remained strong, REF2021 was different from REF2014 in several ways, not just because of the changes to the selection of staff and outputs initiated by the Stein review of REF2014. Among the other changes was the introduction of a two-stage process with smaller panels working on the criteria in stage one and larger panels for the assessment of the submissions in stage two. During the criteria stage the group was rather small but nevertheless set a friendly and collegial tone for the tough time to come. Shortly after the first meeting of stage two the pandemic started. REF2021 was paused for three month and the submission deadline postponed. This new timeline messed up long prepared plans for teaching relief. And then came the lockdown and nearly all panel meetings moved online, including the ones that took place over several days. Sitting on front of the computer screen for hours and hours and discussing REF procedure and assessments without time to catch up with friends and colleagues over tea had been extremely exhausting. REF2021 has been therefore a strange exercise for me. Nevertheless, despite of the lack of personal meetings, working online had been better than expected and I can ensure colleagues that moving online had not undermined the rigour of the assessment. Led by our excellent chair, Gordon Lynch, we were able to discuss openly the submissions and agreed on fair profiles.

Comparing the composition of the Sub-panels Theology and Religious Studies in 2014 and 2021, the BASR was less successful with our nominations for 2021. However, as TRS-UK and other subject associations also nominated colleagues from the study of religions, our field was sufficiently represented, including by four members of the BASR (Naomi Appleton, Gavin Flood, Sophie Gilliat-

Ray and myself, Bettina Schmidt). In addition, we had colleagues nominated by the British Association for Jewish Studies and the philosophy of religion section of the philosophical association among the panel (Philip Alexander and Fiona Ellis). Including the chair of the sub-panel, Gordon Lynch, whom we know as one of the hosts of the BASR conference in 2015, seven of the fourteen full members of the panel had therefore some background in the study of religions.

NOW TO THE RESULTS:

I am confident that the profile below is the outcome of rigorous assessment of the research in TRS at UK universities and reflects the study of religions fairly.

%4*	%3*	%2*	%1*	%Unclassified
38	41	19	2	0

We received 31 submissions for the TRS Sub-Panel. While the number of submissions went down by two when compared with REF2014, the number of staff submitted increased from 413 to 505.12 FTE. Religious Studies was included in all the submissions and the overall outcome presented strong evidence for the strength of our field. As the report of the sub-panel states, research in Theology and Religious Studies makes a vital contribution within the wider research landscape of UK higher education. Religion – broadly understood - has been an integral part of human cultures and societies, shaping knowledge, moral traditions, social institutions and collective rituals, and has been deeply intertwined in processes of social change, cultural creativity and conflict. Research that we assessed on the nature of religious traditions, practice, and texts – and the lives and communities formed in relation to them – is making a significant contribution both to understanding the past and to social, cultural and geo-political processes in the contemporary world. This research is also providing an essential space for thinking critically about key issues of existence, personhood, community and society from within the framework of a range of religious and non-religious traditions.

The changes to the exercise between REF 2014 and REF 2021 mean that absolute comparisons between the results of the two are not valid. In particular, changes to the submission of staff make comparison of outcomes for outputs difficult. Nevertheless, we can see an increase in *4 scores in all three areas that were assessed. The changes to the submission rules since 2014 have enabled greater capture of the increasing volume of world-leading research being produced.

Outputs:

	4*	3*	2*	1*	U
REF2021	33.7%	42.8%	21.7%	1.0%	0.2%
REF2014	23.7%	38.4%	31.5%	5%	0.5%

Impact:

	4*	3*	2*	1*	U
REF2021	44%	37.5%	15.7%	2.8%	0%
REF2014	37.4%	42.2%	18.6%	1.8%	0%

Environment:

	4*	3*	2*	1*	U
REF2021	46.5%	37.7%	13.2%	2.6%	0%
REF2014	37.1%	42.2%	16%	4.6%	0%

SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS:

Turning now to our area, the study of religions, it was very good to see the range of research carried out in the study of religions at HEIs in the UK. Many submissions were multi-disciplinary and drew on other humanities and social science disciplines. This diversity reflects the study of religions and shows the importance of our field. Among the submissions were world-leading research outputs across all religious (and non-religious) traditions and cultures applying social scientific research methods as well as historical and textual and language-based ones. As the sub-panel report states, we found clear evidence of strength in research on global religion, including on issues of religious diaspora and migration, as well as outstanding research on religion in Africa, North and Latin America, the Middle-East, and Asia. In addition to a substantial body of outstanding work in well-established fields of study such as languages, texts and religious thought, belief and practice, we also found work of the highest quality in the study of embodiment, emotion, material and visual cultures, practice, space and a range of forms of media and cultural production. A range of outstanding work was also found in scholarship on the 'non-human', including on animals, climate change and environmentalism, the post-human and technology, with clear evidence of work in our subject area making important contributions to the wider field of environmental humanities. Alongside the continued strength of well-established approaches to study, we were also pleased to see evidence of critical, often multi- or inter-disciplinary approaches, including in relation to gender, race and sexuality, becoming part of the mainstream of our subject area. The report also highlights the widening of research areas as a positive development. Research is moving away from a strong focus on specific religious traditions and towards non-religious people, other than human entities, animals, environment and so on, all areas of the study of religions. Another interesting observation was that world-leading outputs were found across all types of outputs (monographs, edited volumes, and articles/book chapters) and produced by scholars across all career stages including ECR.

AREAS OF CONCERN FOR THE BASR:

Nevertheless, there are a few areas of concern the BASR need to reflect. The report highlights the challenges to produce impact case studies for very small units. The same problem was visible in the environment statements, and the lowest grades for environment submissions tended to be concentrated in units with very small staff numbers (<6 FTE). However, there is no clear correlation between size of unit and research as two of the strongest environment submissions came from small units. Nevertheless, research environments which provide researchers with more time, financial and other infrastructural resources, an effective culture of critical peer support and well-designed support which recognises staff diversity are more likely to generate stronger research outputs. This is something we need to consider in future as some of the small units are mainly study of religions units. I see a danger that in future REF small RS departments might not be submitted any longer. Perhaps the BASR should support the development of joint-submissions in future REF. This is in particular important as the pandemic has caused delays with research projects not only but perhaps especially in our field due to restricted access to archives and communities over the last two years which will have consequences for development of world leading outputs and rich impact case studies for the next REF.

Another point for the study of religions to consider is that the submission to sub-panel 31 reflects only part of the research in the study of religions. Several BASR members were submitted to other sub-panels such as History, Area Studies, and Modern Languages instead to TRS. In light of the report published by the British Academy just before the pandemic, this is an important issue to consider. However, it is difficult to address. Nevertheless, I wonder whether the BASR needs to highlight more the inclusivity of the study of religions towards non-social scientific approaches, hence make colleagues working on religions from a textual, linguistic, or historical perspective more welcome within the BASR.

My last point that I want to highlight for discussion is that some submissions included more than RS/TRS. For instance, some submissions included colleagues from archaeology, classics, politics and other disciplines. This development can go both ways. It can be an opportunity for the study of religions to illustrate the multi-disciplinary nature of our field. But it can also become a threat to the future of our presence in HEIs as the study of religions might move into a general humanities unit in future and disappear.

I don't want to finish on this note as it would be not a fair reflection of the achievements. The result of REF2021 is a celebration of our achievements, whether we work in a research-intensive university or a teaching-led institution. The study of religions makes a vital contribution to the understanding of today's problems, and we are also part of the solution.

 www.facebook.com/groups/490163257661189/

 twitter.com/TheBASR

GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

News Items	Up to 150 words
Conference Reports	500-1500 words
Conference Announcements	Not more than a single page
Book Reviews	700-1000 words
Features	Around 1000 words
Members' Recent Publications	Maximum 5 items

PLEASE SEND MATERIAL FOR INCLUSION TO tw36@soas.ac.uk
DEADLINE FOR THE MAY 2022 ISSUE IS 30 APRIL 2022

RUNNING A FIELDWORK MODULE ONLINE

Suzanne Owen, Leeds Trinity University

From January to March each year I run a final year module called *Religions in Leeds Bradford*, which combines fieldwork methods, theoretical approaches to studying religion on site, and three class site visits plus an additional one the students arrange themselves. Site visits are crucial to the success of the module as they offer many avenues for theoretical considerations (religion/secular or sacred/profane distinctions; adaptations to contemporary society; spatial, cultural and gender analyses, etc.). The Covid 19 pandemic complicated the delivery of this module, though some aspects worked surprisingly well.

The UK first went into lockdown due to the Covid 19 pandemic toward the end of March 2020. That year, most of the core teaching was nearing its end and it did not impact my fieldwork module. However, after a semester of teaching face-to-face in the autumn of 2020, by January 2021 we were back in lockdown and all my classes were moved online, including Religions in Leeds Bradford.

Each year I usually take the class to Jamyang Buddhist Centre in Leeds, who are welcoming and offer a short meditation practice, talk and Q&A. Over the years they have been in different locations around Leeds, renting different office spaces in the city centre, until they were able to purchase their own place, a former warehouse in Holbeck, which is a relatively deprived area of Leeds. Jamyang had already contacted me toward the end of 2020 to say they could do an online event and, grateful for this, I took up their offer. With little time to arrange the other two 'site visits', I called on a couple of friends to speak respectively about spiritualism and the Quakers. Each of the speakers were remunerated either by a donation or a voucher (which I paid for myself as I've rarely been able to get funds for site visits).

I preceded each of the 'site visits' with a short presentation about the tradition and a seminar where students presented their research into specific representations of them in Yorkshire and, in some case, the nearest one to where the students were residing at the time, as some had returned home away from Leeds. For the spiritualist topic, I'd also found a short documentary video made in 2013 by York St John students providing a glimpse into what goes on within a spiritualist service ('Exploring the Unexplained – A Journey into Spiritualism').

The session with Jamyang was well-organised and included the usual elements such as a talk, a short meditation practice and Q&A. In addition, they showed a virtual tour of the space in Holbeck. One of the unexpected benefits of having the session online was the sense of intimacy when speaking to the representatives of Jamyang. The two members spoke of their personal journeys to Buddhism and how they practiced Buddhism in daily life (neither adhered to the fifth precept!).

For the next two sessions with the spiritualist and the Quaker, and already aware of how quiet students could be online, I decided to prepare by setting up a virtual whiteboard where students could add their questions the week before. This proved quite successful as it helped to structure the session and there were plenty of questions.

The module evaluations were entirely positive. These were some of the individual comments:

“The best aspects of this module included the wonderful opportunities to meet representatives of different religious groups, movements and cultures which otherwise I likely wouldn't have encountered. This made for a particularly unique learning experience as the lecturer was able to set the scene on the topics and then allow us to absorb information and first-hand accounts from a different source, separate from university material.”

“Conversations and discussions prompted by the lecturer on the topics were invaluable, as it allowed both my peers and the lecturer to engage in interesting dialogue, sharing our experiences and perspectives with one another.”

“The academic material provided was incredible! Material provided was not only complex and thorough, but it was also constantly updated meaning that there was consistently an abundance of material. The lecturer went above and beyond to support the students in this way.”

“One-to-one meetings were also consistently offered in case we needed additional help which was also great.”

“What could be improved? Maybe the lectures could have been an hour or so longer. Other than that, no suggestions!”

With the 2021-2022 year still uncertain about face-to-face teaching due to the pandemic, I arranged for the first session to be online again (with the spiritualist). We managed to visit the other two sites in-person – Jamyang and a Sikh gurdwara in Leeds. Students then had the option to do their final assessment, a report on their own site visit, based on an online or in-person visit. By this time, many groups had a well-established online presence and a couple of the students were able to attend live virtual services and chat to other participants and group committee members. It was clear from the students' reports that the groups themselves had also found unexpected positives by having a virtual component with international participants and attendance by those less likely or unable to attend in-person.

In conclusion, the pandemic has opened up different ways to study religion online and will remain a feature of the module alongside in-person fieldwork.

Image credits:

Cover - A Jain Tantric Serpent Mandala
Region: Gujarat
Circa 1700 CE
Source: Bonhams, via @EnrouteH

Page 18 - Church billboard
Bath, UK, 2022
Source: Johnathan

A RESPONSE FROM IAHR

IAHR response to the review (by David G. Robertson in the BASR bulletin 139, November 2021, pp.18-20) of Donald Wiebe's, *An Argument in Defence of a Strictly Scientific Study of Religion: The Controversy at Delphi*. Toronto: Institute for the Advanced Study of Religion, 2021

Though Dr. Robertson in his review (p.19) makes explicit room for the possibility that Prof. Wiebe 'has overstated some of the details [...]', we fear that the review may prove harmful to the IAHR if it stands on its own.

Dr. Robertson renders, as a reviewer most certainly must, Prof. Wiebe's criticism and allegations (constituting the foil for Prof. Wiebe's most recent 'defence of a strictly scientific study of religion') directed at the IAHR leadership, including what Wiebe claims to be a hidden agenda in Delphi as well as the actual outcome of the Delphi meeting(s). But Dr. Robertson does not render or even refer to the repeated and well documented responses and refutations published by the IAHR leadership and shared openly with the public at large and the IAHR membership, including BASR members.

We worry even more because Dr. Robertson nowhere in his review indicates that he is familiar with the materials, - and because we take this as an indication that Dr. Robertson most likely is not the only BASR member who is not aware of the materials.

Moreover, Dr. Robertson, despite his reservations as regards Wiebe's readings of the Delphi meeting, at the end of his review writes that he [Wiebe] "is ultimately correct to be concerned". Saying so (p. 20) Robertson has in mind in particular "the position advocated for by [Ann] Taves", a position he finds in conflict with the IAHR Constitution § 1 , as well as with former energetic statements, not least by the IAHR President, in strong support of the 'Werblowsky stance' and § 1.

Consequently, we are grateful to the editors of the BASR bulletin for giving us this opportunity to, ever so briefly, respond, not to the review, but to the claims and allegations of Prof. Wiebe as regards the Delphi meeting, its outcome and the stance of the IAHR leadership and Executive Committee.

Since we do not think Prof. Wiebe in his book adds anything significant or important to the criticism and allegations already expressed in his 2019 'Letter of Resignation' and his 2020 MTSR article "A Report on the Special Executive Committee Meeting of the International Association for the History of Religions in Delphi"), we shall refer readers to what we have already written and published in that regard.

And we shall, of course, ever so sincerely ask readers and members to be so kind as to read the materials so that they can hopefully see why Wiebe is not correct when claiming that the EC during the meeting in Delphi "revealed its intention to abandon its commitment to the non-confessional study of religion", or, as it is put in a nutshell on the back cover of the hard copy version of his book, that the IAHR leadership revealed its intention "[...] to include in its mandate promotion of theological, normative, and applied studies of religion." The IAHR EC had and still has no such intention, nor has it

made a decision whatsoever to abandon its commitment to Article 1 of the Constitution.

We thus urge BASR bulletin readers and members to fact-check what happened during the Delphi meeting, and to assess what its effects could be to IAHR members, by way of reading:

Satoko Fujiwara & Tim Jensen, "What's in a (Change of) Name? Much—but Not **That** Much—and **Not** What Wiebe Claims", *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion*, 32/2, 2020, pp. 159-184 (OPEN ACCESS).

A brief summary of the arguments of that article runs:

Wiebe claims that the IAHR leadership (already before an Extended Executive Committee (EEC) meeting in Delphi) had decided to water down the academic standards of the IAHR with a proposal to change its name to "International Association for the Study of Religions." His criticism and allegations, we argue, are based on a series of misunderstandings as regards:

1) the difference between, on the one hand, the consultative body (EEC) gathered in Delphi and its discussions, and on the other, the conclusions drawn at a following meeting by the EC;

2) the difference between, on the one hand, the preliminary points of view of individuals during the EEC meeting (inter alia Prof. Taves' mentioned by Prof. Robertson as indicated above) and, on the other, the final proposals by the EC;

3) personal conversations;

4) the link between the proposal to change the name and the wish to tighten up the academic profile of the IAHR.

Moreover, the EC is not the final and ultimate decision-making body of the IAHR. The, International Committee and the General Assembly, are the only truly decision-making bodies. Both as regards e.g. a proposal for a new name and a proposal for, say, a mandate to the EC different from what is given it by the current Constitution and its article 1.

Please also check our e-Bulletin Supplement, which contains our initial response to Wiebe's resignation, as well as our e-Bulletin, which notified the publication of our above-mentioned article.

IAHR e-Bulletin Supplement, November 2019
IAHR Bulletin 41, July 2020 (esp. p.9)

The Bulletin also contains a link to an online folder to all the documents shared at the Delphi meeting (p.8).

Last, but not least: please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any question on any of the abovementioned publications of ours.

Tim Jensen, IAHR President
Satoko Fujiwara, IAHR Secretary General

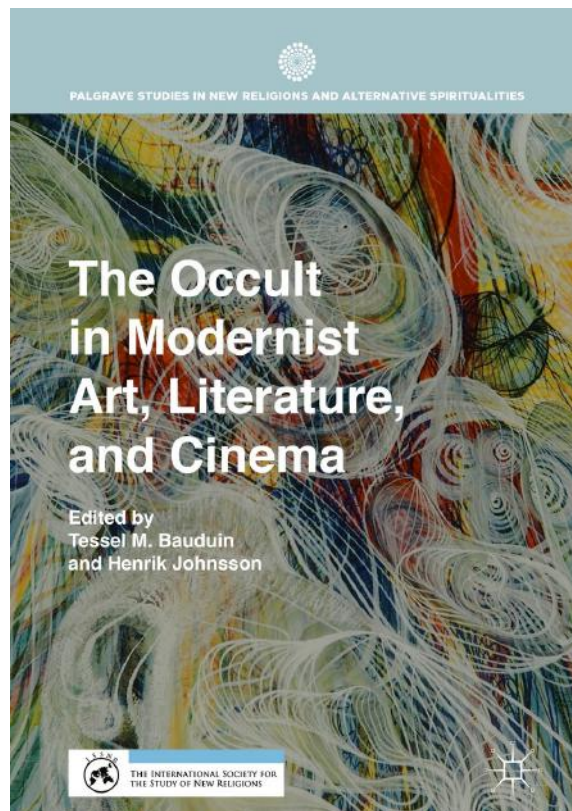
reviews

TESSEL M. BAUDUIN AND HENRIK JOHNSON (EDS), THE OCCULT IN MODERNIST ART, LITERATURE, AND CINEMA (CHAM, SWITZERLAND: PALGRAVE MACMILLAN 2018); XII, 275 PP.; ISBN: 978-3-319-76498-6 (HARDBACK); RRP: €139.99 (EBOOK OPEN ACCESS).

This edited volume is part of the Palgrave Studies in New Religions and Alternative Spiritualities series. It consists of an introductory chapter by the editors, and ten case study chapters. In “Introduction: Conceptualizing Occult Modernism” Tessel M. Bauduin and Henrik Johnsson open with the mediumship characteristic of nineteenth-century Spiritualists, which gave rise to automatic writing and painting such as the abstract watercolours of Georgiana Houghton (1814-1884), and argue that the intersections between occultism and Modernist art and literature are a neglected research area. Occultism has been claimed as a legitimate component of modernity, rather than a rejected ‘other’, and it is no longer the norm to point to irrational or superstitious aspects of the life or works of authors and artists, as Sixten Ringbom did in his pioneering study of Wassily Kandinsky, *The Sounding Cosmos* (1970). Bauduin and Johnsson distinguish five components in Occult Modernism (processes, actors, works, how works function, and aesthetics). The “Introduction” ends with a sketch of the book’s contents.

Johnsson’s chapter, “A History of Research into Occult Modernist Literature” is also an introduction of sorts to the study of occult modernist fiction in French and English. French and English scholarship on Romanticism and symbolism identified occult interests in the writings of Gérard de Nerval, Arthur Rimbaud, and Charles Baudelaire during the 1940s, and in the period up to 1990 figures like W. B. Yeats, Wallace Stevens, Henry James, and Virginia Woolf were studied for spiritual, mystical, and occult content. After 1990 more books were produced, focused on authors including Ezra Pound, and artists like Constantin Brâncuși and Giacomo Balla, and since 2000 the influence of occultism on Surrealism has been a major area of research.

Part I, “Artistic Practices”, starts with Gisli Magnússon’s “Visionary Mimesis and Occult Modernism in Literature and Art Around 1900”. Magnússon argues that the worldview he terms “supersensuous monism” influenced artists to rethink mimesis, and thus led to abstract art such as that of Kandinsky, though he thinks Kandinsky’s oeuvre is more accurately termed “visionary mimesis” (p. 51). The authors Magnússon considers include Guy de Maupassant, August Strindberg, Gustav Meyrink, and Rainer Maria Rilke. Next is Marja Lahelma’s chapter “August Strindberg’s Art in Modernist and Occult Context”, which discusses in detail Strindberg’s



photographic experiments, which were overtly spiritual in nature. Per Faxneld's " 'Only Poets and Occultists Believe in Them Just Now': Fairies and the Modernist Crisis of Authorship" is an entertaining discussion of photography of fairies (the 1917 Cottingley case, which Arthur Conan Doyle was involved in) and literary engagements with preternatural beings (for example, as exemplified by W. B. Yeats).

Part II, "Aesthetics," opens with "Return from Oblivion: Joséphin Péladan's Literary Esotericism" by Sasha Chaitow, a study of a neglected figure who made both theoretical and literary contributions to Modernist Occultism. Benedikt Hjartarson's "Ghosts Before Breakfast: The Appetite for the Beyond in Early Avant-Garde Film" analyses Hans Richter's film *Vormittagsspuk* (1928), and relates it to both Richter's writings on film, and to spirit photography. Next is Victoria Ferentinou's "Marie Wilson and Nanos Valaoritis in Conversation: Surrealist, Imagetext, and Occult Aesthetics in Terre di Diamant", which is focused on the 1958 publication of the book of the title, a collaboration in which the American artist Wilson created the sixteen lithographs and her partner wrote the sixteen accompanying texts. Wilson and Valaoritis drew upon a range of occult influences including Native American spirituality, Surrealism, and parapsychology, and developed a heterodox aesthetic together.

Part III, "Occulture," begins with Kristoffer Noheden's "Magic Art Between the Primitive and the Occult: Animal Sacrifices in Jan Svankmajer's Drawer Fetishes" which discusses the creation of six drawer fetishes in 2014-2015. These were inspired by African ritual; Svankmajer bought "pig's and bull's blood from a nearby slaughterer" (p. 195), mixed them with oats and poured it into the drawers, left them in the sun and flies laid eggs in the mess; when the larvae hatched the artist exploded them with a heat gun, poured bitumen into the mixture, and covered it with ashes. The final chapter is Giuliano D'Amico's "Retrogardism and Occulture in Hakan Sandell's Poetry", which engages the poet's interest in ancient wisdom narratives and shamanic religion. The volume is more unified in subject matter and historical span than many such scholarly outputs, and is of interest to Religious Studies as well as those in the fields of

Esotericism, Art, and Modernism generally. The academic standard of the contributions is high, and the subjects analysed are original and relevant. It certainly deserves to be in academic libraries, and is recommended strongly to the widest possible readership, given that the ebook is open access and free from Springer's website.

Carole M. Cusack
University of Sydney

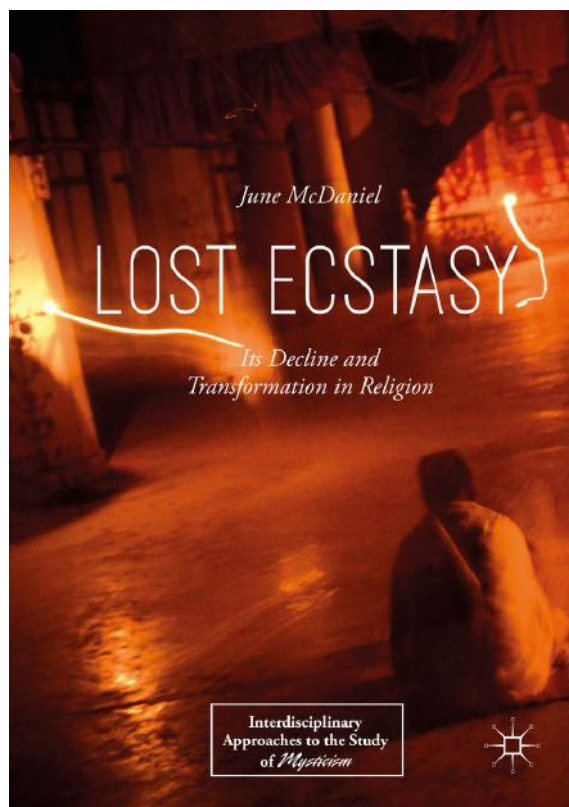
JUNE MCDANIEL, LOST ECSTASY: ITS DECLINE AND TRANSFORMATION IN RELIGION (CHAM, SWITZERLAND: PALGRAVE MACMILLAN 2018); VIII, 325 PP.; ISBN: 978-3-319-92771-8 (HARDBACK); RRP: 109.99 EUROS.

This book is published in the Palgrave Macmillan Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Study of Mysticism series. June McDaniel argues in "Introduction: What Happened to Ecstasy? Mysticism, Ecstasy, and the Constructivist Loop" that the study of mysticism is unfashionable, and that she wishes "to bring [mysticism and ecstatic experiences] back into the study of religious consciousness, at least partly by documenting how much of the field opposes it" (p. 2). The denial and delegitimation of religious experience is core to the reformulation of religious studies as an explicitly secular, anti-religionist, academic discipline. This reader is aligned with this approach and firmly in the camp that opposes the inclusion of theology in the remit of religious studies, yet believes that the study of religious and spiritual experiences (whether termed mysticism, ecstasy, or "non-ordinary reality") is both valuable and possible in a scientific, non-confessional way. The author's examination of the subject begins by chronicling examples of religious experience in the World Religions (another unfashionable category), and then analysing the "pathologisation" of such experiences within academic discourse. There are scholars who champion such anomalous states; McDaniel draws on the work of Grace Jantzen, Amy Hollywood, and Jeffrey Kripal to uncover an ecstasy that is erotic, powerful, and ignored at peril.

Attention then shifts to the identification of ecstasy with theology, another rejected field of study. McDaniel cleverly demonstrates that theology is also hostile to ecstatic experiences (one clear example is the mainstream Islamic suspicion of Sufism, for example). To balance case studies from World Religions there are citations of contemporary phenomena that show the continuation of religious experience as a key area for new spiritualities (Linda Woodhead and Paul Heelas' work on "New Age" practitioners) and current manifestations of traditional religion (the visions of the Virgin Mary received at Medjugorje, for example). The subject matter of Chapter 5, "Destructive Ecstasies: Wargasm and the Joy of Violence" is ecstatic violence in corporate and individual military and other contexts (sexual, emotional, self-harming and other-harming, and so on). There is some methodological discussion of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's "flow" state, Georges Bataille and Michel Foucault, then McDaniel sketches some cases of specifically martial religious violence, including ancient and medieval Celtic rituals, Viking warrior culture, and martyrdom in Christianity and Islam.

Secular applications of experiences of non-ordinary reality form the basis of the next chapter, "The 'Spiritualized' Ecstasies: Sex, Drugs, and Rock and Roll." This covers traditional religious instances of sex or drug-induced altered states of consciousness, and contemporary secular culture that draws on these sources to establish pop cultural tropes, including romance motifs in novels and films, and electronic dance music culture. New religions including Rajneesh, Santo Daime, and neo-shamanism are covered, and the interest that rock stars exhibited in Indian religions including Transcendental Meditation

and the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, as well as the emergence of Christian rock and Hip-Hop Hasidism. This secular excursus is followed by an examination of Pentecostalism, Millenarian Christianity, the idea of the Rapture, and Catholic Charismatic experiences. Revivalism is also discussed in the context of Judaism and the Sufi Order of the West. Chapter 8, "The Case of Hinduism: Ecstasy and Denial," is unusual as it considers a single religion from a historical standpoint, working through Vedic scriptures, the Upanishads, Yoga, and Tantra. Ecstatic experience in folk religion, the devotionalism of bhakti, and communities that gathered around modern gurus are also briefly touched upon.



The final substantial chapter, "Ecstasy and Empathy: Some Venerable Elders and New Directions," revisits earlier Religious Studies scholars such as Rudolf Otto, William James, Mircea Eliade, Carl Jung, and Paul Tillich. McDaniel argues that ecstasy has been sidelined in a predominantly Protestant-dominated milieu, and that the human potential oriented psychology of the 1960s (Abraham Maslow, Stanislav and Christina Grof, and others) recognized the need for extraordinary experi-

ences for those who wanted to be whole, fulfilled, self-actualized. There is a mention of esotericism, as well. McDaniel's conclusion makes it clear that she really dismisses much (if not all) of the critical religion scholarship that caused "the wreck of the good ship Eliade" (p. 301), and thinks neglect or abandonment of the big questions has left Religious Studies undernourished, impoverished, arid and irrelevant. This means that *Lost Ecstasy: Its Decline and Transformation in Religion* is yet another salvo in a culture war that has divided Religious Stud-

ies for decades. It is easy to read, interesting and topical, yet feels old-fashioned in methodology and theoretical underpinnings. Yet it has some power, and makes a case that the critical turn has lost present-day scholars and interested laypeople a world of ideas and experiences, perspectives and values, that simply became unfashionable.

Carole M. Cusack
University of Sydney

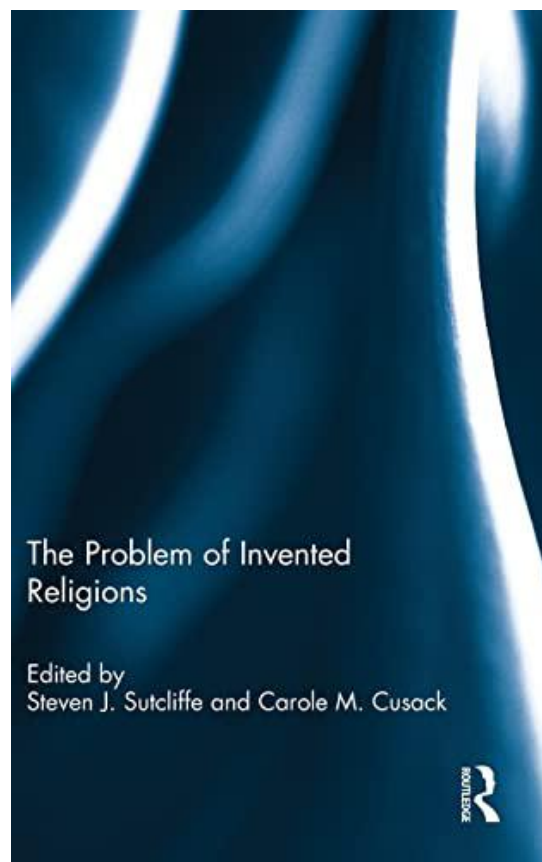
STEVEN J. SUTCLIFFE AND CAROLE M. CUSACK (EDS), THE PROBLEM OF INVENTED RELIGIONS (LONDON AND NEW YORK: ROUTLEDGE, 2016); ISBN 9781138099036; £ 42.99.

Within the context of religious studies more and more attention has been paid recently to alternative forms of spirituality which are rooted in pop culture. The volume *The Problem of Invented Religions* investigates the theoretical concept of invented religions proposed by Carole M. Cusack in her *Invented Religions. Imagination, Fiction and Faith* (Ashgate, 2010) and is located on the intellectual route which leads to *Fiction, Invention and Hyper-reality*, which she edited with Pavol Kosnáč in the Routledge Inform Series on Minority Religions and Spiritual Movements (2017).

This book is a republished special issue of the journal *Culture and Religion* (Vol. 14, Issue 4, 2013) so it is a miscellany of contributions by different authors, who try to expand the concept examining it from a range of perspectives.

The essay by Cusack proposes to link the theoretical framework of invention to Robert N. Bellah's studies on play "which features in language, art, myth [...] is crucial to the human experience of what Bellah calls unitive events" (p. 12), while Danielle Lee Kirby demonstrates how various groups (The Church of SubGenius, Jedism, and Sithism) develop relationships with the fictional texts in their manifold functions (catalyst, proof, reality, practice, and so on). Essi Mäkelä and Johanna Petsche connect "invented religions" to Zygmunt Bauman's "liquid modernity" in an article on Discordianism, a parody religion dedicated to the worship of Eris, the goddess of discord; while Steven Sutcliffe re-reads from an historical perspective the heritage of the Rosicrucian manifestos (1614-16) on the Rosicrucian Order, Crotona Fellowship (ROCF).

However not every essay agrees positively on the validity of using the term "invented religions". The volume is constituted in part by critical contributions, as in the case of Markus Altena Davidsen, who offers a proposal to replace "invented religions" with the term "fiction-based religions". Paul-Francois Tremlett believes that the term "invention" brings an excessive concentration on texts, forgetting that religions are "a product of a specific kind of society and particular types of social relationships" (p. 116). In the last article, Teemu Taira similarly challenges the term, arguing that the invented status is only one of the many criteria to consider in terms of the idea of religious as a



whole.

This collection of essays supplies the scholar, as well as the uninitiated student, fruitful insights

in the general concept of “religion” and in what constitutes it, both in terms of belief and in practice.

Due to the clarity of presentation and the simple structure of the volume (helped by the introductions and conclusions to each chapter, reflecting their origin as journal articles) I would recommend it to undergraduate students and

general readers interested in the significance of spirituality for contemporary human beings and the importance of cultures and religions beyond the Abrahamic and World Religions, as well as to scholarly researchers.

Federico Palmieri Di Pietro
Independent Scholar, Rome



Members' Recent Publications

Eileen Barker

- 2022 with Beth Singler, eds. *Radical Changes in Minority Religions*. London, New York: Routledge.
- "New Religious Movements." In *Encyclopedia of Violence, Peace, and Conflict*, edited by Lester R. Kurtz, 339-53. Oxford: Elsevier, Academic Press
- 2021 with James T. Richardson, eds. *Reactions to the Law by Minority Religions*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
- "The Scriptures of Daesoon Jinrihoe: The Canonical Scripture, the Guiding Compass of Daesoon, and Essentials of Daesoon Jinrihoe." *Journal of Daesoon Thought and the Religions of East Asia* 1, no. 1 (2021): 155-59.
- "'Othering': A Necessary but Dangerous Practice." *Journal for the Study of Beliefs and Worldviews. Special edition Limitations of Religious Freedom: On Stereotypes, Prejudice and Social Discrimination* edited by Gerhard Besier: 25-48.
- "Even New Religious Movements Have Legacies." *e-Rhizome* 2, no. 2: 65-80.
- "Contemporary Creations and Re-Cognitions of Sacred Sites." In *Scared Sites and Sacred Stories across Cultures: Transmission of Oral Tradition, Myth, and Religiosity* edited by David W. Kim, 25-62. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Simon Brodbeck

- 2021 'What Difference does the Harivaṃśa make to the Mahābhārata?' *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 141, no. 1, pp. 73-92.
- 'Patrilocality in the Harivaṃśa's Viṣṇuparvan.' *Religions of South Asia*, vol. 13, no. 3, pp. 266-88.
- 'Interpretation of Baladeva and Yamunā at Harivaṃśa 83.' *International Journal of Hindu Studies*, vol. 24, no. 3, pp. 313-43.
- 'Mercy, my Jewels! The Syamantaka, Aśvatthāman's Maṇi, and the Earrings.' In Ivan Andrijanić and Sven Sellmer, eds, *Mythic Landscapes and Argumentative Trails in Sanskrit Epic Literature: Proceedings of the Sixth Dubrovnik International Conference on the Sanskrit Epics and Purāṇas*, pp. 233-74. Zagreb: Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts.
- 2020 'The End of the Pāṇḍavas' Year in Disguise.' *Journal of Hindu Studies*, vol. 13, no. 3, pp. 320-46.

Ann Gillian Chu

- 2022 'Digital Research and COVID-19: An Argument for using both Primary and Qualitative Secondary Data in a Hong Kong Ethnography'. *Ethnographic Encounters* 11 (1): 14-21.
- 2021 'From Folk Religion to Evangelical Christianity: A Case Study on the Process and Challenges of Retirement-Age Chinese Males Converting from Folk Taoism to Evangelical Christianity in Hong Kong'. *Asian American Theological Forum* 8 (2).
- 'From Colonialism to Communism: The Christian Church's Response to Hong Kong's 1997 Handover'. *Journal of the Oxford Graduate Theological Society* 2 (2): 88-101.
- 2020 'Faith and Status Quo: What Can Post-Handover Hong Kong Churches Learn from Liberation Theology?' *Hill Road* 23 (45): 137-49

Christopher Cotter

- 2021 "New Atheism" in *The Cambridge History of Atheism*, edited by Michael Ruse and Stephen Bullivant. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1007-1023.
- 2020 [Paperback available 2022]. *The Critical Study of Non-Religion: Discourse, Identification and Locality*. London: Bloomsbury.

David Douglas

- 2022 *Worldview Religious Studies*. London: Routledge. Pp. 137.
- 'NHS values, ritual, religion, and Covid 19 death'. In Panagiotis Pentaris (ed.) *Death, Grief and Loss in the Context of Covid 19*. London: Routledge. Pp. 121-133.
- 2021 'Death Studies and Disasters: Ritualizing and Numbering Numbing Realities'. *Handbook of Disaster Ritual, Multidisciplinary Perspectives, Cases, and Themes*. (eds.) Martin Hoondert, Paul Post, Mirella Klomp, Marcel Barnard. Peters publishers.
- 2020 'Grief in human and companion animal loss, bonding and pet personhood'. *Exploring Grief: Towards a Sociology of Sorrow*. (eds.) Michael Hvidd Jacobsen and Anders Petersen. Pp. 153-168.
- 2019 'Ritual, Identity and Emotion.' *Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Ritual*. (eds.) Risto Uro, Juliette J. Day, and Richard de Marinis. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Pp. 55-73.

Mathew Guest

- 2022 *Neoliberal Religion: Faith and Power in the 21st Century*. London: Bloomsbury, (in press).
- 2022 “From Protestant Ethic to Neoliberal Logic: Evangelicals at the Interface of Culture and Politics”, *Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion, vol. 32: Lesser Heard Voices in Studies of Religion*. Leiden and Boston: Brill, pp. 482-507 (in press).
- 2021 “Tracing the Routes to Pro-Trump Evangelicalism: Review Article”, *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, vol. 36, no. 1., pp. 161-66.

Elizabeth J. Harris

- 2021 *Buddhism in 5 Minutes*. Sheffield UK and Bristol CT: Equinox.
- with Perry Schmidt Leukel eds., *A Visionary Approach: Lynn A. de Silva and the Prospects for Buddhist-Christian Encounter*. Sankt Ottilien: Editions of Sankt Ottilien.
- 2020 'Buddhism and the Religious Other: Twenty-First Century Dambulla an the Presence of Buddhist Exclusivism in Sri Lanka'. *Interreligious Studies and Intercultural Theology* 4.1: pp. 3-20.

Moojan Momen

- 2022 “Bahá'u'lláh” and “Iran”. In Robert Stockman ed. *The World of the Bahá'í Faith*. London: Routledge, pp. 40-50 and 546-68 (ISBN: 978-1-138-36772-2)
- 2021 *The Baha'i Communities of Iran 1851 1921. Volume 2: The South of Iran*. Oxford: George Ronald, ISBN: 978 0 85398 630 0

Masoumeh Rahmani

- 2021 *Drifting through Samsara: Tacit Conversion and Disengagement in Goenka's Vipassana Movement*. New York: Oxford University Press. Oxford Scholarship Online, 2022. doi: 10.1093/oso/9780197579961.001.0001

Richard H. Roberts

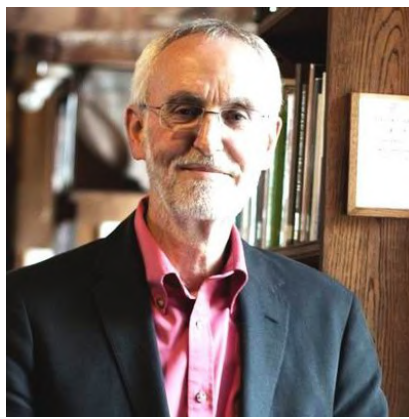
- 2021 'Hugh MacDiarmid's "On Raised Beach": "Geopoetics" in a Time of Catastrophic Crisis', *Religions* 2022, 13(1), Special Issue Literature and Eco-theology 31; <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13010031>
- 2019 'Theological Revisionism and the Recomposition of the Religio-spiritual Field', in Sabine Dedenbach-Salazar Saenz (ed.), *Translating Wor(l)ds: Christianity across Cultural Boundaries*, Collectanea Instituti Anthropos Baden-Baden: Academia/Nomos (2019), pp. 305-333.

Paul Weller

- 2021 with S. Cheruvallil-Contractor, K. Purdam, "Much More Than a Negation of Religion: A Qualitative Exploration of Non-Religious Identities in England and Wales", *Journal of Contemporary Religion*, Volume 36, No. 2, pp. 329-348.
- "The Potentialities of Love in Social, Political and Economic Contexts," in P. Fiddes (ed), *Love as Common Ground: Inter-Faith Essays on Love in Religion*, Lexington Books, pp. 311-332.
- with J. Rees, L. Caulfield, S. Wilson, S. Ouillon, J. Booth, L. Peacock, E. Paffett, S. Wilson, Innovation and Enterprise Across the Social Economy in Recovery from COVID-19 *Final Report: Report for the West Midlands Combined Authority*, Wolverhampton University, Wolverhampton.
- 2020 "Changing Socio-Religious Realities, Practical Negotiation of Transitions in the Governance of Religion or Belief, State and Society," *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue*, 30 (2), pp. 145-162.
- with E. Camilleri; H. Cremin; M. Demir; M. Hardy; K. Murji; O. Shener; F. Sleaf; S. Steinberg, guest co-editors (2020), *Special Issue of Journal of Dialogue Studies: Rethinking Dialogue in the Age of New Challenges and Opportunities*, Volume 8.
- 2019 "Brexit: A Colonial Boomerang in a Populist World", *Social Justice*, Volume 41, 196, pp. 8-11.

obituaries

Professor James A. Beckford (1 December 1942–10 May 2022)



It is with great sadness that we learned of the death of Professor James Beckford after a short illness. Jim was an important force in the life of Inform, joining the Board of Governors in 1991, two years after it had opened, and becoming its Vice Chair in 2011. In 1999 he took on the role of Chair of Inform's Management Committee, which involved contact with the staff, usually by email, on what was roughly a weekly basis, until his retirement from the Board in September 2018.

Most recently, he joined us in February of this year, providing a thoughtful and generous review at the launch of *Radical Transformations in Minority Religions* (2021), edited by Beth Singler and Eileen Barker. This was the latest addition to the Routledge-Inform book series, he himself having co-edited an earlier volume in the series, *New Religious Movements and Counselling: Academic, Professional and Personal Perspectives*, with Sarah Harvey and Silke Steidinger. At an Inform Seminar in November 2008, he was presented with a festschrift, *The Centrality of Religion in Social Life. Essays in Honour of James A. Beckford* (Eileen Barker, ed., Ashgate) which had contributions from many of the leading international scholars of religion.

Having obtained a First Class BA in French, Jim's post-graduate career began with a PhD on the Jehovah's Witnesses, which resulted in the publication of his widely acclaimed book, *The Trumpet of Prophecy: A Sociological Study of Jehovah's Witnesses*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1975). His research continued in the area of minority and sectarian movements and social reactions to them in various countries, leading to numerous articles, his book *Cult Controversies: Societal Responses to New Religious Movements*, (London and New York: Tavistock, 1985), and his edited volume, *New Religious Movements and Rapid Social Change*, which was published as the result of a UNESCO project (London: Sage, 1986). Scores of further books and other publications followed in which he

combined meticulous research with clear and innovative theoretical analysis on a variety of subjects including the mass media, theories of religion in advanced industrial societies, chaplaincies in prisons and hospitals, and Muslims in Europe.

It was Jim who founded and served as the first Convenor of the British Sociological Association's Sociology of Religion Study Group (Socrel) in 1975, becoming its Chair between 1978 and 1983. As an internationally recognised scholar he was elected to numerous other official posts in scholarly societies, including the International Society for the Sociology of Religion (SISR President, 1999-2003); the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion (SSSR President 2010-11); and the Association for the Sociology of Religion (ASR President 1988-1989). His international reputation was further acknowledged when the ASR presented him with its Lifetime Achievement Award for Contributions to the Sociology of Religion in 2017. In 2004, he was elected as a Fellow of the British Academy.

Jim will be greatly missed by all who knew him or were influenced by his prodigious scholarship. He is fondly remembered by those who worked with him at Inform as a brilliant scholar, a wise counsellor, and a great human being, who was always a gentleman, with a fabulous sense of humour. We extend our deepest sympathy to his wife, Julie, his children and his grandchildren.

Suzanne Newcombe and Eileen Barker, on behalf of INFORM



**"Reverence is a religious,
and not a scholarly
virtue. When good
manners and good
conscience cannot be
reconciled, the demands
of the latter ought to
prevail."**

Bruce Lincoln, Theses on
Method, *Method & Theory in
the Study of Religion* vol. 8
(1996): 225