



bulletin

British Association for the Study of Religions



135: November 2019

contents



- 2** EDITORIAL
- 3** NEWS, ETC
- 4** AGM PROCEEDINGS
- FEATURES
- 11** RETHINKING JAMES LANDING
- 14** DUDECK: RS MATTERS
- CONFERENCES
- 24** DVRW 2019
- 25** APPROACHING ESOTERICISM
- 26** RELIGIOUS EXPERIENE
- 28** TRANS STATES
- 30** BASR 2019
- 32** BOOK REVIEWS
- 37** RECENT PUBLICATIONS
- 39** APPENDIX: ETHICS GUIDELINES

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.

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editorial

The publication of the British Academy report in May (<https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/publications/theology-religious-studies-provision-uk-higher-education>) was something of a watershed moment for me. It was the first time that I perceived an attack on the discipline coming from inside the establishment in which I was now a stakeholder, for better or for worse. I realise these are fairly strong words, but the opening paragraph describing the discipline in which I work as ‘the study of the Divine’ - incidentally words taken directly from the course description for Theology - was a visceral gutpunch to read. I was soon approached a number of times by scholars working in the same discipline in other countries and continents, or working in this country in other disciplines, who were shocked at what was being presented as the state of RS.

This sense of crisis led me to propose that the BASR committee respond formally and substantively to the claims made in the report. They agreed, although this meant I was essentially volunteering myself to do the bulk of the writing. I further proposed that we spend some of our reserves in order to access the full data upon which the British Academy based their report in the first place. We have done so, and enrolled a researcher to help us crunch the data, but this is proving a more complex task than we initially envisaged, due to several discrepancies within the data, and how that data is used in the British Academy report. Therefore this issue of the BASR bulletin does not contain initial findings, beyond this Editorial. When our counter-report is published, it will be sizeable and complete, and we will be attempting to achieve the same reach and visibility as the British Academy report received. It may also cause us to rethink some other

strategies that we have worked with in recent years, and how we present ourselves to the public, the government and UCAS.

For now, this issue does contain proceedings of our annual conference, which this year was held in Leeds Trinity. Minutes of the AGM are included, of course, but rather than a traditional report, the bursary holders produced a podcast, a photo-essay and a graphic work inspired by the discussion. These novel formats show how much early career scholars have to offer, how important it is that the BASR continues to support them, and how many possibilities remain for us to communicate the importance of what we do. The podcast was broadcast on the Religious Studies Project, another example of the RSP and BASR working together for mutual benefit, and can be heard at <https://www.religiousstudiesproject.com/podcast/basr-2019-the-state-of-the-discipline/>. This issue also contains preliminary details of next year's conference, which will be held at the Open University in Milton Keynes, and which due to the IAHR quinquennial conference in Otago, New Zealand, will be a shorter one-day conference.

As ever, I hope you enjoy the issue. Remember to send conference reports and book reports, as well as your most recent publications, for inclusion in the may bulletin. We are particularly looking for people to contribute From Our Correspondent and ReThinking pieces (see Michael Miller's piece in this issue).

Oh, and if you are on strike, solidarity!

Until May, David



www.facebook.com/groups/490163257661189/



twitter.com/TheBASR

news, etc

BASR TEACHING AND LEARNING FELLOWSHIP 2019

Congratulations to Dawn Llewellyn who was awarded the 2019 BASR Teaching and Learning Fellowship in recognition of her contribution to the innovation and transformation of the student learning experience in the study of religions! Dawn is a Senior Lecturer in Christian Studies at University of Chester, where she has been the programme lead for the BA Single Hons in Religious Studies. As well as lecturing in Christian Studies and supervising MA, PhD and Professional Doctorate students, she has coordinated the training and research seminars the Theology and Religious Studies department offers to their postgraduate students. Courses she has taught include 'Global perspectives on Christianity' (developing students' field work and reflective skills) and 'Religion and Culture', which has been described by students as "the most engaging module with the variety of teaching methods". Since 2012 Dawn has been nominated every year in various categories of the Student Teaching Awards at the University of Chester, where students have been praising her "genuine passion for teaching which stimulates and motivates students" and the care and support she has provided. Dawn describes her approach to teaching and learning as intentionally inhabiting "feminist principles by attempting to enable learning

through building a 'learning community' which aims to transform students". Comments by her colleagues and students highlight the positive impact of the inclusive pedagogical strategies she has designed to facilitate genuine interaction and mutual support, with colleagues stating, for example, that "Dr Dawn Llewellyn has completely transformed our department's approach to the creation of a learning community."

If you would like to be considered for the 2020 BASR Teaching and Learning Fellowship or would like to nominate a colleague in recognition of their contribution to the innovation and transformation of the student learning experience in the study of religions, please get in touch with Steffi Sinclair at stefanie.sinclair@open.ac.uk for further information on the application process. The deadline for applications will be on the 1st of May 2020. The BASR Teaching Fellowship includes an award of £300 plus a funded place at the BASR Annual conference. The expectation of the person receiving the award would be to write a short piece reflecting on current issues/ experiences of teaching Religious Studies in HE for the Bulletin sometime within the next year and to help Steffi organise the teaching and learning panel for the 2021 BASR conference, but there's a lot of flexibility in how this could be approached.

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 david.robertson@open.ac.uk
DEADLINE FOR THE NOVEMBER 2019 ISSUE IS **31 MAY 2020**

The Shap Working Party on Religions in Education 1969 – 2019
A Jubilee gathering and final consultation.

Since 1969 The Shap Working Party on World Religions in Education has been a unique organisation which has brought together University teachers of Religious Studies, those educating teachers and serving as advisors and serving teachers from across the sectors, nursery, primary, special needs and secondary. Members were invited for their involvement in education, but many have also been members of the religions and worldviews concerned and this ranged more widely than the title might indicate to some, for example the humanist H.J.Blackham was involved in the initial conference and more recently there has been a Zoroastrianism educator as a member. Its stated aims were:

- (1) To identify the practical problems at various educational levels involved in teaching about world religions.
- (2) To study and provide relevant syllabus material.
- (3) To generate new ideas, to explore the possibilities of future conferences and in-service courses for teachers.
- (4) To act as a clearing house for information on visual aids, books, conferences or working parties on related topics.

In the early days, the Schools Council was funding research on Religious Education at Primary and Secondary Levels and change was vibrant. The inspiration for a very inclusive working party fitted the ethos created round the newly developing field by such figures as Ninian Smart, Geoffrey Parrinder, Eric Sharpe, John Hinnells, W. Owen Cole and F.H.Hilliard. They chose to meet to launch their project in 1969 at the Shap Wells Hotel in beautiful Cumbria and that is where the name derives. The work has continued for 50 years with key books and other publications, conferences, a calendar of religious festivals, and since 1998 an annual award for an important contribution to the professional arena in this area. The first award was to Kim Knott for her *Hinduism, A Very Short Introduction*, and was presented in honour of Rabbi Hugo Gryn, who had in his youth served a Jewish community in India. When an award was presented, the pattern of honouring a now-deceased member where appropriate continued, and the breadth of the work that was nominated from 1998-2014 ranged over projects, publications of various kinds, organisations such as the Open University, the Three Faiths Forum and Religious Broadcasting.

Twenty Five past and current members of the Shap Working Party and Award Winners gathered for 24 hours between April 11th and 12th, 2019, for their final consultation and to wind up the formal face-to-face organisation, as it was felt its aims had been mainly achieved and some of its activities, such as in-service conferences for teachers and their attendance as members of the working party, had now become difficult because of changes in funding. The occasion was joyful, early spring sunshine, lambs in the Cumbrian fields and on the hillsides, red squirrels in the hotel grounds, and the company of many dear colleagues in the field with memories of those not able to attend or who had died. Members reflected on the achievements of the past but also described their plans for future individual research and writing. It should be pointed out, though, that Shap as a brand lives on in an excellent full website listing the themes of its conferences and of the articles in the Shap Journals and of other book publications. Mary Hayward, who has been a key participant in the field from her involvement in Lancaster and Schools Council Working Paper 36 has written a full piece on Shap's history. An extensive and well-organised archive is easily accessible for research in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. Also the pioneering and useful calendar of religious festivals will continue to be published annually online.

Peggy Morgan

BASR Annual General Meeting – 16.00-17.30 - 03/09/19

Leeds Trinity University

British Association for the Study of Religions

Registered Charity Number 801567

(Affiliated to the IAHR and EASR)

1. Welcome. BS welcomed all, in first AGM as President. Delighted to be at LTU, with very strong papers and discussions. Welcomed Prof. John Barclay, who will speak for TRS-UK later in the agenda.
2. Apologies. Received from Steve Sutcliffe, Marion Bowman, Ursula King, Graham Harvey, Molly Kady, & George Chrissydes.
3. Minutes of the previous AGM. Published in bulletin last November, confirmed as accurate record by Liam Sutherland (propose) & Suzanne Owen (second).
4. Matters arising. None not covered by proceeding agenda items.
5. Presidential Address (Bettina Schmidt). 15 years since BS joined BASR, through links with Peggy Morgan, Helen Waterhouse and Marion Bowman. They have been interesting years for the subject, and RS has changed in the UK over that time. REF 2014 caused increased visibility for RS, helped by AHRC Religion and Society project. In latter years, the RSP has helped to bring new members and invigorate membership of the BASR and our subject conversation globally, especially with links with the EASR. Unfortunately, there are also challenges – the increase in fees had an impact on Humanities and RS, and many departments have been restructured and colleagues lost. These pressures continue, especially in smaller institutions and departments. The recent BA report did not help – painting a negative report of TRS (old white and male) which is simply not true with regard to the RS part of TRS. BS foreshadowed BASR's work in response to this. BS noted she was recently invited to a BA roundtable – not for being BASR President, but for working at a Welsh university. She will argue for BASR presence in future discussions. Time to fight back and bring BASR back to the forefront of the conversation in the UK. Good to see vibrant EASR – incoming committee includes Kim Knott (BASR member and EASR President-elect). Incoming secretary is Jenny Berglund, who has key links to UK research and T&L. IAHR next year in NZ, call for papers is open already – BS encouraged members to go. Noted we will offer bursaries, which CC & SG will note later. Updated members on future EASRs 2021, Pisa, 2022 Cork, 2023 Kiev. BS thanked committee and exec members for their support. BS welcomed Stefanie Sinclair in taking over T&L role.
6. Secretary's Report (Stephen Gregg). SG formally welcomed SS to her role as T&L rep. SG noted that the BASR had written two statements in response to the Brexit situation, for the use of the AHA, but one had been so heavily edited that it lacked impact, which was unfortunate. Also, consultation from AHA on Open Access was responded to. BASR have been approached by the Wolf Institute seeking contributors to their podcast series, however we had not yet received a response to our response. SG also noted that we had been asked by the British Society for the Philosophy of Religion regarding joint conferences going

forwards. The Exec are responding saying that we are open to the idea, but that the next two conferences are already arranged, and there is the complicating factor of the BSPR only meeting every other year. SG noted that 5 bursaries were given to students at this year's conference, and also introduced two new funding streams: a £500 'pot' to which members may apply for support of one day conferences, and 4 bursaries of £500 each to help students attend next year's IAHR. Further details will be in the November bulletin. Finally, SG noted that the Exec are still looking for a member who lives near London to volunteer to be on 'stand-by' to attend London-based meetings, in case Exec members are unable.

7. Treasurer's Report (Chris Cotter). CC provided a complete overview of accounts, with notes, which are reproduced after these minutes. Paying membership figure now stands at 195. Accounts accepted and approved by membership by a show of hands.
8. Teaching and Learning (Steffi Sinclair) – thanked committee for welcome into her new role. Thanked Wendy Dossett for organising T&L panel at this conference, and those who spoke and attended. Suggested recipient of T&L award should help to organise panel for following year's conference. SS asked for membership to contribute any ideas to her on any T&L issues.
9. BASR Teaching and Learning Fellowship (Steffi Sinclair) – Dawn Llewellyn introduced as winner of this year's prize. SS gave introduction and welcome to DL, outlining her contributions to T&L over recent years. DL thanked WD & SS for support, and exec committee for the award. DL noted in her speech of thanks that we must push back to avoid teaching and research being separated from 'above' in our institutions – DL thanked BASR for leading on this.
10. JBASR Co-ordinating Editor's Report (Suzanne Owen). SO noted that JBASR (as DISKUS) was first digital journal for RS anywhere in the world – fits well with theme of conference. SO asked for self-nomination abstracts and peer-nomination, for upcoming editions. SO stressed JBASR is open access, which is great for REF. Last year's conference will appear in dual issues with Irish association, to come out in early December. For this edition, Theo Wildcroft has assisted SO, for which she is grateful. Emma Salter asked about extra editions – SO welcomed guest editors to do whole editions. Moojen Momen asked about papers not presented at conferences – SO said if it fitted the theme, that is fine, although any ideas are welcome – just send them to her.
11. Bulletin Editor's Report (David Robertson). All systems working like clockwork – but always need contributions. New formats and columns working well, but book reviews are often slow to be returned, despite books being sent out. Please respond if you have taken a book. Also would like more ReThinking series columns – particularly any written by ethnic minority authors. Vivian Asimos asked about books for review – DR noted email always has link to live list of books for review.
12. Website and Social Media (Vivian Asimos). No major issues, social media progressing well, but Things to Think With section of website needs help and contributions. All members welcome to contribute at all times.
13. Religious Studies Project (David Robertson / Chris Cotter). Just completed twelve months as incorporated Scottish charity, including audited accounts and official Trustees. Major change is that CC & DR are stepping back to take oversight roles and have appointed two editors to run podcasts - David McConeghy (US) and Brian Fallon (AUS). Now has genuine international coverage. RSP's support of BASR events, including recordings and podcasts, will continue. CC showed members website with members section with edited recordings. Password is RSPPatrons – free to all members. Dawn Llewellyn asked if Patreon initiative had

- been helpful. DR said yes – gives level of support to allow transcription of episodes and a retainer for a web professional to solve online and hosting issues when needed.
14. BASR Research Ethics Code of Practice (Bettina Schmidt). Discussed two years ago, with regard to updating ethical guidelines for research, based on old AUDTRS literature. It was agreed to make a working group, which was organised last year, along with a round table. Working group was formed, and initial draft shared with members via mailing list, who commented. Feedback was taken onboard, and they were used to redraft and this was circulated again to members. Second round table held yesterday at LTU conference, and BS noted two minor re-wordings on terminology and headings. As changes are so minor, BS asked membership to approve, based on last draft, the policy to be stamped as BASR and uploaded to BASR website. BS noted it is a developing and changing document in a shifting field, so this will be an ongoing project, but we hope it will underpin approaches to research and support members in their work. BS asked for a show of hands – Wendy Dossett proposed and Dawn Llewellyn seconded. No dissent, so passed.
 15. Conference Behaviour Policy (Bettina Schmidt). Discussed last year, and raised by members, so the Exec have responded and produced a statement of behavioural expectation for all those attending the conference, which has been reproduced in the printed LTU conference guide this year, based on a working model used by TRS-UK. BS mentioned this at the EASR, who are now looking to adopt a revised version. IAHR will also have a similar statement. Remaining issue with public photos, which needs addressing, to help with clear consent in future meetings. BS asked members to suggest any improvements, which will be communicated with the next conference host. Jonathan Tuckett suggested box on slides saying if photos allowed or not. Steffanie Sinclair suggested colour system for lanyards, but acknowledged expense. Maria Nita suggested stickers. SG noted consent should be in conference registration. Lydia Guzy asked if this was based on social atmosphere, or on specific issues delegates were facing. BS said not appropriate to go into private instances, but all welcome to approach conference organiser or President. Douglas Davies, supportive of the BASR's efforts to support and welcome all, wanted to express a certain degree of sadness that it was felt necessary to remind people of how to behave. BS thought it positive that it protected and emboldened individuals.
 16. BASR Response to BA TRS Report (David Robertson). DR reminded members of the recently published V600 subject report on TRS by the BA, picked up on by press. Colleagues across disciplines and in different countries have expressed support. SG contacted members asking for responses. TRS-UK published response, which was welcomed, but Exec agreed to undertake substantial response. JT hired (after competitive applications), and HESA data has been commissioned, at a cost of £2500 (approx.) This data will be more specific to the V600 range of data, not just headline data. JT also contacting departments. DR will ask for comments from members as drafts are produced of written response. Headline picture is that RS is declining, but far slower than Theology. Joints are particularly problematic – RS & PH is in V500s so not in figures, despite being our biggest joint nationally. Members asked to support by talking to their departments to get data. JT noted it is taking time to get data out of departments, and again asked for help from members. JT asked if colleagues could ask their institutions why they use certain codes. Emma Salter noted it is always a management decision (usually marketing) to hit the highest common denominator (i.e. V600). JT suggested colleagues check descriptors on The Complete Student University Guide, as many were outdated, but it is a major marketing point for potential students. Michael Dudek suggested media blitz opportunity once we have completed response (#RSMatters or the suchlike). DD noted this is important that BASR is doing this, but queried where report came

from. Argued BA has not been sufficiently self-scrutinising, for example with class-diversity. DD hoped this initiative will trigger self-scrutinising analysis, and BASR report could be an 'alerting factor'. DD final point – we can't guarantee that all the voices from BA are in contact with students. BASR is advancing critical awareness of the situation, and should be praised for their actions. DR thanked DD for his encouragement. Peggy Morgan noted previously a book was published in TRS, which misrepresented the subject – this misrepresentation is happening again. Despite PM pushing back and suggesting alternative RS scholars, we faced challenges from those outside RS using the name. She wonders if attitudes have changed? DR said it is our job to speak out publicly about it.

17. BASR Conference 2020 & 2021(BS). BS noted one day conference next year- members to be informed asap. 2021 to be in Edinburgh, to celebrate 50 years of RS at Edinburgh.
18. TRS-UK (John Barclay). JB introduced himself as President of TRS-UK. BASR largest and most active of the 12 subject associations they work with. TRS-UK aims to work strategically in three areas: increase undergraduate numbers, increase collaboration with RE teachers and enhance public understanding of Religion. Argued if we work together we will succeed, if we are not unified, it will be a challenge for us all. Looking to produce graduate videos, not tagged to any department, which all members can use – important to market these to parents. Devising questionnaire to ask RE teachers what they want. Ideas include doing Podcasts (possible with RSP) aimed at RE teachers. New website and social media also being developed. Talking to media experts about how we may engage as experts in mainstream media. Also looking to do data collection at departmental level across TRS to analyse BA/HESA data. JB thanked BASR for welcome and invited questions. MM suggested poster campaign for career options for TRS subjects in schools. DR noted RS is one of the most employable subjects in the Humanities and Social Sciences, but we need to promote the data. JB asked for employers to speak about how TRS graduates are good for them.
19. Any Other Business. PM raised issue of archiving at Boldeian. BS will coordinate with recent secretaries and treasurers to ensure it will be updated. SG & BS to coordinate.
20. Date, time and location of next AGM. To be confirmed by mailing list once conference host is agreed..

BASR TREASURER'S REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 15th AUGUST 2019

Dr C.R. Cotter, BASR Honorary Treasurer, Leeds Trinity University, 3rd September 2019

1. Last year I accidentally reported two closing balances on the report. The correct figure (shown twice) was £21979. The incorrect figure (shown once) was £22144 and was the result of an error in the accounting spreadsheet. My apologies for not catching this mistake at the time.
2. General income for the year was £7,085.
3. Bank Interest: More than double last year's, but still very low due to low base rates. I have persistently said I will investigate options going forward. This is *still* the plan...
4. Subscriptions: Last year reflected a huge increase due to rationalization of members list, and £660 in one-off back payments. At 2017 AGM we had 142 paying members. At 2018 AGM this increased to 209 paying members, and 13 life members. We now have 195 paying members at 13 life members. 18 new members have joined in the past year. 28 individuals have defaulted on payment in the past year and are being contacted.
5. General expenditure for the year: £5,755, a decrease of £1,695 on last year. However, this is largely due to my direct involvement of the 2018 conference finances. The 2018 conference 'actually' involved a further £2362.50 expenditure for bursaries (£960), committee expenses (£795), Naomi Goldenberg's registration (£277.50), and conference assistants' registration (£330). These expenses were absorbed in the Queen's profits and didn't pass through our books.
6. Committee expenses are £1,015 lower than last year, at £1,815. back to 'normal' levels, at £2,830. Last year included committee expenses for two EASR conferences, this year only one (and only B. Schmidt represented BASR). Also, see point 5 above.
7. Insurance remains in place, paid after this accounting period.
8. The BASR continued to sponsor the *Religious Studies Project* at £500 per year.
9. Expenditure on the website is up on previous years, reflecting continued work on design and stability. This year includes £450 paid to a developer (2 instances) to fix persistent issues.
10. Final payment of £1500 still due on completion of History Project (hopefully September 2020).
11. 2018 joint conference with ISASR in Belfast was a financial success. This surplus of £718 does not reflect four bursaries at £240 (£960), minus £872.23 for ISASR share, plus £334.20 still due from Queen's. Given that bursaries are a 'normal' BASR expense, the final BASR18 profit will settle to £1140. Queen's and ISASR payments happening imminently.
12. The committee received a request for financial support from BASR members organizing a conference at the University of Birmingham. The committee agreed that supporting the conference with £500 was in keeping with the aims of the BASR. BASR members are encouraged to contact the committee if they would like similar support for events. At present these will be handled on a case-by-case basis and judged against the BASR's constitutional aims. If the volume of applications increases significantly, we will need to develop a policy on such support.
13. Bank Accounts: As of August 15th. Bank Accounts totalled £23,309, an increase of £1,330. Treasurer still to do the long-awaited Gift Aid return which should result in a substantial payment. We will also be spending a significant amount (£3,000-£4,000) for data access and research time to produce a report on the provision of RS at UK HE institutions.
14. Summary of Financial Position: Overall, the finances of the BASR are still very good with adequate reserves. Our healthy bank balance has allowed the BASR to continue investment in postgraduate bursaries, collaborative research, conference-support and inter-association networking, and to maintain the teaching fellowship, history project, website and branding. We always welcome comment on spending decisions, as well as suggestions/applications from members for the future allocation of funds in keeping with the BASR's constitutional aims.

**BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR
THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS
ACCOUNTS as at 15 AUGUST 2019**

	<i>Notes</i>	2018-19	2017-18		<i>Notes</i>	2018-19	2017-18
Balance at 16 August 2018		21979	23565				
RECEIPTS				PAYMENTS			
Subscriptions	<i>i</i>	4301	5280	Printing & Postage Bulletin		0	-65
Bank Interest		25	10	RSP		-500	-500
				Committee Expenses	<i>ii</i>	-1815	-2830
				Society Subs		-822	-729
				Merchandise		0	-125
				Insurance	<i>iii</i>	-405	0
				Journal		-251	-212
				History Project		0	-1348
				Teaching Fellowship	<i>iv</i>	-300	-341
				Website	<i>v</i>	-785	-554
				Birmingham Conference	<i>vi</i>	-500	N/A
2019 Conference Receipts		390	0	2019 Conference Expenses		0	0
2018 Conference Receipts		711	450	2018 Conference Expenses		-375	-68
2017 Conference Receipts	<i>vii</i>	1658	123	2017 Conference Expenses		0	-678
Total		7085	5864	Total		-5755	-7450
Balance at 15 August 2019		23309	21979				

BALANCE SHEET as at 15 August 2019

Cash Funds: Bank Accounts

Lloyds Current	1984	1509
CAF Gold	19947	19922
PayPal	1353	522
Petty Cash	25	25
Total	23309	21979

FINANCIAL SUMMARY UP TO 15 AUGUST 2019

	21979		Conference 2018		
Balance as at 16th August 2018					
Total Receipts	7085		Total Receipts	1161	
Total Payments	-5755		Total Payments	-443	
Net Receipts/Payments	1330				
Balance as at 15th August 2019	23309		Deficit/Surplus	<i>viii</i> 718	

NOTES TO ACCOUNTS

- i* Slight drop off in membership. And last year there was a £660 one-off bonus from members paying back payments.
- ii* Last year included 2 EASR conferences. This year only B. Schmidt represented at EASR.
- iii* 2019/20 paid after this accounting period
- iv* W. Dossett £300. Conference place still up for grabs.
- v* Including two separate instances (amounting to £450) where we paid a developer to fix persistent issues.
- vi* Support for conference at University of Birmingham organized by BASR members: <https://blog.bham.ac.uk/festivalcultures/>
- vii* £1658 backpayment of profits from Chester
- viii* This figure does not reflect four bursaries at £240 (£960), minus £872.23 for ISASR share, plus £334.20 still due from Queen's. Given that bursaries are a 'normal' BASR expense, BASR18 therefore ran at a profit of £1140.

features

RE:THINKING JAMES LANDING

*Michael Miller,
Liverpool Hope University*

Black Judaism as a field of scholarly enquiry has been bubbling under now for some decades. Scholarly investigation likely began in the 1950s or 60s with scholars such as Howard Brotz, but it is James Landing's *Black Judaism* which is the go-to text. Published less than twenty years ago, it may seem strange to require rethinking already but the field, and its assumptions, have progressed vastly in that time. Since then, Lewis Gordon established the Center for Afro-Jewish Studies at Temple University, and several books, dissertations, monographs, and edited volumes have explored in detail black and African American Jews and Judaisms in their many forms.

Landing's text is an investigation of a particular phenomenon within African American religion: the autonomous emergence of Jewish practice and identification with or as Jews or Israelites. Landing traces this back to the late nineteenth century and provides extensive documentation of congregations and individuals both pivotal and tertiary to the movement (in fact movement may be the wrong word; there is very little unity, although certain motifs persist over the many decades). The final chapter fo-

cuses on a particular, and particularly visible, group, the African Hebrew Israelites of Jerusalem, a community of now some 5000 who emigrated from the USA and have lived in Israel since 1969. These latter are indicative of much of the movement as it now stands, which largely rejects identification as Jews, naming themselves Hebrews, Israelites, or Hebrew Israelites as a means of asserting direct lineage from the people of the Bible, in distinction to the people of the Bible and the Talmud. This movement has drawn increasing attention over the last seventy years, but consists of numerous independent groups who practice and define their identity independently of one another, and who vary in their proximity to and acceptance of rabbinic Judaism.

The main point of contention is in Landing's typology. In an oft-quoted passage, he writes:

Black Judaism is ... a form of institutionalized (congregational) religious expression in which black persons identify themselves as Jews, Israelites, or Hebrews (sometimes as Hebrew-Israelites) in a manner that seems unacceptable to the "whites" of

the world's Jewish community, primarily because Jews take issue with the various justifications set forth by Black Jews in establishing this identity. Thus, "Black Judaism," as defined here, stands distinctly apart from "black Judaism," or that Judaic expression found among black persons that would be acceptable to the world's Jewish community, such as conversion or birth to a recognized Jewish mother. "Black Judaism" has been a social movement; "black Judaism" has been an isolated social phenomenon. Thus, "Black Judaism" will be seen to be more emphatically a black expression than a Jewish one. (2002:10)

Here, Landing posits a fundamental difference between two communities – blacks who practice normative Judaism, who are accepted as Jews by “the world’s Jewish community”, and blacks who practice, putatively, some kind of para-Judaism and are not accepted by – notably – “the ‘whites’ of the world’s Jewish community”. Clearly, for Landing, “the world’s Jewish community” is basically composed of individuals who are white, and it is these white Jews who hold the position of gatekeepers. As indicated by the final line quoted above, Landing determines that “Black Judaism” is in fact not descended from Judaism, but is rather a specifically African American response to slavery and segregation – the appropriation of biblical Israelite identity via the sympathetic resonance of Egyptian and Babylonian bondage, internment, and liberation, which eventually in the twentieth century took on in some cases a growing proximity to rabbinic Judaism. Indeed, Landing’s conclusion is only the most detailed iteration of a conclusion reached by scholars since the 1960s: Black (Hebrew Israelite) Jews are not Jews but black Christians who have de-emphasised the New Testament and found a lost identity in the identification with Israel.

There are several points of contention with this description. Firstly, as Andre E. Key has pointed out, the terminology of either Black or black Judaism implies that normative, unqualified Judaism is inherently non-black, and that any Judaism practiced by blacks is an aberration to some degree or another. Notwithstanding that there is a significant portion, even within the USA, of the normative Jewish community who identify as black, on top of the large Mizrahi (Middle Eastern) and Sephardic (Spanish/North African) Jewish population, the ascription of “whiteness” even to those (Ashkenazi) Jews who would more often be coded as white is a matter of debate (in fact it

is only when discussing “black Jews” that researchers are completely comfortable using the term “white Jews”; there is more to be said about this fact alone than could fit into this article). Furthermore, the racial demographics of the Jewish world are currently shifting, as both individuals and entire communities around the world are emerging who wish to be included within – or claim they are descended from – the umbrella of normative Judaism, including several African groups from South Africa to Nigeria.

But equally, Landing’s historical narrative has faced critique. Recently Walter Isaac – a rabbi and Hebrew Israelite – has challenged scholars’ assumptions of white normativity. Arguing that “Dismissals of Jewish blackness have revealed the white supremacist thinking that often underlay self-assertion of Jewish identity”, Isaac asserts that if we are looking for ‘proof’ of historical lineage then that of white Jewish communities is no more achievable than that of African Americans. In doing this, he argues for the inclusion of Hebrew Israelite groups into the umbrella form Judaism. For Isaac, both normative black Jews and Black Judaism are essentially part of Judaism, rather than Black Judaism being an irreverent or militant form of (white) Judaism.

Part of the debate here is to do with lineage: because Judaism traditionally holds that one has to either be born of a Jewish parent or go through a long-winded process of conversion, Judaism isn’t something you can self-identify into; your status has to be conferred. The problem is that who decides the criteria is determined according to an assumed criteria, and thus the circular nature is irresolvable. While Jewish authorities have generally been willing to accept anyone who wished to undergo conversion (the Ethiopian Beta Israel having been accepted as Jews by both secular and religious authorities), most Hebrew Israelites perceive conversion as relinquishing their own narrative in favour of the whitewashed version or worse, the submission of authentic Israelites to European Gentile norms.

As well as the common ideas of social protest (rejection of Christianity as a slave religion) and identification with Israelites, there are a variety of possible descent histories for Black Jews in America. These include conversion by Jewish slave owners, intermarriage, and African Jewish communities such as those among the Nigerian Igbo (Igbos were indeed among those taken to America, and so it seems, some Jew-

ish Igbo). Pointing to the Talmudic principle that upon manumission slaves become fully Jews, Isaac argues that those slaves held by Jews were as Jewish as those slaves held by Christians were Christian, and “upon the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment, a black Jewish community was created in the United States”. Even the possibility of this has been ignored by previous researchers, the Christianity of all slaves and their descendants being assumed without question; in fact, they are usually seen as no less essentially Christian than white Americans. And indeed, historical documents testify to the (growing) existence of mulatto Jews in 18th century Suriname who were a, somewhat unwelcome, part of the Sephardic community (there was a mixed-race Jewish congregation there until it was forcibly closed in 1793). However the weight of scholarly opinion holds that those North American Jews who held slaves routinely did not indoctrinate their slaves into their religion. There has also been no further evidence forthcoming for the existence in the Americas of any self-identifying black Jewish groups (and only a handful of individuals) until the emergence of the earliest preachers mentioned by Landing at the end of the nineteenth century, all of whom appear to proclaim, at most, hybrid forms of Christian-Jewish practice which are most easily explained by the model of Christian groups adopting some aspects of Jewish (or even simply Old Testament) practice, all with Christ still in prominent position. This is to say that, despite the large number of self-organised black churches, there appear to have been no black synagogues either before or after emancipation, until their emergence in New York in the twentieth century. However, as the majority of black Jewish communities sprang up in the period following the Great Migration of blacks from the south to the north USA, it is not impossible that this movement brought with it internal traditions, rather than forming black ‘appropriations’ of Judaism based solely on interactions in the north, and we may suspect that the apparent absence of black Jewish communities means that emancipated black Jewish individuals were ultimately absorbed into broader black Christianity, only to later emerge as the hybrid forms which drew upon both traditions.

On the other hand, MaNishtana – an African American Orthodox rabbi, blogger and writer – argues strongly for the distinction between Hebrew Israelites and black Jews; because “no sect of it has ever been started by anyone actually Jewish” and does not re-

quire or attempt conversion to Judaism, MaNishtana argues that Hebrew Israelites are their own religious form separate from any kind of Judaism, although there is exchange and transition between the Hebrew Israelite and black Jewish populations. MaNishtana sees Hebrew Israelism as the Jewish equivalent of the Nation of Islam – at most a para-Judaism which gains much media attention, while there is a long authentic black Judaism woefully underrepresented and under respected by normative white Judaism.

One important caveat should be noted: the historical origins of Black Judaism as a movement are distinct from many of the individuals who have entered the movement; many, likely most, did not come from self-consciously Black Jewish backgrounds (though a fair proportion did), but adhered to such groups for the same reason that any individual joins a spiritual community: it offered fulfilment which they did not find elsewhere, including in other forms of Judaism. However, for someone from a family who have identified as Jewish for several generations the apparent refusal of the Jewish establishment (including the infrequent but increasingly necessary synagogue security checks of unregistered attendants) to accept their claims could appear to be conditioned principally by race, because of the faulty assumption that, unless converted, Jews are not black and blacks are not Jews.

The debates involved in this issue are critical and growing; what Landing identified as black and Black Judaism are both increasing social phenomena, and questions of race are ones that can and should no longer be ignored; but it is crucial to also recognise the very personal nature of these ideas, and the fact that in drawing boundaries we as scholars are delving into the deepest sense of identity of many individuals. Some have argued that a broadening of the term “Judaism” is appropriate: While Christianity and Islam are broad movements which include many antagonistic and wilfully exclusive groups, to the outsider the resemblance is clear. If “Judaism” is broadened so that the currently majoritarian form, rabbinic Judaism, is seen as just one variant, then the way is clearer to admit that other groups such as the various Hebrew Israelites, Lemba, Igbo, and Beta Israel, are as much variants as the earlier breakaway Karaites are; many of whom do not accept one another, but all of whom have much in common even if they found their way to their faith by diverse paths.

**RELIGIOUS
STUDIES
MATTERS**





**THE
HUMANITIES
ARE UNDER
SEIGE**



HIGHER EDUCATION'S TRADITIONAL MODEL OF PRODUCING CITIZENS & LEADERS

IS BEING HIJACKED
BY GLOBAL CAPITALISM
WHERE THE HUMANITIES
ARE DOWNGRADED INTO
CULTURAL AWARENESS
TRAINING PROGRAMS
FOR SUCCESSFULL
CAREERS

A classical painting depicting a man with a beard and long hair, shirtless and wearing a white loincloth, sitting in a cave. He is holding a glowing lantern in his hands, looking down at it. A dog is sitting on the ground to his left. The scene is dimly lit, with the light from the lantern illuminating the man's face and the cave's interior.

AND THOSE
THAT DO NOT COMPLY
OR ADAPT ARE THREATENED WITH
EXTINCTION



**RELIGIOUS STUDIES
IS BEING TARGETED
AND STANDS THE RISK OF BECOMING
ENDANGERED
DESPITE THE OBVIOUS FACT THAT...**

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**THE FUTURE
WE INHERIT
WILL REQUIRE A PROFOUND
RELIGIOUS LITERACY**



**BELIEVE
IT OR NOT
WE MAY NEED
RELIGIOUS
STUDIES
IN ORDER TO
SURVIVE**





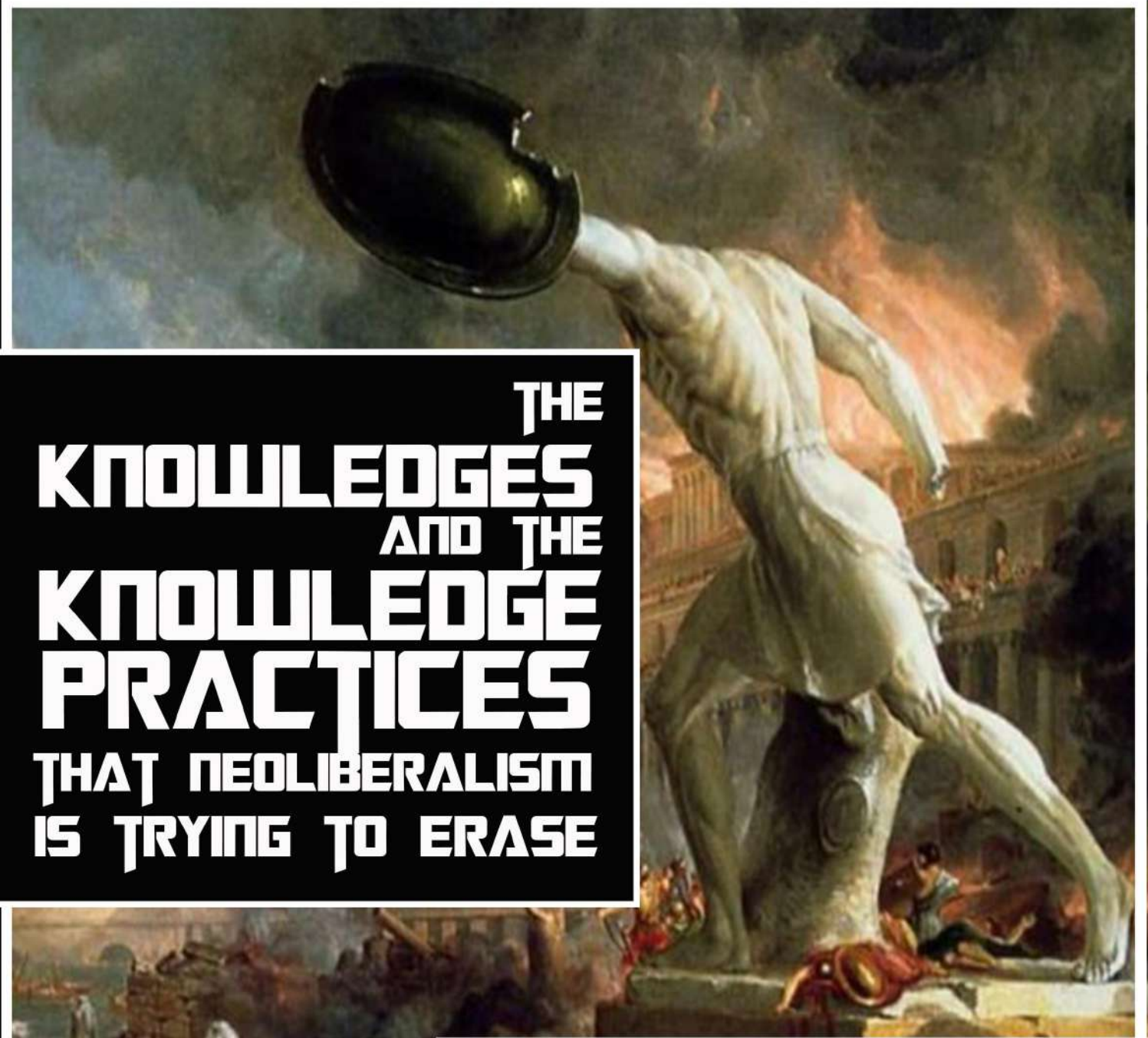
AS GLOBALLY WE ARE FACED WITH

CATASTROPHIC PROBLEMS

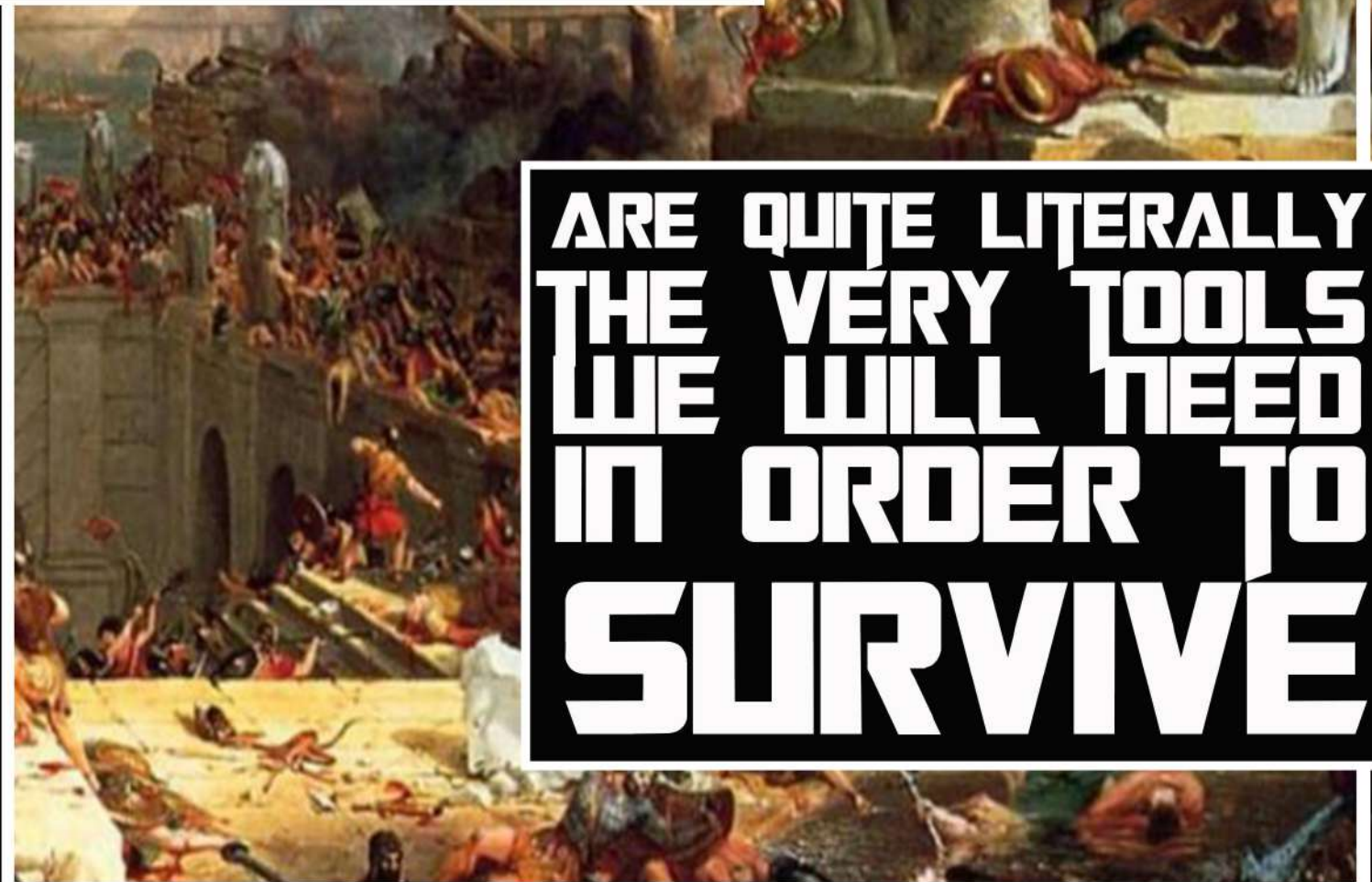


THAT ARE READ AND FRAMED DIFFERENTLY

**THROUGH THE LENSES OF CONFLICTING
WORLDVIEWS**



**THE
KNOWLEDGES
AND THE
KNOWLEDGE
PRACTICES
THAT NEOLIBERALISM
IS TRYING TO ERASE**



**ARE QUITE LITERALLY
THE VERY TOOLS
WE WILL NEED
IN ORDER TO
SURVIVE**

**AS WE LEARN TO
LIVE AND DIE TOGETHER
ON A DAMAGED
PLANET**



**RELIGIOUS
STUDIES
MATTERS**

conferences

GERMAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGION (DVRW), 3-6 SEPT 2019, LEIBNIZ UNIVERSITY, HANNOVER

The 33rd biannual conference of the DVRW took place at Leibniz University in Hannover. The theme of the conference was 'Conceptualizing Religion', and was an unusually constant focus throughout the panel sessions, 'Input Statements' and other presentations throughout.

A keynote by Jenny Berglund, Horst Junginger and Oliver Krüger opened the conference on the tuesday evening. First thing each morning following, Input Statements - short position papers lasting around 30 minutes - set the agenda for the day's panels. The first of these was by Michael Berglund, the second by Chris Cotter and myself, although this was presented on video after we were left stranded in Amsterdam, en route from the BASR in Leeds. The third and final was given by Tomoko Masuzawa, author of *The Invention of World Religions* (2005). The selection of these particular speakers for the input statements makes clear that the conceptualisation of religion which the conference seeks to address is coming from a critical discursive perspective predominantly, although this was certainly not a position shared by all speakers taking part. Theoretical issues, and particularly critical theoretical issues, have a strong tradition in Germany and elsewhere where in Europe; nevertheless with a high number of British and American critical scholars invited to talk this was one of the most critically engaged conferences in the study of religion for a number of years, and certainly one of the largest to focus on this issue predominantly. Unfortunately due to travel issues a number of invited speakers ended up giving their presentations either via Skype, video, or read in lieu, but nevertheless, presentations overall were marked by a high level of critical engagement, and

sessions were run with a friendly, casual efficiency. Never once did anyone hold up cards warning that their time was running out, nor did anyone fail to regulate themselves at the expense of others. For those of us who were new to German conferences, the practice of knocking, rather than clapping, our appreciation was a surprise. Some of us found ourselves knocking immediately, though a determined few continued to clap.

In the panel "It's not just about religion: towards a critical study of a system of modern Western categories", chaired by Mitsutoshi Horii, Tim Fitzgerald presented on his recent work in which religion is important chiefly in being a part of a larger system of categories in which the Colonial episteme is enforced and mystified. Naomi Goldenberg supported this position with an example of where both political and religion can be mobilized by the same group, depending on their particular aims. However, it was when Christoph Klein presented his critique of critical religion that the session got very interesting. Klein's critique was not strong; however, it cannot have been easy attempting to critique Fitzgerald while Fitzgerald's head was projected, via Skype, 6-foot high on the wall behind, with his every tut and sigh amplified through the room speakers. Whilst it was great to see Fitzgerald again engaging with the Academy after a difficult few years, it was not a session in which either the critic or the critiqued came off particularly well.

In some ways, the panel from Thursday afternoon, "Religion and Intersecting Concepts in Contemporary Social Formations", continued this conversation. Originally scheduled to involve Fitzgerald, Goldberg and Malory Nye, it was rejigged due to Fitzgerald and Nye's eventual absence, although Nye's paper was read by Carmen Becker in his absence. The discussion however eventually ended up in something of an

impasse, given that essentially all of the participants agreed on the central needs and importance of a critical approach, but were essentially preaching to the choir. If we take the publication of Fitzgerald's *Ideology of Religious Studies* as a starting point for critical religion, then we will soon be 20 years into the project, and it would be fair to say that many of the voices at this conference were frustrated in how little impact the approach has had amongst our peers. Nevertheless, it was encouraging to note how many of our colleagues internationally are incorporating this approach (or at least the central ideas of this approach) into their work, so we may be looking at a longer generational shift from broadly comparative approaches towards critical and discursive approaches predominating.

Other panels of note included one on worldwide co-operation in religion in public education, organised by Wanda Alberts and including Marion Maddox and others; a panel on teaching Religious Studies chaired by Teemu Taira of the University of Helsinki; "The Muslim Question" on the domestication of Muslims in the German-speaking world, organised by Carmen Becker; and a panel developing from Tisa Wenger's book, *How Religious Freedom Makes Religion*. Despite the strong showing for critical approaches, other panels focussed on other potential methodological developments, including material religion in the study of the classical world and in museums, and aesthetics in the study of material religion. Of particular interest to my American colleagues was a panel approaching the Legacy of J.Z. Smith from a European point of view, although unfortunately, my German was too poor to be able to follow the arguments presented there.

The public conversation by Winifred Sullivan and Heiner Bielefeldt was interesting, although it did feel that they were talking past each other somewhat. Sullivan seemed unnecessarily defensive, perhaps because of Bielefeldt's rather overconfident style of presentation. Although Bielefeldt was coming from a theological position, it was nevertheless interesting to hear about his work with the United Nations; but ultimately the conversation disappointed, as neither seemed to understand what the other was saying and there were a few moments of factual inaccuracies and normative claims to which the audience clearly wanted to respond, but unfortunately the speakers did not.

The conference was ably organised by Carmen Becker and Wanda Alberts, assisted by a team of student helpers. To me, it was an example of how doing things simply can create the best results - and the local fruit and homemade plum pastry was so far ahead of the expensive sandwich platters I have come to expect from conference catering. With the high level of discourse and the lively international attendees, I will be paying more attention to German conferences in future than I have in the past. I am certain that many publications and ongoing conversations will emerge from this conference, and I urge my English-speaking colleagues to consider attending the next DVRW in 2021.

David G. Robertson,
The Open University

**APPROACHING ESOTERICISM AND MYSTICISM:
CULTURAL INFLUENCES CONFERENCE, 5-7 JUNE
2019, DONNER INSTITUTE, TURKU FINLAND.**

This conference was co-hosted by the Donner Institute and the "Seekers of the New: Esotericism and Religious Transformation in Finland during the Era of Modernisation, 1880-1940" Research Project, which is funded by the Kone Foundation for three years from 2018. The venue was Åbo Akademi University (ÅAU), in Turku. A warm welcome by Ruth Illman (Director of the Donner Institute) and Ulrika Wolf-Knuts (Chancellor of ÅAU) was followed by the opening keynote by Olav Hammer (University of Southern Denmark, Odense), on "Esotericism and Mysticism: Two Essentially Contested Concepts." This lecture was remarkable for its clarity of argument and provided a foundation for the presentations that ensued. There were parallel sessions so I can only comment on those papers I heard. Olli Pitkänen and Oskari Koskela's "Esotericism in Black Metal and the Contemporary Occult Milieu" was the opener in an entertaining and informative session on popular culture. Next was a fascinating comparison of the two soundtracks of Kenneth Anger's *Lucifer Rising* (1980[1972]) by Kimi Kärki, and the last speaker was Tilman Hannemann on "Conceptualising Magic in 1950s Germany". After lunch Day 1 continued with a session on esotericism in literature: Carles Magrinyà discussed cave symbolism in Cervantes' early modern *Don Quixote* and Tiina Mahlamäki discussed Emanuel Swedenborg's ideas in Laura Lindstedt's

Oneiron (2014).

The second keynote of the day was Per Faxneld (Stockholm University) on “The Death of the Author and the Birth of the Luciferian Reader: Ur-images, Postmodernity and Semiotic Self-Apotheosis”, which despite the forbidding title was a brisk analysis of Roman Polanski’s adaptation of Arturo Pérez-Reverte’s *The Dumas Club* (1993), *The Ninth Gate* (1999). That evening participants were entertained by a fin de siècle magic show by Pauliina Räsänen and Slava Volkov in the Donner Institute, where drinks and dinner were served after. From 8 PM delegates were escorted on a walking tour of “Esoteric and Occult Turku” in which local students enacted tableaux illustrating the particular figure the guides were speaking about. In addition to the program a “Guide to Esoteric and Occult Turku” was in the conference pack, in which figures like Anthroposophist Olly Donner and Theosophist Hélène Jacobsson, occultist and neo-Nazi Pekka Siitoin and ritual magician Reima Saarinen were profiled.

The first day of the conference set a high standard that was upheld on Day 2. The third keynote, Christine Ferguson (University of Stirling) on “Journocultism: Newspaper Scrying from Machen to Fort” addressed newspaper and magazine articles on anomalous phenomena. The subsequent paper session showcased Michelle Foot’s “The Visual Culture of Christian-Spiritualism in Scotland”, Marja Lahelma’s “Artists as Producers and Mediators of Esoteric Knowledge” and Ray Radford’s “UrbEX and New Maps of Meaning: Psychogeography as an Innovative Methodology for Understanding Sacred Space.” After lunch a similarly fascinating and varied session featured: Tommy Ramstedt’s “Applying the Methodological Framework of Scene in the Study of Western Esoteric Environments and Spaces” (which resonated in certain ways with Radford’s paper); Cristoffer Tideliu’s “Studying Paranormal (Oc)culture: Previous Attempts”; and Sara Duppils’ “Happiness is Not of this World: The Significance of the French Spiritist Branch for the Swedish Spiritist Movement.” At 3.30 delegates were transported by bus to the Gallen-Kallega Museum in Espoo to view the exhibition “Finnish Art and Clairvoyance” curated by Nina Kokkinen and the conference dinner at Tarvaspää Cafe Zoceria in a turn of the twentieth century villa on the site.

On Friday 7 June I presented on “Gurdjieff and the Angry Young Men: Stuart Holroyd, Colin Wilson and

Waking Up in 1950s Britain” in a session that included Hippo Taatila’s “George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff” and Karen Swartz’s “Behind Every Successful Man (There is at Least One Exhausted Woman): Rudolf Steiner’s Silent and Silenced Partners”. The last lunch was memorable, in that the catering staff who had served delicious (largely vegetarian or vegan) food and strong coffee throughout were thanked, as were the organising team and student volunteers. Indeed, the open, egalitarian nature of the conference was obvious throughout. The last paper session featured: Juuso Järvenpää on “Friends or Foes? The Difficult Relationship of Spiritualism and Theosophy in Early 20th Century Finland”; Kaarina Koski’s “Esoteric Journals and Folk Belief Tradition in Early 20th Century Finland”; and Tora Wall’s delightfully eccentric “Elves, Trolls, and Dragons: Supernatural Beings as Personifications of Nature in Swedish Tourism”. The last keynote, Maarit Leskelä-Kärki’s “Ethics and Esotericism” maintained the high standard of the whole gathering. A panel of the four keynotes chaired by Ruth Illman summed up the principal themes of the conference effectively. A wine reception with music by Finnish legend Kimi Kärki and an enthusiastic invitation from Ruth Illman to all participants to consider submitting their papers to *Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis*, Volume 29, to appear in 2020. The organising team are to be congratulated on what was a fabulous conference.

Carole M. Cusack
University of Sydney

THE FUTURE OF THE STUDY OF RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE: 50TH ANNIVERSARY CONFERENCE OF THE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE RESEARCH CENTRE. 1-4 JULY 2019, TRINITY ST DAVID UNIVERSITY, LAMPETER.

After he retired as the Regius Professor of Zoology at Oxford University, the famous marine biologist Professor Sir Alister Hardy founded a unit which was based at the then Manchester College, Oxford, focusing on collecting and studying first hand descriptions by ordinary people of spiritual experiences. They responded to his ‘call’ for accounts through the press, radio broadcasting and face to face lectures given in various places, including one in 1969 in the newly founded Department of Religious Studies in Lancaster at the invitation of Ninian Smart. The Re-

search Centre is the custodian of the ongoing collection of accounts and has continued through conferences, lectures and publications in this interdisciplinary field of study.

experience in Christianity; Nicole Graham on laughter as religious experience; Jennifer Uzzell on the varieties of Pagan religious experience; Nicole Holt on the effects of spirituality on the health of those who



It moved to Lampeter in 2000 and those who attended the conference had an opportunity to view some interesting archival material and past publications in a special exhibition set up by the Lampeter librarian and archivist to celebrate the life and work of Sir Alister Hardy.

The present RERC Research Director is Professor Bettina Schmidt and she organised this anniversary conference which included three keynote lectures and nine panels. The panel papers illustrate the rich potential and work in this area by both senior academics and research students from various countries. Some few examples of the diverse themes explored were Wendy Dossett's paper on the spirituality among people in twelve step recovery from addictions; Ann Morgan on female conversion

identify as spiritual but not religious; Olivia Lujnenburg on the spiritual needs of older people in residential care; Paul Marshall on the metaphysical implications of mystical experience; Zsusanna Szugyicki on comparisons between 'traditional and 'modern' mysticism. There was a panel organised by Fabian Graham whose own paper compared Chinese healing rituals in contemporary Singapore and Taiwan. A later panel included James Murphy on interpretive phenomenological analysis and the study of religious and spiritual experience, and there was also a panel with three papers from medical anthropological perspectives focusing on healing; older patients with affective and non-affective psychosis and those patients with bi-polar disorder. The final panel of three papers, which had made 24 in all focused on religious experience and interfaith.

Invited to give one of the keynotes was Professor Anne Taves, Distinguished Professor of Religious Studies at the University of California at Santa Barbara, who is a past president of The American Academy of Religion and general secretary of IAHR. Her title was What Counts as Religious / Spiritual Experience? Contextualising (and testing some of the associated ideas) in the Hardy data in light of five culture studies of nonordinary experiences in five countries: US; China; Thailand ;Vanuatu and Ghana.

Professor Jeremy Carrette gave the second keynote. He is Professor of Philosophy, Religion and Culture and Dean for Europe at the University of Kent, Canterbury. His paper emerged from his research in philosophy and psychology as well as extensive publishing on William James on whose diaries and notebooks at the William James Archive at the Houghton Library, Harvard University he is researching at the moment. His title was "The Mystical Kiss: William James, Love and Attentive Consciousness". Alongside the work of James and that of the Spanish pragmatist Ortega Y. Gasset, his emphasis was on love as a specific form of conscious attention or attentive consciousness which is a profound part of the expression of religious experience and intimacy as well as the foundation of human loving.

The final keynote which ended the conference was by Professor Leslie Francis, Professor of Religions and Education at The University of Warwick and currently Chair of the Alister Hardy Trust. His work uses quantitative analysis and is built on a research tradition established by Greer in the 1980s. On this occasion he presented analysed data from 3,523 students between 16 and 19 years old in Northern Ireland and 3,848 in the Republic of Ireland exploring the effect of having and acknowledging religious experience on religious affect (attitudes towards Christianity) and personal affect (happiness).

Professor Schmidt's careful planning with her support helpers from Lampeter made sure that the conference was a great success. It showed, as the title suggests the ongoing, innovative and relevant vitality in the field with its rich breadth of disciplines and range of perspectives.

Peggy Morgan
Director RERC 1996-2002

TRANS-STATES 2019: THE ART OF REVELATION. 13-14 SEPT 2019. UNIVERSITY OF NORTHAMP- TON.

Arguably, this year's Trans-States conference (held 13th-14th September) lived up to its title even more than the original conference in 2016. With its eclectic and interdisciplinary mix of academics, artists and occult practitioners (often all three), here was something genuinely liminal; somewhere between a colloquium and a gathering of the tribe, between a ritual and an academic exercise. These fuzzy boundaries were explored in the panel on Revelation and Radical Reflexivity and were the focus of day two's plenary session on "The Lightning Struck Ivory Tower". Chaired by the event's organiser Cavan McLaughlin, this discussion panel addressed the still somewhat controversial role of magic and the occult in academia. A discursive journey around the epistemological and ontological problems faced by the academic who wishes to take religious and esoteric ideas as their object of study. Is there - and ought there to be - a distinction between the practitioner and the academic when it comes to the study of the occult? How many academics use, say, the study of art, comparative religion or popular culture as a "cover" to legitimise their interest in such ideas?

To put this all into perspective it is worth highlighting how the conference began, with an astonishing performance piece by butô dancer and co-founder of publishers Scarlet Imprint, Alkistis Dimech. This was then followed by another performance of theurgic saxophony, "Voces Mysticae", by Randal Hall. By beginning with these pieces, as opposed to the more traditional keynote session, Trans-States 2019 opened itself to the outside, inviting both participants and visitors to reconsider the roles of magic, ritual, performance and academia - and how each of these might bleed into the other. The first official keynote from Wouter Hanegraaff, entitled "Transitioning to the Cosmos: Music Esotericism and Consciousness Change", addressed these concerns through an investigation of the music and philosophy (or musical philosophy) of Stockhausen; a theme continued in the next session on "Sound and Music". That session was in complimentary competition with two other panels. Word on the street had much praise for the panel on "Reintegrating the Self", particularly Anne Crossey's "From Tragic to Magic: Trauma as an Encounter With the Real" (it's worth noting here that all of the talks will be eventually be

made available, as per the previous conference, on the Trans-States YouTube channel).

If the speakers on “Reintegrating the Self” walked the line between psychoanalysis and the occult, the third panel of the afternoon, simply titled “Psychedelics”, crossed over still further into realms where academic/practitioner become ever more blurred. The stigmatised role of these substances (not to mention their legal status) means that they remain controversial, even within the psychopharmacological and medical disciplines. Occultist, writer and independent researcher Julian Vayne’s paper *Manifesting Metaphorical Minds: Towards a Psychological Theory of Psychedelic Therapy* explored the various models and metaphors used to describe that most ambiguous of states, the psychedelic consciousness, while Nikki Wyrd and Danny Nemu’s talks went even further from recognisably academic territory, incorporating storytelling and even a little demonic invocation.

A more clearly political strand ran through the workshop on “Magico-Politics” (featuring myself on the presentation of anarchism and magick) and Kasper Opstrup’s “News from the Sun: On the Search for a Politics of Revelation”, which expanded upon some themes explored in his excellent book *The Way Out* (2017), which addressed the web of connections between the political, occult and artistic practices of William Burroughs, Alexander Trocchi and the Situationists. Elsewhere, the artist and practitioner Geraldine Hudson (“Ritual as Resistance: On the Performative Hierophanies of Revelation”) described how her group of artist-witches has been performing cleansing spells in patriarchal institutions, while the darker side of magico-political nexus explored in Christian Giudice’s pressing and necessarily disturbing, “Dreaming of a White America: Atomwaffen Division, Satanism and the Alt Right”.

Which brings us back round to the plenary discussion. I think it is possible to describe that as political in the broadest sense, in as much as it addressed the ways in which occult practices are delegitimised (in sociological terms, they lack cultural capital) and thus must be reformulated in terms of the academy in such a way that holds them at arm’s length (e.g. sneaking in a discussion of theosophy under the more respectable guise of studying Kandisky). Coincidentally (or synchronistically?), the other two keynote speakers, while coming from very different

perspectives, both attempted to unify, or resolve some of these tensions.

Writer, director and performer Daisy Campbell’s dizzying piece described her journey from Cern to Cern, and took in Discordianism, tarot and Hakim Bey (among many other topics) along the way. Whether this be considered an academic presentation or a performance matters less than its galvanising effect (though it is perhaps worth noting how many other speakers at the conference incorporated ritual elements into their presentations, from banishings to group energising exercises). Daisy’s central point, that we ought to fall in love with the world again, turning towards Eros in the name of ushering in the “erotic ‘20s”, resonated with the audience in such a way that served as the substrate for many encounters and conversations over the course of that weekend.

Jeffrey Kripal’s keynote, which ended the conference, was more typically academic, being presented from behind a desk and based on his latest book *The Flip*. Nevertheless, the effect was similar. Where Daisy drew on artistic tradition of symbol and metaphor, Kripal was making the argument in epistemological and ontological terms. Put reductively: that anomalous and unusual experiences are not to be ignored but should be our point of focus. What better way to fall in love with the world again than to recognise what many scholars already recognise but are ‘forbidden’ to say - that reality is already deeply strange. As Kripal put it, “our conclusions are a function of our exclusions”. The collective efforts of the various scholars, artists and practitioners that came together for Trans-States 2019 pointed towards a vision of artistic, academic and political practice that opens up to that which has been excluded, a vision fit for the 2020s, that recognises re-enchantment as resistance.

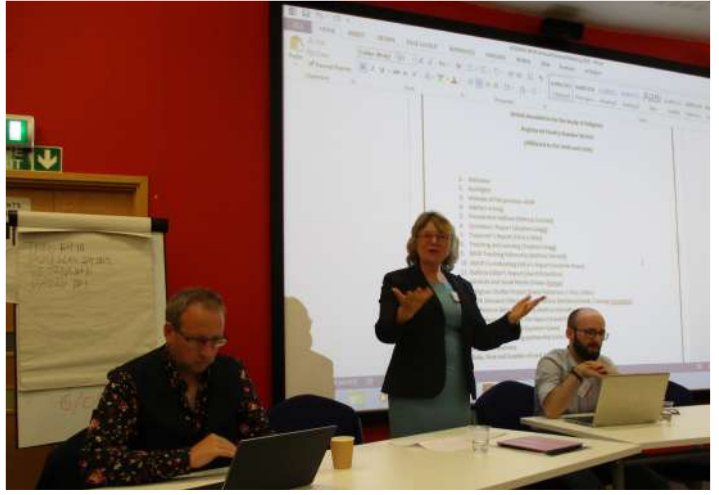
Sott Jeffery,
University of the Highlands and Islands

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BASR 2019





reviews

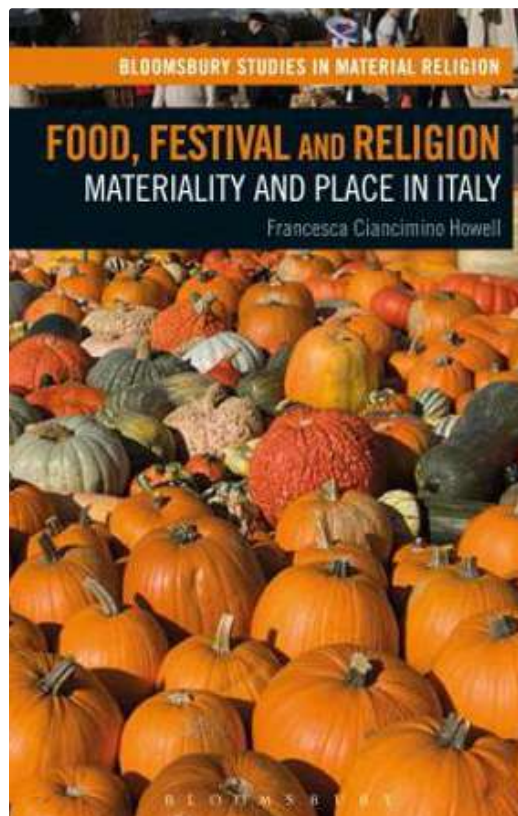
FOOD, FESTIVAL AND RELIGION: MATERIALITY AND PLACE IN ITALY. FRANCESCA CIANCIMINO HOWELL. BLOOMSBURY, 2018,

The relationship between food, place and religions (Catholic, pagan or aimed to food itself) is extremely important in Italy and evident in many cultural expressions, especially during the thousands of feste and sagre (festivals) held all over the country throughout the year. Francesca Ciancimino Howell's book presents several fascinating examples from festivals of Northern Italy as a lens for exploring the emerging phenomenon of New Paganism phenomena, and to present the Theory of Active Place (TAP).

The book is divided into six chapters and a conclusion. The first two chapters present the key theories guiding Howell's research, especially those of Ingold (relational epistemology), Harvey (other-than-human agents) and Turner (liminality). According to Howell, Italians have a deep, even religious, re-

lationship with food; when expressed in annual festivals, a sort of "ingested topography" is produced by the strong link between traditional dishes, local culture and sense of belonging. In chapters III

and IV, Howell describes the Badalisc festival of Andriste, the celebration of the Celtic new year in Milan, the Pumpkin Festival and the Carnival at Omegna, and finally the Saint Martin Summer at Paroldo. Chapter V explores the development of the Neo Pagan movement in Italy and how it mixes influences from the Wicca, Druidy, British Witchcraft and other non-Italian movements, with the local pre-Christian beliefs of Northern Italy. Then, Chapter VI extends the discussion by applying the theories presented in the first two chapters to the festival case studies. The final concluding chapter sees the author employ an indexing and analysing method called "Scale of Engagement" to probe the involvement of locals, and the role of place/power as related to local/regional awareness.



Among the most valuable notions introduced is the Theory of Active Place (TAP). For the author, “to sense the power of place and of Nature we must use our intuition and a multi-sensory embodied awareness”. This offers much to the study of rituality, not only in Italy but more widely. Indeed, as a researcher, we need to take into consideration the important role of place in the rituals we study and we should focus on all our senses when studying a ritual or a phenomenon.

More frustrating, though, is the decision to describe and analyse six different festivals in a book of only 224 pages (including the bibliography), forcing the author to dedicate just a few pages to each ritual, and such rich case studies deserve more space dedicated to detailed presentation and deeper analysis. Ciancimino Howell takes in consideration very complex and interesting rituals that offer many elements of study. Indeed, each of the rituals discussed could easily become the argument of the entire book, but instead, the author decided to confine these six festivals in just one chapter, taking space away from a possible discussion on the complexities of these rituals. Especially useful would have been a discussion of the current socio-economic-political-religious situation of Northern Italy. Also tantalisingly sparse is thorough elaboration of the points of view of ritual actors and participants, and when surveys are discussed, all but one or two are passed over with findings only hinted at.

The book emerges from short field visits during festival times rather than longer periods of study in the locations of the rituals. This has the downside of reducing opportunity to observe and analyse the complex realities of the cultural groups studied. An example could be a deeper discussion regarding the Italian political reality and its link with Neo Paganism in Italy and the Celtic New Year celebration in Italy, or a more informative discussion on the historical and cultural elements of each place studied. This is especially important as the book is really talking about many “Italies” (rather than the single Italy of the title), an important distinction in the case of a young nation with great diversity in languages, religions, cultures, economic realities and environments. Indeed, it is surprising to see that few Italian-language sources are drawn upon, especially considering the immense corpus of local studies.

Alongside the book’s primary contribution – the The-

ory of Active Place (TAP) – it is also worth noting how successfully the style captures all the love and the passion the author put in her work and the insightful comments on the connection between ritual practices, landscape and food. While theoretically impressive, the field methods and analysis of the rituals found in the middle chapters still leave unanswered questions about the complexities in this part of Italy. For these reasons was more disappointing the lack of a deep analysis that could have allowed Howell to be able to present an amazing book that could become a classic.

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NOVA University Lisbon.

SENSUAL RELIGION: RELIGION AND THE FIVE SENSES, ED. BY GRAHAM HARVEY AND JESSICA HUGHES. EQUINOX, 2018,

This edited volume is the first in a new series on religion and the senses published by Equinox. As the opening volume it presents an overview of studies on religion and senses, highlighting the five core senses, smell, taste, sight, hearing and touch, with two case studies each. Each of them presents a different approach to the study of sensual religion which makes the volume an important text for students as well as scholars. A recommendable feature of the book is that the editors did not select chapters about the so-called world religions for the case studies. Instead they selected for each of the five sections (focusing on one of the five senses) one example from the field of Ancient religion and one from the field of contemporary religion. This structure makes the book relevant for a range of disciplines and highlights the complexity of the study of religions which covers ancient and contemporary religions. All ten chapters reflect on vernacular forms of religions, whether they are ancient or contemporary, highlighting the focus on lived religion. As an anthropologist of religion, I welcome the series as well as this first volume very much. Whenever I am “in the field” all my senses are involved in gaining as well as analyzing knowledge. My stomach still crunches when I remember the humiliating silence after a priest called out the elders of his congregation with

embarrassing questions about theology instead of honouring their work in organizing the festival in honour of the holy patron of the village. My legs still want to dance when remembering the invigorating music in a Vodou ceremony in New York. I still feel a bit upset in my stomach when remembering the local beer everyone was invited to drink to toast the hosts of the ceremony. And I am still remembering the smell of incense in a temple that left me slightly nauseated after I spent some hours in it. These memories of various fieldwork experiences stay with me because they involved my senses (I am not very good at remembering numbers or names). We create memory with our bodies, with our eyes, ears, noses and hands. While the memories might not justify scientific testing, they allow us to reflect on the communities and their religious practices.

However, the book is not about creating of memory but about “mechanisms through which bodies gain and integrate knowledge about the world around them” (p. 2) as outlined in the Introduction by Graham Harvey. He explains that the book invites the readers “to reflect on the ways in which religion involves sensuality” which he clarifies as “diverse bodily practices, experiences and engagements” (p. 1). The introduction also clarifies that while this book focuses on the five core senses, the series will not be limited to these five senses but is open to new directions. Hence, the five senses are just the starting point. I look forward seeing the expansion of it in one of the future volumes in this series (for instance, a volume about religion and the sixth sense).

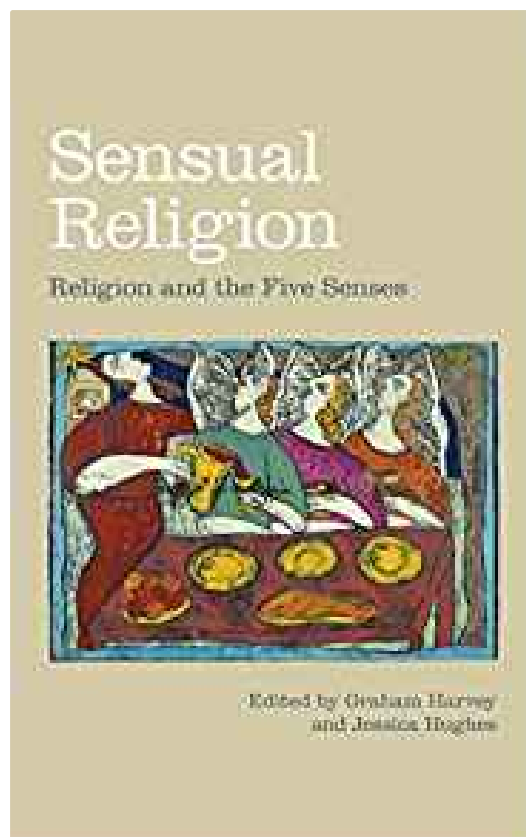
The book starts with the section on smell which includes a chapter by Anne Katrine de Hemmer Gudme about Passover sacrifice in Mount Gerizim and in the

Hebrew Bible and a chapter by Shawn Arthur about incense and heavenly food in Chinese religion which he describes as Daoist, Buddhist or folk religion, in both rural and urban temples. In both chapters we learn explicit details about the smell during rituals. However, smell is, as Arthur describes, a cultural phenomenon (p. 43) and it is therefore important for our understanding of the experience of religious smells to include a discussion of the wider social and cultural context of each case.

The following section on taste contains a chapter by Zena Kamash about the Roman world with focus on Roman Britain and a chapter by Patricia Rodriguez de Souza about the African derived Brazilian religion

Candomblé. As Kamash writes taste is “an inter-sense that exists alongside smell and touch” as well as vision when we include the artistic food presentations (p. 64). This is also visible in the second chapter by Rodriguez de Souza who combines being a trained and experienced chef with her training as a scholar in religious studies. Her chapter outlines in detail the function of food in Candomblé rituals and also highlights the gender division in the preparation of food and the slaughter of animals for sacrifice and food. Interesting are also her drawings that show very visibly the material dimension of food.

The section on sight follows with a chapter by Angeliki Lymberopoulou on Byzantine Orthodoxy and a chapter by Opionderjit Kaur Takhar on Sikh rituals. Lymberopoulou discusses the veneration of icons which she describes as a multisensory image (p. 121) while Kaur Takhar discusses whether seeing is knowing (p. 134). And the next section on hearing presents a chapter by Georgia Petridou about sound and silence in Eleusinian soundscape and a chapter by Byron Dueck on North American indigenous songs. His article discusses in



particular Canadian powwows and the different drum and gospel songs.

The book ends with the section on touch with a chapter by Jessica Hughes, one of the co-editors, on the Greco-Roman world and a chapter by Amy Whitehead about the veneration of the Madonna in Spain which she discusses in relation to animism and fetishism, around the “problem of idolatry” (p. 221). Overall, the ten chapters have shown very successfully with the ethnographic and historic details that “religion is sensual because it is corporeal and earthy” (p. vii) as outlined in the series foreword. Religion is what people do, what can be touched, tasted, smelled, seen and listened to. The chapters also demonstrated that senses do not work in separation but intertwined with each other. We can expect much from this series and its coming volumes.

Prof Bettina Schmidt,
University of Wales Trinity Saint David

GODS AND ROLLERCOASTERS: RELIGION IN THEME PARKS WORLDWIDE. CRISPIN. PAINE, BLOOMSBURY, 2019.

Crispin Paine’s book on religion in theme parks is a very welcome addition to the literature on religion and popular culture. It makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of everyday lived religion in the contemporary context. Paine argues that religion is not only practiced in traditional places of worship, but that religion can be found in the seemingly incongruous setting of the theme park. This book also adds to the literature that problematises the distinction between the sacred and the profane, and challenges the assumption that leisure and religion are two separate spheres of activity.

As the subtitle suggests, the book is a worldwide survey of the religion and theme parks. This global survey is both a strength and a weakness of the book. It is a strength as Paine identifies that religious theme parks such as the Holy Land Experience in Orlando Florida are not simply whimsical anomalies, restricted to the context of Christianity in the USA.

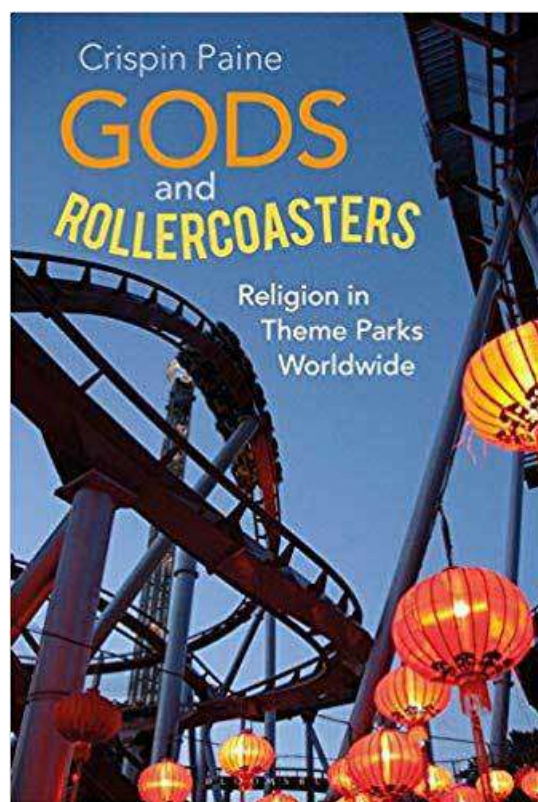
Paine observes that religious theme parks are a global phenomenon in the context of late modernity. However, the weakness of the breadth of examples from across the world means that Paine is unable to explore any of these in any great detail. It is also unclear whether Paine is comparing like with like. For example, can we really compare The Holy Land Experience with giant Buddha images in Japan or the Akshardham (Hindu) temple in Delhi? This is a clearly definitional problem. There are, as Paine observes, three components to the definitional conundrum: what is a theme park, what defines religion and what is a religious theme park? While identifying the definitional problems of both theme parks and religion, Paine wisely avoids getting into the debate. He also points out that it is also impossible to provide a clear definition of what constitutes a religious theme park. For example, Paine poses the question, ‘when does a pilgrimage centre with a range of entertainments become a theme park?’ (p.3).

To justify the range of examples used throughout the book Paine suggests a threefold typology. First, religion parks themselves, ‘a theme park promoted specifically to address religion’ (p.10). The Holy Land Experience exemplifies this category. The second category are what Paine terms ‘culture parks’. These are parks that represent broad cultural aspects, but where religion nonetheless is a significant element of the wider culture. He cites the Tama Mini Park in Indonesia as an exemplar of the cultural theme park where religion has a significant presence (pp.65–6). This park promotes national unity while at the same time acknowledging the religious diversity of Indonesia, and therefore includes ‘a mosque, a Buddhist temple, a Hindu temple, a Confucian temple and Catholic and Protestant churches’. The third category are the more traditional amusement parks, such as Disneyland, which although the primary focus is on entertainment, excitement and leisure may also include some religious aspects. However, Paine points out that ‘too often religious symbols and ideas are used without thought to add a hint of exoticism to the park’s theme’ (p.87).

Paine begins the book with a brief description of seven religion parks – two Hindu, three Christian, one Daoist/ Buddhist and one Buddhist. Unsurprisingly there are no Muslim theme parks as such in his list, although later on in the book Paine does briefly mention a couple of Islamic parks (pp. 132-3). Even these

seven examples are challenging to clearly define. For example, Paine rightly observes that 'it is hard to say whether Akshardham is a theme park containing a big temple or a temple complex with theme park features' (p.100). While the two Akshardhams and the other five theme parks outlined in the opening chapter are good, albeit problematic exemplars of the religious theme parks, other selections are rather more tenuous. For example, Paine mentions Efteling in Holland, which is themed around folk and fairy tales. However, I agree with Paine that these less obvious examples should be included in this survey as it reminds us that 'religion' is not a clearly defined category, and that religion, popular culture and folk culture are deeply imbricated with each other.

The following chapters are thematic. For example, in Chapter Three, Paine examines the overall context for the increasing popularity of theme parks in general. One of Paine's central arguments is that the rise of middle classes in many places across the world is 'a necessary condition for the rise of theme parks' (p.41). The middle classes not only have disposable income, but also embrace the concept of leisure, which makes a visit to a theme park not only affordable but also desirable. Paine also identifies what he calls 'an escape into nostalgia'. He argues that many in the middle classes are ambivalent about the context of high modernity. While on the one hand the cosmopolitan middle classes enjoy the material comforts of the modern world, they also yearn for a romanticised conception of tradition. Paine explores this idea more fully in Chapter Five, in which he suggests that religion theme parks can provide an escapism into the exotic other in terms of a retreat to an imagined past and/or withdrawal to a romanticised foreign other.



Perhaps the most interesting chapter is where Paine discusses whether theme parks can be considered as sacred places. Drawing on a Durkheimian argument Paine identifies that theme parks can be considered as places that are set apart from the quotidian. He observes that theme parks have obvious gateways, are bounded spaces and once you have crossed the threshold it is clear that you are in a different world from the mundane everyday. Paine acknowledges that theme parks cannot be understood as religion, but like many commentators on religion and popular culture draws on a functional understanding of religion. He suggests that theme parks may perform 'many of the human needs traditionally provided for by religions' (p.93).

In other chapters Paine explores the motive for religion in theme parks, various religious themes found in parks, techniques used in theme parks and the business of theme parks. In the concluding chapter Paine observes that very little is known about the visitors to religious theme parks. This is perhaps the most glaring lacuna in both this book and in research about religion in theme parks more generally. This book is a welcome starting and opens up many avenues for further research on religion and theme parks. It is written in an engaging style and is accessible for undergraduates, but also is relevant for experienced researchers who are interested in the intersection between religion and popular culture, and vernacular religion in non-traditional spaces.

Stephen Jacobs,
University of Wolverhampton

Members' Recent Publications

George D. Chryssides

- 2020 (ed. with Stephen E. Gregg). *The Bloomsbury Handbook to Studying Christians*. Bloomsbury. (Chapters on Vernacular Christianity 5-16; Denominations 31-48; Healing 183-187; Laity 201-206).
- 2019 (ed. with Stephen E. Gregg). *The Insider/Outsider Debate: New Perspectives in the Study of Religion*. Equinox. (Chapters on Relational religious lives: beyond insider/outsider binaries 3-29; Moving out: disengagement and ex-membership in new religious movements 371-392).
- 2019 'Beyond Armageddon: Is the Jehovah's Witnesses' Paradise Earth Conceivable?' *Journal of the Daesoon Academy of Sciences* 32, June: 237-267. <https://doi.org/10.25050/jdaos.2019.32.0.237>.
- 2019 "Following the Charisma: Understanding Charisma Through Followers". Cyberproceedings of CESNUR Annual Conference, Università di Torino, Torino, Italy, 5-7 September 2019. www.cesnur.org/2019/turin_chryssides_text.pdf

Moojan Momen

- 2019 "The Baha'i Community of Iran: Cultural Genocide and Resilience," in *Cultural Genocide: Law, Politics, and Global Manifestations*, ed. Jeffrey Bachman. Routledge.
- 2019 "The Struggle for the Soul of Twelver Shi'ism in Qajar Iran" *Die Welt des Islams*. online advance copy at: <https://brill.com/view/journals/wdi/aop/issue.xml>

David G. Robertson

- 2019 "Review Essay: A Gnostic History of Religions." *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*. Online advance: <https://doi.org/10.1163/15700682-12341464>
- 2018 (with Asbjørn Dyrendal) "Superstition and Salvation: Conspiracy Theories and Religion" in Joseph Uscinski (ed.) *Conspiracy Theories and the People who Believe in Them*. Oxford University Press.
- 2017 "'Tuning Ourselves': Fripp, Bennett, Gurdjieff." *Religion and the Arts*, 21:1-2, 236-258.
- 2017 "Am I a Religious Studies Scholar?" in Russell McCutcheon (ed.), *Fabricating Identities*. Equinox, 13-19.
- 2017 "SubGenius vs. the Conspiracy" in Carole M. Cusack and Pavol Kosnac (eds.) *Fiction, Invention, and Hyper-reality: From Popular Culture to Religion*. INFORM/Ashgate, 198-212.

“Maps are
influential, subtle
forms of power, and
hence often
vigorously defended
by religious scholars
no less than by
ecclesiastical and
political authorities.”

*Wade Clark Roof, Spiritual Marketplace
Baby Boomers and the Remaking of
American Religion, 1999.*



British Association for the Study of Religions
Ethical Guidelines
(final version, 17 September 2019)

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

A “Framework of Professional Practice” was formulated in 2005 by AUDTRS (Association of University Departments in Theology and Religious Studies, renamed to TRS-UK in 2015). This framework was eventually appropriated by the Higher Education Academy. The Framework was designed to be short, highlighting broad areas for ethical reflection, rather than offering firm guidelines.

The need for a revised and somewhat more detailed Ethical Guidelines for researchers was thought desirable for several reasons. Institutional research committees and grant awarding bodies now often require assurance that research projects have undergone ethics scrutiny and conform to an adequate professional code of practice relating to the subject area. Additionally, the emergence of digital tools and increased attention to digital contexts has sharpened ethical hazard for certain areas of research, necessitating a renewal of existing guidance.

1.2 Purpose of the Ethical Guidelines

The purpose of the Ethical Guidelines is to highlight to researchers in the study of religions the areas in which ethical issues arise, and to make them aware of their responsibilities. The Guidelines also demonstrates to institutional authorities, to subjects who participate in research, and to the wider public, the standards to which researchers in the field are committed.

1.3 Scope of the Ethical Guidelines

The Ethical Guidelines is aimed at scholars who are engaged in research in the study of religions at undergraduate, postgraduate, and postdoctoral level in educational institutions in the United Kingdom. The Guidelines also applies to situations outside academic institutions, for example where one is engaged in consultancy work, engaging with the media, or giving evidence as an expert witness in a court of law.

While acknowledging that there are other areas that raise ethical issues, such as teaching, examining, and curriculum planning, these Ethical Guidelines principally addresses issues relating to research.

1.4 The socio-political environment

No scholarly research happens in a socio-political vacuum. Researchers should also consider the likely consequences of their research for the wider society as well as the immediate research participants. This is especially important when the research involves marginalised or vulnerable groups, including but not limited to diverse ethnic groups, indigenous peoples, LGBTQ+ communities, displaced and disabled people, and children.

That information can be misconstrued or misused is not in itself a convincing argument against its collection and dissemination. However, scholars need to take an open and ethical stance towards major issues of the time, so that as far as possible, Religious Studies research

does not collude with common structural oppressions such as colonialism, imperialism, and the ongoing degradation of sentient life, human dignity or the wider environment.

1.5 The nature of research in the study of religions

The study of religions (also known as religious studies) is a polymethodic field of study, much of which involves contact with or observation of participants. It draws on a variety of academic disciplines, including, but not limited to, anthropology, geography, history, philosophy, psychology, sociology, statistics, and theology.

Some research on religions is entirely literature-based. However, this does not mean that such studies are necessarily devoid of ethical considerations.

Although much research on religions involves participants, a biomedical model for ethical practice is inappropriate. Most research in the subject is not experimental or physically invasive, and hence it is not always necessarily appropriate or even practical for human participants to give written consent for research. Where religious gatherings are open to the public, or where researchers are explicitly invited to an event, there should be no need for the researcher to seek explicit consent or institutional ethical approval, although appropriate standards of behaviour are nonetheless expected. The researcher remains responsible for considering, mitigating where possible, and managing harm. Harm should be considered in relation to participants, particularly if vulnerable, and researcher.

Ethics is itself part of the subject matter of the study of religions, and hence researchers can be expected to have familiarity with ethical decision-making, and how different religious communities have different ethical values. Ethical decisions can at times be contentious, and are often matters of personal judgement. It is important that ethics should not be merely conflated with methodology, health and safety, risk assessment, or the feasibility of research, although these are areas of institutional concern, and at times bear some relationship to ethical considerations.

The BASR does not adjudicate or intervene on allegations of unethical behaviour, but can act as a forum for discussion on ethical matters.

2. General principles

2.1 Professional integrity

Research should always maintain the highest standards of integrity, with due regard for all stakeholders involved. Researchers should be committed to maintaining the basic principles of honesty, rigour, transparency, and respect.

The purpose of ethical guidelines is not to impose undue restrictions on scholars, for whom the key principles of academic freedom and the advancement of knowledge remain paramount.

Researchers should identify and respect the interests of all stakeholders who have an interest in their work. They have a responsibility for ensuring that their findings are reported as accurately as possible, and that their material is used responsibly.

Research should be conducted legally and responsibly, with due regard for the law of the land (both domestic and foreign) and for institutional regulations. In particular, researchers should be aware of laws and regulations relating to data protection, human rights, copyright, and libel.

Researchers should be aware of the scope and limits of their professional competence, and should not undertake work for which they are unqualified, or claim expertise outside

their range of competence. The role of consultants in research should be made explicit, and appropriately acknowledged.

2.2 Equality

Scholars of religion should be acquainted with their institutional policies of equal opportunities and be compliant with them. However, it should be acknowledged that numerous religious communities are not committed to the same principles of equality as an academic institution or the investigating scholar might wish. Researchers may at times be prevented from gaining access to premises or parts of them, or to events, for example on the grounds of gender, religion, or ethnicity. Some research topics can only be explored effectively by scholars of a particular gender or ethnicity, and this must be recognised, notwithstanding normal considerations of equal opportunities.

However, wherever it is practical, care should be taken not to exclude a researcher from a project on the grounds of gender, race, religion, or ethnicity, and every effort should be made to ensure fair representation in collaborative enterprises.

3. The conduct of research

3.1 Respect

In undertaking fieldwork or participant-observation, researchers should familiarise themselves with the expectations of the community under research. It is important to act in a manner that shows due respect, both for members of the community and their environment, and to ensure that one does not cause offence. It is important, both in conducting one's research, and in presenting one's findings, to ensure that subsequent researchers' work is not hampered by one's conduct, and that the reputation of the subject is maintained.

When coming into contact with religious communities, there is often a disparity in power relationships. The researcher has the power to place his or her findings in the public domain, while religious communities typically have gatekeepers with the power to allow or prevent access. These relationships need to be negotiated, and appropriate agreements secured.

3.2 Obtaining consent

While the principle of informed consent is an ideal, it may be unnecessary to obtain consent to attend a public gathering, or in situations where the researcher is explicitly invited to an event. Consent does not necessarily need to be written. Indeed, obtaining written consent can involve difficulties – for example, when researching communities who do not speak English, or where it is unclear who is authorised to give consent. In many situations, undue formalisation of the relationship between researcher and participants might hamper the conduct of the research, and it can be appropriate to assume implicit consent. Researchers should reflect on the ethical demands which pertain to their context.

When administering questionnaires, or conducting interviews, the researcher should be satisfied that his or her participants have given consent, and they should be informed that they have the right to withdraw at any time, without having to give reasons. Researchers should provide personal contact details to intimate any concerns about the research, or to declare any intention to withdraw.

3.3 Transparency and confidentiality

At all times the purpose of one's research should be made clear to informants, and how information obtained will be used.

The researcher should pay due regard to the sensitivities, interests, and well-being of the participant under study, and minimise inconvenience to them. Where sensitive information is divulged to a researcher, careful consideration must be given as to how or whether this is used. Name anonymity should normally be preserved, with the exception of well-known figures whose names are already prominent in the public domain.

Guarantees of confidentiality should be realistic, since it is impossible to maintain total confidentiality when one places one's findings in the public domain. Guarantees should be clarified and should be honoured. Careful consideration needs to be given as to whether participants might be permitted to see notes and transcripts, or whether and how they might be allowed to view material prior to publication, and how any comments will be treated by the researcher.

Photography, filming, and audio-recording should normally be overt, and undertaken with the consent of the participants involved. Written permission is normally needed where a researcher intends to publish material in which individuals can be identified. When using historical photographs every effort should be taken to identify individuals shown and that photographs taken against the will of those depicted are thoroughly contextualised and, whenever possible, living relatives are contacted for permission.

3.4 Vulnerable individuals and groups

Some research participants may be vulnerable because of age, disability, and physical or mental health. Some individuals and communities are vulnerable on account of prejudice, while others are at risk of being over-used by researchers where members are few in number. Particular care is needed in researching these groups, to ensure that proper consent has been given, and that the researcher's portrayal is fair and accurate.

Where research involves children and vulnerable adults, researchers should ensure that they have obtained the relevant training and complied with legal requirements for safeguarding. Consent must be given by a relevant parent or guardian.

When working with communities that have experienced past trauma, the researcher should ensure that there is a minimal risk of the research causing repeat trauma either through the research process (interviews that explore painful past experiences) or through the publication of research findings (that may draw attention to a community that remains vulnerable). In such circumstances, the researcher should ensure that appropriate supports are put in place for anyone experiencing emotional distress (from social services, NGOs and charities).

3.5 Protection and storage of data

Data obtained in the course of one's research, such as field notes and confidential or sensitive documents, should be safely stored so that it cannot be accessed by unauthorised persons. Where material is stored in digital form, researchers must comply with the Data Protection Act.

Data may be archived by researchers, unless there is a legal or contractual requirement to do otherwise. Because research in the subject is often diachronic, it may be important to compare data from one time period to another, and hence it is inappropriate for an institution to require the destruction of data after a specified period.

4. Publishing

4.1 Contractual obligations

It is in the interests both of the scholar and the wider community to disseminate one's findings. Scholars have an obligation to fulfil the terms of any publisher's contract, to deliver a manuscript reliably, within the agreed time frame, and with any copyright clearance when needed.

4.2 Recognition

Scholarly research should be diligent and honest. Fabrication and falsification of data are unacceptable, as is plagiarism. Where an author's material is reused in another publication, appropriate permission should be sought, and due acknowledgement made. Care should be made to attribute the involvement of research participants in scholarly work at an appropriate level, up to co-authorship.

Any conflicts of interest should be made explicit.

Declared authorship of books, chapters, and articles should be a true reflection of the researchers' input. Ghost authorship and gift authorship are unacceptable in academic writing, as is the practice of adding extra names in multi-authored works where their contribution has been minimal, or where their permission has not been sought.

5. Funding and sponsorship of research

When research is sponsored or supported by a funding body, due acknowledgement should be given, and there should be openness concerning the sources of financing. Acceptance of monies or other incentives (such as hospitality or travel) is normally a matter of personal decision for the researcher, although at times there may be institutional embargos on certain funding sources.

Researchers have the responsibility to identify the sources of any remuneration, and to ensure that sponsorship does not compromise the integrity of one's research, or dictate the conclusions that the researcher should reach.

Researchers should comply with the contractual expectations of their sponsors. However, at the outset they should clarify the terms and conditions of sponsorship, which may include matters like publication destinations, dissemination of findings, potential publicity for the researcher or his/her institution, and whether there might be subsequent expectations such as lending support to a controversial organisation.

6. Covert research

The right to privacy is defined as a fundamental human right in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). Any researcher contemplating covert research should take careful account of the relevant legal framework surrounding the right to privacy.

Covert research militates against the principles of transparency and informed consent, and should in most cases be avoided, particularly when such research is conducted in private rather than public space. However, there may be situations in which important data cannot be obtained in any other way, for example if it is important to access a community that wishes to avoid scrutiny, or where participants might modify their behaviour in the presence of a

researcher. Covert research should only be undertaken in circumstances where it is impossible to collect data by other, more open, means.

7. Digital Research

Research in digital environments, such as (but not limited to) the online environment and video games, can lead to ethical questions regarding representation, anonymity, the identity of participants, and many others. Several of these ethical considerations are not limited to the online environment.

It should also be noted that while online usernames may appear, or be considered to be anonymous in the offline context, these usernames are attached to history, personality, and context which has a life of its own, even if not connected to the offline life. When interviewing participants online with only reference to username, and anonymity is requested, a pseudonym should be used in place of an online name, as these have as much context as an offline name. Proper and true representation of the voices of the participants should be respected.

Honesty in self-representation as a researcher is ethically paramount for online research just as it is offline. The researcher should make the nature of their presence and participation as researcher clear to both participants as well as any necessary gatekeepers (e.g. moderators who allow people to post on forums).

8. Circulating and revising

The Ethical Guidelines should be made available to students and researchers engaged in the study of religion, and should be circulated as widely as possible.

The Guidelines will be reviewed at regular intervals, and revised and updated when necessary.

BASR Ethics Working Party

The working party consists of Bettina Schmidt (BASR President, University of Wales Trinity Saint David), George D. Chryssides (York St John University and University of Birmingham), Vivian Asimos (Durham University), Lidia Guzy (University College Cork), James Kapalo (University College Cork), Jeremy Kidwell (University of Birmingham), Suzanne Owen (Leeds Trinity University), Giorgio Scalici (Durham University), Beth Singler (University of Cambridge), Paul-Francois Tremlett (Open University), Jonathan Tuckett (University of Stirling), Theo Wildcroft (Open University).

Other relevant documents:

British Sociological Association (2017). BSA Statement of Ethical Practice. Accessible online at: www.britsoc.co.uk/media/24310/bsa_statement_of_ethical_practice.pdf

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