

Unravelling Religion 4: Bodies and Objects

May 12-13 2017

Donald Gordon Conference Centre
Queen's University, Kingston

A Word From the Organizer

It has been a great pleasure organizing *Unravelling Religion* for the last four years. Since the first conference in 2014, *Unravelling Religion* has welcomed 101 presenters from 18 different institutions of higher learning. This conference would not be possible without the tireless support of Dr. Richard Ascough, the valuable organizational assistance provided by Cheryl O'Shea, and the generous financial support provided each year by the School of Religion. I would also like to thank Alexander Ferko, who designed the conference posters and programs for all four conferences.

Ian Alexander Cuthbertson

May 12, 2017

18:30-20:00 Panel Discussion: Bodies and Religion

Alexander Cox-Twardowski

Dr. Valerie Michaelson

Dr. Pamela Dickey Young

Dr. Tracy Trothen

20:00-23:00 Reception

May 13, 2017

7:30-8:45Breakfast

8:45-8:55 Welcome and Opening Remarks (Room C)

9:00-10:50 Concurrent Panels 1 and 2

10:50-11:00 Break

11:00-12:20 Concurrent Panels 3 and 4

12:20-1:20 Lunch

1:20-2:40 Keynote Address (Room C)

2:40-4:00 Concurrent Panels 5 and 6

4:00-4:10 Break

4:10-6:00Concurrent Panels 7 and 8

6:00-6:10Closing Remarks (Room C)

Panel 1: *Sex and Violence*

9:00-10:50 / Room C / Chair: Reem Sheikh-Khalil

Amy Clanfield

University of Ottawa

Deities, Dogmas, and Dildos: Christian Sex Shops in the Digital World

"Covenant Spice" is one of many stores popping up online who orient themselves towards a very specific demographic: the married, Christian, heterosexual couple (<http://www.covenantspice.com>). Carrying everything from "sex toys, to Christian sex manuals," this shop offers "every marital aid you need to keep the sparks flying in and out of the bedroom." Instituting a very strict moral and religious ethic, the husband-wife team maintain a "no nudity" policy on any packaging, and reassure their customers by stating that these "marital aids" are not in any way sinful, "as long as they are not in conflict with Scripture, encourage the marital relationship, [and] are acceptable to both people." Therefore, this paper seeks to explore how the religious discourse employed by this website, and others like it, are in part leading a morally and ethically safe, heteronormative, and Christian sexual revolution online.

Morgan Oddie

Queen's University

Painful Authenticity: Bodies and BDSM

Inflicting and receiving pain are prominent techniques in the creation and maintenance of erotic power exchanges and used for sensational play for pleasure. Because the body is the site for the administration of pain, embodied pain is an important concept in BDSM. Ariel Gluckrich (2003) describes the process of pain as complexly formed by the immediate physical and social external environment, the immediate internal somatic environment, and processes involving memory, moods, attention, and expectation. The experience of consensual bodily pain is mediated by the affect of performativity. Even with only two directly participating bodies, BDSM is often performed in semi-public spaces with the affective interactions of many bodies. Robin Bauer (2014) refers to BDSM as "intimate theatre" because of this different experience of reality faced by practitioners. I expand Bauer's theory by using Gluckrich's discussion of sensational pain to develop a more comprehensive understanding of experiences of consensual pain in BDSM practices.

Leah Valentine

Queen's University

The Missing Half-Second: Affect, Trauma and Pneumatology

This paper will investigate the intersection between affect theory, theology and trauma induced via domestic violence. It will examine the trans-rational possibilities of escaping the linguistic fallacy: the reducing of the study of religion to ideology critique, to make worldview and discourse the locus of one's analytics of power. Like affect in the Deleuzian sense trauma, specifically C-PTSD and the experience of the theophany both escape the privilege of cognitivism. They are pre-subjective forces that operate independently of consciousness and are distinct from emotions. Theology is thus revived as a useful schema in comprehending the affect of trauma more specifically, and offers a more totalizing healing framework for survivors of domestic violence.

Muhamed Riyaz

Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi

'Kutharatheeb' and Sacred Pain in Ritual Body: Detachment and Absence of Pain in Self-Torturing 'Violent' Religious Rituals

Different religions have various rituals that are rooted in spirituality and vehement religiosity. These rituals include apparently violent and non-violent forms of practices which lead to certain questions related to religion, spirituality and self-torture. *Kutharatheeb*, a ritual practiced in some parts of Kerala, is defined thus: "through invocation of Sufi Master Sheik Rifai and recitals of particular prescribed *dikrs* (supplications), practitioners are heightened into mystical ecstasy where they are becoming unconscious of their body fully concentrated on making of their soul attached with God, they would pierce their body with nails, knives, sharpened iron rods and at final stage Sufi master will caress their wounds with his palms and will get immediate cure without having experience of pain at all stages". This practice is the custom of some sect of Muslim Sufi saints. Here, the pain inflicted through piercing and hitting is absent in the sense that it is detached from the aversion usually associated with physical pain owing to the sacred character of this ritual. This pain is what scholars termed as Sacred Pain. And I would rather call this as Ritual Pain, since this relation to pain derives from the ritualistic character of these practices. Similar practices are known to other communities and religions as well.. In this paper I will explore the different aspects of sacred pain and ritual pain, how these pains differ from what is considered to be real pain: is pain fully absent or partially absent in the body of ritual practitioner, or is it that the sacredness of the ritual enables to the annulment of the aversion that one otherwise has towards the pain actually felt. What are the findings of medical science regarding the reality of pain in rituals? How does spiritual transcendence or what is called spiritual trance make one unconscious of his/her body and thus his/her pain? Finally, how do these violent practices end in a non-violent result, namely of spiritual elevation?

Panel 2: Modernity

9:00-10:50 / Room 1 / Chair: Ben Shaw

James Kwateng-Yeboah

Queen's University

"I Wish You Prosperity!"

Unravelling the Ambivalences of Modernity in Ghanaian Neo-Pentecostalism

Debates over the role of the Neo-Pentecostal prosperity gospel in effecting modernity have been the subject of many works under sociology of religion (Berger 2010; Martin 1990, 2002; Maxwell 1998). The underlying theory of the prosperity gospel is that "Christians are rewarded with wealth, financial success and good health for their faith in God, demonstrated by hard work and giving (Gifford 2016). Proponents tend to argue that the prosperity gospel replicates the Protestant Ethic made famous by the influential German sociologist Max Weber (1930 [1905]) in his thesis *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Scholars of such persuasion (Peter Berger 2008; David Martin 2002; Ann Swindler 2013; Lovemore Togarasei 2011) suggest that the doctrine fosters a modernising work ethic; hence, a catalyst for socio-economic change. Critics, however, chiefly Paul Gifford (2004, 2016) and Adekunle Dada (2004), view the doctrine as an impetus for delusion. Their main objection is premised on the assumption that the prosperity gospel, particularly in Africa, places emphasis on miracles and spiritual forces, which fosters an "enchanted religious imagination" that downplays "functional rationality" underpinning modernity.

Contrary to the opposing views, this paper takes the position that the classical view of modernity (Weber 1930 [1905]), as derived from Western Christian historicity, is inadequate for capturing realities of the prosperity gospel; hence, modernity needs to be substantiated by a notion of "multiplicity" (Eistenstadt 2000). Using the case of Ghanaian Neo-Pentecostalism, the paper argues that the modernizing effect of the prosperity gospel is best captured by the "multiple modernities" paradigm: on one hand, it refutes the homogenizing and hegemonic assumptions of classical approaches of modernity by its pervasive enchantment. On the other hand, it shares modern traits by stimulating entrepreneurship, optimism and individual autonomy. Overall, the paper aims to demonstrate that religion is part of, rather than antithetical to modernity.

Emily Halprin

Queen's University

Looking for Communities where there are Only Networks

Studies of the non-religious often indicate that they are unable to form supportive communities and lack any ideological or political motivation towards social cohesion. By examining the relationships built between non-religious individuals through the framework of networked relationships instead of group membership this paper will determine that religion is not the only way to achieve sociability. Modern relationships have been built by individuals, with individuals and thus have been tailored towards the autonomous individual of modernity whose interactions are all oriented towards their own interests and goals. When non-religious networks manifest in material forms they seek to set themselves apart as an alternative social position, fostering a social ideology based on individual ability and choice of participation.

Ruth Chitiz

Queen's University

The Trump Phenomenon: The Power of Paranoia

This paper argues that considering the affective networks coalescing and zigzagging through the nation's bodies proves more useful than an assessment of the ideological underpinnings that shape voter preference. This is because the typical voter makes decisions based on small amounts of information that have been selectively filtered, making little use of abstract categories such as 'egalitarianism' and often having little logical consistency in the opinions they hold. As it relates to affect, the most important part of this equation is how powerfully bodies can be influenced by how they imagine *people like us* feel about shared issues. This paper suggests that based on the recent American election, political campaigning is primarily about winning the hearts, because the mind usually finds a way to follow. By embracing the paranoia that shapes the political dispositions of many Americans, and allowing such paranoia to characterize his own campaign, Donald Trump was able to secure enough American support to win the election. The first section of this paper discusses the sociopolitical developments that laid the groundwork for a paranoid culture to develop, with specific attention on the role of identity politics in shaping Trump supporters' paranoid dispositions. The second section will discuss what Robert S. Robins and Jerrold M. Post call the "Paranoid Culture", in order to examine how that regime is mitigated by and satiated through affect. This section examines how Donald Trump embodied this paranoia in his persona. Following these sections, this paper concludes with a macro critique of democracy as an operational system through an affective lens.

Hannah Sourisseau

University of Ottawa

Transhumanism, Transcendent Bodies, and Technologies of Governance: Rethinking the "Secular Faith" of Transhumanism through Critical Religion

In an essay titled "Transhumanism as a Secularist Faith", Hava Tirosh-Samuelson argues for the conceptualization of transhumanism, i.e., the social and cultural movement of human alteration and advancement via science and technology, as a "peculiar hybrid of religious and secular motifs, a secular faith that fits the contemporary postsecular moment" ("Transhumanism as a Secularist Faith", *Zygon* 47.4, 2012). A similar exploration of such a link between transhumanism and religion, Linell E. Cady imagines transhumanism as a vehicle "to rethink transcendence in a way that ties it to the bodily, material existence" ("Religion and the Technowonderland of Transhumanism," *Building Better Humans?*, 2012). This paper interrogates the ways in which proponents of the transhumanist movement implicate the category of religion within discourse aimed at legitimizing transhumanism, while also exploring the ways in which the category of the secular remains attached to transhumanist discourse. Employing the theoretical lens of "critical religion" which seeks to de-essentialize and demystify the category of religion, with particular attention to Naomi Goldenberg's vestigial state theory, this paper aims to render the arguments for both the religious recognition of transhumanism, or its classification as a "secular faith", to be arguments aimed at securing its political and cultural legitimacy, particularly in its quest to restructure, reframe, and advance the human body.

Panel 3: Antiquity

11:00-12:20 / Room 1 / Chair: Ben Shaw

Aaron Ricker

McGill University

"Blood on the Streets of Philadelphia: Scrolls/Scriptures and their Use as Embodied Witness/Martyrdom in Revelation 3 and 11."

The "Two Witnesses" martyred, exposed, humiliated, and ultimately vindicated in "the streets of the great city" of Revelation 11 have been identified variously by scholars. My paper argues that their primary function is to represent Moses and Elijah, re-imagining their authority as the witness of "the Law and the Prophets" in a time of perceived crisis. For communities recently robbed of both teacher and Temple by Roman violence, Revelation moves the witness of scripture to center stage, with an insistence on public "prophesying" by means of scriptural allusion, an obsessive symbolic interest in texts and scrolls, etc. Re-imagining Moses and Elijah as "martyrs" conflates the witness of scandalous public humiliation with the witness of memory/survival. This symbolic strategy had real-world propaganda war catalysts: Josephus names the Temple Scroll as the ultimate trophy paraded by Titus in his triumph (Jewish Wars 7.148), exposed to cruel Roman eyes like the Two Witnesses humiliated and "gloated over" in the streets of "the Great City" (Rev 11:8-10). Such memories of public insult clearly had legs: Rabbinical tradition further accuses Titus of desecrating the Scroll with a prostitute (Gittin 56b). In this context of imperial propaganda and trauma, Revelation invites a local minority of "true Jews" in Philadelphia (Rev 3:7-13) to see Rome and her collaborators – including Asia Minor's successful assize cities and their local synagogues – as making a "martyr" out of "scripture" itself. I argue that evolving first-century norms for the production and use of scrolls both inspired and practically incarnated Revelation's picture of sacred scrolls/scriptures and their proper use as embodied witness/martyrdom in that "great city."

Alissa Droog

Queen's University

Clothing Regulations in the Sacred Law of Andania

There are not many references in the ancient Greek world to religious clothing regulations, but of these, the Sacred Law of Andania is certainly the most detailed. This inscription, dated to 91/92 BCE, regulates the mysteries which took place in a grove outside of Andania in the region of Messenia. This paper will apply current dress theory to the regulations concerning dress in Andania to learn about what these rules might have meant to the community they were prescribed to. The argument is twofold. First, although this regulation is the longest and most detailed of its kind, the regulations concerning clothing in it would not have been surprising to the ancient onlooker and reflect cultural norms in ancient Greek religious rituals at the time. Second, scholars have posited a variety of purposes for the regulation of clothing in Andania. These factors: the social control of women, to reduce competitive shows of wealth, to maintain social hierarchies and to create group identity through visual conformity, have mostly been discussed on an individual basis. I argue that it is most probable that these factors together show the complex social construction at play in the regulation of clothing in Andania.

Iris Liu

University of Toronto

Stone Innovation: Ossilegium and the Stone Vessel Industry in Ancient Jerusalem

My paper examines the stone vessel industry in Jerusalem during the late Second Temple Period, and in particular the phenomenon of secondary burial in stone ossuaries (ossilegium) which arose during this period but largely disappeared after the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD. I examine ossilegium through the material evidence of Second Temple-period tombs and stone vessel workshops in the Jerusalem area and relate this phenomenon to the wider stone vessel industry and the building plan of Herod the Great.

Although ossilegium was previously thought to have been studied exhaustively by scholars such as L. Y. Rahmani and Eric Meyers, more recent suggestions by Steven Fine, Andrea Berlin and others have opened new avenues for scholarship which move beyond methods traditional to the field of 'Biblical archaeology.' Steven Fine specifically has criticised over-reliance on non-contemporaneous textual sources, i.e. the halakhic literature, which have shaped Rahmani's arguments as well as the stream of scholarship which follows him. Contrary to Rahmani, who sees ossilegium as rooted in Pharisaic beliefs regarding resurrection of the dead and expiation of sins, Fine advocates for re-analysis of the material evidence without assuming the precedence of the aforementioned literary sources. I utilise Fine's suggestion along with anthropological techniques in order to more firmly situate ossilegium in the real socioeconomic circumstances of Herod's Judea and offer new suggestions for the social function of this phenomenon.

My analysis relies on network theory and the *chaîne opératoire* approach, which considers all steps involved in the production of an object from the acquisition of raw materials to the distribution of the final object. By applying this approach to the model of the stone vessel workshop at Hizma, I illustrate the reliance of the stone ossuary industry upon the stone vessel industry at large, and the larger industry's reliance on Herodian financing for both the acquisition of raw material and the supply of trained craftsmen. Finally, I discuss the breakdown of social networks after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD and relate this to the overall decline of ossilegium after this period.

Panel 3: Room C

Panel 4: Nature and the Environment

11:00:12:20 / Room C / Chair: Reem Sheikh-Khalil

Malith Kur

McGill University

The African Indigenous Religions and the Protection of Environment

The biggest problem threatening our survival on the planet earth today is the environmental degradation. This paper proposes that as the world faces environmental challenges, the indigenous African religious practices about the environmental protection have something to offer to modern environmental science—a responsible use of resources that respects the sacredness of "biodiversity." It is, therefore, imperative for the modern science and technology to incorporate the indigenous knowledge of environment into its scientific research. Hitherto, a healthy environment remains an important part of African indigenous spirituality. Anything that people obtain from nature carries with it responsibilities toward humanity. In the indigenous African worldview, respect for the environment guarantees healthy life and prosperity for the communities because environment sustains both humans and animals. Consequently, proper management of natural resources is a significant indigenous religious obligation. Such obligation has been part of indigenous African communities before the advent of modern science and technology. In recent years, however, the role of African indigenous religious practices in the process of environmental protection has been eroded by the modern lifestyle that has introduced the unlimited use of forest and animal products. The results of these irresponsible exploitations of natural resources have violated the sacredness of nature. The consequences of this violation come in the form of drought, floods, hurricanes, and other severe natural disasters.

Panel 4: Room C

Caelen Christine Salisbury-White

Queen's University

Where the Goddess and Nature Meet: Unearthing the Meaning of Female Body Politics

My research seeks to examine the Goddess as an immanent theological figure, which brings religion and nature together. The Goddess can be understood as both an immanent and transcendent religious phenomenon. Transcendent in the sense that she exists apart/beyond the limitations of the material universe and immanent because she *is* an embodiment of nature (e.g., Mother Earth as an embodiment of female power). I hypothesize that the figure of the Goddess and the female body is emblematic of the earth and its natural processes. The Goddess, as a point of location, reveals many goddess types which include: a) the Goddess as the Moon and the greater cosmos, b) the Goddess as atmospheric conditions (e.g., storms), and c) the Goddess as the planet herself as a part of the soil and all that is naturally created. This inquiry is guided by: 1) how does the goddess movement of the 1970's to present explain how the religion and nature are connected? 2) if the locus of the sacred is found on earth—where goddesses represent the earth and its processes—is there a relevance for environmental issues and planetary thinking? I employ a thematic methodical approach in that this paper is organized by 'goddess types' as outlined above, so as to best present *how* and *why* the Goddess movement (and the symbol of the Goddess as representative of socio-cultural political tensions) have influenced the religious beliefs of planetary beings.

Galen Watts

Queen's University

Finding the Spiritual in Nature: So What?

One way of understanding the current ecological crisis is as the byproduct of a modernist conception of the relationship between humans and nature, which holds the natural world to be instrumentally valuable to humans insofar as it can provide resources to fulfill both our needs and desires (Gottlieb 2015). On this view, any attempt to mitigate or solve the crisis must include its replacement with an alternative understanding of this relationship (Sharma 1996). Drawing from qualitative data collected from semi-structured interviews with twenty-six Canadian millennials who self-identify as "spiritual but not religious," this paper sheds light on the various conceptions of the significance of non-human animals and the natural world to these young people's understanding of "spirituality," and evaluates their potential contributions and/or challenges to environmentalist discourses. While acknowledging that some of these millennials promulgated dualistic conceptions of nature which have been central to justifying the exploitation of the natural world for the sake of capitalist production—exemplifying how superficial the spiritualization of nature can be—many others articulated understandings of the self and the sacrality of nature that, in fact, challenged modernist assumptions. This paper investigates these competing understandings of the relationship between humans and the natural world, outlines their historical antecedents, and offers a critical analysis of their socio-political and ecological implications.

Keynote Address

1:20-2:40 / Room C

Dr. Donovan Schaefer

University of Oxford

**Only Better Beasts: Emotion, Material Religion,
and the Scopes Trial**

How does knowledge feel? How does science feel? And how is the pattern of interactions between religious bodies and science structured, not by a grid of beliefs, but by a living tangle of emotions? When we talk about evolution in America, we're talking about bodies of knowledge, but we're also talking about bodies. We're talking about emotional formations, shaped by material cultures. This talk will explore the material culture of the case, particularly with attention to the dynamics of racialization in print and visual journalism. It will diagram how what Sara Ahmed calls an affective economy—an economy of dignity—directs the reception of Darwinism in America.

*Donovan Schaefer is a departmental lecturer in science and religion at the University of Oxford. He earned his B.A. in the Interdisciplinary Religion, Literature, and the Arts program at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. His master's and doctoral degrees are from Syracuse University in New York. After completing his doctorate, he held a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowship at Haverford College. His research focuses on the role of embodiment – especially embodied emotion – in religion and contemporary (post)secularism. His first book, *Religious Affects: Animality, Evolution, and Power* (Duke 2015) challenges the notion that religion is inextricably linked to language and belief, proposing instead that it is primarily driven by affects. His current project explores the intersection between New Materialism, science, and secularism.*

Panel 5: *Ritual and Experience*

2:40-4:00 / Room C / Chair: Reem Sheikh-Khalil

Matthew Arthur

Vancouver School of Theology

Doing Multispecies Rituals

Daily, our screens flood with news of anthropogenic disasters, species extinction, urban sprawl and decay, massive-scale extractive projects (or protests), and technoscientific moves hatched to clean up the mess we are in. Can ritual doings configure relations that yield or halt possible worlds? Are our practices able to account for the unfurling relational patternings provoked by fast-changing material and virtual topographies? I suspect our nominally eurochristian, operatively syncretic ritual assemblages are about stretched to their serviceable and symbolic limits. As strange climates beat down and shorelines are swallowed up, rituals must be taken up as unnervingly ethically and politically ensnared, as radically creative, and as generative modes of expressing difference and responsibility. To attend to difference and absence, to mourn and contest the stillborn bodies and worlds precluded in practices performed as universal, I aim to launch an experimental and speculative online world that explores the segregations, undoings, or implosions of “multispecies” and “ritual”—a world that attends to nonlife, hybridities and artificialities, geologic and hydrologic forces, spirits, ancestors, and the agency of plant and animal bodies. Accompanying my paper presentation and available online for the duration of the conference, “Doing Multispecies Rituals” will be a single player, side-scrolling platform game.¹ In gameplay, an avatar will run and jump to navigate a series of platforms, collecting talismans. Each talisman will prompt the player to describe, in 400 characters, a sequence of actions, gestures, or recitations. User rituals will be collected and catalogued as generative resources and performative provocations for multispecies worlds

Dana Sidebottom

Queen's University

**Separating the Liminal from the Liminoid:
A Discussion of the Transformative Properties of Performance**

Victor Turner differentiates between what he terms “liminal” experiences versus “liminoid” experiences. He argues that while people attending a religious ritual are there involuntarily, they experience a forced transformative, “liminal” experience. If, however, a person attends an event willingly and while there experiences a transformation, he terms that “liminoid”. But is this truly the case? Are the experiences of transformation different depending on the circumstances that brought them to that transformation? And if we can determine a difference in moments of liminality, is that the divide? Or should we instead consider Richard Schechner’s division of participant/spectator in relation to liminal/liminoid experiences?

Jack Stanley

University of Ottawa

**A Very Good Friday: Assessing the Religious Import of
Drug-Induced Mystical Experiences**

The notion of whether drugs can induce genuine religious experiences akin to those had by Buddhist monks, Christian saints, or Jewish mystics has raised eyebrows and produced fierce rebuttals from advocates and enemies alike. It is only recently that Western scholarship has truly opened its eyes to the serious exploration of this uncomfortable issue. From the experiments William James conducted with Nitrous Oxide, to the bicycle ride in which Albert Hofmann became the first person to experience LSD, to the publication of Aldous Huxley’s mescaline-informed “Doors of Perception,” the twentieth century witnessed the rise of the academic exploration of mind-altering substances. The intentional observation of people under the influence of psychedelics, deliriants, uppers, and downers, truly culminated in the 1960s, a decade infamous for the spread of the philosophy: “Turn on, Tune in, Drop Out.” It was during this heyday of liberal drug use that inquiry into the religious import of psychedelics reached its epitome before the war on drugs forced such research underground. In the following exploration I will be examining two experiments involving the hallucinogen psilocybin: one conducted over fifty years ago in the depths of Boston University’s Marsh Chapel and another more contemporary example carried out at Maryland’s John Hopkins University. Ultimately, between assessing the procedures and results of each study and paying heed to ensuing critiques, I will investigate whether the ingestion of psychedelics can produce experiences akin to those reported by notable mystics in various religious traditions.

Panel 6: *Objects and Images*

2:40-4:00/Room 1 /Chair: Ben Shaw

Monica Grigore Dovlete

University of Ottawa

**Displaying the Nativity Scene in a Shared Religious Space:
The Case Study of Saint-Pierre Church in Montreal**

Once called “the city of a hundred bell towers,” the urban landscape of Montreal still preserves the marks of its religious past. In other words, churches stand out in the contemporary Montreal cityscape. However, the transformations brought about by the *Quiet Revolution* in the 1960s left the churches deserted, while the idea of a secular Quebec became part of the public discourse about Quebec identity. Lacking the financial support of an active community, many Catholic churches, and not only them, have been left with no choice but to find a new vocation. They were thus transformed into residential or institutional spaces, entering what might be conceptualized as a secular order. Anyway, some of churches managed to delay this major transformation by sharing their space with another religious community. It is the case of a Catholic church located in Montreal that I call Saint-Pierre Church. The old building of Saint-Pierre Church accommodates today two Christian communities: one is French-speaking Catholic and the other is Romanian Orthodox. At a first glance, no tensions seem to trouble their coexistence. However, people’s perspectives of religious artifacts depict a slightly different image. Starting from participant observation and interviews carried out in 2016 and 2017 with believers of both communities, I explore the narratives that surround one religious artifact: the Nativity scene. This allows me to study two main points: 1) how each cultural group experiences the sharing of a religious space, and 2) how each group attempts to preserve its identity and to coexist with the other.

Stacie Swain

University of Ottawa

**Of Maces, Feathers, and Displaced Sovereignty: A Discursive
Approach to Indigeneity, Materialization, and ‘Religion’ in Canada**

Each sitting within a session of the Canadian House of Commons opens with the procession of the ceremonial mace, which is an ornamental staff that symbolizes the authority of the Speaker. The mace is a secular symbol and thus a political one, tied as it is to the ruling order and the sovereignty of the British Crown. While symbols of the Crown’s sovereignty are inextricable from the settler colonial logic that undergirds contemporary Canadian sovereignty, such objects have been normalized. What if, however, a symbol of the authority of an alternative and former sovereignty were to appear within a Canadian political, legal, or legislative context? Beginning with 1990 as a key moment in Indigenous-Canadian relations and proceeding to 2017, this paper traces appearances of the eagle feather as a symbol of Indigenous sovereignty in interactions involving the state. The wielding of the feather and its flexible metonymy enables the materialization of Indigenous bodies as political, spiritual, and sovereign. Rather than addressing the meaning or experience of the feather as a symbol in itself, this paper utilizes a critical religion approach to focus upon how Canadian norms and structures both constrain and enable the deployment of such symbols and their potentiality. By examining how the construction and classification of the eagle feather as a religious or spiritual symbol occurs against a backdrop of state secularism, we might better understand the interplay between Indigenous discursive practices, the category of religion, and modern settler colonialism.

Marlene Misiuk

Concordia University

“Touch me with your eyes”:

Noli me Tangere by Lavinia Fontana and Fede Galizia

The iconic statement, “*Noli me Tangere*” or “Don’t touch me”, from the book of John (20:17) has been the subject of countless visual interpretations in the history of western art. However, during the Counter-reformation in Italy, Magdalene imagery widely circulated in the later 16th and 17th century as a central component to cultural and spiritual reform of women. The outbreaks of syphilis, attacks by Protestant reformers, and threats to the moral order, all forced widespread governmental and church campaigns against legalized prostitution and dishonest women. However, when the forced registration and segregation of prostitutes failed to “to restrain their wickedness and uncontrolled freedoms of life”, images of the Magdalene surfaced as final cry to convert the sinful women to Christianity. As the Dutch ecclesiast Jan Vos once stated in the 16th century, praise should be given to the artists who could “convert the unchaste by means of their brush”. This paper will examine two paintings by women, Lavinia Fontana of Bologna (1552-1614) and Fede Galizia of Milan (1574-1630), who took up the iconic subject of *Noli Me Tangere* in their artistic practice in the hopes of forging unique models of their own for women’s devotion in Italy. In addition, with a comparison of the two works, it will be argued that Galizia’s *Noli Me Tangere* (1616) altarpiece for the Santa Maria Maddalena Church may have taken inspiration from Fontana’s painting. This paper hopes to shed light on women who actively engaged in religious imagery for female conversion. And further, I hope to encourage further academic study on the artistic exchanges between women in the arts in the early modern period.

Panel 7: Bodies

4:10-6:00 / Room 1 / Chair: Ben Shaw

Mark F. Novak

Institute for Christian Studies

Eschatological Erotic Enfleshment: Incarnation as Nuptial Nexus of Human and Divine

The history of Western philosophy and religion can rightly be accused of two things: dualistic thinking and a disdain for bodily life. In Greek thinking there was a strict separation between this life and the next, between bodily existence and true existence in the ideal forms. This type of thinking was adopted into Christian theology almost unconsciously. Humans live on Earth in bodies, but after death go to heaven or hell as disembodied souls. In this framework, the incarnation of God ignores an affirmation of bodily life, reducing it to a means to an end: atoning for sin so that human souls have a way to get to an immaterial heaven. But there are numerous issues with this thinking, and recent work in philosophy and theology has been addressing them. What would it look like to set aside the view that sees the incarnation of God as a means to an end, and to look at it as an end in itself? How would our approach to life be altered if we overcame dualistic thinking, and saw the incarnation as the Eschaton?

The proposed paper will explore these questions by examining the ways in which we can understand the incarnation of God in Christ as an affirmation of fleshly existence. Drawing from the incarnational and Christological thinking of Bonhoeffer and Kearney, and the phenomenological understandings of flesh and the erotic of Merleau-Ponty and Marion, I will argue that God’s desire is to continually become enfleshed. Positing that the incarnation of God in Christ, although unique, was only the beginning of God’s enfleshment in the world, we should view fleshly incarnation as the erotic and ongoing adventing of the divine. Such an understanding entails that we understand incarnation as eschaton—the chiastic weaving of human and divine in the flesh.

J. Julian Butterfield

University of Toronto

**This Very Body, Beyond a Buddhist Context:
Tracking Empowerment from Proto-Tantra to Naruto**

Properly ordained bodies, in the literary tradition of East Asian Esoteric Buddhism, often have the ability to radiate powerful light beams, to transform both themselves and the spaces around them, to multiply infinitely, and to either heal or subdue. Although the Tantras' systems for empowering the body belong today to distinct, Buddhist ritual traditions, some of its elements (such as mudras or the cakras) have become increasingly represented in popular, secular media, in and beyond East Asia. This exploratory essay considers one example of such appropriation in the popular anime *Naruto*, which (re)imagines the body's Esoteric-style empowerment in distinctly non-Buddhist contexts. Adopting a comparative literary approach, the paper reads an episode of *Naruto* against key Esoteric Buddhist depictions of empowerment, questioning where, on what terms, or indeed whether its mudra-making, radiant, and multiple bodies can be said to fully break away from their Buddhist prototypes. In so doing, this paper contributes to an emerging discussion on the transit of the empowered, Buddhist body through the parallel worlds of contemporary secularism.

Junyu Ke

Queen's University

Move to Think: The Daoist Body Consciousness

The Daoist idea of body is believed to be in stark contrast with the modern corporeal concept. While the reality of modern body is validated on a base of numerical and sequential informants that empower genes and flesh, in Daoism it perceives body in broader relations within itself and with the world through the permeation of qi (vital energy) and the interplay of contrasting forces—Yin and Yang. In this way the imagination towards the inner body is less dominated by its anatomical structure, but instead is built around the conceptualizations of pragmatic nothingness and liquid substance, that the invisible and intangible qi manifests itself via the interconnections of visceral functioning. And organs and veins are not solid; rather they diffuse and affect each other through their qi.

This Daoist idea of body has developed a kind of body consciousness that is not only led by meditated self-introspection that unfolds body as a fluid, porous and cosmological landscape, but also pursue longevity and spirituality in a state of endless movement, that change is embodied and performed with an effort to attain the dynamic balance of body and thus its perfection. Therefore, many teachings and body cultivation practices of Daoism were invented to embrace the view of an unbounded body in the environment, and the attunement of the two will lead to immortalization. This paper looks at the ecological significance of the Daoist body and its cultivation from the mobility and permeation of qi, and how the body consciousness is formed and develops in ways that redefine body as an object.

Emmanuel Chaput

University of Ottawa

On Some Common Fallacies in the Apprehension of Feuerbach's Critique of Religious Consciousness and his Importance for Contemporary Religious Studies: An Outline of Ludwig Feuerbach's Theory of Religious Objectification

In my presentation, I aim to discuss Ludwig Feuerbach's theory of religious objectification (*Vergegenständlichung*). Feuerbach's materialist critique of religion as an objectification of man's essence in the transcendent figure of God has often been deemed as reductionist and his hermeneutics of reversal has been criticized as mechanistic. In this regard, his critique of religion is viewed as a figure of the past having little relevance in the contemporary debates. Against this view, I shall argue that Feuerbach's theory of religious objectification has often been misread according to a reductionist grid. On the contrary, I contend, Feuerbach's critique of religion should be understood as a phenomenological enquiry within religious consciousness. His materialist stance relies not on the classical, materialist critique of religion of the French Enlightenment, but on the presupposition of man's natural embodiment. In this regard, Feuerbach anticipates a phenomenological standpoint that remains relevant today. From a critical standpoint, Feuerbach will claim however that our natural and embodied being-in-the-world could in the end be antinomic with what he'll perceived as religious consciousness's goal to transcend its own finitude through its relation with the Divine. The aim of my presentation will be to present the complexity of Feuerbach's argument, especially where he has largely been misinterpreted. By doing so, I hope to show how Feuerbach opens a search field still relevant today.

Panel 8: Identity

4:10-6:00 / Room C / Chair: Reem Sheikh-Khalil

Aidan Gray

University of Ottawa

**The Cultural Intelligibility of Bodies:
Queering Israeli and Palestinian LGBT Identities**

This paper seeks to understand how the Israeli/Palestinian conflict has structured the intelligibility of queer identities in Israel and Palestine, and to interrogate the subtleties between a mainstream LGBT identity and an oppositional queer identity in these regions. I will argue that the Israeli/Palestinian conflict has generated a cultural intelligibility of queer identities with exaggerated political dimensions. Those who identify as queer and in solidarity with the Palestinian cause define themselves in oppositionality with hegemonic LGBT rhetoric and liberal values in Israel. That is, that queer Palestinians represent a manifestation of queer theory: queerness defined largely due to its oppositional nature to dominant political and sexual norms. This article does not argue that those with alternative sexual identities in the Palestinian community should use the term "queer" as an identity category necessarily, as many are understandably uncomfortable in adopting a term with distinct Western origins. However, I will suggest that some central tenets of queer theory, specifically in the definition advanced by David Halperin (1997), are useful in understanding and delineating the differences in political oppositionality salient in the relationship between LGBT Israelis and Palestinians. Throughout the paper, I will examine the production of normative LGBT identities in Israel, and how these identities have been politicized for militaristic and imperialistic gains, specifically utilizing the works of Jasbir Puar (2007). In contrast, I posit that Palestinian queer identities are inseparable from liberation-based politics. "Queer" as an identity category in Palestine is inextricably linked to anti-occupation activism; Palestinian queerness is a manifestation of queer theory inasmuch as it is inherently oppositional to the normative hegemony of Israeli politics.

Jenna Mowbray

Queen's University

A Religious Clown Thing:

The Construction of Jewish Identity in *The Simpsons*

The construction of Jewish identity in *The Simpson* is seen through the character of Krusty the Clown. In the episodes "Like Father, Like Clown" (1991), "Today I am a Clown" (2003) and "The Nightmare After Krustmas" (2016) Krusty's negotiation of his Jewish identity is part of the main plot and therefore at the centre of the audience attention. He is often seen in relation to his Jewish identity in other ways as well as in relation to his Rabbi Father and the tertiary character 'old Jewish Man'. Jewishness in Springfield is that of otherness and how Krusty's identity functions is in relation to the Christian community. Considering the writers identify themselves as "atheists and Jews" this reflects how Jewish identity functions in a larger Christian centered society. The images and symbols of Jewishness are meant to be recognizable to a broad audience and therefore a nuanced view of Jewish identity is not the priority of the writers. As an entertainer Krusty's Jewishness is a part and parcel with this identity. Through analysing and deconstruction how Jewish identity is portrayed, I argue how Jewishness is recognized by a broader American audience in this work of popular culture.

Jacob DesRochers

Queen's University

Boys to Men: Modern Jewish Masculinities

This paper takes the position that the Zionist preoccupation with the Jewish physical and cultural body was not only a response to the heterosexual model of European bourgeois society, but was also rooted in Jewish nationalist thought and assimilation. I examine the early Zionist involvement in the gendered revolution of European Jewry with a focus on minority gendered and sexual practices, as well as the challenges of Jewish socialization in Palestine. Further, I examine the gender ideologies of the Hebrew Bible to determine how these images of a masculine ideal contribute to traditional notions of Jewish masculinity. My analysis includes approaches arising from gender theories, feminism, and masculinity studies. This paper argues that the modernizing effect of the Zionist movement in late nineteenth- and early twentieth- century Judaic culture created tensions between modern European and traditional Jewish representations of a feminine-masculinity, and the cultivation of a new Jewish hegemonic hyper-male ideal.

