

Abstracts for ISMRC Conference: Media, Religion and Culture in a Networked World

Wednesday Panels starting at 8:30 am

Introducing the Study of Media, Religion and Culture: A Conversation with Jeffrey Mahan's Media, Religion and Culture: An Introduction

1. Jolyon Mitchell
2. Heidi Campbell
3. Alexandra Boutros
4. Nabil Echchaibi

Jeffrey Mahan's *Media, Religion and Culture: An Introduction* provides one of the first efforts to summarize the conversations about religion and media in an integrated, accessible, and teachable form. In this forum four scholars discuss the book, its accomplishments and limitations, and explore the challenges of teaching media, religion and culture. Participants include: Jolyon Mitchell, University of Edinburgh (Scotland); Heidi Campbell, Texas A&M University (USA); Alexandra Boutros, Wilfrid Laurier University (Canada); and Nabil Echchaibi, University of Colorado of Boulder (USA). Responding, Jeffrey Mahan, Iliff School of Theology (USA)

Discourses in Legacy Media

Michael Brady Munnik
PhD Candidate, University of Edinburgh
What Counts as a "Muslim Story?"

The news media play a profound role in shaping the public's religious understanding. In this paper, I interrogate the criteria producers cite for including "Muslim" as an element in news stories. How and when "Muslim" is used matters for those who identify as Muslim and for the consuming audience. The texts media scholars identify as Muslim stories typically associate the religion and its practitioners with violence and otherness; scholars reach these conclusions through content analyses of the published texts. In contrast, I analyse the comments of those who produce such texts: journalists and their sources. I draw these comments from qualitative fieldwork conducted in Glasgow, Scotland. Journalists tend to characterise events, issues, or sources as Muslim through negative definition—they tell me when they would *not* use the term. Sources also contribute to this definition, both passively through their identified association with the term and actively through their communications with journalists, and I scrutinise the boundaries they use to determine what counts as a "Muslim story." Both sources and journalists justify the term's use "when it's relevant," which leads us to the question, "what makes it relevant?" My participants deem religious or cultural occasions such as festivals and awards dinners to be acceptable occasions for use, but this does not encompass political dimensions of the word "Muslim." In this matter, source contacts offer diverse responses as to whether issues such as terrorism, foreign policy, or homosexuality are or should be relevant to Muslims' faith. This ambivalence is also reflected in reticence of journalists: festivals are not "news" per se, and journalists risk criticism if they associate Muslims with terrorism. Statements from both sets of participants concerning the Glasgow airport attack of 2007 contradict many of their views as discussed in the statements above, revealing the contingency of journalism in practice. What emerges is not a consensus on what counts as a Muslim story but an anthropological meditation on the complexity bound up in the term.

Marta Axner

PhD, Uppsala Religion and Society Research Centre, Uppsala University

Public Religions in Swedish Media: A Study of Religious Actors on Three Newspaper Debate Pages 2001-2011

This paper will consist of the main results from my doctoral dissertation, defended in October 2013. The study addresses issues concerning religion in the public sphere, brought about by the debates over the perceived resurgence of religion and the post-secular. The aim is to analyze the participation of religious actors in the public, using three newspaper debate pages as the empirical material. Building on theories by Casanova, especially his concept of public religions, as well as mediatization theory and Habermas' writings on religion in the public sphere, 639 opinion pieces signed by religious actors were analyzed. The mixed-methods content analysis was conducted in two steps: first a quantitative overview of the religious actors published, to what extent and on what issues. The second step consisted of three qualitative case studies based on the results of the first step. These were analyzed on the basis of criteria for public religions developed from Casanova's theory and from the media logic of debate articles. While the results show no clear increase in the number of religious actors during the period under scrutiny, one notices a clear presence of Muslim and Jewish actors, even though Christians of varying denominations dominate the material. There are also clear differences between the different religions: minority religion contributions are limited in terms of issues and scope, while Christian groups write about more varied issues. Muslims often relate to negative media discourse towards Islam, while Jewish signatories write on a limited number of themes closely related to the group itself. In many articles, one found a meta-debate over the place of religion in the public sphere even when specific issues were debated. The contribution of this dissertation is to critically discuss the concepts and assumptions underlying the debate over the place of religion in the public sphere. It stresses the importance of media perspectives as well as empirical studies for analyzing issues of authority, visibility, private/public and religion in late modern, mediated contexts.

Yoel Cohen

Ph.D, School of Communication, Ariel University, Israel

News Gatekeepers and Religion News in Israel

Journalists have an important role in the construction of the image of religion in the media. In Israel the secular-religious divide has resulted in the media being seen as contributing to the perceived negative image which religious communities, in particular the Haredi ultra orthodox, enjoy. Attempts by religious political parties (ultra-orthodox and modern orthodox) to impose religiosity on the Jewish state - such as in matters regarding personal status like marriage, divorce, and conversion – which are in the hands of the religious courts – generate an impression of religious coercion.

A poll by this author of Israeli journalists and Jewish identity – 250 filled questionnaires were received-- while confirming that Israeli journalists favour the separation of synagogue and state, the poll found there were little or no differences between the positions of Israeli Jewish journalists and that of the broader Israeli Jewish population on existential questions like belief in God, reward and punishment, and messianic redemption. Nor was there any significant differences regarding religious activity like observance of religious holidays or Jewish life cycle events (circumcision, barmitzvah, the religious marriage ceremony, and religious funeral rites).

Given all this, the despise held by the religious population, in particular the haredim, for the media requires reexamination. It suggests that critics of the media – including rabbis – fail to distinguish between the broader dynamics of the market forces of news and the views of the individual journalist. The news process focuses on the conflict elements of religion – which includes the demands of the religious political parties for government budgeting for religious institutions like yeshivot, or for exemption from national service -- as well as the media focusing excessively upon Haredim when only 8% of the Israeli Jewish population are Haredim. It suggests that rabbis require a more sophisticated understanding of the news process.

But given the delegitimation of the media by rabbis for failing to function in accordance with Torah values, makes any major change by rabbis toward understanding the individual journalist and the news process unlikely.

Struggle for Religious Authority

Ruth Tsuria

PhD Graduate Assistant, Communication Department, Texas A&M University

In my own opinion – Rabbis Negotiating their Religious Authority Online: A case study of Israeli Jewish Responsa

This paper will delve into Israeli Rabbinical negotiation of religious authority in new media settings. The case study presented focuses on the practice of questions and answers ("ask the Rabbi"), also known in Judaism as *responsa*. The practice of *responsa* is a traditional act with a history of at least 1,200 years. According to Steinitz (2011), "the purpose of the Q&A genre is to give a practical solution to legal [*Halachic*.] questions." In that way, *responsa* affirms the Rabbi's role as a religious authority with epistemic knowledge and jurisdiction in communal and personal everyday life. What happens, however, when this ancient practice takes place online, with easier access and in participatory culture? Is the Rabbis' authority affirmed or challenged? What techniques do the Rabbis use to maintain their authority?

This paper will explore online cases of *responsa* by conducting a content analysis of Rabbis' responses online. The case study is drawn from *kipa.co.il*, a popular Israeli religious website aimed at the religious Zionist community. On this website, users can ask Rabbis various questions, receive answers from Rabbis, and respond to those answers in open dialogue. The content analysis reveals three roles the Rabbi takes in answering: Halachic law expert, a psychological consultant or a political/communal leader. This categorization helps highlight some trends in the negotiation of the Rabbis' roles as authority figures. By using Campbell's (2010) theory of religious social shaping of technology as well as Cheong's (2012) logics of authority online, this paper will argue for a dialectic reading of the phenomenon. This dialectic reading shows how, on the one hand, the practice of online *responsa* affirms traditional offline authority by allowing the Rabbis to enact their epistemic authority. On the other hand, online *response*'s informal language and lack of textual support (Steinitz, 2011) challenges Rabbinical authority. Thus, this paper will raise the question of what will be the long-term effects of such tensions.

Jere Kyyrö

M. A., MSocSc, PhD Candidate, Comparative Religion, University of Turku, Finland

Sociology of the sacred, ritualization and media power: Three cases of Finnish art controversies in the 2000s–2000s

My paper reflects on three pieces of art (Kristian Smeds' theatre performance *The Unknown soldier*, 2007, Katariina Lillqvist's puppet animation *Far away from Urals*, 2008 and Gilbert Lukalia's film *The Marshal of Finland*, 2012) and their media reception. The pieces of art were (or included) re-interpretations and deconstructions of Finnish national symbols. Smeds used a well-known Finnish war novel text to reflect on antagonisms of modern Finnish society, Lillqvist portrayed a national hero (field marshal C. G. E. Mannerheim) as a homosexual and as an executioner of Finnish civil war reds. Mannerheim was also portrayed in Lukalia's film, which was made by Kenyans by the order of Finnish-Estonian production team: Mannerheim was played by Kenyan Telly Savalas Otieno. In media these pieces of art gained lots of attention, and their covering some scandalizing tones.

These art controversies give possibility for media actors to perform their media power, by attaching to the concentration of symbols, which national symbols are a part of. The framing of the situations was fairly similar in all cases, and they had ritualized ways constructing the society through oppositions. The ritualization takes space from reflection.

I will discuss this material within theoretical frameworks of the sociology of the sacred (Gordon Lynch 2012), media anthropology (Nick Couldry 2008; Johanna Sumiala 2013) and ritualization (Catherine Bell 1992). I will focus on the questions of the use of symbols and media personalities in constructing oppositions, maintaining them and deconstructing them, and will also pay attention on what kinds of strategies of counter-ritualization can be found. The emphasis will be on strategies, rather than contents of sacred formations.

Isaac Arten

Duke University Divinity School

Habeas Papam on the Internet: "Pope Memes" as a Catalyst for Dialogue Between Religion, Media, and Culture

By means of their humorous, sarcastic, or ironic combinations of text and image, visual memes – still or animated images furnished with captions by Internet users, which circulate through contemporary social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr – provide commentary on current events and assign, interpret, or subvert the meaning of cultural artifacts such as major headlines, iconic pieces of popular culture, and the actions of religious and political leaders and celebrities. Meme creators often invest an image or symbol with a connotation significantly different from its original or official meaning with the goal of exposing hypocrisy or bad faith.

As the recent spiritual leaders of the world's Roman Catholic population and the source of authoritative and normative claims about Christian belief and practice, Popes Benedict XVI and Francis I have been depicted in memes that analyze and evaluate the integrity of Christian teaching and the real-world benefit of Christian actions. Although the evaluations of religion made by memes are often sharply critical, they do not represent a wholesale rejection of Christianity as a valuable voice in social, cultural, or political dialogue. Instead, memes employing images of the Pope may serve as a catalyst for dialogue between Christianity and culture, since memes reveal which aspects of an organization's official message are being received most clearly and what pressing questions outsiders to that organization want to ask.

Dialogue between Christianity and culture, mediated through memes, begins with the recognition that these visual commentaries extract the received implications of Christian teachings and reflect these back to the group responsible for transmitting them. In response, the production of memes should initiate a process of active listening in which Christian leaders and teachers hear what Christianity seems to mean to observers and opponents in order to ascertain the need for clarity on specific points and to recognize the need for integrity in applying Christian. In this way, engagement between religion and media becomes a source of growth rather than intractable conflict.

Deborah Whitehead

University of Colorado, Boulder

Joel Osteen, Evangelicalism, and the Negotiation of Religious Authority

Joel Osteen is America's 21st century superstar evangelist, with his 45,000 member Lakewood, Texas megachurch, 15 bestselling books, and heavy media saturation via talk shows, satellite broadcasting, and a savvy social media presence. By any objective measure, he is a highly successful and effective evangelical preacher, reaching an audience of millions each week with the gospel. But he has also been criticized within the evangelical community for watering down the message, compromising too much with popular culture, and becoming more famous than Jesus. What critics and admirers see when they "behold the man" Osteen is quite different depending on what message they understand him to be conveying: is it the gospel truth or pop culture banality? This presentation explores controversy in the evangelical movement around Osteen's authority as a celebrity and an evangelist, focusing on how different types of religious authority are negotiated and contested in terms of effectiveness and authenticity.

Proposal

In April 2013, an online hoax about Joel Osteen leaving his ministry and renouncing Christianity attracted widespread media attention. The hoaxer was revealed to be a former evangelical who, although personally no longer Christian, regarded Osteen's particular brand of therapeutic Christianity as inauthentic, and perpetuated the hoax through social media in order to get other Christians as well as Osteen himself to reexamine his celebrity and his "feel good" theology. Though seemingly just a minor bump in the road for Osteen, this incident reveals controversies around his religious authority within the U.S. evangelical Christian community, complicating our understanding of evangelicalism, media, and celebrity. I argue that because of these tensions, for many inside and outside the evangelical Christian fold, Osteen's authority as a celebrity exists in a fraught relationship to his religious authority. Introducing a hermeneutical framework for understanding how U.S. evangelicals "read" popular culture textually and visually, and how this framework informs their understanding of media, I focus on the issues of mediated religious authority and authenticity.

While U.S. evangelicals have traditionally exemplified a utilitarian and instrumentalist approach to media, seeing it as a tool for evangelism, or proclaiming the gospel, Osteen's success raises larger questions about evangelical preaching and media usage, such as: does Osteen represent an authentic form of evangelical Christian theology and preaching despite his celebrity status? Is his positive affect a manifestation of adaptive genius or theological bankruptcy? Is his popular message the gospel truth or pop culture banality? Rather than provide definite answers to these questions, I show how they underscore ongoing debates. Arguing for a view of evangelicalism as a religious tradition that is historically tied to practices of adaptive mass communication, I show how Osteen's successful media presence may actually expose some disputed boundaries of theology and mediation in this tradition. In the process, the example of Osteen serves as a case study that brings to light a set of interpretive practices centered around the production, consumption, and reception of mass media in the U.S. evangelical community, illustrating how historical traditions and theologies are being worked out anew through mediation today.

Health, Wellbeing, & Religion

Jin Park

Associate Professor, School of Communications and Media, Seoul Women's University

Healing Culture

"Healing" has lately become a vogue word in Korean popular culture. It has been employed in a variety of popular cultural products including talk shows, books, movies, pop music, and ads, to name a few. Although there are corresponding Korean words such as "치료(chi-ryo)" or "치유(chi-yu)", "HEALING", an English word, itself is commonly and intentionally used in popular culture as well as in everyday language. The imported, or "re-coined", term appears to be believed to signify what cannot be precisely delivered through other native equivalents. What is the meaning(s) of the word "healing" to people in Korea who are situated in the current, late capitalist and neo-liberalist, context of the country? Why are they so much into the healing discourses in popular culture? What would be the "political" implication of the fast emerging healing culture for this materialistic society? This paper explores these questions by comparing the case in Korea with the "therapeutic culture" that has been observed and analyzed in the US setting. The US therapeutic culture looks very similar to what is developing in the other part of the globe, in that both are ideologically functioning as they effectively reduce the political and structural problems to personal and psychological ones. However, the healing culture in Korea cannot be fully understood with the framework explaining the Western counterpart, because it, in its particular social and cultural context, also shows positive and promising effects. The recent focus on healing in Korean popular culture is accompanied with people's reflexive and critical assessment of the existing and dominant orders and values of the society. It also provides, in a discursive level, people in their everyday life with "popular imagination" about alternative, sometimes subversive, ways of life. This case study in Korea suggests for the scholarship of media, religion and culture that increasing significance of religion/spirituality in the media may eventually contribute to the possible social change by providing a powerful source for alternative imagination of values, social orders, and ways of life.

Diane Winston

University of Southern California

'The Many Faces of AIDS: Secular and Religious Coverage of Catholic Response to a Moral/Medical Epidemic

My paper compares and contrasts secular and religious news coverage of the US Catholic community's response to AIDS during the first decade of the crisis. It addresses several conference topics: the role of media in shaping religious and cultural understandings; media, religion and authority, and religious conflict and media representation.

Focusing on moral/medical narratives that characterized coverage during the 1980s, the paper examines how the media handled issues of conflict, authority, and sexuality posed by AIDS. The paper looks at news coverage in Los Angeles and New York. Both cities had large gay and Catholic populations, strong hometown papers and lively diocesan newspapers.

I explore three instances of coverage. The first is the “conflict” among Catholic bishops after the release of their 1987 statement, “The Many Faces of AIDS: A Gospel Response.” Secular papers framed the ensuing debate to mirror the culture war between liberals and conservatives. Catholic coverage played down divisions and condemned the secular media for its sensationalism. However, several Church leaders did use the conflict and subsequent coverage to quell an incipient crisis of authority. The “American church,” which represented a more liberal and autonomous Catholicism than the Vatican mandated, was on the rise in the 1980s and its response to AIDS, well-reported in much of the Catholic media, challenged traditional Church teaching on homosexuality and episcopal authority. This challenge to authority and the counter-attack is the second site for my analysis of media coverage. Thirdly, secular papers framed the medical/moral dimension of the AIDS crisis in the Christian right’s language of “divine punishment” for homosexuality. Catholic papers framed the medical/moral axis in terms of the sanctity of suffering. Despite very different representations, both perpetuated religious homophobia—and enabled religious leaders to use media to do so.

The paper will illuminate how the news media shaped public understanding of what it meant to be a Catholic in the 1980s. By comparing secular and sectarian outlets, it will investigate how religious authority and identity were contested and renegotiated at a time of crisis –and what subsequent markers of American Catholic identity emerged afterwards.

Ann Hardy

Audience Research Unit, University of Waikato

Moved by the spirit of The Hobbit?

The production of film adaptations of *The Lord of the Rings* (2001-2003) and *The Hobbit* (2012 -) and their distribution to global audiences has been a significant cultural phenomenon in the early years of the twenty-first century. The original books, palimpsests of European mythological traditions elaborated by the Christian author J.R. R.Tolkien (cf. Hardy 2008), arrive on screen already freighted with a complex mix of nostalgia and expectation that for some people provides a spiritual touchstone to their lives. The addition of the work of the director, Peter Jackson, who has developed considerable expertise in mobilising the passionate attachment of fans of both the earlier films, and to a more qualified degree, of the books, has enhanced the sense that film events such as these are an important source of personal value to segments of contemporary populations. This paper works with data generated from the first two stages of a large-sample longitudinal online Q-method study into audience receptions of *The Hobbit* trilogy and analyses it within a framework of religious and spiritual reference. Specifically, it interprets data from research into the prefigurative responses to publicity and debate preceding the launch of the first film in the trilogy (*The Hobbit: an Unexpected Journey*), and then, the reactions of viewers to the film after its release. The Q-methodology research design invited participants to distribute a corpus of 38 typical statements about the film across a matrix according to their degree of agreement, disagreement, or neutrality about the statements. Their choices were then subjected to factor-analysis which identified the most significant clusters of response (for a description of Q-Methodology applied to media products see Davis and Michelle, 2011).

Most participants provided qualitative responses as well as detailed demographic data and it is these qualitative statements, where respondents are particularly eager to explain what the books and/or films mean to them that provide the bulk of the evidential material for this paper. An earlier audience research project into the *Lord of The Rings* trilogy (Barker & Mathjis, eds. 2008) noted that an undifferentiated category of ‘spiritual’ responses formed a significant cluster across international audiences, but with some differences in incidence across national populations. This paper goes further in unpacking what might be categorized as varieties of spiritual response.

Wednesday Starting at 10:15am

Media, Religion and Gender: Key Issues and New Challenges Roundtable

Chair: Mia Lövheim (faculty of theology, Uppsala University)

Respondent: Jolyon Mitchell

Curtis Coats (Millsaps College)

Stewart Hoover (University of Colorado at Boulder)

Mary Hess (Luther Seminary)

Joyce Smith (Ryerson University)

Diane Winston (University of Southern California)

In today's mediatized discourse on religion gender emerges as a key aspect highlighting changes in social relations and tensions between cultural values across national and religious contexts. Nevertheless, work on gender has for long remained in the fringes of mainstream research in the field of media, religion and culture. This roundtable brings together some of the authors presented in an edited collection entitled *Media, Religion and Gender: Key Issues and New Challenges*, published by Routledge in the spring 2013. The participants will, drawing on their various disciplinary perspectives from theology, communication studies, religious studies, and studies of religion and entertainment media, briefly present the key ideas of their respective chapter, discuss how a focus on gender can highlight emerging transformations and key issues in current research and discuss how a focus in gender brings out challenges that calls for attention in future research on the interplay between religion, media and culture.

Wednesday Panels starting at 1:00 pm

Body and Technologies

Larissa Carneiro

North Carolina State University

E-meter: The 20th Century Technology for Spiritual Enlightenment

Media technologies not only pervade commerce and communication, but seep into the very means of perception and the structures of consciousness. For example, Aristotle compared the state of an empty mind to a "tabula rasa." Psychologist and hypnosis researcher Joseph Delboeuf stated that the "soul is a notebook of phonographic recordings." It is common to hear people say that their dreams were "as real as a movie." In every case, the understanding of the soul and the mind are cast in the mold of contemporary media. The way we think and experience the world owes to the materiality of current technological media and the way they process and record information.

Likewise, scientology and its method (dianetics) were shaped by the advent of a medium: the computer. In 1952, the e-meter, a new electronic device, bolstered L. Ron Hubbard's claim for the scientific exactitude of dianetics. Scientology claimed that the control of all functions of the central nervous system could be reduced to the analogy of a computer hard drive, from which hidden and lost data could be finally retrieved. The electrical and religious device worked by unveiling the hidden sources of mental disturbances and psychosomatic illnesses registered inside the human body. Hubbard announced that the e-meter was the most important tool of his religion. Consequently, the instrument was not just optional, but an indispensable part of the core principle around which scientology was constructed. The device shaped the way the client experienced scientology's therapeutic intervention in aesthetic and material terms.

Although Hubbard acknowledged many influences in the formation of scientology, he failed to acknowledge the field of cybernetics, computer science and its rhetoric, popular film, and science fiction. Each of these shaped his understanding of the power of the e-meter as a technological medium for his religious therapy. This paper will argue its case by examining the role of the e-meter in scientology and exploring what many

scholars are now understanding to be the constitutive role that technologies play in religion—not as something extrinsic to religion, but as organic ingredient in religious experience.

Anderson Blanton

Curator: The Materiality of Prayer Collection (<http://forums.ssrc.org/ndsp/category/materiality/>)
The Point of Contact: Radio Prayers and the Apparatus of Belief

Throughout the middle of the twentieth century, millions of Americans simultaneously tuned-in to hear Oral Roberts' instructions to "put your hand upon the radio cabinet as a point of contact" to facilitate the communication of miraculous healing power during the "prayer time" of his famous Healing Waters Broadcast. Providing concrete archival and ethnographic detail to approach the contemporary debates on the relation between "the miracle and the special effect" (de Vries) in the fields of philosophy and critical theory, this talk demonstrates the way tele-technologies such as the radio have organized new forms of ritual efficacy in the late modern world. Articulating the profound performative and experiential shifts in the practice of charismatic Christian prayer organized through the radio apparatus, my presentation utilizes archival images and sound recordings to track the development of mass mediated techniques of faith healing. This presentation has emerged out of my current Materiality of Prayer project sponsored by the Social Science Research Council's "New Directions in the Study of Prayer" research initiative.

Joonseong Lee

Digitality as Practice-Oriented Spirituality: A New Dimension of Spirituality in the Digital Age

Complex new media technologies are infiltrating our lives to the same extent that religious powers dominated the lives of people during the Middle Ages. Commercial power is to consumers today what religion was to people at that time. Under these circumstances, "advertisers are becoming increasingly attentive to individuals' spiritual needs" with the advancement of new media technologies (Marmor-Lavie, Stout, & Lee, 2009, p. 2). If this paradigm has any merit, then the previous approaches to media, religion, and culture research must assume a fresh perspective in order to more clearly explain the pervasive commercial power created by this new media. This is the primary reason that we need to understand a new dimension of spirituality-digirit, and digirituality-with which we can become conscious of the level of enslavement to dominate commercial power.

The concept of "digirit" refers to the equilibrium of energy flows between the universal energy field and the human energy field of those who live inside and outside cyberspace. Digirituality contemplates the aspirations and practices needed to maintain digirit. Here "intentional and incessant efforts" are highlighted because digital-media environments have great power to induce us to breathe fantasized and magical images and sounds and to remain hallucinated. People who live both inside and outside cyberspace become more defenseless than they were in any other media age. With intentional and incessant efforts, one can deflect the pressure to accelerate territorialization process of energy flows and can maintain the equilibrium of the flows.

In this sense, to become digiritual is a process of regaining the immanent field of digirit, which is, borrowing from Wuthnow's (1998) term, practice-oriented spirituality. Wuthnow offers the term as an alternative to "spirituality of seeking" and "spirituality of dwelling." It means that, "People engage intentionally in activities that deepen their relationship to the sacred (p. 169)". From the digiritual standpoint, "the relationship to the sacred" can be interpreted as "the relationship to the equilibrium of energy flows between universal energy field and human energy field." In this paper, anal sphincter exercise or anus breathing exercise, which has long been a method of controlling energy flows in the Eastern culture, is discussed as a way of practice-oriented spirituality as a means to remain digiritual.

This paper fits well in the scope of this conference, Digital Humanities 2014 ("Digital Cultural Empowerment"), in that the concepts of digirit and digirituality are a reflection of how the immanent-world view of the East can help to better understand the new dimension of digital spirituality. In addition, the concepts of digirit and digirituality are a byproduct of joining Eastern and Western perspectives. The term "digirit" is a combination of the words "digital" and "spirit" and is conceptualized from the Deleuzian perspective of Tao. Anus breathing exercise is reinterpreted as a method of practice-oriented spirituality to be digiritual.

Joyce Smith
Ryerson University

The Charter of Quebec Values: a media story told in English and French, with illustrations

In May of 2013 the Parti Québécois (PQ), which holds minority power in the provincial government of Quebec, announced a proposal for Bill 60, known as the Charter of Quebec Values. The announcement made immediate waves inside and outside the province, as it seeks to limit public employees in their choice of religious garb. This includes turbans, veils, kippot, large crosses and other religious signs.

While most political analysts note that the chance of this bill being passed into law is slim and its ability to withstand any legal challenges under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is even less plausible, the proposal has served to divide Quebec citizens. (The Charter was officially proposed on Sept. 10, 2013, and at this point has yet to be voted upon).

The PQ espouses the separation of Quebec from Canada, and so appeals to Quebec nationalism. Part of this appeal is to secularism; Quebec has undergone what is termed the “quiet revolution” in which a society dominated in all sectors by the Roman Catholic Church is now the province with the largest number of professed atheists and agnostics, the lowest percentage of marriages and the highest number of children born outside wedlock. In this context, the Charter of Quebec Values further differentiates the province from other Canadian jurisdictions which have upheld individual religious freedom and official multiculturalism. This paper will examine the ways in which the Parti Québécois has used French, English and visuals to communicate its Charter of Values in mainstream media. This will allow for a discussion of the rhetorical devices used to describe what is and is not permissible (eg. “ostentatious” or “conspicuous” displays of religion) as well as pointing toward the media articulation of secularism in modern-day Quebec. In doing so, the paper will add to the conference discussion of themes related to media, religion and authority, although in this case, the authority is squarely lodged in the exercise of secular power.

Historical Review

Matt Hedstrom
University of Virginia

Post-Protestantism in the Marketplace of Print

This paper explores the role of the book marketplace in nurturing and promoting post-Protestant spirituality in the twentieth and twenty-first century United States. The book marketplace became increasingly commercialized and professionalized beginning in the 1920s, and as the book became a commodity to be advertised and sold like soap or automobiles, new vocabularies of the spirit were needed to speak to (and sell books to) an increasingly fragmented and consumerist culture. Modern religion for a modernizing America became both a theological rallying cry and a business plan.

This search for new vocabularies drew upon the century-old liberal religious project to strip religion of its creedal and ritualistic particularities, a project rooted in German Protestant theology and American transcendentalism. For twentieth-century Americans this liberal religious quest was articulated most compellingly by William James in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), and James’s post-Protestant spirituality became the lingua franca for generations of popular religious writers and readers in the twentieth century. The marriage of commoditized books and liberal religious social and theological ambitions produced, in this way, the dominant spiritual vocabularies of twentieth-century American consumer society: psychological, mystical, and increasingly global and cosmopolitan.

This paper draws on my recent book, *The Rise of Liberal Religion: Books, Book Culture, and American Spirituality in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford University Press, 2013), but extends the argument from that book into the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In this talk I will focus especially on the religion department at Harper and Brothers (founded 1928), especially on its long transition from a Methodist-rooted, New York-based publisher to a San Francisco-based publisher of alternative spiritualities under the names HarperSanFrancisco and HarperOne. The 1977 move of the Harper religion department to San Francisco is situated both in the long trajectory of American religious publishing in the twentieth century and in the particular religious and media dynamics of the 1960s and 1970s.

Peter Horsfield

RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia

The contributions of an historical perspective in media and religion analysis

The modern study of media and religion has, by nature of its origins in the rapid media developments of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, had a strong focus on the characteristics and changes being brought by the technologies, affordances and social applications of electronic media. Such a focus is understandable and highly appropriate.

However, in the process of interpretation and theory building about the impacts and significance of these changes on religion, restricting the frame of analysis to the same time frame of the media being studied can result in a limited and distorted understanding. While practical and theoretical work that takes up a historical perspective has been done, to good effect, more is needed.

This paper will explore the benefits of a historical perspective in the study of modern interactions of media and religion with three brief historical case studies from Christianity that cast light on contemporary issues under current consideration: the Apostle Paul's use of letter writing and the routinization of doctrinal invention, contests between oral and written Latin in the medieval period and the authorization of religious language, and the Catholic printers of Leipzig during the Reformation and the influence of commerce in the spread of religious ideas. Correspondences or perspectives from these case studies that can inform understanding of contemporary developments will also be considered.

Stephen Parker

University of Worcester

Faith on the Air: a religious educational broadcasting history, c.1922-

'Faith on the Air' is a Leverhulme Trust-funded project on the history of religious education in the context of religious broadcasting, running at the University of Worcester (2014-2016). The project aims to document the history of this strand of religious broadcasting from its inception on radio in the 1920s, through the television era, to the digital present, focusing upon the ways in which religion was represented in various outputs, (including documentary sources) for children and young people across decades during which significant religious change occurred. It will explore the interface between religious, media and educational history and various ways each impacted upon one another through dominant discourses in circulation about religion and education, and by the crossover of personnel between the fields of RE and broadcasting. This paper will introduce the project in more detail, with the intention of disseminating some of its early observations and to enable greater connectivity with those working researching the field.

Practical Spirituality: Intersections of Spirituality, Media and Everyday Life

For many, spirituality is vibrant. It is lived. It is experienced. It infuses work and leisure, public lives and private lives, sense of self and sense of community. Spirituality may take the form of practices with products. It might assign sacred meaning to the voting booth, to one's battle for social justice in the streets, or to what one buys or sells. It might include services provided by spiritual guides in Glastonbury, mementos purchased from vendors in Chichen Itza, or books on self-awareness methods, trance music, incense. It can be derived through and expressed as products created under the rules of "Fair Trade," food packaged in recyclable containers, or reused resources in home remodeling.

This panel is concerned with spirituality focused on the here and now, spirituality that is material and mediated, spirituality that focuses on how we live with others—human and nonhuman—in a shared sacred space that is the planet as a whole. This panel is interested in the ways in which people identify their spiritual life as one mostly of practicality, how they find guidance for their lives and form for their ideas of the sacred through and in practical, hands-on applications. We're interested in the linkages people are making between the quotidian and the transcendent, between the world as it is and the world as they imagine it could be. We are also interested in how people engaging in what Heelas called "wellbeing spirituality" participate in community and in politics (in traditional and nontraditional ways). Wellbeing spirituality is often critiqued for

being shallow, narcissistic and consumer-driven, but the work in this panel suggests that efforts to heal the self are tied to efforts to heal the world.

We propose a roundtable discussion format in which each participant will offer brief insights from her or his case studies relevant to the topic. Participants will then respond to a question engaging the intersections between engaging self and the world and to a question engaging new questions and concerns in scholarship on non-traditional “spirituality” and its relationship to the study of media, religion and culture.

Monica Emerich

Building the Fourth Pillar of Sustainability: Media, Market and Global Consciousness

It is widely acknowledged in the field of sustainability scholarship and practice that there is a hole in the traditional three-pillar model of sustainability composed of environmental, economic and social dimensions. Alternate proposals to fill that lacuna are the realms of the political-institutional, the religious-spiritual, or the cultural-aesthetic. This paper takes up the argument for the primacy of the second – the religious-spiritual realm – and proposes that the dawning of a global consciousness may be less an alternate realm and more “the first pillar of a sustainable way of life” (Rockefeller, 2010). But how has such a “global consciousness” come about and how can it be sustained and developed? The presentation explores how media and the assumed sustainability adversary, market capitalism, are hand-in-glove generating this fourth pillar, without waiting for the pundits to approve or disapprove.

Curtis Coats and Julian Murchison

Global Realignment at Synthesis 2012

Synthesis 2012 was a conference/festival held in the village of Piste, Yucatan and broadcast live via a web-based video stream in Dec. 2012. Its purpose was to celebrate the “end” of the Mayan calendar and the beginning of a new world consciousness. This presentation combines ethnographic fieldwork from the conference/festival sites and from the virtual stream to examine the new world consciousness imagined by the group. We consider the practices, discourses and materials of the event, as well as the intention and implementation of media as a facilitator of global consciousness. Finally, we consider the implications of all this -- implications for local Maya, for civic engagement, for “spiritual” expression and experience in “third” and other spaces.

Sarah McFarland

From Ecopods and Bio-Urns to Environmental Tattoos: Materiality, Marketing, and the Embodied Paradoxes of Ecopiety and Devotion

Weaving together perspectives from Religious Studies, Environmental Studies, and Media Studies, Taylor examines the intersections of environmental sensibilities, contemporary expressions of piety and devotion, and popular culture. Specifically, Taylor looks at how notions of “ecopiety” get put into practice and are embodied (quite literally) in the cases of green burial and environmental tattooing. What ensues is a series of complex negotiations between ideals of ecopiety and their much more complicated and conflicted enactment “on the ground.” Taylor argues that material culture and media representations of ecopiety and its practice provide us critical insight into the ways that the “stuff” we make remakes us and how, especially in death, we are stuff, too.

Marion Bowman

Spiritually Shopping Around in Glastonbury

The small town of Glastonbury, in the south west of England, has become known as a pilgrimage site and spiritual centre attracting national, European and international interest. Significant among its attractions is the spiritual service industry, which has developed to cater to its broad range of religious and spiritually inclined consumers.

After a brief summary of some of the relevant current academic literature on consumerism within 21st century religiosity, this presentation will consist largely of a short film made in 2012 - a snapshot of one ordinary weekend of commercial and healing activity in Glastonbury, featuring interviews with spiritual entrepreneurs,

the local chip shop owner, and visitors to the town. The film is designed to encourage more nuanced discussion of the role and significance of consumerism and material culture within contemporary spirituality, and the self-understanding of those involved in providing such goods and services.

“Other” in Popular Culture

Jelena Jorgacevic

Religion in Film in the Case of Croatia and Serbia

This paper explores the relationship between the film and the religion in the case of Croatia and Serbia. Although the topic refers to two Christian denominations, Catholicism is dominant religion in Croatia and Orthodox Christianity is in Serbia, they have gone through the very similar path in the recent decades. During the communism, they were severely oppressed. The war in the former Yugoslavia has put them in the limelight, the religious and the national identity became deeply intertwined. The both churches enjoyed sudden and vast popularity, the growing number of the believers as well as significant role in the society. Finally, in the present-day situation, while the democratic changes are ongoing, Croatia became the member of the European Union and Serbia has the full candidate status, the churches have important but different role comparing with previous times. The paper will analyze the cinematography in both countries i.e. the film presentation of the religion: how much it was shaped according to state politic and how much has it mirrored the dominant social attitudes and expectations; also it shall demonstrate the type and difference in the relationship toward religion in these two country trough the lenses of the seventh art. The main focus will be in the contemporary period, how is religion at all, with the accent on dominant one but also the religion of “others” (as a way of “othering” process) presented; how much Croatian and Serbian societies are religious and in what way, according to the its presentation in the popular domestic films. Have films become just the place for critic and which kind of critic is it? Also, the Catholic Church in Croatia as well as Serbian Orthodox Church has not still found the right way to present itself properly through new technologies, to benefit from medias and social networks. Nevertheless, there are few attempts which will be presented and analyzed in the work.

Luis Leon

The Myth of Machismo/Marianismo: Cinematic Representations of Eros and Spirituality among Latino Men

Focusing on religion and film, this presentation addresses the role of media in shaping religious and cultural understandings of mythology and gender, particularly the racializing ideologies of machismo. The term “macho” has become part of the American English lexicon, yet there has been little critical investigation into the etymology of that word. What is machismo? Without doubt the macho is a tough guy. But machismo can also signify violence, misogyny, homophobia, racism, alcoholism and unrestrained libido. For many Americans—and indeed globally— machismo is a Latin American invention. According to academic studies, Latino men often reject the macho tag and opt instead for identities based on models of “hombre,” or true men, which fly in the face of baleful machista cultural practices. The discourse of machismo is contested terrain, and I intend to contest it further.

I approach machismo as a *religious* myth that has as its necessary correlate the mythology of Marianismo, sometimes called *hembrismo*—embodying the concept of “virgin motherhood,” which impugns Latina women as submissive and enabling. My presentation will explore this gendered binary through a genealogy of Latina/o representation in film, arguing that the macho is a discursive construction, produced and mediated through film, television, and other sites of popular representation. My paper will explore filmic representations of machismo among Latino men, focusing those films in which a confluence of spirituality and Eros shape masculine identity. I am especially interested in depictions of men that transgress the stereotypical macho codes, disrupting stereotypes. Thus my emphasis is on queer Latinos—though not exclusively. I am also interested in depictions of female machos, or what has been called the “Marimacha,” for the ways Latina women perform aspects of masculinity typically attributed only to men in hetero-normative patriarchal society. This study is genealogical, a history of the present, beginning in the 1990s when representations of Latina/o masculinities and femininities began to break from traditional models.

Milja Radovic

Otherness and Foreignness in Transnational Cinema

In this paper I explore the concepts of otherness and foreignness in the transnational cinematic context. I argue that the perceptions of foreignness and otherness are inevitably linked with the perception of 'Self' and what we perceive as our own unique national, religious and cultural identity. Religion and its relationship to national and social identities in our changing transnational context is a topic that deserves attention: nation and religion are embedded in cultural myths and identitarian ideologies that have more and more relevance in the global setting, and which are consequently shaping our understanding of the foreign 'Other'.

In various conflict and post-conflict zones, the concept of 'Other' is a matter of both war and peace, and its conceptualization is often a part of conflict resolution processes. In the Western multicultural context on the other hand, which is based on tolerance and inclusiveness, 'Other' is nevertheless frequently exoticized and reduced to a stereotype. The multi-cultural ideology thus often appears to be controversial in a sense that the 'Other' is frequently marked by his/her 'foreignness'.

I focus upon the Hollywood film, and films produced in South East Europe and Russia in order to explore these different layers and forms of exclusion that take place in different cinematic contexts. I take a transnational approach which gives the required critical perspective on the cross-cultural representation of the 'foreign Other'. I am interested in how global stereotypes influence our (self) perception of both locality and otherness, and vice versa. I claim that embracing a transnational approach in studying cultural representations and cinematic depictions of the notions of otherness and foreignness provides a good ground for further critical reconstructions of both locality and globalism.

Stephen Garner

School of Theology, Mission and Ministry, Laidlaw College, Auckland, New Zealand

Upside-down Angels: Inverting of Supernatural Good and Evil in Popular Culture

Angelic figures and their demonic counterparts have become a mainstay of popular culture over the past few decades since the introduction of television programmes such as *Highway to Heaven* and *Touched by an Angel* in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The introduction of these popular representations of angelic figures opened the door to further explorations of religion and spirituality in the mainstream media (Hoover, 2006) seen not only in film and television, but also in the work of authors such as Neil Gaiman (*Neverwhere*, *Sandman*, and *Lucifer*) and Thomas E. Sniegoski (*Fallen*, *A Kiss Before the Apocalypse*, and *Vampirella Strikes*), as well as in other supernatural and vampiric popular culture.

Over this period a significant shift in the portrayal of the angelic and demonic characteristics has occurred, with angels tending to become 'evil' (or at least misguided), while the demonic characters are presented in positive and even redemptive ways. These new narratives highlight an interesting shift where angelic and demonic figures are used to critique institutional religion, in particular Christianity, rather than being used to reinforce traditional understandings of supernatural good and evil. This paper will argue, using key examples, that this shift does not mean that religion or spirituality are being rejected *per se*, but rather serves to demonstrate that while original biblical and theological material may have become disconnected from its original context, cultural echoes of that biblical and religious imagery is being used to critique what is perceived as oppressive religious authority and dogmatism.

Christianity and Media**Sheila McCreanor**

Media coverage around canonization of Mary MacKillop

In the late 1990s I submitted a doctoral thesis entitled: *Sainthood in Australia: Mary MacKillop and the Print Media*. It was a study of Australian popular culture and endeavoured to explore how Mary MacKillop, an Australian Catholic nun, had become a religious icon and had affected the Australian search for identity. I incorporated into the thesis an analysis of political cartoons from mainstream Australian print media that dealt with Mary MacKillop.

Since then Mary MacKillop has been canonised by the Catholic Church in October 2010 and has received even more public acclaim in the print media. She has continued to be of interest to political cartoonists and more than 20 examples have appeared in Australian newspapers since 2009.

This paper will revisit themes from the earlier study and, using the additional cartoon data, explore how these reflect Mary MacKillop as an inspirational element in Australian religion and culture.

Craig Mitchell

PhD candidate, Dept of Theology, Flinders University, Adelaide, South Australia

Remixing and reframing the Sacred: the use of digital media in curating liminal religious experience

The paper will explore the changing use of electronic media within religious communities, in particular, the use of digital media in western Protestant churches. There has been a slow but significant shift in the ways in which digital media has been used to represent artefacts of religious meaning. Quentin Schultze and others have been critical of the introduction of screen-based communication into liturgical settings, reflecting a “high culture-low culture” view of media in relation to religion.

However, in recent times we have seen the emergence of what are known as “alternative worship” gatherings, articulated as sub-cultural expressions of religious devotion. The form of these has much in common with installation art, with the leaders taking the role of artists or curators rather than presiders or performers. The paper will examine this phenomenon using examples of two of the author’s own curated liturgical experiences. These examples will be analysed in terms of ritual theory, digital media theory (related in particular to video and projected image), and installation art theory.

The paper will then make some observations about the ways in which the use of media to create liminal religious experience reflects postmodern shifts in the quest for religious meaning. [Re]mixing, [re]framing, [re]presenting, [re]mediating, [re]flexing – processes of authoring and curating digital media exemplify shifts in the nature of authority, the place of tradition, the contribution of popular culture, and the validity of human experience.

Adam T. Shreve

University of Edinburgh

Jesus Films in Zimbabwean Contexts: Film Reception Concerning Representations of Jesus

This paper presents the author's research of a comparative reception study of Jesus films among the Shona peoples located in the Gora and Chikara villages, which are located in the Mashonaland West Province of Zimbabwe. The two central questions of the author’s research are: (1) In what ways might pre-existing Shona images of Jesus shape Shona responses to, and interpretations of, Jesus as he is portrayed in *The Jesus Film* (1979) and in indigenous, short, Jesus films in Zimbabwe today? (2) How might the viewing of these films affect these images of Jesus? This paper addresses how indigenous, short Jesus films in Zimbabwe have manifested different images of Jesus from the pervasive European image of Jesus that is perpetuated by *The Jesus Film*. This research is particularly relevant to current trends in media and technology, as the indigenous, short Jesus films are being distributed via mobile phones in Zimbabwe. This paper illustrates how the author is helping to fill the wide gap in Media, Religion and Culture scholarship associated with the reception of Jesus films in Africa through his original research connected to the reception of both *The Jesus Film* and indigenous, short, Jesus films in Zimbabwe today

Wednesday Panels starting at 2:45 pm

Identity Online

Nabil Echchaibi

Center for Media, Religion and Culture, University of Colorado Boulder

Islamic Media Redefined: Awakening Records and the Branding of the New Muslim Artist

In 2012, the London-based record label company, Awakening Records, signed a young American Muslim singer who made his YouTube debut rewriting the lyrics of popular songs. Raef, a high school teacher from Washington D.C. is best known for his 'Islamic covers' of Maroon 5, Chris Brown, Bob Marley and Michael Jackson. Raef's latest covers included a rewrite of Rebecca Black's 2011 Internet hit 'Friday', which he turned into 'Jumuah' to celebrate the Muslim day of prayer. Raef is the latest sensation in a growing wave of Muslim artists who seek to sanitize secular entertainment and provide a higher moral ground for the production and consumption of a religiously committed form of art. In the last decade pious Muslims have increasingly turned to secular symbols of consumer culture to refashion a modern religious identity. New niche markets for 'halal' (religiously lawful) music, films, food, tourism and other consumer goods are booming across Muslim majority countries and in Western cities across Europe and the Americas. The stunning growth of the global halal industry (with a market value estimated today at US\$2.1 trillion) has accelerated thanks to a wave of religious fervor among a social class of young, educated, and cosmopolitan Muslims who wish to embrace an "Islamic modern and global lifestyle." Such a modern lifestyle has meant that an emerging market of consumer products, advertising, and commercial media programming is increasingly labeled "Islamic" or halal and slowly contributes to the rise of an alternative marketing and branding culture.

This paper explores emerging branding landscapes in modern Muslim consumer culture through a focus on the Islamic music industry and the marketing of its popular artists. Specifically, I look at the work of Awakening Records and its impact on the cultivation of new entertainment tastes through music video production and digital marketing techniques. I argue that our interest in the marketing of new Muslim consumer lifestyles should move beyond the novelty of branding in Islam and turn to a substantive exploration of how contemporary Muslim actors negotiate their religious sensibilities in a secular global culture and re-imagine the terms of their identities through pious art productions. I ask how a burgeoning market of Islamic 'clean' music creatively appropriates secular symbols and production values to position the modern Muslim consumer as an agent in a larger piety movement that promotes an active form of religious devotion and cultural participation.

Susanne Stadlbauer

Research Fellow at the Center for Media, Religion, and Culture (CMRC)

Salafist networks

Modeling their ways of life on those of the Prophet Muhammad and of the *salaf* (the first generations of Muslims) does not necessarily give recent online Salafist activists the reputation of being modern. Global mainstream media often criticize Salafists' new media use as hypocritical and thus perpetuate rich neo-Orientalist and postcolonial discourses of conflicts between the West and Islam. As a response, some online Salafist networks in Germany, the UK, and in Tunisia authenticate their new media usage as a continuation of Islamic precepts given by the prophet Muhammad. One of these online communities is the Tunisia-based blog *SLF magazine*, or *Le Magazine du Salafi Moderne* (The Magazine of the Modern Salafist). Its bloggers, for example, include a Salafi seeing himself going to the mosque in a flying saucer in the future and a self-identified "Imam 2.0," who represent the interests of modern Salafists in Tunisia and in the Francophone world.

In this paper I analyze how the Salafist bloggers establish the validity of their creed through online comics, popular culture, and fashion marketing, while projecting historic concepts, such as *dawah* (outreach) and *jihad* (struggle), as authentic and modern. As "Super Muslims," "Iron Muslims," or simply as "superheroes of modern times," they work to stop endless fighting in foreign lands, such as in Syria. They utilize YouTube and Twitter to bypass traditional media outlets and thus counter the misrepresentation of the

mujahideen. As “cyber-jihadists,” some bloggers hack websites of Western establishments and ridicule indifferent Muslim leaders as Pok’imams (Pokémon Imams) who practice a “*Bisounours* (Care Bears) Islam” or “Barbie Islam.” As “fashion icons,” they market online Salafist fashion trends, such as the revival of *sirwal* (baggy pants) and of dense beards that are recently seen on some Hollywood actors. Both contested and celebrated elements of the mainstream imaginary merge into the common ideology of modern Salafism: the authentication of traditional Islamic authority *and* a neoliberal logic of consumerism and self-optimization through which Salafi customs are made appealing to a wide audience. Through the bloggers’ individual creativity and the internet’s technological affordances, the audience becomes part of this space and is conditioned in how to cultivate the body and mind as one dynamic whole.

Naseem Ammerally

A reading of Bollywood cinema as a site of melancholia for Indo-Mauritian Mauritian Muslim youth

Using questionnaire and interview findings from 100 young Mauritians (80 Muslims and 20 Hindus aged between 18-25, with a majority of women), this paper explores the ways in which young Mauritian Muslims for whom Bollywood narratives constitute one of the most significant cultural resources, negotiate the ambivalent legacies and representations of Muslims in Bollywood cinema. Dwyer (2000: 169) has suggested that one of the most important gaps in the study of Hindi cinema is the absence of any ethnographic study of the cinema audience. Ray (2000) and Mishra (2002) have discussed the centrality of 1960s Bollywood films in maintaining an imagined ‘Indianness’ for old Indian diasporic communities which had very little contact with the homeland. In Mauritius, Muslim and Hindu coalition for independence against Creole and white support for continued colonial rule was understood in terms of the moral scripts evinced by Bollywood narratives. The Muslim minority population in Mauritius has gradually re-imagined itself as forming part of a pan-Islamic nation, privileging its religious affiliations over its diasporic connections (Eisenlohr, 2006), having re-appropriated Arabic as one of its ancestral languages to uphold authenticity and purity. Informants’ responses will be read in terms of melancholia (Freud, 1914-1916), as their apparent emotional investment into Bollywood cinema is anxiously mitigated, particularly in the case of male respondents, marking a lack of consciousness of, and ambivalence towards the lost object—a composite Indo-Muslim culture—(Mufti, 2007), which remains under erasure in Mauritius. Following Mufti (ibid.), this experience of melancholia is understood in terms of the minoritization of Muslims of Indian descent who are divided between the sensory and cosmopolitan world embodied by Bollywood cinema (Werbner, 2009) that is an intrinsic part of their heritage, and their need to retreat into an ‘impermeable’ and ‘distinct’ Muslim self.

Nkiruka Okafor

Rethinking Post Colonial Religious Identity in Cyberspace: A Case Study from Nigeria

Studies on how Africans engage digital media have been carried out from various perspectives, as have studies on the role of the media in the formation of identity. Digital media culture theory studies engagement with the media and religion not from the approach of instrumentalism but from the point of view of culture being created and negotiated (Horsfield, Hess, Medrano 2004). Previously, studies of how Africans engage digital media have been done from the perspective of significance and usage (White 2011). Despite the importance of the role of the digital media in the rethinking of postcolonial identity by Africans, little work has been done on the topic. Therefore, this study will use a simple exploratory qualitative research to thickly describe the culture of rethinking postcolonial religious identity by Africans in the cyberspace using a case study of an issue in Nigeria. The data are from discussions on three social media groups (n=4803) of a particular town on a controversial burial rite forbidden by the traditional religion but, approved by Christianity, where the people found the space to express their religious identity as Christians and Africans. The data generated from the posts and comments were manually coded and analysed, prompting four themes to emerge from the data. Some Africans are rethinking their religious identity through rejection of Christianity as an imposed religion from colonization. Second, there are those who think that what should be rejected are African traditions and religions which are “pagan.” The third theme describes those who struggle to hold on to a balance between the two seemingly disparate religious identities. The last theme captures those who express apathy and dismay and want all matters on religion to become private as is much of the West. The findings affirm that Africans are rethinking their postcolonial identity in different ways and are doing so within the digital media in a manner that challenges the instrumentalist approach to the study of the media.

New Trends in Religion and Film

The aim of this panel is to demonstrate a number of new trends in the field of religion and film. It is now two decades since the theological and religious study of the arts and culture underwent a renaissance in the academy, the school and religious communities. Journals, conferences and symposia, international societies, monographs, encyclopaedias and essay collections have been produced to explore the rich interplay between human cultural creativity and theological and religious studies, and some of the most prolific literature has been at the intersection between religion/theology and film, as the work of Lyden, Johnston, Wright, Vaux, Marsh and Reinhartz has highlighted. This panel will consist of three papers each of which typify four main directions that research in this burgeoning field have produced in the last twenty years and will suggest the directions in which the field needs to move if it is to have a future.

Árni Svanur Danielsson's paper will begin the conversation by exploring the ways in which fictional religious representations in the history of film match, or deviate from, their real-life counterparts, with specific reference to the depiction of pastors in Nordic films from a sample of films from 100 years ago and today. This paper will take as a starting point the presence of the pastor in celluloid and will ask questions about the effect that such representations possess for both Christian and non-Christian spectators of these films concerned, and the multifaceted ways in which the churches themselves have sanctioned or critiqued such portrayals of their communities.

Alexander Darius Ornella will then situate the study of religion and film within wider ideological and interdisciplinary discourses, in particular those which focus on the representation of the body. This is an important paper for the way in which it seeks to move beyond surface-level investigations of the relationship between 'religion' on the one hand and 'film' on the other by focusing on the ambiguous and messy terrain that emerges when different constructions of corporeal identity are projected in postmodernity.

Finally, Chris Deacy will examine and critique the implicit assumption in much of the religion-film literature that 'religion' and 'film' are effectively two discrete, autonomous and clearly demarcated constructs. Such a position is redolent of Niebuhr's dualist, 'Christ and Culture in Paradox' model which sees a tension between these two norms and which, while allowing for negotiation and sometimes compromise between the two, is nevertheless clear that they are not interchangeable or fluid constructs. Deacy will show that for the field of religion and film to have any longevity there needs to be a movement away from such binary positions towards one in which the category of religion is itself capable of revision and reformulation as a result of such dialogue. Deacy's focus will be on how Christmas movies may comprise rich sites of religious activity because of rather than in spite of their material and consumerist pedigree.

Árni Svanur Danielsson
Icelandic theologian and pastor
Rev. Metalhead

Janus in the Icelandic film *Metalhead* and Anna in the Danish film *Forbrydelser* are two of the most interesting characters we meet in recent Nordic films. Both are pastors and there is a level of vulnerability to them that makes them deeper and more likable than many pastors on the silver screen. In the paper I analyse the representation of the pastors and Christianity in these two films and examine them in the context of the representation of pastors in Nordic films from 1919 and the representation of religion in recent Scandinavian films. In particular I look at two questions: is there a difference between the representation of male and female pastors in these films and what role do they play in the films with regards the other characters, i.e. what is the function of the pastors and thus religion in these films?

Alexander Darius Ornella
Lecturer in Religion, University of Hull
Fantastic Bodies. Tech-Bodies as mysterium tremendum et fascinosum

Visions and ideas of bodies, of perfect bodies, broken bodies, fantastic bodies, and monstrous bodies continue to haunt us as we try to make sense of our corporeality. Our time is a time of rapid scientific and technological development, of technology that invades our bodies but also calls for a tender touch or

stroke. Sci-fi aims to disrupt viewing patterns, reveal new perspectives, and reflect on the human condition and human bodiliness in its technological context. The category of the fantastic as ambivalent category between the uncanny and that which fascinates us is a particularly apt framework to analyze these fascinating-uncanny (technological) bodies on screen and the questions they raise for the way we understand our messy bodies. This paper will first look at the category of the fantastic and then apply it to the analysis of sci-fi bodies on screen.

Chris Deacy

Reader in Theology & Religious Studies, University of Kent

Christmas films as sites of religious activity

In light of the culturalist turn in the study of religion since the 1970s, this paper will examine the extent to which Christmas films give rise to the possibility that religious identity and experience may be located in new cultural forms. Have cinematic models of Christmas as a festival of consumption resulted in any changes to the way Christmas has been defined or appropriated within Christianity, such as by subsuming Santa and material gift-giving within Christian liturgy and ritual? In view of their transcendental (rather than as Dell de Chant sees it their naturalistic) elements, might Christmas films not so much comprise secular paradigms of Christmas but function in their own right as new forms of religiosity and repositories of sacred activity? At the heart of this paper I will explore the paradox that Christmas movies are spaces in which the transcendent appears in an otherwise secularized milieu.

Music Messages

Jean-Baptiste Sourou

African Cities: Place for Developing a New “Hybrid” African Culture

Over the two last decades, in many parts of Africa there is an emergence of new religious cultures. People invent new fashions to celebrate their rituals. Traditional weddings, funerals, birthdays or other major events become very impressive with the use of new symbols and the presence of new ministers who perform beside the old ones. The phenomenon affects particularly cities, where the innovators deploy great communication methods which attract and involve crowds.

This paper is the result of a recent fieldwork in West African and it examines the reasons for the emergence of these new religious cultures through musical and dance performances since they embody new symbolic forms for the city dwellers.

Tom Wagner

University of London

What is the “Value of Values”? : Music and Prosumption in the Growth Church Context

This paper addresses the apparent synergy between evangelical Christian growth churches and modernity, late-capitalism, and neoliberalism. Commodification and consumption are often posited as important modes of circulation and experience in mediated religious practices. While this is undoubtedly the case, I suggest that the “theology of consumption” thesis that is used to explain the self- and meaning-making activities of (post)modern subjects, while useful, risks oversimplifying the variegated forms of value and values that color the dynamics of exchange. Protestant thought, late-capital exchange, and neoliberal subjectivity are all built upon internal tensions vis-à-vis individual and systemic authority. However the delineation between “producer” and “consumer” and “authority” and “agency” in any of these realms is not cut and dry. Rather, they are “prosumed,” co-constituted through a Post-Fordist cluster of co-productive relationships.

Drawn from my PhD work undertaken between 2009 and 2013 on Australia’s Hillsong Church London location, this paper is an ethnomusicological exploration of the “prosumption of values.” Hillsong’s music is engaged with throughout the world, so much so that it is often referred to as a distinct genre or style of worship. This is significant, because style carries with it value-laden connotations. One would expect that churches that share Hillsong’s values would use its music. Yet many churches that explicitly reject its values

also sing its songs. I suggest that this apparent contradiction can be understood by placing the evangelical call to live “in but not of the world” in the context of the Web 2.0 marketing strategies that growth oriented churches employ. Growth oriented churches provide the materials and infrastructure for meaning- and self-making activities but “allow” them to be assembled as “user-generated content” by participants in local, socio-historically situated contexts. In doing so, the brand values of the organization act as reference points (both synergetic or otherwise) for that allow each participant to articulate his or her own values. This presumption process is both “in and of” late-capitalism in that it is hegemonic, but can also be understood in the historical Protestant understanding of anointing, in which an individual’s evangelical agency is concomitant with spiritual authority.

Mark Porter

City University, London

Congregational music and the ‘new cosmopolitanism’

Within discussions of diversity in church music it is often assumed that the key issue at stake is one of representation. If congregational diversity is to be taken seriously then members will want to hear their own, familiar, styles of music within the worship of the church. At the opposite end of the spectrum is the position that members of a congregation will somehow assimilate to a church’s dominant musical style, learning to appreciate it on the terms that it is offered. In contrast to both perspectives I want to suggest, on the basis of my doctoral fieldwork, that a focus on the diverse ways in which individuals understand the values present both within their ‘own’ musics and the music of the church does better justice to the experience of worshippers. As such it is negotiation surrounding these values and understandings which offers a potential site for productive dialogue. Such a model holds much in common with elements of the ‘new cosmopolitanism’ and I will suggest that, with their desire to bring diverse understandings into conversational relation, cosmopolitan models provide a potentially fruitful alternative to the multicultural and assimilationist models that often dominate discussion.

Daniel Thornton

Alpha Crucis College

Contemporary Congregational Songs, YouTube and virtual Christian Communities

The online media streaming and social networking service, YouTube, has become a dominant resource of Contemporary Congregational Songs (CCS) to Christians around the globe. This free (from a user perspective) service allows people to listen to and view their favourite CCS anywhere, anytime, provided they have an internet connection. Furthermore, they can share these videos, create and post their own, make comments on other people’s creations, and enter into online text discussions with other listeners/viewers. Church musicians are able to learn or discover songs for use within their local setting. Churches are able to project YouTube videos of CCS on public screens (despite the copyright implications) in place of live worship teams when required, as a facilitator for congregational worship. This phenomenon is reshaping global Christian community identities, as CCS define and reinforce doctrine through their lyrics, while the style of music and visual performance contexts (including staging, lighting, physical movement, and film editing approaches) communicate cultural values, aesthetics and identity.

This paper seeks to examine the top 5 globally (at least in the Western or Westernised world) accepted and utilized CCS according to data collected from Christian Copyright Licensing International (CCLI), the international body that collects royalties on behalf of CCS owners and CCS recording owners from local churches. These songs’ representations on YouTube (especially those with the highest view counts) will be scrutinized from musicological, media studies and cultural studies perspectives to understand how virtual transnational religious communities are being formed and how these songs shape the theology and identity of these “imagined” communities.

Religious Branding

Benjamin Lindquist

MORMONSANDGAYS.ORG

Since 2012, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has operated an official website to clarify its stance on homosexuality. The design of *mormonsandgays.org* is spare but crisp; through text and video, the site shows Saints explaining their attitude toward “same-sex attraction.” I will explore the subtle ways in which this website uses the non-verbal language of media in order to make the LDS stance on homosexuality palatable.

While the website never explicitly states that sexual preference can or will change, it does use imagery to suggest that members can alter their sexual orientation. Without saying that change in sexual orientation is possible (a claim that is increasingly difficult to defend), *mormonsandgays.org* provides a video of a formerly gay man happily watching his wife and child. The church, I contend, uses this tacit tactic because visual evidence is more difficult to challenge or refute. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this image comports with the website’s consistent emphasis on family. A self-identified gay man, for example, says that family was his main reason for leaving homosexuality and remaining within the church. The church uses an appeal to family to subtly suggest the consequences of homosexuality: apostasy and the loss of family and friends.

This website contains sympathetic videos of lay church members who have experienced “same gender attraction.” Perhaps somewhat ironically, however, church leaders appear less sympathetic. In their videos, they wear dark suits and sit in dim libraries and offices. Unlike the lay members, the words of the church leaders are not accompanied by heartwarming music. I want to argue that these non-verbal differences in presentation allow and even subtly encourage church members to position themselves against the negatively perceived official church stance on homosexuality. This presentation seems to ask viewers to associate with the more personal testimonials of the sympathetic church members who struggle with homosexuality but nevertheless decide to remain with the church. The website’s Mormon readers can adopt the appearance of liberality through a soft opposition to the much-derided official LDS stance on homosexuality. However, this presentation nevertheless encourages viewers to side with the orthodox and anti-homosexual views as presented by the lay church members.

Stefanie Knauss

Villanova University

Religion in Advertising: What, How, and Why? A Comparative Study of Print Advertisements in the US and Western Europe

This paper presents the results of an exploratory study that compares the presence of religious motifs in US-American and western European magazine print advertisements (lifestyle and news magazines) for non-religious products. I argue that the use of religious motifs in advertising differs due to the different socio-religious set-up of these cultures (separation of religion and state, but strong public presence of religion in the US; closer relationships between religion and state, but more private practice of religion in western Europe). The study uses content analysis to establish differences and similarities in how often and what kind of religious references (both visual and textual, explicit and implicit) appear in advertising. It seeks to understand these differences and similarities on the background of existing theoretical frameworks, such as Katie Edward’s critique of the ideological and normative power of advertising, Tricia Sheffield’s discussion of the religious dimensions of advertising (mediation, sacramentality, ultimate concern), Anna-K. Höpflinger’s application of Bellah’s concept of civil religion to the “commercial religion” of advertising, Vincent Miller’s study of religion in consumer culture, and Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital. This paper contends that these frameworks can be useful to understand in a general sense why religious motifs are used in advertising in a supposedly secular society, and they can help to imagine possible religious functions of advertising. However, given the considerable differences in how media and religion interact even within a North-Atlantic western context such as in the US in comparison to western Europe, frameworks for understanding the interaction between advertising and religion have to be more culturally specific and take the socio-cultural contexts into account in which advertisements are produced and received. With its comparative

study of US-American and western European advertising, this paper contributes to such a culturally specific study of advertising and religion, and more in general of the interaction between religion and media.

Michael Ulrich
University of Zurich

The role, effects, and impact of religious symbolism in successful marketing strategies

This research project focuses on strategies that drive some of the most successful-marketing campaigns in the recent past. Market shares of 20% and more, successfully built and defended are exceptional and need explanation beyond the standard analysis of marketing budget and brand identification. The project approaches marketing-strategies within a religious-theoretical frame striving to find out if some obviously extremely powerful and successful marketing strategies can be compared with the role, the effects, and the impact of religions symbolism.

The theoretical frame is developed following the contributions of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum on capability, combining them with Clifford Geertz' approach to religion. Selected marketing-strategies and their medial representations will be analysed on behalf of the circuit of cultures described by Stuart Hall. Inquiring about a potential appropriation of religious symbolism by the business community, this interdisciplinary research outlines the often overlooked economical dimension within the study of religion.

Wednesday Panels starting at 4:30 pm

Media, Ritual and Emotion: Revisiting Ritual Theory and Practice in the Study of Religion in Modern Society

One of the eminent debates in contemporary social and cultural analysis is the contested relationship between ritual and modern society. For one, there is a strong legacy of the work of Durkheim, Turner, Douglas, Goffman, and Collins and their followers explaining social life through the framework of ritual. For the other, ritual in modern social and cultural theory has been claimed to belong to the category of primitive social order, hence alien, or even hostile to modern life. Sociologist David Chaney (1986) even observes that, by definition, society is modern when its dependence upon shared (religious!) beliefs and rituals representing these beliefs is severed, or when ritual virtually loses its meaning. Seen from this point of view, rituals are religious, archaic, authoritarian, unquestionable, superstitious relics of the pre-modern social organization that are in irreconcilable conflict with the type of society that places a premium on rational, secular and individual choice. Put somewhat bluntly, these factions of modern social theory take the view that rituals have had little, if any, value in understanding modern life.

Yet it remains clear that rituals have not died out. One of the explanations offered for the continued survival of ritual in present day, pluralistic societies highlights the role of broadly shared emotions. Many social and cultural analysts agree that the incessant movement of modernization generates a new type of insecurity and anxiety, resulting in an unintended longing for repetition and structure (cf. Seligman et al. 2008). Individuals, the argument goes, are besieged by various states of anomie that sever them from established hierarchic structures and fail to attach themselves to a new order. Consequently, modern society creates a hunger that symbolic and ritual communication satisfies. In a world of global risks, insecurities, maximal mediation, and unexpected consequences, rituals not only help to give a sense of control and order to the world, they also provide a momentary release from everyday shackles. Ritual can be understood as a modulation of emotion that limns what phenomenologists call the life-world, the horizon of felt-life, and what others have called communities of sentiment, structures of feeling that map the world in terms of sympathies, empathies, and antipathies. John Corrigan has argued that “by linking various aspects of religion—ritual, authority, community, ideas, and other features—to a new center, the study of religion and emotion promises to disclose meanings previously hidden” (2004: 25). This panel is designed to clarify that new center in the study of religion.

Jolyon Mitchell

Edinburgh University, Scotland

Ritualising Becket: Material Memories and Mediated Emotions

Through this paper I analyse how the murder of Thomas à Becket (c.1118-1170) by four of King Henry II's knights in Canterbury Cathedral on 29 December 1170 laid the seeds for the growth of a range of informal and formal rituals. I investigate how these rituals evolved and provoked a range of emotional responses. I begin by discussing how different materials and media were used to preserve and promote the memory of Becket's death. Thousands of pilgrims were soon visiting, touching and even kissing the shrine of the former Archbishop of Canterbury. I consider how his remains, and arguably the materials and emotions that were connected with them, became a magnet for visitors. The significant increase in the number of visiting pilgrims substantially augmented the wealth of the Cathedral and the city of Canterbury. I go on to investigate, through a brief series of discussions of artistic, dramatic and cinematic examples, how these rituals and 'rememberings' became points of controversy and creativity in later historical contexts. By way of conclusion, I discuss what light this history can shed upon how material memories and mediated emotions can contribute to evolving forms of ritual practice.

David Morgan

Duke University, USA

Emotion and Imagination in Ritual Mediation

This paper considers the place of emotion and ritual in social analysis once we move beyond functionalism, particularly as regards the understanding of such cognates as religion, sport, and national piety as forms of

mediation. The paper works from Durkheim on emotion and ritual and Anderson on imagination and cognition toward an integrated treatment of mediation as the aesthetic analysis of thought and feeling. Mediation is defined as the production and maintenance of human associations in ways that both modulate feeling and embody thought. Ritual and media uses are deeply enfolded in order to charge the imagination of belonging to diverse social units. Such ritual activities as religion, sport, and national piety are therefore best understood as variously integrated forms of thought and feeling. Ritual amalgamation, as we might call it, leavens or tinctures an event with the prestige of an authority or institution as a way of enhancing the prestige and charisma of the event and accruing that prestige as symbolic capital for the sponsoring organization—advertisers, professional organizations, politicians, religious institutions, or the state. The attention afforded the ritual event urges spectators to recognize in it a compelling medium for imagination and shared sensibility.

Joanna Sumiala

University of Helsinki, Finland

Ritualization of Public Death – The Case of Two Ladies

Ritualization of public death is a prism that casts light in many ways on the theme of the (sacred) value of life and death in the contemporary society of high media-saturation. In this paper, the ritualization of public death is first discussed by examining the idea and history of ritualization of public death in and via the media as a gendered performance. This is followed by an examination of the dynamics of ritualization in the case of highly emotional and symbolically laden public death in the media. Two case studies consist of the analysis of the death Princess Diana in 1997 and former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in 2013. In the paper it is argued that even though different in many aspects (cause of death, age, character, role in society) the ritualization in both cases played an important role in constructing and maintaining the gendered hierarchies associated with the value of life and death and the related sacredness in the contemporary media society.

Gordon Lynch

University of Kent, Canterbury, UK

The Ritual of Public Apologies: Marking Shifting Forms of the Sacred

A specific form of mediated ritual in late modernity is the form of the public apology made in relation to a specific historical injustice. Using the example of recent public apologies in cases of institutional abuse in which religious organizations and State structures have been implicated, the paper examines how such rituals seek to generate an experience of collective moral solidarity which stands in opposition to earlier forms of moral consensus which allow such abuse to take place. Whilst constructed as 'natural' expressions of remorse, such apologies constitute a re-framing of moral distinctions between the sacred and the profane that suggest the ways in which these moral meanings shift through time. This has potentially significant effects in drawing people previously shamed into the "sacred centre" of civic life (Alexander, 2008). As such these rituals of public apologies are examples of the "social process of remembering" (Olick, 2007), in which the roles of specific social actors and institutions are plotted in relation to the sacred and the profane and whose narration of the past can be contested.

Pious Pregnancies, Political Satire, Friendly Atheists, and Urban Eco-Justice: Politics, Media, and Moral Engagement

This paper session brings together four scholars whose work probes the complex entanglements of religion, media, and politics in contemporary American culture. Engaging dynamics of multiplicity and meaning in a variety of contexts, the papers pay particular attention to strategic media practices as they relate to political/moral storying, critique, resistance, and reframing. Whether engaging the body and gender politics of high-profile heroic pregnancies, the national political satire and wry moral commentary of the Colbert Report, the rebranding of new atheist identity and aesthetics in advertising campaigns, or the moral critiques and prophetic dimensions of urban eco-rap's rhymes and beats, this session provides a fresh perspective not only into the relationship between media practices and moral engagement but into the polyvalent and potent ways that culture "works."

Myev Rees

Northwestern University

Media Martyr Mommies and the Heroic Pregnancy

This paper will examine the convergence of media, religion, and politics in the construction of the “martyr mother” and the “heroic pregnancy.” From Kate Gosling, to Michelle Duggar, to fictional mothers from books like *Twilight* and *Harry Potter*, motherhood—particularly heroic, risky, or fatal motherhood—has become a powerful source of religious, political, and cultural self-identification. Motherhood as piety is hardly new. However, the image of the self-sacrificing mother has been deployed in recent religious and political discourse, as well as in popular media, to invert the feminist narrative of reproductive choice and construct and sanctify the mother (and by extension the child) who chooses to die for her pregnancy or child. This inversion is directly tied to the dissemination of conservative evangelical cultural discourse into the “secular” realms of popular culture and politics. This paper will examine the trope of the martyr mother and the heroic pregnancy in popular media in order to unpack questions related to the convergence of politics and popular culture, identity and gender, piety and symbol production.

Stephanie Brehm

Northwestern University

Colbert's Religious Expressions: The Liminal Space of the Satirical Persona in American Media

In his Comedy Central television program, “The Colbert Report,” faux-news pundit Stephen Colbert illustrates the “culture wars” debate through his polarizing interviews with clergy and atheists. His satirical persona complicates the perceived duality of atheism and conservative religious understandings. Colbert mediates the bifurcation and segmentation of American politics and religious ideologies for his audiences, humorously advocating and rationalizing the multiple viewpoints espoused by his guests. Since humorous satire and jokes are a primary method of debating ideologies in the twenty-first century, popular comedians like Stephen Colbert have a significant influence on mass society and culture. Brehm analyzes how Colbert’s interviews with Catholic priests and nuns, and with New Atheist writers alike, construct complex definitions of “religion” for contemporary audiences.

Hannah Scheidt

Northwestern University

“Just Be Good for Goodness' Sake”: Defining Irreligious Morality in the Mediasphere

This paper examines how atheist media outlets – from billboard and bus ad campaigns to television and radio shows – engage in efforts to challenge perceptions of a religious monopoly on morality. Atheists, we are increasingly told, are good citizens, good neighbors, and good people. Analyzing both the aesthetics of visual culture and engaging varied new media sources of atheist discussion communities, Scheidt provides insight into how a new generation of atheists is rejecting the image of the “unhappy atheist” as they speak to a universal responsibility to live ethically without reference to God. These efforts aim to reshape, reposition, and rebrand the public face of atheism, pushing back against conservatives’ dour warnings against the moral dangers of “losing religion.”

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Sarah Macfarland Taylor

Pollution, Prophecy, and Politics: Green Hip Hop and Eco-Rap as Moral Tools of Urban Media Resistance

The prophetic music and video creations of eco-rappers reveal a distinctive vision of environmental values and ethical priorities from those primarily associated with environmentalism in American popular culture. Instead of images of redwoods, endangered species, rainforests, national parks, and majestic retreats for wilderness lovers, sportsmen, and hikers, eco-rap artists radically reframe the aesthetics and politics of American environmentalism to focus on asthma, cancer, toxics, and “food deserts” in minority neighborhoods. Eco-rap’s emphasis is fundamentally and unapologetically urban and centers on unemployment, poverty, malnutrition, and illness as not peripheral but core environmental problems. In this multimedia digital sound/video presentation, Taylor explores the use of green hip hop aesthetics and eco-rap as moral tools of urban media resistance. Eco-rappers prophetically conjure a future in which jobs, justice, and healthy urban minority communities are central not just to survival but indeed to an envisioned “great future” for the nation. As eco-rap videos flash images of refineries, high-voltage power lines, chemical run-off, and minority children sucking from asthma inhalers, eco-rap artists issue not only an indicting critique of the moral failures of eco-racism in America’s cities but call their audiences to action for justice.

Demonization/Marginalization:

Magali do Nascimento Cunha

Methodist University of São Paulo

The place of media in the construction of the imaginary of the "enemy" among Protestant groups in Brazil: a case on the relationship between media, religion and politics

It was possible to accompany in the news media in Brazil, in 2013, an episode without precedent in the country's Parliament, which potencialized the relationship media-religion-politics in the social dynamics. On March 5, the small Christian Socialist Party (PSC) announced the nomination of one of his members, the deputy Pentecostal pastor Marco Feliciano (from the State of São Paulo), as chairman of the Human Rights and Minorities Commission of the Chamber of Deputies. The reactions contrary to the name of Marco Feliciano on the part of groups for the cause of Human Rights were immediate, claiming that the deputy was known in media spaces for discriminatory statements regarding black people and homosexuals. Added to this is the fact that the nominated politician and his party do not have any history of involvement with the cause of Human Rights that qualify them for the position.

Despite the political issue around the legitimacy of the nomination, what caught attention to this case was the "snowball" it provoked from the reactions against the deputy, formed by public protests by various segments of civil society, plus the creation of a parliamentary opposition front to Feliciano’s nomination and the establishment of a "religious war" between Protestants and activists of lesbian, gays, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) movements and feminist movements, and between Protestants and non-Christians. And this snowball is the product of factors that are beyond the case, and expose it as one more element in a more complex picture of the relationship between religion and society in Brazil. Among these factors is the construction of the imaginary of the other as an enemy which is the object of this study.

Starting from the assertion that media are components of the social dynamics and interact in socio-historical, cultural, religious and political processes of different societies, this work seeks to identify the place of media in the construction of the collective imaginary configuration of enemies in this sociopolitical and religious phenomenon, here called "Marco Feliciano case". To do this, the work has references on studies in the field of social imaginary anchored in the philosophy of Cornelius Castoriadis, the anthropology of Gilbert Durand and the sociology of Michel Maffesoli. These references are the basis for this exploratory and descriptive study, which was guided by the following question: to what extent and how the Brazilian media participated in the process of the construction of the collective imaginary of the enemy in the Marco Feliciano case in 2013?

Leonardo Martins (University of São Paulo, Brazil)

Wellington Zangari (University of São Paulo, Brazil)

New "lambs of God": The public scorn as a mediatic strategy for growth of exotic religious groups in Brazil

Introduction: The Brazilian syncretism favors the coexistence among different religious denominations. However, some groups interact with such customarily permissive major culture in a way to suffer open stigmatization, which generates their growth instead of decline.

Objective: It aims to present psychosocial processes by which some Brazilian religious groups obtain their strengthening through the scorn suffered in strategic media appearances.

Method: This is an ethnographic research, with data collected between 1997 and 2013 inside religious Brazilian groups allegedly guided by extraterrestrial and spiritual entities.

Results: The exoticism of these groups results in frequent appearances on television and other media. Then it occurs a generalized public scorn through aggressive and satirical attacks to the honesty and intelligence of the members of these groups while they defend themselves with apparent humility. This defense continues in events and publications of the groups, in addition to being a main topic of daily conversations among members.

While the representatives of the groups seem to be fakes or ignorant to the vast majority of people who follow these media appearances, a very small minority of viewers (but large in absolute numbers, because of the national reach of the media) identify with these members, consider them as special and misunderstood people and then join the group. There is evidence that one group has acquired hundreds (allegedly thousands) of members mainly through this intentional media strategy.

Discussion: It is possible to recognize religious aspects in these groups and their belief-meaning systems, such as transcendence, faith, rituals, codes of conduct, deification of extraterrestrial guides, myths of foundation, prophecies, among many other aspects.

That minority recognize the leaders of the groups as martyrs, new "lambs of God" who sacrifice themselves to spread the "truth" and promote salvation to humanity through their painful public exposure. Then occurs numerous new affiliations to the group and the strengthening of the emotional ties among members who recognize each other as wronged and outsiders.

Tim Karis

University of Münster, Center for Islamic Theology

Beyond Stereotypes: A Cultural Approach to Islam on German Television (1979-2010)

Given widespread anti-Muslim discriminations in the West, the need for critical research on media portrayals of Islam is beyond dispute. However, I argue that in order to deepen our understanding of Islam in the media, we have to review some of the terminology, theoretical assumptions, and methods that are prevalent in the research field and find alternative approaches that go beyond one-dimensional concepts like 'stereotyping' and 'bias'.

A first problem is oversimplification. Through their terminology ('Islamophobia', 'Feindbild Islam') many studies imply that media reporting on Islam was of an entirely negative and hostile character. This notion is easily rejected in view of the fact that a lot of media reports actually revolve around the problem of Muslim discrimination or take issue with states withholding Muslim minority rights. Second, many researchers take it

for granted that the media base their representations of Islam on a simple and dichotomous structure (Islam/West) and therefore fail to acknowledge the many complexities, ambiguities, and contradictions that constitute the discourse. Third, a common proposition given by researchers is that the media should include more ‘positive’ reports on Islam in order to counter the bulk of ‘negative’ news. This proposition ignores that negativity is a basic news value not specific to reporting on Islam. Besides, the distinction between ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ reports runs the risk of creating highly problematic categories like ‘the good Muslim’ and ‘the bad Muslim’.

In my paper, I put forward an approach that is designed to bring research on media representations of Islam closer to the wider theoretical discussion that goes on in the field of research on religion, media, and culture. Taking its cues from the Cultural Studies School, this approach focuses on media narratives rather than stereotypes. In order to point out the advantages of such an approach, I present some results of a research project in which I analyzed news reports from German television and identified a number of Islam-narratives that constituted the discourse in the 1979-2010 time period. As I point out, it is possible to deal with the complexities of media discourses whilst maintaining a critical position towards reporting.

Nazli Ozkan
Northwestern University

Broadcasting Violence Against Alevis: Competing Historical Narratives of Alevi Marginalization in Turkey

During Ramadan 2012, in the city of Malatya in Turkey, a group of Sunni-Muslims attacked a Kurdish-Alevi family because the family members were not fasting. The Alevis, a non-Sunni-Muslim religious minority, do not fast in Ramadan and this creates tensions between Sunnis and Alevis in many mixed neighborhoods. The ‘Malatya Event,’ which quickly became national news, is an extreme example of this conflict. Based on fieldwork at the Alevi-run Cem TV station in Istanbul during its broadcasting of the incident, this paper shows how the media in Turkey becomes a key site for managing the particular meanings attributed to the religious marginalization of Alevis. During when Cem TV covered this occurrence, the channel had an unsettled discourse that both asserted and disavowed the Alevi-Sunni tension that triggered the incident. Why did Cem TV, a channel established to publicize Alevi problems, follow such an ambiguous approach in reporting an attack on Alevis? In what ways does Cem TV’s unsettled mediation reinsert the state’s nationalist framework in order to manage class and ethnicity based inequalities within Alevis? By following this event in several contexts of its utterance, the newscast, the newsroom, and Malatya, this paper contends that Cem TV’s ambivalent discourse works to silence experiences of lower-class, Kurdish-Alevis while simultaneously producing a single historical narrative of Alevi marginalization whose ‘victims’ are exclusively Turkish. This ethnographic study, therefore, reveals how minority media open new possibilities of representation for marginalized groups, but also foreclose others in the face of the state’s hegemonic nationalism.