

# Introduction

In March 2010, McGill Graduate Student's hosted their third annual McGill-CREOR Graduate Students Conference. The theme of the conference was, "Religion as Revolution: Sites of Transformation." The conference attracted a large interdisciplinary audience who presented papers concerned with the relationship and identity religion shares with revolution, revolutionaries and other transformative events. Presented in this volume are the two keynote speakers from the conference, Johannes Wolfart and Travis Kroeker. Followed by the keynote papers we have selected three articles that portray the breath of the conference. Contributions from Richard Greydanus, Victoria Gross and E. Meaghan Matheson portray the kaleidoscopic perspective religion has in reference to 'revolution'. The key to these papers was not to specifically focus on revolution in its standard political social meaning, but to see the many different layers religion, understood from the perspective of revolution, contains—or does not easily contain, as evidenced in Wolfart. These papers discuss religion as revolution from the perspective of, but not limited to, theology and literary criticism, methodology and theory, political movements and national identity, corporeality and aesthetics. To further contextualize the articles the conference problematic is quoted in full for the reader's interest:

At first glance, religion might appear antithetical to revolution. In fact, in the discourse of contemporary Western secularism, religion is often spoken of as inherently conservative, in that it upholds outdated principles and ideals, and so, does nothing to substantially disrupt the status quo. Religions themselves often participate and help to shape this vision, painting themselves as the last bastions of 'traditional values', islands in a sea of change. A closer look at religious thought and practice reveals that they can and often have been revolutionary, providing some of the most severe, sustained and ground-breaking critiques of the prevailing social order. As such, both contemporary and historical religious movements have, and continue to radically reshape the social world, whether it be that of the individual practitioner, the religious community, or society at large. Though this conference takes as its starting point the Study of Religions, we welcome and encourage an interdisciplinary approach to the problematic. Thus, [the conference organizers] are looking for papers that address questions such as: How have particular religious movements challenged established worldviews through (re)education? How have they provided a space to deconstruct and/or

reconstruct identity? Can religious conversion be thought of as revolutionary? In what ways has religion involved itself in, or been usurped by revolutionary political movements? What linguistic and methodological revolutions have been associated with religion? We welcome all papers that duly engage with the study of religious perspectives as revolutionary.

We hope that the readers of *Arc* will enjoy these papers selected from the conference as well as the non-thematic submissions, which help to convey the current shifts in method, object and theory in religious studies.