Arc, The Journal of the School

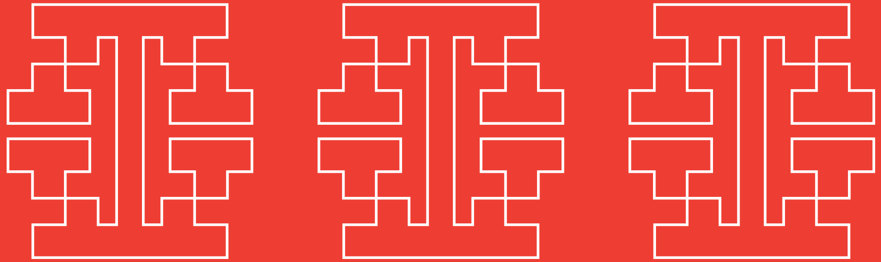
49
(2021)

of Religious Studies, McGill University

ARC

The Journal of the School of Religious Studies
McGill University

Volume 49 : 2021



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Arc now incorporates Religious Traditions: A Journal in the Study of Religion (ISSN 0156-1650), first published in 1978 with Ian Kesarcodi-Watson (1938-84) and Arvind Sharma as its founding editors.

Arc is indexed in Religion Index One: Periodicals, published by the American Theological Library Association (ATLA), and is part of the ATLA Database available online at http://www.atla.com/.

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LCCN cn 82-30306; RSN 8276282; ISSN 0229-2807

Website: https://arcjournal.library.mcgill.ca/index
E-mail: arc.relgstud@mcgill.ca

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Editorial Address

Although many will remember 2020 as the year of the pandemic, it was also the year when George Floyd, a Black man, was brutally murdered by White police officer Derek Michael Chauvin under the pretense of reasonable policing. The Black Lives Matter demonstrations in protest of the systematic racism laid bare by this murder inspired a global response: in the months following Floyd's death, millions of people from around the world held demonstrations protesting racial inequality, racialized violence, and racialized police violence specifically.

In the wake of these protests have been calls for renewed vigilance in reflecting on and responding to issues related to race and the reality of racialized discrimination and violence; calls to seriously foreground these discussions and not let them slip out of public consciousness as so commonly occurs in our world of twenty-four hour news cycles. The present volume – "Religion, Resistance, and Racialization" – was inspired by these calls, and seeks to showcase research dealing with some of the ways racism and religion intersect.

Our first article, "Purity Culture's Racist Fruit: Centering the Voices of Black Womanists and Feminists in the Deconstruction of Purity Culture," by Olivia Jayne Schultz, interrogates the racialized underpinnings of contemporary North American Evangelical purity culture, and highlights the need to foreground Black womanist and feminist interventions in the deconstruction of this culture. Next is Filippo Pedretti's "Race and Zen: Julius Evola, Fascism, and D. T. Suzuki," which highlights how discourse analysis can be used to problematize political narratives rooted in the intersection of racism and spirituality. Following this is "The Racialization of Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa" by Brenda McCollum, a work which examines how colonial powers, and later academics, participated in constructing a racialized notion of Sub-Saharan Islam – Islam *noir* – which is framed as inherently inferior to the Islam practiced in North Africa and the Middle East. The final article is Ana de Souza's "Interpreting the Muscular Ram Statue in Procession," which examines the inter-ethnic tensions informing Hindu devotional expression at the annual Ram Navami festival in Hyderabad, India. As an important editorial note, we would like to make it explicit to our readers that *Arc* follows the Chicago Manual of Style in respecting individual author preferences on whether to capitalize "Black" and "White" when referring to racial or ethnic identity.

The books reviewed in this volume are: David G. Horrell's *Ethnicity and Inclusion: Religion, Race, and Whiteness in Constructions of Jewish and Christian Identities* (reviewed by both Arazoo Ferozan and Louis-Joseph Gagnon); Larissa Brewer Garcia's *Beyond Babel: Translations of Blackness in Colonial Peru and New Granada* (reviewed by Eduardo Dawson); Kirk A. Johnson's *Medical Stigmata: Race, Medicine, and the Pursuit of Theological Liberation* (reviewed by Sarah Hodge); Anabel Inge's *The Making of a Salafi Muslim Woman: Paths to Conversion* (reviewed by R. Scott Bursey); Mark McIntosh's *The Divine Ideas Tradition in Christian Mystical Theology* (reviewed by Daniel Fishley); Jarred Austin Mercer's *Divine Perfection and Human Potentiality: The Trinitarian Anthropology of Hilary of Poitiers* (reviewed by Jessica Gauthier); and *The Michel Henry Reader,* edited and translated by Scott Davidson (reviewed by A. J. Smith).

In parting, we must acknowledge that McGill University – and therefore *Arc* – is located on unceded Indigenous lands. We acknowledge and thank the diverse Indigenous peoples recognized as the original custodians of this land.

Thank you for your continued support and interest in *Arc*,
Elyse MacLeod & Amanda Rosini (*Editors*)

Purity Culture's Racist Fruit: Centering the Voices of Black Womanists and Feminists in the Deconstruction of Purity Culture

Olivia Jayne Schultz, ***Concordia University***

The last ten years have seen an emergence of scholarship examining and interrogating the evangelical purity movement and purity culture in North America.[1] Though the term "purity movement" refers to a specific movement oriented towards adolescents in North America beginning in the 1990s, it is not unlike previous theological purity campaigns. Rooted in the sixteenth century Protestant Reformation, purity campaigns seek to convince adherents that Godly sex is permitted exclusively within heteronormative marriages between cis-gender people.[2] North American purity culture scholar and historian Sara Moslener has argued that purity campaigns often seem to arise when traditional Christian ideals of marriage, gender, and sexuality lose their hold in

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[1] See Christine J. Gardner, *Making Chastity Sexy: The Rhetoric of Evangelical Abstinence Campaigns* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), Google eBook; Marie R. Griffith *God's Daughter's: Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Sara Moslener, *Virgin Nation: Sexual Purity and American Adolescence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), Google eBook.

[2] Monique Moultrie, *Passionate and Pious: Religious Media and Black Women's Sexuality* (Durham: Duke University Press. 2017), 16–17; Amy DeRogatis, *Saving Sex: Sexuality and Salvation in American Evangelicalism*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

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institutional power structures.[3] Beginning in the 1800s, as conservative and politically inclined Christians felt their weakening political influence, they invoked narratives linking sexual deviance to moral decline. This positioned biblical ideals of marriage, family, and sexuality as the means to national salvation.[4] The 1990s purity movement sought to re-establish Christian hegemony by linking sexual immorality to feminist sexual liberation movements, teen pregnancies, rising divorce rates, youth delinquency, prostitution, the rise in HIV/AIDS and STDs, and the eventual fall of North America if it does not return to a path of Godly morality.

While one of the main goals of the purity movement was political – it sought, and indeed received, US federal funding and support for abstinence education in public schools – it was also interested in tapping into the revolutionary energy of evangelical adolescents.[5] Because of the new sexual freedoms and opportunities available to adolescents, the messaging of the 1990s purity culture movement was specifically targeted at adolescents. Organizations like True Love Waits, Silver Ring Thing, and books such as Joshua Harris's *I Kissed Dating Goodbye: A New Attitude Towards Romance and Relationships* (2003), linked the "true demonstration of faith" to whether one could maintain their chastity until heteronormative marriage.[6] Purity culture discourse told adolescents that a pledge of abstinence would honour God, ensure they attained a God-blessed marriage, and, moreover, that they would be part of saving North America by restoring it to God's plan.[7] Purity culture thus describes the environment that is created when singles and adolescents are policed, surveilled, and judged within evangelical communities based on their ability to maintain community-defined chastity and gendered behaviours.[8] A recent and growing body of scholarship has emerged in response to this, beginning the important work of examining the historical formation and impacts of the purity movement and purity culture.

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[3] Moslener, *Virgin Nation*, 13–28.

[4] See Marie Griffith, "Introduction," *Moral Combat: How Sex Divided American Christians and Fractured American Politics* (New York: Basic Books, 2017), and Moslener, *Virgin Nation*, 2.

[5] For information on United States funding of abstinence-only education, see Marcela Howell, "The History of Federal Abstinence-Only Funding," *Advocates for Youth: Rights, Respect, Responsibility*, 2007, https://www.advocatesforyouth.org/wpcontent/uploads/storage//advfy/documents/fshistoryabonly.pdf

[6] Joshua Harris is one of the most controversial figures of the purity movement. He was just twenty-one when he became a significant leader in the purity movement, and just twenty-two when he became a pastor. However, in 2018 he disavowed his teachings due to the harms he became aware of in purity culture.

Deconstructing the purity movement is unequivocally a feminist project. There is, however, more to be done to ensure this work reflects the inclusivity and intersectional concerns of contemporary feminist movements. While there is upcoming research directly related to the experience of women of colour in purity culture, almost all of what is currently published is written by White women, and largely speaks to the experiences of White women (although men are also discussed sometimes). Barbara Smith, a Black feminist and lesbian, defines feminism as "the political theory and practice that struggles to free all women: women of colour, working-class women, poor women, disabled women, lesbians, as well as White, economically privileged heterosexual women. Anything less than this vision of total freedom is not feminism, but merely female self-aggrandizement."[9] Though many White authors do touch upon racialized elements of purity culture discourse, it has not yet become commonplace for White people deconstructing their experiences in evangelicalism and the evangelical purity movement to recognize the racialized origins of purity. Furthermore, many White people deconstructing purity culture do not adequately consider the specific and multi-layered experience of racialized bodies brought up within purity culture – an oversight which highlights the need to abandon the problematic tendency of discussing purity culture in the singular.[10]

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[7] Moslener, *Virgin Nation*, 3; Griffith, *Moral Combat*, xi.

[8] Inspired by Emily Joy Allison's definition of purity culture in, *#ChurchToo: How Purity Culture Upholds Abuse and How to Find Healing* (Broadleaf Books, 2021), on page 51 of Kobo. For other information on the harms of purity culture, see Caroline Blyth, *Purity Culture, Rape Culture, and Coercive Control;* Elizabeth Gish, "'Are You a 'Trashable' Styrofoam Cup?': Harm and Damage Rhetoric in the Contemporary American Sexual Purity Movement," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 34, no. 2 (2014): 5–22; Linda Kay Klein, *Pure: Inside the Evangelical Movement that Shamed a Generation of Young Women and How I Broke Free* (New York: Touchstone, 2018).

In *Black Feminist Thought* (2009), Patricia Hill Collins demonstrates that racism in contemporary feminism and scholarship may be subtle; for example, when White women continue to focus primarily on their own experiences, the voices of Black women are suppressed through omission.[11] Kimberlé Crenshaw, a Black feminist known for her work on intersectionality, demonstrates that when individuals only focus on analyzing the experiences of the most privileged groups in society, they further the marginalization of those who experience multiple burdens within their experiences.[12] To apply this to scholarship purity culture is to recognize that White body supremacy is apparent when White experiences in evangelical purity culture are centered at the expense of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, Person of Colour) experiences – experiences which tend to be systemically excluded from intellectual projects. It is for this reason that Jennifer Nash and Samantha Pinto argue that the perpetuation of "White feminism" is likely the greatest obstacle to the liberative ideals of feminism.[13] Indeed, it seems that Barbara Smith's call in the 1980s for feminist work to address the problem of racism is still relevant today.[14] This is part of the legacy of White body supremacy, something that we, and indeed I – a White scholar of purity culture – must reckon with.

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[9] Barbara Smith, "Racism and Women's Studies," *University of Nebraska Press and Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies* 5, no. 1 (1980): 48–49, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3346304. See also, bell hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1981).

[10] The need to speak of purity cultures in the plural was brought to my attention in conversation with Sara Moslener (personal communication, February 27th, 2021). In sum, the idea is that, when we pay attention to intersectionality, we see that purity culture is not universally homogenous; rather, it takes on different forms and is experienced differently by different groups and individuals depending on a variety of intersectional factors.

[11] Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York: Routledge, 2009). See "Introduction" to learn more about how the intellectual work of Black women often gets suppressed either intentionally, or simply through omission.

[12] Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A

The term "White body supremacy" may sound threatening to White readers. We may tense up and think to ourselves, "Yes, I am White, but I do not consciously believe that I am superior to other races. I do not consciously attempt to suppress the experiences of people of colour in purity culture, I am just speaking from my experience." However, we cannot always readily conceptualize the ways we are complicit in racism. As Resmaa Menakem – a Black Somatic (nervous system and trauma) scholar who coined the term White body supremacy – would say, "white body supremacy doesn't

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Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *The University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989, no. 1 (1989): 140.

[13] White feminism, as defined by Nash and Pinto, is when White people claim to be doing the intersectional and liberative work of feminism but continue to exclude intersectionality in their analysis. When we speak in the language of feminism, but do not include people of colour in our conversations, we perpetuate racism and White feminism, which is unfortunately the dominant feminist narrative. See Jennifer C. Nash and Samantha Pinto, "A New Genealogy of 'Intelligent Rage,' or Other Ways to Think About White Women in Feminism," *Signs* 46, no. 4 (2021): 883–910. See also bell hooks, "Theory as Liberatory Practice," *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism* 4, no. 1 (1991): 1–12.

[14] Smith, "Racism and Women's Studies," 48.

live in our thinking brains. It lives and breathes in our bodies."[15] Throughout the history of North America, White comfort has relied on Black labour and marginalization. BIPOC bodies have been seen – and used – as a tool for White colonizers, and the wide range of abuses they have faced – murder, rape, mutilation, slavery, etc. – are baked into North American institutions, laws, regulations, norms and beliefs.[16] White body supremacy thus refers to the political, economic, cultural, and social systems of domination that have been historically built to privilege, centralize, and elevate the White body, all while creating discourses to systemically undermine bodies of colour.[17] The fact that we, as White people, *have space* in academic settings to examine and publish *our* experiences in purity culture is, then, indeed a form of White body supremacy (and privilege).

What makes White body supremacy insidious, so hard for White people to understand and detect, is that it is *structural* – which is to say, it often doesn't manifest consciously, but rather shapes the norms and institutions we orientate ourselves around, the opportunities we can access, etc. White body supremacy thus describes the phenomenon of inheriting a position of privilege simply by being born White.[18] This is, in part, what Menakem means when he says White body supremacy lives in our bodies rather than in our cognitive intentionality. As Menakem states:

> Our bodies have a form of knowledge that is different than our cognitive brains. This knowledge is typically experien-

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[15] Resmaa Menakem, My *Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Path to Mending Our Heart and Bodies* (Las Vegas: Central Recovery Press, 2017), 2, Google Playbooks version.

[16] Menakem, *My Grandmother's Hands*, 20–21.

[17] Menakem, *My Grandmother's Hands*, xviii.

[18] Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2010).

> ced as a felt sense of constriction or expansion, pain or ease, energy or numbness. Often this knowledge is stored in our bodies as wordless stories about what is safe and what is dangerous. The body is where we fear, hope, and react; where we constrict and release; and where we reflexively flight, flee, or freeze […] White body supremacy is always functioning in our bodies. It operates in our thinking brains, in our assumptions, expectations, and mental shortcuts. It operates in our muscles and nervous systems, where it routinely creates constriction. But it operates most powerfully in our lizard brains. Our lizard brain cannot think. It is reflexively protective, and it is strong. It loves whatever it feels will keep us safe and hates whatever will do us harm.[19]

While it might be normal for a White person to have grown up in an evangelical purity culture that consisted of mostly or only White people, this is a demonstration of both White body supremacy and the legacy of segregation. As Black scholars like Anthea Butler have demonstrated, evangelicalism is an institution which seeks to maintain and perpetuate White body supremacy. The fact that you may have attended evangelical institutions that were predominantly White was often intentional, for these spaces are simply reproducing White body supremacy. Menakem and Smith both compassionately articulate that it is not the fault of White bodies for inheriting White body supremacy. They do, however, argue that it is our responsibility to do the work to change these realities.[20]

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19. Menakem, *My Grandmother's Hands*, xviii.

20. Smith, "Women's Studies and Racism," 49. Menakem specifically speaks about the necessity of healing our trauma as part of how we heal White body supremacy. He highlights that social and political activism is not enough. Since White body supremacy lives in our bodies, we must do embodiment work to help heal it. See Menakem, *My Grandmother's Hands*.

As a White former evangelical turned researcher of North American purity culture, this paper thus seeks to contribute to the work of amending some of the problems discussed above; to discuss this topic, and my own experiences with it, while simultaneously foregrounding the racialized legacies and racialized impacts of purity culture. By specifically focusing on the Jezebel trope that has been attached to Black female bodies, this paper asks: How have evangelical teachings of purity, both historically and contemporarily, been employed in the construction and perpetuation of White body supremacy? What can we learn about the function of sexuality and purity campaigns by following the racialized Jezebel trope that has been attached to the bodies of Black women? How have Black Christian communities, womanist theologians, and Black feminists sought to use scripture and other theorizing as forms of resistance?[21] How can White Christians or ex-Christians center the wisdom of scholars of colour to build discourses of resistance to respond to the ongoing evangelical teaching of purity culture? With these questions in mind, this paper will argue that, although purity culture is presented in evangelical communities as God's design for gender, sex, and marriage, it has been constructed and employed by evangelicalism as a sexist and racialized tool in the building and maintenance of discourse legitimizing White Christian patriarchal hegemony in America.

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[21] Womanism, a term created by Alice Walker in 1979 in response to White feminism, recognizes that real societal healing and equality cannot simply occur through the White feminist goal of gender equality. Black women require a complex framework that interrogates the multilayered forms of overlapping oppression in an individual's experience – such as race, gender, and sexuality – while simultaneously embodying a collective love for Black life, survival, and thriving. Womanism, then, can be understood as interrogating the struggle for Black wholeness and well-being, often against power structures that have been built to reinforce hierarchal oppression. By embodying radical self-love and acceptance, womanists actively desire communal restoration of connection with themselves, others, spiritualities, and the ecological environment. Anything that alienates individuals from embodiment connection, womanists must resist. See Alice Walker, *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down* (Orlando: Harcourt Books, 1981).

This paper is made up of three parts. In the first part, I take the time to unpack my own positionality and acknowledge how the reality of White body supremacy had blinded me from seeing the racialized violence beneath evangelical purity culture.[22] In the second part, I conduct a historical analysis and trace how purity rhetoric and the Jezebelian trope emerged alongside Europe's first encounters with Africans in the sixteenth century, and was solidified in American slavocracy, emancipation, the Civil Rights Era, and in contemporary Black faith-based sexuality ministries. In the third part, I will foreground interventions by Black feminist and womanist scholars, with a specific focus on Kelly Brown Douglas' *Sexuality and the Black Church* (1999), Monique Moultrie's *Passionate and Pious* (2017), Audre Lorde's *Sister Outsider* (1984), and Tamura Lomax's *Jezebel Unhinged* (2018). Douglas, Moultrie, and Lomax all assert that to lift the oppressive Jezebel trope off Black women, we must re-interpret purity discourse and evangelical interpretation of scripture in a way that brings embodiment and thriving to Black communities.

This paper is not meant to be a high-level academic read. In loving memory of bell hooks, this paper takes seriously her earnest belief and desire that feminist theorizing is not merely an academic endeavour, but rather something that can be used to transform our everyday lives and liberate all that may come across it.[23] My goal is to make this work accessible and readable, especially for White people who may be struggling to acknowledge how White body supremacy bears on their efforts to deconstruct evangelicalism and/or the purity movement. My hope is that, together, we can find the hope and direction to transform our body-minds[24] through the liberative power of intersectional and inclusive feminism.[25] By predominantly foregrounding the research and writing of Black scholars, I want to highlight the possible transformations that can occur when we center the extensive and transformative wisdom that Black feminists and Black intellectuals, who aren't even directly speaking about purity culture, have to offer to the deconstruction of evangelicalism, purity culture, and White body supremacy. As you read – especially *you*, White reader – do not be overcome with guilt or shame; rather, be gentle with yourself. Redirect your feeling towards the transformative power of *knowing*, which has the power to disrupt White body supremacy and evangelical purity culture.

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[22] Although I use the past tense "had" it must be emphasized that, as a White person, I am still learning and unlearning White body supremacy and how it exists in my body. This paper is only just one step in the process.

Situating Myself

I was born into a White middle-class Christian family in Canada[26] in the mid-1990s. Though I didn't know it at the time, I was born during the height of the North American evangelical purity movement. By the time I was an adolescent, much of the purity movement's messaging had become normative within my faith community. I learned from my church community, my youth leaders, my *True Images* teen girl Bible and other evangelical books and resources, that to demonstrate the authenticity of my faith, build a strong personal attachment to Christ, and secure a God-blessed marriage, I was to abstain from sex and dating.[27] It is important to note that, until the mid-2010s, evangelicals and adherents to purity were not aware of the terms "purity culture" and "the purity movement." These teachings were positioned as God's eternal plan for goodness – not as a human-made movement. Purity, piety, modesty, submission, gender essentialism, and heteronormativity were, then, simply understood as normative elements of what it meant to be living after God's heart. Living in this way was positioned as good, while not doing so was cast as a sin. I recall learning that if we lived sinfully, we were likely to miss out on the Godly spouse that God had set aside for us; that, in following temporary pleasures (such as lust), we no longer deserved God's gift of a lifelong Godly spouse.[28] Though I had always been enchanted by spirituality and what I perceived to be the Holy Spirit in me, I wasn't fully committed to Christian purity teachings until the late 2000s, a period when I

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[23] hooks, "Theory as Liberatory Praxis," 1–12.

[24] Coined by White, disabled, and genderqueer activist, Eli Clare, the term "body-mind" seeks to highlight the inextricable link between our body and mind; to highlight the necessity of resisting the Western dualism that separates them. See Eli Clare, *Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling with Cure* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), pages 12–14, Google eBook.

[25] hooks, "Theory as Liberatory Praxis," 9.

[26] I acknowledge that I am a settler on the Indigenous lands of Turtle Island (North America). More specifically, I write in Hamilton, Ontario, located on the

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traditional and unceded territory of the Anishinabek, Erie, Neutral, Huron-Wendat, Haudenosaunee and Mississauga.

[27] *True Images: The Bible for Teen Girls* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012) was one of the three teen girl Bibles analyzed in Caroline Blyth's *Rape Culture, Purity Culture, and Coercive Control in Teen Girl Bibles* (Routledge, 2021). Blyth highlights that these teen girl Bibles are heavily encoded with editorials that espouse harmful purity culture teachings affirming messages of coercion, shaming, and rape culture. As a teen, I followed these editorial inserts that claimed to be God's voice more than I followed the Bible.

[28] Although this messaging was communicated to me in a myriad of ways, both implicit and explicit, one of the specific messages that really impacted me was from Andy Stanley's sermon series called "The New Rules for Love, Sex, and Dating," which I listened to when I was 14 shortly after it came out in May 2011,

struggled with depression, darkness, and self-image issues that only intensified as I became aware that I had a significant body "malformity."[29]

In my first week of grade nine while trying out for touch football, an older girl saw me bending over and told me that my back "was puffed out on one side." Humiliated, because I was unaware of what she was talking about, I felt my back and realized she was right. The next day, I was diagnosed with severe idiopathic scoliosis. The doctors told me it was so severe that I needed to either have surgery to straighten and fuse my spin, or to wear a back brace until I stopped growing so my spinal curve didn't continue to worsen. Though I did go on to have surgeries years later, at the time my mother and I decided I should start with the Boston Brace. I had no idea what I was getting myself into. The Boston Brace was a full upper-body back brace that was fitted specifically for my body and had to be fastened extremely tightly to work properly.

I wore this plastic corset for four years, the whole duration of my high school experience. As a consequence of having to wear the brace for so many years, I experienced significant weight loss, patterns of disordered eating, and a great deal of physical pain. It was very marginalizing. I felt malformed, ugly, and unlovable, the oppo-

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https://northpoint.org/messages/the-new-rules-for-love-sex-and-dating/the-right-person-myth. After asking listeners if they are "becoming the person the person they are looking for is looking for," Stanley shares a story of a girl who strayed from pursuing God and purity before meeting the Godly man she wanted to date. Once she meets him, he rejects her because of her ungodliness. The message is clear: pursue purity and God to secure a respectful mate.

[29] At least, this was the only frame of reference I had at the time to understand my diagnosis; that I was malformed, disordered, and in need of repair. I have been inspired by the work of the disabled genderqueer activist Eli Clare, who says, "I wonder what we would know about ourselves and about each other if our diagnosis [our differences] projected acceptance rather than disorder onto our body-minds." See Eli Clare, *Brilliant Imperfection*, 12–14.

site of a beautiful person. Due to normative beauty standards, I slowly began to believe that because my body was so hunchbacked, I would never be able to find someone who would really love me. The only flashes of hope came from what I learned at Church. I learned that if I focused my adolescent years, not on dating, but on reforming my heart towards Christ, that God would bring me someone who would fall in love with my heart for Christ; that my body would not be an issue. This was rooted in the idea that our spiritual selves were more important than our fleshly selves. I had a brief two-session counselling experience with a Christian therapist who told me that if I pursued purity and holiness, a man would eventually fall deeply in love with my heart for Christ. This messaging – combined, of course, with my diagnosis and my felt sense of the sexism that existed within evangelical culture – fueled my desire to do whatever it took to be loved unconditionally. I made a conscious decision to follow Christ and purity no matter the cost.[30] I completely denied my sexual self in the name of serving Christ, waiting for the promise of future happiness that comes from purity.

Since I was born in a female body – or, perhaps better said, in a body assigned female at birth (I now identify as non-binary) – I was subjected to intense messaging about how my "sexualized" features were an inherent threat to female modesty and purity.[31] I remember being at an all-girls youth retreat where we were told that, although yoga pants are extremely comfortable, we should abstain from wearing them around men because "yoga pants leave nothing to the imagination. Girls wearing yoga pants really cause Christian men to sexually sin." Since I was already convinced to do whatever it took to be loved properly, it was easy for me to be convinced by this rhetoric. If yoga pants were impure, I would wear jeans.[32] This was especially damaging for me, because the constriction of jeans combined with the tightness of my back brace only aggravated my pain. One day I decided to wear yoga pants to school for some pain reprieve. After lunch, I was walking to my locker when a male student who was several years older than me and who I did not know, came up behind me with his friends and slapped my behind. As he and his friends walked away laughing, I remember feeling humiliated, dirty, sinful, and ashamed. I thought, "this could have been avoided if I didn't wear yoga pants! I was told I would be sexualized if I wore these!"[33] It would take about ten years before I would come to understand this experience as a form of sexual assault. At the time, this experience only compelled me to deepen my commitment to living for Christ and purity, as I desired nothing more than to be respected and loved. I became heavily involved in evangelical projects all throughout high school and university, hoping eventually to become a missionary.

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[30] Inspired by Matthew 8:18–23 NIV.

[31] Though purity discourse is marketed to binary male and female genders, its messages and products often specifically focus on female virginity. Women are cast as less sexual than men, but as having the ability to cause men to stumble due to the nature of their bodies. The message is thus: protect your purity or risk losing it or being assaulted. See Carolyn Blyth, *Rape Culture, Purity Culture*, 17.

However, towards the end of my undergraduate degree, I had a handful of experiences that made me feel disillusioned with purity teachings: I broke up with the man I thought God wanted me to marry; I was chastised time and again for "impurely flirting" – which was often just talking – with boys that I did not intend to date; I was blamed by the few evangelicals I confided in for numerous instances

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32. On page 99 of *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*, Harris says, girls, "your job is to keep your brothers from being led astray by [your] charms […] many girls are innocently unaware of the difficulty a guy has in remaining pure when looking at a girl who is dressed immodestly."

33. See "Purity, Modesty, and Rape Culture in Teen Girl Bibles," in Blyth, *Rape Culture, Purity Culture.*

of sexual assault I experienced; my older brother came out as gay and lost numerous friends and Christian community because he was "living in sin"; and, finally, it came out that my dad, a missionary in Haiti, had numerous extended extra-marital affairs throughout the duration of my parent's marriage. During these years, I had ongoing and mysterious illnesses and symptoms that made it difficult to live my life. For years, I was told to pray and to overcome my body with God's strength. I tried. Earnestly, I tried. But the longer I tried to push through, the worse and more extreme my symptoms got. After tracking my symptoms, I realized that they worsened when I was proximate to church, faith communities, or faith commitments. By this point, my life was so saturated and directed towards evangelical pursuits (I attended a Reformed Christian university, worked in Christian jobs, and was a youth leader and pastor at my Baptist Church), it was hard to give myself rest from it. However, in 2018, it got so bad that I had to leave church for my own bodily survival. In 2020, after numerous tests and a lot of despair, I was diagnosed with Fibromyalgia.

As I had learned that church was the only place where I could be truly loved and safe, I was overwhelmed by the contradictions I was seeing and experiencing. I asked myself and others *How can God-designed teachings that are supposed to bear good fruit bring about so much pain? I thought Church was supposed to be a safe space. What is going on?* During this period, I came across a book – *Pure* by Linda Kay Klein – that changed the trajectory of my life.[34] For the first time, I learned that the teachings I had been earnestly adhering to, believing they were for my wellbeing, were part of the

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[34] *Pure* by Linda Kay Klein was released in 2018. Like the other purity culture books referenced here, this book largely details White evangelical experiences in purity culture, but does touch briefly on racialized experiences. Her hard work and dedication in writing this book has contributed to purity culture conversations becoming mainstream. I am forever grateful.

"purity movement." I learned how evangelical purity culture permits rape-culture discourse, sex-shaming messages, body dysphoria, spousal abuse, sexual-and-gender based violence as well as coercion, all of which specifically target women, people of colour, and the 2SLGTBQIA+ community.[35] I learned that those who manage to survive purity culture often do not often escape unscathed; they may struggle with self-doubt, depression, anxiety, fatigue, and PTSD-like symptoms.[36] Like me, they may eventually get diagnosed with chronic illness and struggle to walk into church settings without experiencing panic attacks.[37] When I brought these critiques to my former Christian community I was often brushed off – I was told that purity teachings *are* God's plan for humanity, and that the harms I was describing were not inherent to the movement, but were rather demonstrative of our sinful humanity.[38]

However, it seemed that the effects of the evangelical purity movement clearly *were* harmful. But how did I not see them for so long? Why was I taught to believe that purity inherently brings goodness and happiness? As Sara Ahmed, a queer scholar of colour who analyzes the affective function of happiness in society, says:

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[35] See Blyth, *Rape Culture, Purity Culture;* Gish, "'Are You a 'Trashable' Styrofoam Cup?"; Linda Kay Klein, *Pure*. As a number of different acronyms are now in use to refer to this community, I should clarify that 2SLGTBQIA+ refers to two-spirit, lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual, queer, intersex, and asexual, while the plus sign is meant to acknowledge other non-normative expressions of sexuality and gender.

[36] See Blyth, *Rape Culture, Purity Culture,* 18.

[37] This theme deserves a whole paper of its own. There is much research coming out demonstrating how trauma and disembodiment may connect to chronic illnesses. For resources on this, see Gabor Mate's *When the Body Says No: The Cost of Hidden Stress* (Knopf Canada: 2004); Bessel Van Der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (New York: Penguin Books, 2015).

[38] In these instances, scripture such as Romans 3:23 (NIV) are quoted, "for all have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God."

> There is something false about our consciousness of the world; we learn not to be conscious, not to see what happens right in front of us. Happiness provides as it were a cover, a way of covering what resists or is resistant to a view of the world, or a worldview, as harmonious. It is not that an individual suffers from false consciousness, but that we inherit a certain false consciousness when we learn to see and not to see things in a certain way.[39]

Like millions of others who have been subjected to evangelical purity teachings, I learned to see purity as a means of creating a happy future. Inheriting this consciousness indeed made it such that happiness – or at least the future promise of happiness – covered the violence beneath it.

Although promises of happiness are promoted as accessible to all, one's proximity to a privileged identity is often what decides who can access said happiness.[40] For instance, evangelical purity culture promises happiness to those who remain obedient to God, to those who remain sexually pure, to those who remain monogamous until heteronormative marriage, and to those who remain faithful to essentialized ideas of masculinity and femininity and pursue a nuclear family. From this, we see that those who are privileged in this dynamic are those that identify as cis-gender, monogamous, and heteronormative in their positionality. But what about race? Are all races equally given access to purity's promises of happiness, so long as they also embody cis-gender, monogamous, and heteronormative positionalities? Anthea Butler's *White Evangelical Racism*: *The Poli-*

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[39] Sara Ahmed, "Creating Disturbance: Feminism, Happiness, and Affective Differences," in *Working with Affect in Feminist Readings: Disturbing Differences,* ed. Marianne Liljeström and Susanna Paasonen (New York: Routledge, 2010), 31.

[40] Ahmed, *Promise of Happiness*, 11.

tics of Morality in America (2021) will be helpful in answering this question.

Although the term "evangelical" may be simply described as "one who spreads the gospel," Butler demonstrates that scholars of evangelicalism have largely ignored the historical construction and privileging of Whiteness within history of evangelicalism.[41] Butler thus seeks to highlight the racism and White body supremacy within evangelicalism. She argues that:

> evangelicalism is not simply a religious group at all. Rather, it is a nationalistic political movement whose purpose is to support to hegemony of white Christian men over and against the flourishing of others. To put it more baldly, evangelicalism is an Americanized Christianity born in the context of white Christian slaveholders. It sanctified and justified segregation, violence, and racial proscription. Slavery and racism permeate evangelicalism, and as much as evangelicals like to protest that they are colour-blind, their theologies, cultures and beliefs are anything but […] Evangelicalism is a religion that has benefitted and continues to benefit from racism on both an individual and structural level, always under the guise of morality and patriotic nationalism.[42]

It is thus Butler's assertion that slavery is the foundation of racism and power in American evangelicalism, and that, unless otherwise specified, evangelicalism should always refer to White American Christianity.[43] To return to the question posed above, Butler's work thus helps us see that all races are *not* given equal access to purity culture's promises of happiness; that accessing the happiness promised by purity culture is indeed decided by one's proximity to whiteness. With this being said, the following question still remains: If American evangelicalism was "born in the context of White Christian slaveholders," and purity movements are born from the American evangelicalism, then how have bodies of colour, and Black female bodies in particular, been constructed and understood within this movement? For this, we must turn to Black historiography, in particular Black historiographies of the construction of the Jezebel trope.

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[41] Butler, *White Evangelical Racism*: *The Politics of Morality in America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2021), 15.

[42] Butler, *White Evangelical Racism*, 149–150.

[43] Butler, *White Evangelical Racism*, 15–16.

Finding the Root of the Jezebel Trope in European-African Encounters

Michel Foucault asserts that power is realized through "the will to knowledge," which is to say, through the production and dissemination of certain forms of knowledge which come to be received as cultural truths.[44] This knowledge – which Foucault terms "discourse" – is concerned with defining proper or improper conduct. As discourse establishes the proper or ideal state of being, it simultaneously creates its binary opposite: the non-ideal, improper, inferior, or "othered" state, which can be used for both oppressive and productive means.[45] Once established, discourse is socially communicated through education, family, religious teachings, and other institutions. An example of purity culture discourse is establishing and teaching young children that those who remain pure are holy, and those who do not remain pure are sinful.

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[44] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Vol. 1*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 95–96. See also Jana Sawicki, *Disciplining Foucault, Power, and the Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 23.

[45] Kelly Douglas Brown, *Sexuality and the Black Church: A Womanist Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 22. See also Tamura Lomax, *Jezebel Unhinged*: *Loosing the Black Female Body in Religion and Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018) 2.

According to Kelly Brown Douglas, what is particularly important is how Foucault's notion reveals that integral to the establishment and maintenance of White hegemonic power is the establishment of oppressive sexual-related discourses or tropes that reduce a group to their constructed inferiority.[46] Foucault argues that if certain sexual conduct comes to be seen as improper, then a whole people can be discursively rendered as inferior or pathological.[47] Applying this insight to discourse on Black sexuality, Douglas argues that virtually every aspect of Black sexual well-being – both historically and contemporarily – has been fractured by White Christian purity discourse and scriptural interpretation, which has naturalized the Jezebelian trope on Black bodies in the project of building and maintaining White body supremacy.

Scholarship on the root of the Jezebelian trope traces it back to sixteenth century European-African contact. As Europeans arrived in Africa, they saw African women who, due to the climate, were wearing significantly less clothing than Europeans were used to seeing on middle-class European women. Coming from Protestant traditions which had theorized the female body as a site of sexual temptation and sin,[48] Europeans read the scarcity of clothing on Black African women as demonstrative of their innately sinful nature – a nature rooted in a carnal and lustful sexuality.[49] Carter Heyward identifies the European Christian tradition as the main architect of proscriptive sexuality in European history. This tradition, and how it interpreted sexuality, made it possible to use sexual practices as a means of devaluing and demonizing human beings.[50]

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[46] Douglas articulates that whiteness "is distinguished by its ability to promote the sanctity of whiteness by that which is non-White. This culture asserts the supremacy of whiteness and is accompanied by social, political, economic systems that also privilege whiteness." Individuals racialized as White therefore benefit from these systems. See *Sexuality and the Black Church*, 16–18.

[47] Douglas, *Sexuality and the Black Church*, 22.

[48] See Imani Perry, *Vexy Thing: On Gender and Liberation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 14–41; see also Douglas, *Sexuality and the Black Church,* 25 ff., and Yvonne C. Zimmerman, *Other Dreams of Freedom: Religion, Sex, and Human Trafficking* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013),

Europeans also defined the Black female body in terms of "excess" – Europeans read the "exaggerated" breast and body sizes of Black women as a further demonstration of their seductive and impure qualities.[51] This discourse then informed how Black African men were read; if the Black female has a raging sexual appetite, then Black men had no choice but to be sexual animals, if only to fulfill the desires of Black women.[52] Europeans constructed Africans as more aptly compared to apes than to White "civilized" humans, which further coded Black Africans as animalistic and inferior to their White counterparts.[53] In this way, Jezebel imagery "was necessary to ideas of White male and female privilege and superiority. The Black woman as a Jezebel was a perfect foil to the White, middle-class woman who was pure, chaste, and innocent."[54] These discourses are not rooted in the reality of who Black people

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81. As these sources indicate, Eve's alleged role in the fall of humanity has been historically used as a pretext for assigning women primary responsibility and blame for humanity's sinful state. This is often interpreted both as divinely mandated and connected to their sexuality.

[49] Douglas, *Sexuality and the Black Church*, 31.

[50] Carter Heyward, "Notes on Historical Grounding: Beyond Sexual Essentialism," in *Sexuality and the Sacred: Sources for Theological Reflection*, ed. James B. Nelson and Sandra P. Longfellow (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 12.

[51] See: Jennifer L. Morgan, *Labouring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004); Imani Perry, *Vexy Thing*, 38; Sabrina Strings *Fearing the Black Body*: *The Origins of Fat Phobia* (New York: New York University Press, 2019), 1–14.

[52] Douglas, *Sexuality and the Black Church*, 45.

[53] Douglas, *Sexuality and the Black Church*, 33.

[54] Douglas, *Sexuality and the Black Church,* 39.

were, but in interpretations of Protestant ideals of purity, sin, and sexuality.[55] Unlike "civilized" Europeans, Black people were constructed as removed from the Christian virtues of sexual self-control or sexual purity, for they were the epitome of sexual excess.

The Jezebel Trope in American Slavery

By the time Europeans invaded America, discourses surrounding Black animality had already been normalized and reinforced to justify the capture and forced enslavement of Black Africans. Brought to North America – which is to say, to stolen Indigenous land – Black slaves were beaten, raped, and exploited. In *Vexy Thing: On Gender and Liberation* (2018), Imani Perry demonstrates that when Africans were stolen and thrown on boats during the transatlantic slave trade, Black women would often undergo a ritual raping to be rendered a non-virgin, which not only functioned as solidification of their position as impure and sinful, but to assert White domination over Black women's bodies.[56]

Though slavery was, overall, seen as sinful within the Christian tradition, many Christians did own slaves, which they justified through biblical scripture.[57] Evangelicals interpreted Genesis 9:18–27, Noah's cursing of Ham, and Ephesians 6:5–7, the command for the enslaved to be obedient to earthly masters, to be scriptures in support of slavery.[58] When Ham was cursed by Noah, Noah claimed that his descendants (Canaan, which came to be interpreted as Black people) would become servants of other nations, which seemingly legitimized the White subordination of the Black body. The Bible thus gave southern evangelical slaveowners space to interpret themselves as moral actors in their injustices. The enslaved were not granted direct access the Bible, and instead had the Bible preached at them both for the sake of missioning and as a form of control. They were told – with reference to Ephesians 6:5–7 – that the only way they would receive salvation and eternal life was if they were completely obedient to their masters, as this reflected humanity's obedience to God.[59]

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[55] Perry, *Vexy Thing*, 16.
[56] Perry, *Vexy Thing*, 37.
[57] Butler, *White Evangelical Racism*, 29–30.
[58] Butler, *White Evangelical Racism*, 29.

White Christians believed that teaching the Bible was a true gift to the enslaved, a form of love, for it saved their souls. Christian slaveowners believed in a mind-body dualism which held the condition of the enslaved person's spirit to be more important than the condition of their body – in other words, the physical pain of enslavement was framed as temporary; as a small price to pay for the gift of eternal salvation. This rhetoric gave Christian slaveowners permission to believe they were blessing the enslaved with the gospel while simultaneously violating, raping, and subjugating their bodies.[60] And rape they did. Even as White men venerated the supposed virtue, piety, and respectability of White women, many saw no contradiction in valorizing these ideals while simultaneously sexually assaulting the bodies of Black women.[61] If a Black woman resisted the sexual desires of a White man she was beaten for her disobedience.[62] The Black Jezebel was interpreted to always be on the sexual prowl, so if a man raped her, he was never punished because she was viewed as the instigator. In reading the biblical Jezebel trope as descriptive of the Black female body, White Christians thus forced Black women into a life filled with sexual violence, which, in turn, perpetrated the stereotype that they were "impure" and "promiscuous." By constructing things in this way, White women – the perceived opposite of Black women – were able to maintain an aura of purity and Christian virtue.

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[59] The logic of the evangelical cult of masculinity is rooted in the idea that all of America's problems can be solved by instating proper (read male) authority figures in the family, church, and the government. For more on this see Kobez du Mez, *Jesus and John Wayne*, 73–74.

[60] Douglas, *Sexuality and the Black Church*, 27.

[61] See Leon Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 344.

[62] Douglas, *Sexuality and the Black Church*, 39.

It is well-documented that Christian slaveowners often asserted that the enslaved had a better life than any other free laboring population, because, in addition to having their needs provided for them, they were taught about Christ.[63] Figures like Frederik Douglass, however, tell a different story. In his 1845 autobiography, Douglass asserts that Christian slaveowners were the worst of the slaveowners, citing their cruelty, violence, and frequent use of the Bible to justify their subjugation and frequent violation of Black bodies.[64] According to him, slaveholding Christianity had no relationship to the Christianity of Christ. The Bible was thus used by White Christians to force Black people into conformity and to permit religiously sanctioned violence over them. The violence and dehumanization that enslaved Black people experienced did not align with the liberative interpretations the enslaved gleaned from the Bible, which fractured their relationship with God. The enslaved thus began meeting in forests in "hush harbours" and "invisible institutions" – spaces away from their masters where they could practice and preach Christianity and their traditional African religions.[65] It was in this space that the liberative foundations of the Black Church began. In these spaces, the enslaved were able to claim that the gospel message they interpreted did not call for their submission to slavery and violence. In coded messages and through song, they turned the meaning of scriptures into messages of hope. Though Christian slaveowners framed scripture as reinforcing Black subordination and slavery, in hush harbours, Christianity was interpreted as being about freedom.[66]

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[63] Butler, *White Evangelical Racism*, 31.

[64] See Frederick Douglass' *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave* (Boston: The Anti-Slavery Office, 1845). See also Butler, *White Evangelical Racism*, 31.

[65] Butler, *White Evangelical Racism*, 30–33.

Where the Jezebel was rendered uncontrollably sexual, the Mammy trope constructed older Black women as maternal and asexual in a bid to legitimize their presence in the White Victorian household. Though the White mother may have handed down moral and religious values to her children, the Mammy was both the housekeeper and the surrogate mother, which maintained the façade of successful White Victorian womanhood.[67] As the Mammy figure cleaned the house, took care of the children, and made the meals, White Victorian women were able to preserve their role as pure and competent mothers.[68] Deborah Gray White articulates that the Mammy figure was an ideal expression of the southern Christian patriarchal tradition: she mirrored Victorian whiteness, she was obedient and respectable, dedicated to White progress, and had an ordered and controlled sexuality.[69] Though the Mammy was constructed as asexual, she could not always escape the Jezebelian trope, and was often raped by male figures in the household as a form of domination and control.[70] Moreover, if the Victorian housewife came to feel threatened by the Black woman and her sexuality, she may have experienced further hostility and punishment.

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[66] Butler, *White Evangelical Racism*, 30–33.

[67] Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*, 11.

[68] Douglas, *Sexuality and the Black Church*, 41–43.

[69] Deborah G. White, *Ar'n't I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: Norton, 1985), 58 and 61.

[70] Douglas, *Sexuality and the Black Church*, 44.

The Jezebel Trope in Emancipation

Unfortunately, violence against the Black body did not end after emancipation.[71] The purity, innocence, and respectability of southern womanhood was part of the logic that kept Black men and woman in subjugation and fear. The practices associated with the White female – religiosity, respectability, and homemaking – "reflected genteel morality and emphasized the sacredness of a particular type of family life and structure. These women, existing virtually on a pedestal, were seen as the virginal ideal of the home. This image was juxtaposed with stereotypes of freed Black women, who were considered sexually promiscuous and impure."[72] Southern Christians felt it was their God-given duty to defend White female purity and the Southern Christian civilization. This Christian civilization was defined by patriarchal heterosexual Christian marriages, and by this point, coloniality and slavery had structured the United States in the image of patriarchy.[73] The rhetoric produced by southern evangelical Christians falsely idealized antebellum slavery as a time where God blessed America with progress because Christians were obedient to Christ-like sexual morality and were similarly committed to the divinity of how the family unit operated. In fact, prominent evangelical leaders asserted that the Civil War was not a war over slavery, but a war where the South was defending Christian America.[74] This created White longing for a mythical Christian past, a longing which obscured the brutality experienced by Black people.[75]

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71. Butler, *White Evangelical Racism*, 25–26.
72. Butler, *White Evangelical Racism*, 36–37.
73. Perry, *Vexy Thing*, 83.
74. Kobez du Mez, *Jesus and John Wayne*, 71.
75. Butler, *White Evangelical Racism*, 35.

Organizations such as Religion of the Lost Cause, the Ku Klux Klan, and the White League arose with a mission to maintain "southern Christian values" and to "protect Whites and Christian civilization against freed Black people."[76] Members claimed that slavery and White dominance were key to the thriving of Christian civilization. In the KKK's 1915 constitution, which at the time was led by a former Methodist minister, members wrote, "the Klan wanted a homogenous, Protestant White America, free from the corrupting influences of diversity."[77] These groups, which included many southern evangelical Christians, contributed to the brutal lynching of over 4,400 Black people between 1877–1950, and crimes of slavery, rape, murder, violence, and racism were hidden behind the noble language of "protecting Christian civilization, order, and purity."[78]

To reduce the antagonism directed at them by White people, Black people – and the Black Church itself – began adhering to strict White ideals of respectability, sexual purity, and hetero-patriarchal marriage.[79] As the Black female body was the site where White people located the sexual deviancy of the Black race, attempting to adhere to White Christian ideals of respectability led to the disproportionate policing of Black female bodies.[80] Many Black women had to perform asexuality in the hope of being protected from violence. The most conclusive way for Black women to escape the Jezebel trope was, and continues to be, conformity to the White Christian ideal of heteropatriarchal marriage and the nuclear family.[81]

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[76] Butler, *White Evangelical Racism*, 38–39.

[77] Butler, *White Evangelical Racism*, 38.

[78] Butler, *White Evangelical Racism*, 41, 36–37.

[79] Moultrie, *Passionate and Pious*, 15–16.

[80] Cooper, Brittney C. *Beyond Respectability: The Intellectual Thought of Race Women* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2017).

[81] Jennifer Nash and Christina Sharpe, among others, speak about how Black

As a result, the practice of adhering to extreme notions of purity and respectability before heteronormative marriage has been institutionalized in the Black Church. Due to this, a whole market of Black faith-based ministries – separate from the White purity ministries mentioned above – emerged in the later 1900s, and have increased in influence since the 2000s. The aim of these ministries is to keep single Black women respectable and accountable to their values through sexual celibacy.[82] As this historical overview reveals, the impact of the Black Jezebel trope is not only historical but contemporaneous. I will now move on to discuss the commodification of the Jezebel trope, which arose following the commodification of Christian faith-based beliefs around purity during the rise of the White capitalist evangelical marketplaces in the 1900s.

The Profitability of the Jezebel Trope

Kate Bowler demonstrates that to be successful in the Christian marketplace, individuals must reflect the messaging of this marketplace, a messaging which largely privileges whiteness and conservative Christianity.[83] Bowler describes the contemporary American Christian marketplace as "made in the image of evangelicalism and developed in order to meet the desires of a Protestant subculture that wanted to remain distinct but not isolated,

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women had to come to control their sexualities for the sake of Black survival. See Jennifer C. Nash, "Black Sexualities," *Feminist Theory* 19, no. 1 (2018): 3–5, https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700117742865, and Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

[82] Moultrie, *Passionate and Pious*, 19.

[83] Kate Bowler, *The Preacher's Wife: The Precarious Power of Evangelical Women Celebrities* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019); Butler, *White Evangelical Racism,* 92.

privy to the same music, television, radio, books, and goods that the wider culture enjoyed – but with a sanctified twist!"[84] As there are more opportunities for White bodies in a culture where White body supremacy is operative, for the majority of the nineteenth twentieth centuries, White evangelicals monopolized the marketplace.[85] It was only in the 1970s that the White evangelical marketplace began to incorporate Black people, and they only did so limitedly. As Butler demonstrates, the original intent behind including Black voices on televised or recorded Church ministries was to respond to the critique that evangelicalism was racist. Megachurch pastors and parachurch ministries thus began including a limited number of Black folks to create the façade that they were not racist, while simultaneously refusing to engage in any meaningful anti-racist structural change. Since this type of capitalist Christian platforming was – and is – intended to present the platformed individual/message as a product to be consumed, evangelicals took pains to only platform *certain types of* Black people – i.e., those who affirmed whiteness, respectability, and purity as the ideal; those who did not speak about racial justice issues or attempt to change the status quo; those who continued to attach the Jezebel trope to Black bodies.[86] It was out of this competitive White evangelical marketplace that Black faith-based ministries arose.

Alongside the White purity ministries that proliferated in the 1990s, figures such as T. D. Jakes and his apprentice Juanita Bynum created Black-led faith-based sexuality ministries. Black sexuality ministries modelled themselves after White purity ministries. Though their messaging spoke of Black empowerment, Bynum, Jakes, and other Black faith-based ministries continued to harmfully naturalize the Black Jezebel trope, and were exceptionally well rewarded by the Christian marketplace for doing so. To be able to have a Black voice on evangelical stages, Black faith-based ministries thus had to put great effort into teaching Black women how to embody White ideals of sexual respectability.[87] Following Tamura Lomax's terminology in *Jezebel Unhinged*, this will further be referred to as the Jezebel/lady or ho/lady binary.

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[84] Bowler, *The Preacher's Wife*, 13.
[85] Bowler, *The Preacher's Wife*, 32–33.
[86] Butler, *White Evangelical Racism*, 92.

When Jakes first preached his "Woman, Thou Art Loosed!" sermon in 1993, he was among, if not *the* first Black man to publicly recognize the sexual and emotional abuse that Black women experience.[88] However, instead of attempting to liberate them from inherited purity rhetoric, Jakes mirrored the Jezebelian trope by placing the onus of maintaining purity on Black women. Jakes suggested that their struggles to find suitable husbands – as well as any abuse they experienced – was due to them dating men who wanted "loose women." In other words, they were told they were not taking the steps they needed to pursue a Godly marriage. Jakes told them they could find healing through submitting to Christ and becoming celibate – i.e., by leaving their "loose" ways behind – until they found a husband.[89] In *Jezebel Unhinged*, Lomax notes that Jakes has been preaching the same sermon, seemingly unchanged, for over twenty years. During this time he has turned "Woman, Thou Art Loosed!" into a multimedia franchise spanning a TV series, a stage play, books, cookbooks, Bibles, annual conferences, two feature films (one of which earned 6.8 million in 2004), and more.[90] At his most recent conferences, Jakes has had between 80,000 to 100,000 attendees, all of whom pay around $600 for their ticket and accompanying merchandise.[91] Additionally, Jakes is the Bishop at The Potter's House, a megachurch in Texas with over thirty thousand members.[92] While Jakes and other sexuality-based ministries are financially rewarded for perpetuating the harmful Jezebel trope, Black women continue to make decisions about their sexual practices based on their adherence to these Black faith-based purity ministries.[93] The fact that these discourses are thriving with immense profitability demonstrates that sexual discourses of resistance are required within Black cultural and religious spaces to inspire institutional change.

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[87] Moultrie, *Passionate and Pious*, 45.

[88] Lomax, *Jezebel Unhinged*, 131.

[89] See "Whose 'Woman' Is This? Reading Bishop T. D. Jakes's Woman, Thou Art Loosed," in Lomax's *Jezebel Unhinged.*

[90] Lomax, *Jezebel Unhinged*, 130.

Bynum has also been particularly impactful for Black women, as she was one of the first Black female Christian celebrities to speak to Black women about the struggle of being Black, single, celibate, and lonely. In her sermon "No More Sheets," Bynum argues that to live a life for God, Black women must give up casual sex in favour of celibacy, modesty, and submission to Christ, which is interpreted as preparation for their future husbands. Black women saw themselves in Bynum and were convinced that if Bynum could be celibate, so could they.[94] And if they failed to be – i.e., if they pursued their natural ways of promiscuity – the message was clear: they would not find a Godly loving spouse. As these examples demonstrate, in Black faith-based sexuality ministries, the Jezebel trope is alive and well.

In *Passionate and Pious*, Moultrie interviews Black women who adhere to Black faith-based sexuality ministries and finds that generally, women following faith-based sexuality ministries need not be convinced of the value of marriage.[95] They believe that heterosexual marriage is God’s best plan for their lives, and they are actively pursuing that goal. Black women in Moultrie’s focus group seemed to universally adopt the foundational messages of celibacy in pursuit of Black ladyhood – purity before heterosexual monogamous patriarchal marriage – and many believe that challenging these basic assumptions is sinful and heretical.[96] Despite being convinced by Godly chastity, Moultrie found that almost every individual she interviewed in the making of *Passionate and Pious* transgressed their vow of chastity, which brought about guilt, shame, and depression for not being able to resist their lustful desires as they wrestled with what it meant to be a single woman with no foreseeable marriage partner.[97] Some of the women interviewed desired marriages, while others simply desired an intimate connection but felt discouraged to pursue this because of the potential sin it could bring about, which is reinforced by Black faith-based sexuality messaging.[98]

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[91] Lomax, *Jezebel Unhinged*, 135.
[92] Lomax, *Jezebel Unhinged*, 135.
[93] Marla Frederick, "'But it's Bible': African American Women and Televangelism," in *Women and Religion in the African Diaspora,* ed. Marie R. Griffith and B. Savage (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 283.
[94] Moultrie, *Passionate and Pious*, 43–44.

As a Black Christian herself, Moultrie expresses concern over this ideal, because on top of the perpetuation of the Jezebel trope – which has not only been demonstrated to cause harm, but to be rooted in histories of oppression – Black women make up the smallest population of married women in the United States.[99] Due to the high incarceration rates of Black men – another demographic trend rooted in Black oppression – as Black women get older, there is a decreased amount of opportunity for them to marry heteronormatively.[100] There are approximately 129 adult Black women for every 100 adult Black men, and when Black women reach the age of 85, there are 200 Black women for every 100 black men.[101] Moultrie demonstrates that Black women, and Black churchgoing women, continue to live in the legacy of the Jezebelian trope that marks their bodies as impure. The ministries they adhere to continually espouse that for them to be pure they must remain celibate or get married. However, many of them must go the extra mile to prove their purity because of the assumed Jezebelian impurity that is read on their bodies as the legacy of White manipulations. Moultrie demonstrates that many Black women struggle, knowing that they may never get married, and are often left feeling hopeless, constricted, lonely, and depressed.

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[95] Moultrie, *Passionate and Pious*, 11.
[96] Moultrie, *Passionate and Pious*, 11.
[97] Moultrie, *Passionate and Pious*, 18.
[98] Moultrie, *Passionate and Pious*, 100.
[99] Moultrie, *Passionate and Pious,* 12.
[100] Peter Wagner, Leah Sakala, and Josh Begley, “States of Incarceration: The Global Context,” Prison Policy Initiative, 2016, https://www.prisonpolicy.org/global/; see also: https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2020/07/27/disparities/.

Moultrie argues that it is irresponsible for faith-based purity ministries, both Black and White, to continue to highlight monogamy or celibacy as the only norm permissible within respectable female sexual activity, especially when many of these Black women may never experience marriage.[102] As long as White evangelicalism continues to demand purity, and as long as White ex-purity adherents continue not to center Black experiences with purity culture, the harder it will become to unhinge the Jezebel trope from the bodies of Black women in the Church. Black women deserve to be unyoked from these messages. There must be recognition that there are literal empires built upon the perpetuation of the Jezebel trope at the expense of the well-being of Black women. Letting the Jezebelian trope live on in purity culture rhetoric within general Christian society and the Black Church reinforces men's institutional power to discipline and define female bodies and makes Black women continually vulnerable to violence. I will now turn to the work of some Black feminists and womanists to learn how we, as White people, can listen to and stand alongside their interventions to create a feminist framework of resistance.

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[101] Moultrie, *Passionate and Pious*, 102.

[102] Moultrie, *Passionate and Pious*, 111–112.

Womanism and Black Feminism as Discourses of Resistance Against Purity Culture

In *All About Love: New Visions* (2001), bell hooks argues that, in the world we live in, love is hard to find because many individuals are confused about love or have been taught that love includes forms of abuse. The first meaningful definition of love hooks came across was in M. Scott Peck's book, *The Road Less Travelled* (1978). Peck defines love as, "the will to extend one's self for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's spiritual growth. Love is as love does. Love is an act of will – namely, both an intention and an action. Will also implies choice. We do not have to love. We choose to love."[103] To love includes "care, affection, recognition, respect, commitment, trust, as well as honest and open communication."[104] What is most striking about hooks' comments on this definition of love is when she states, "when we understand love as the will to nurture our own and another's spiritual growth, it becomes clear that we cannot claim to love if we are hurtful and abusive. Love and abuse cannot coexist. Abuse and neglect are, by definition, the opposites of nurturance and care."[105] Evangelicals claim to be all about love. The truest and deepest forms of love. However, the demonstrable harms and abuses condoned by this movement proves otherwise. This section will highlight Black feminist and womanist theorizing on love, theorizing which focuses on how to overturn White lies about love for the sake of Black flourishing and flourishing for all bodies. There is much we can learn from these theorists.

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[103] M. Scott Peck as referenced by bell hooks in *All About Love: New Visions*, (New York, William Morrow, 2001), 4.

[104] hooks, *All About Love*, 5.

[105] hooks, *All About Love*, 6.

Foucault demonstrates that within any power structure, resistance is inevitable. Once a power structure and its accompanying discourse is identified, individuals can expose and disrupt these power relations through discourses of resistance. Since power is relational, power can be manipulated on any level where people interact; if individuals change or resist the normative web of interpersonal relations on the microlevels of society, then the way power is institutionalized can be changed.[106] Therefore, if both Black and White communities begin to demand different sexual discourses, the demand within the Christian marketplace can change the stories and narratives being told. Kelly Brown Douglas, bell hooks, Audre Lorde, Monique Moultrie, and Tamura Lomax, among many other scholars, are Black women who have grown up in the church and experienced Jezebelian violence. Together they demonstrate that to unhinge the Jezebel trope from Black female bodies, we must dismantle the concept of purity, the lady trope, compulsory celibacy and heterosexism, and all the policing that comes alongside traditional purity teachings.

To completely know and love themselves, their spirituality, and their divinity, Douglas suggests that Black women must completely love and embody their sexuality. Douglas states that for Black women to have safe space to love and embody their sexual selves, there must be a reinterpretation of scripture, beginning with a transformed definition of sin. Sin, according to Douglas, is not lodged in the Black female body as Jezebelian discourse claims. Rather, as womanism demonstrates, sin is what alienates Black people from each other, their environments, themselves, and their spiritualities.[107]

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106. Douglas, *Sexuality and the Black Church*, 20.
107. Douglas, *Sexuality and the Black Church*, 125.

Like Douglas, Lomax articulates that the Black Church must recognize that "sin is not located in Black women and girls' bodies. It is not biological. It is in the ways we cause harm […] the ways we limit and halt thriving."[108] Dehumanizing tropes based in Jezebelian or Mammy discourses were successful in disconnecting Black bodies from their humanity, tainting Black self-perceptions, invoking shame, and creating hostile relationships of policing between Black men and Black women. This is sin. This is harm.

First, it is important to reinterpret the White manipulation of 1 Kings 16:31, the origin of the Jezebel trope. Here, Queen Jezebel is thrown out a window by Israelites and brutally eaten by dogs. When the Jezebelian trope was projected onto Black female bodies, it justified the violence, breeding, prostitution, rape, and other atrocities they were exposed to.[109] However, a closer look at 1 Kings 16:31 reveals that Queen Jezebel's suffering was never about her sexuality or her purity. Lomax demonstrates that, contrary to White interpretations, Queen Jezebel never used sex or her beauty against her Israelite enemies; rather, she used her knowledge, assertiveness, and power. Lomax finds that throughout the Christian Bible, when the Israelites came across "foreign" religions and cultures, these cultures were associated with sin, whoring, and promiscuity – whether this was true or not.[110] It was thus in this way that the figure of Queen Jezebel became a cultural, religious, and racialized "other." In other words, what rendered Queen Jezebel sinful and deserving of violence was not any "whoring," immodesty, or impurity – it was, rather, her otherness, an otherness which was later racialized by the White colonial desire to render certain people inferior for the sake of domination and empire building.

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[108] Lomax, *Jezebel Unhinged*, 206.
[109] Lomax, *Jezebel Unhinged*, 110.
[110] Lomax, *Jezebel Unhinged*, 42.

What Black womanists like Douglas are calling for us to recognize is that figures such as Jesus "did not tolerate hate or prejudice of any kind [...] and neither did he tolerate neutrality in the face of human misery or injustice."[111] In fact, when Jesus was given the opportunity to problematize female sexual lives, he always pointed to lessons that transcend sex and gender, pointing back to faithfulness and love. Jesus never referred to women as "whores" or "Jezebels."[112] Lomax's notion of "unhinging Jezebel" refers first to the project of recognizing that the White manipulation of Jesus' gospel has been used to control Black women, and second, to resisting any Biblical interpretations that continue to legitimize the violence of Jezebel's death. If we are to walk alongside Black women, we cannot continue to sit by while injustices continue to be perpetrated against Black sexuality in the name of God. Unhinging Jezebel means creating new interpretations that focus on the celebration of female bodies as the inherently sacred vessels they are.[113] Violence created Jezebel, and violence continues to perpetuate Jezebel.[114] Embracing an unconditional love of ourselves and others, and rejecting harmful discourses about our sexuality – and the sexualities of our Black sisters – is how we can begin to do this work.

In her discourse of resistance, Moultrie turns to the womanist ideal of sexual generosity. According to Moultrie, a sexual womanist is "a responsible, grown, Black woman who is sometimes a lover of individual men, sexually and/or non-sexually [...] but is always a lover of the spirit."[115] This model of sexual generosity offers a framework for young and old Black women alike to explore seeking companionship rather than marriage.[116] This model takes seriously that aging churchwomen express their faith as the ultimate concern, but acknowledges and affirms that they are also sensual beings who may choose to act on their sexual desire or pursue intimate relationships that do not necessarily culminate nor strive toward marriage. There is space within this model for single women to explore their sexualities and be generous with what works for their own flourishing.[117] If celibacy is making Black women feel depressed, guilty, and alienated, then womanist theology can help determine that this practice is not to be continued; that it is not of love. Rather than compulsory celibacy, celibacy can be seen as a part of an individual's toolbox of sexual agency. However, others cannot demand that it be in everyone's toolbox, and it should certainly not be ranked as a "better decision" than others. Choosing to share one's body with someone else is a radical act of love towards the self, the other, and God.[118] Sexual generosity allows women to generously share the wisdom of sexual agency, responsibility, pleasure, and well-being with future generations, centering Black wholeness within Black communities.

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[111] Douglas, *Sexuality and the Black Church,* 116.
[112] Lomax, *Jezebel Unhinged*, 73.
[113] Lomax, *Jezebel Unhinged*, 7.
[114] Lomax, *Jezebel Unhinged*, 43.
[115] Moultrie, *Passionate and Pious*, 73–74.

Womanist models of sexual generosity demonstrate that to bring wholeness back to Black women, all teachings of sexuality must prioritize Black females as responsible sexual agents who deserve love, pleasure, and intimacy.[119] However, in womanist literature thus far, Moultrie asserts that centering Black female pleasure is often only an afterthought to conversations surrounding histories of interlocking oppressions and trauma that block women from connecting with their sexualities.[120] Many Black women in the church have been taught – at risk of being chastised for having a Jezebelian-spirit – that they should not speak about their sexual pleasure. Moultrie asserts that neglecting bodily pleasure because of the politics of respectability is itself a form of oppression. In this case, Moultrie suggests a womanist model of erotic justice which focuses on self-pleasuring in various forms such as masturbation, oral and anal sex, and non-monogamous sex. Of this, Moultrie states, "radical sexual honesty and responsibility are the cornerstones of the womanist erotic justice model, starting with the Black churchwoman prioritizing her desires and her body."[121] Rather than monogamous heteronormative marriage being the only space for "Godly sex," erotic pleasure and responsible sexual generosity should be normative.[122]

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[116] Moultrie, *Passionate and Pious*, 112.
[117] Moultrie, *Passionate and Pious*, 79.
[118] Moultrie, *Passionate and Pious*, 77–79.
[119] Moultrie, *Passionate and Pious*, 79.
[120] Moultrie, *Passionate and Pious*, 114.

Though a model of erotic justice is vital for Black women to learn their bodily desires, as theorized by Black lesbian feminist Audre Lorde, an embrace of the erotic outside the bedroom will further connect women to their spirituality.[123] In *Sister Outsider*, Lorde states that the erotic is the power and embodied knowledge that lies within each of us but that exists specifically on a feminine and spiritual plane.[124] To further define the term, Lorde says,

> the very word erotic comes from the Greek word eros, the personification of love in all its aspects – born of Chaos, and personifying creative power and harmony. When I speak of the erotic, then, I speak of it as an assertion of the lifeforce of women; of that creative energy empowered, the knowledge and use of which we are now reclaiming in

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[121] Moultrie, *Passionate and Pious*, 127.

[122] Moultrie, *Passionate and Pious*, 114.

[123] Audre Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic," in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (New York: Crossing Press, 2007), 53–59.

[124] Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic," 53.

> our language, our history, our dancing, our loving, our work, our lives.[125]

Though we have been taught that the erotic exists solely in sexual moments, Lorde demonstrates this is not so. Rather, the erotic may be described as our embodied non-rational knowledge, the chaotic feelings we feel the strongest and the deepest. The erotic empowers women to examine the world and see the various ways in which society could exist differently. When one comes to recognize the erotic within them, they learn the fullness of what life can be, what they can aspire to and achieve, the type of love and respect they deserve from the world and from others.[126] As Lorde puts it, "recognizing the power of the erotic within our lives can give us the energy to pursue genuine change within our world, rather than merely settling for a shift of characters in the same weary drama."[127]

However, as we have seen, White patriarchal capitalist supremacy seeks to maintain itself, whatever the cost, and, accordingly, has sought to repress and undermine the empowerment represented by eroticism (both sexual and non-sexual). Indeed, in our Western patriarchal society, the deep "feeling power" of women has been undermined and re-scripted as a manifestation of irrationality and psychosis – not only to legitimize claims of female gender inferiority, but also to keep women "in order" for the service of White patriarchal capitalist supremacy.[128] We have learned that only rational knowledge has meaning, and that we should be suspicious of embodied knowledge. This is especially the case in Christianity, which has sought to create a mind-body dualism that undermines the experience of the body and puts the reading and understanding of scripture, the work of the mind, on a pedestal.[129] In Western society, we have been taught not to trust the feminine irrationality that comes from our feelings, and in church, we have been taught that our embodied experiences – i.e., our "fleshly desires" – are demonstrations of sin. To cope, to not be ostracized, many of us have learned to be suspicious of and shut down the erotic knowledge within ourselves. But this, Lorde argues, is the perpetuation of sexist and gendered oppression, not just for women, but for all genders, as this is a form of individual undermining and disembodiment.

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[125] Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic," 55.
[126] Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic," 54.
[127] Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic," 59.
[128] Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic," 53.

Though we have been taught to fear and chastise the chaos of deep feelings within our bodies, Sara Ahmed's work on affect demonstrates that emotions truly do "do" things.[130] Institutions, governments, and figures of authority frequently use fear, shame, the promise of happiness, and other affective emotions to direct our behaviours into compliance with them. The use of emotions as a method of social control demonstrates that these institutions want us to be guided by deep, non-rational feelings, just not when these feelings are our own. Rather, they desire us to submit ourselves to the feelings and beliefs they deem "rational." Once we recognize this, we can recognize that the embrace of the erotic, of our own deep feelings, will not only connect us to ourselves, to humanity, and to others, but will also empower decolonial, liberating, and lifechanging transformations. A true feminist endeavour! We must, therefore, resist the narratives that seek to pathologize deep emotion. In fact, we must empower each other to recognize, believe, nurture, and foster these deep feelings in ourselves. As White people who have more assumed access to rationality, we must center the work of Black feminists like Audre Lorde and womanists like Monique Moultrie; we must give credit to the work they've done and the knowledge they have, and stand in solidarity with them as they fight for erotic bodies of all forms to have space to flourish without being seen as pathological or Jezebelian.

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[129] See, for example, Kelly Kapic's discussion of killing our bodily desires ("dying to the flesh") in "The Mortification of Sin," *The Gospel Coalition*, 2022, https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/the-mortification-of-sin/.

[130] Sara Ahmed, "On Collective Feelings and the Impressions Left by Others," *Theory, Culture, and Society* 21, no. 2 (2004): 25–42.

In a similar manner, we must work against the discourse that seeks to define any identity or orientation in the 2SLGBTQIA+ community as sinful or pathological. This is something purity culture greatly perpetuates. Like White supremacy, homophobia represents another roadblock to the liberatory ideals of feminism.[131] When queer individuals exist in affective communities which declare all non-heterosexuals to be sinful or defective, it is this rhetoric that is harmful and sinful, not their bodies. This rhetoric can cause individuals to leave churches, to be separated from their spiritual selves, to experience self-hate and shame, and, tragically, to death by suicide. Though evangelical communities claim that this treatment of non-normative sexuality is loving, we must recognize that this is part of the discourse of patriarchal supremacy, where the husband must rule over the female partner. We must see through this. Homophobia causes suffering and alienation, and we must recognize that, although there are powerful forces seeking to convince us otherwise, homophobic rhetoric is not the fruit of Christ. To do this, we must begin to dismantle the norm of holding heteronormative marriage as the ideal, which joins this project with the project of unhinging the Jezebel trope. Currently, within the ho/lady discourse in religio-cultural spheres, anyone who is not committed to the nuclear project (read: "Jezebelian" women and 2SLGTBQIA+ individuals) represents a threat to the contemporary moral order and must be punished. This legitimizes homophobia and the policing and chastising of female, racialized female, and gender non-conforming bodies. However, the 2SLGTBQIA+ population can – and, as I argue, should – be understood as representing the diversity of divinity.

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[131] Smith, "Racism and Women's Studies," 48–49.

To dismantle heterosexism and give space to the 2SLGTBQIA+ community, Moultrie suggests we could employ a womanist model of sexual fluidity and sexual hospitality. This model requires "a complete breaking of the binary to bring about acceptance of healthy relationships and sexual expressions of any kind… it can include celibacy, choosing to be in primary relationship with oneself, choosing to engage in a sexual relationship with any gender, and the flexibility to allow people space to identify across a wider range of sexual expressions."[132] This model recognizes the wide fluidity of sexual expression that is possible when individuals see themselves as responsible and autonomous sexual agents, who sometimes love men, sometimes love women, sometimes love trans or gender non-conforming bodies, but always love God. There is no pressure for individuals to be ex-gay, to hide in a straight-passing relationship, or to maintain any sort of static sexual identity. Womanist sexual hospitality honours the grown woman as a responsible sexual agent who does not need to have a fixed identity, and therefore may exist in constant flux.[133]

To know the divine is to share her love with others. To demonstrate the divine act of love is to enter into loving relationships unashamed of our bodies and to encourage others to do the same. The production of a constructive sexual discourse of resistance will encourage individuals to firmly condemn biblical interpretations that encourage sexual silencing, homophobia, and/or the Jezebel/lady binary. This will clear space for individuals to see the divine within themselves regardless of their identity or their management of personal erotic desire.[134] For individuals within the church to flourish, the church can no longer tolerate homophobia, and it can no longer promote racialized Jezebelian violence.

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[132] Moultrie, *Passionate and Pious*, 92–93.
[133] Moultrie, *Passionate and Pious*, 94–95.

Conclusion

When White women deconstruct their experiences in purity culture, we do not get a true sense of how insidious this culture is if we do not include – and indeed foreground – voices of colour. When we do foreground these voices, we learn that White Christians are taught about the beauty of pursuing purity (and are chastised for failing to accept this teaching), not necessarily for theological reasons, but because our blind adherence to evangelicalism is necessary for White body supremacy to sustain itself in Christian spaces. We learn that for evangelicalism to perpetuate itself, we need to embody and pass down White, cis-gender, monogamous, and heteronormative ideals. We learn that purity is not about our well-being, but is, rather, part of discursive manipulations that have systemically oppressed bodies of colour in North America, while simultaneously wiping out Indigenous populations. Evangelicals want to spread the gospel; *the good news*, as they claim it. In accordance with Anthea Butler, I do not think the good news is primarily what evangelicalism is about.

I have used Christian language throughout this paper because, although I have left evangelicalism, its language still lives and breathes within me. As this paper has sought to demonstrate, reinterpreting scripture can be an empowering means of seeking new understandings, resisting old harms, and forging new beginnings. In this spirit, I would like to invoke Matthew 7:15–20 (NIV):

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[134] Douglas, *Sexuality and the Black Church*, 68.

> Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you shall recognize them […] every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

Evangelicalism and purity culture produces bad fruit. Evangelicalism was birthed amidst American slavocracy, Indigenous genocide, and the White nationalist movements that have flourished throughout North American history. We cannot forget that behind the legacy of evangelicalism and its movements lay dead bodies. Hundreds of thousands of bodies of Turtle Islanders, and hundreds of thousands of bodies that were stolen from Africa. We must remind ourselves of bell hook's beautiful reclamation of M. Scott Peck's definition of love as the will to extend oneself for the nurturing of one's self or another's spiritual growth. Love and abuse cannot coexist.[135] As scholars and individuals deconstructing our experiences in evangelicalism and purity culture, we must work towards having inclusive conversations. As Barbara Smith demonstrates, freedom for all is what feminism is striving for. Anything less is self-aggrandizement.[136]

I sit compassionately with those of you who have made it through this paper and feel shattered by its revelations. I, too, have been shattered. I, too, have seen my White fragility. Indeed, my fibromyalgia pain has flared. Indeed, I have been disoriented. You may be too. Allow yourself to feel shattered. Allow yourself to feel. Ahmed demonstrates that the inheritance of feminism may indeed be the inheritance of sadness, the inheritance of unhappiness. We come to realize that the world we live in is not at all the world that thought we lived in.[137] But, in embracing the erotic, in partnering with and centering the work of humans of colour, we can demand different worlds. But we can no longer continue the legacy of having these conversations in racially segregated communities; we must do it together, and we must do the internal work required to do this well. Engaging in this dialogue may bring liberatory outcomes.[138]

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[135] hooks, *All About Love*, 4–10.

[136] Smith, "Racism and Women's Studies," 140.

Resmaa Menakem – the Black Somatic scholar mentioned earlier who coined the phrase "White body supremacy" – states that we cannot change White body supremacy solely from activist work and engaging in dialogue. In fact, Menakem argues, "Do not continue to read this book if you are convinced that ending White supremacy begins with social and political action […] we need to begin with the healing of our trauma – in dark-skinned bodies, light-skinned bodies, our neighbourhoods and our communities."[139] Educating ourselves on the racialized horrors of the past, partnering alongside individuals of colour to make structural changes, and creating liberative work that can help others understand the complexities of White body supremacy and purity culture is important, but we must also work on healing our nervous systems and healing our trauma. Since White body supremacy lives in our bodies, part of how we can heal our bodies is through embodiment practices and through recognizing our trauma responses. I urge you to read Menakem's work *My Grandmother's Hands,* as I cannot do it justice here. Compassionately, Menakem understands that all bodies are harmed by White body supremacy. From the position of a Black Somatic therapist, Menakem provides an accessible resource for understanding how White body supremacy impacts all our bodies, and how we can work towards healing our bodies from intergenerational and personal trauma. If we do not heal, we may continue to repeat harm, or repeat racist tendencies, even if unintentionally. It is not our fault, as White people, that we inherited the world that we did. But it is our responsibility to heal ourselves and turn towards creating a safer and liberative world for all bodies.

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[137] Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness*, 86.
[138] hooks, "Theory as Liberatory Practice," 1–12.
[139] Menakem, *My Grandmother's Hands*, xii.

We can resist the scripts of White body supremacy, but to do this, we must partner with womanists and Black feminists to promote interventions which seek to release sin from sex and sin from the Black female body. We must release individuals from mandated celibacy and heterosexism. We must promote reinterpretations of scripture that connect individuals to themselves, their bodies, their environments, their spiritualities, and others within their communities. We must embrace sexual and gender fluidity, the 2SLGTBQIA+ community, and womanist models of sexual generosity and erotic justice. We must individually and communally re-interpret sexual sin and place love, wholeness, embodiment, and well-being at the center of these interpretations. We must learn to love ourselves and each other. This is shattering, heartbreaking, and difficult work, but from it breathes love, life, resilience, and the potential for the transformational work of feminism.

Race and Zen: Julius Evola, Fascism, and D. T. Suzuki[1]

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The present paper focuses on Julius Evola's representation of Japan and Zen Buddhism, a representation that is strongly connected to his racial theorizations as well as his religious and spiritual views. A multifaceted figure of the Italian far right, Evola often wrote about Asian cultures and religions, producing several works strongly marked by his political ideas. I will try to show how Evola's racism and esotericism lie at the core of his views about Japan and Zen, first by contextualizing his early discourse on Japan within the political context of Italian fascism, and then by clarifying how his initial interest in themes like Zen, Samurais and Japanese Empire fit within a greater programme of fascist propaganda aimed at legitimizing Japan as fascist Italy's ally – a task which will require a careful consideration of Italian racial laws. Following this, I will present Evola's discourse on Zen, focusing on the orientalist themes he adopted. Here, I will critically analyze

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[1] I would like to thank Emanuele Pavoni, who provided me with a number of Evola's texts. I would also like to thank Giulia Luzzo for her huge help and support throughout the whole writing process. Finally, I must thank Osvaldo Mercuri for sending me several pages from some of Ogawa Takashi's books. These books cannot be found outside of Japan, and it would have been very difficult to consult them without his help (especially during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic).

Arc – Journal of The School of Religious Studies, McGill University
Volume 49 (2021): 48–82

Evola's use of Daisetsu Teitarō Suzuki's sources in his writings (hereafter D. T. Suzuki), showing how Evola confronted their Japanese nationalist/nativist elements, as well as their responses to Japan's encounter with Euro-American colonialism. It is my overarching assertion that a critical analysis of Evola's narrative – its sources and presumptions – demonstrates how religious studies can contribute to problematizing political narratives rooted in the intersection of racism and spirituality. As Evola's ideas on religion and race are still alive within the far-right,[2] such work is more relevant now than ever.

Evola's Racism and Japan

Julius Evola was a singular figure within Italian fascism. The great Italian intellectual Umberto Eco has defined him as "one of the most respected fascists gurus" and "the most important theoretical source of the Italian political right."[3] Furio Jesi, in his 1993 book *Cultura di destra* (Right-wing culture), denounces Evola as "a racist so dirty that it is repugnant to touch him with one's own fingers."[4] Evola was born in Rome in 1889.[5] In his early years, he became interested in philosophy and literature, reading authors such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Otto Weininger and Carlo Michelstaedter. In his autobiography, he reports that after his experience in the First World War he thought about committing suicide. Reading the Buddhist Pali Canon, however, helped him overcome his existential crisis, and, subsequently, cultivate his lifelong interest in transcendence[6] even though he never considered himself to be a Buddhist practitioner.[7] He was then involved in the artistic movements of Futurism and Dadaism before definitively concluding his artistic period in 1922.[8] Between 1923 and 1927 he developed his philosophical thought and published his first writings while also deepening his studies in Asian religions. In 1927 he founded the "Ur Group" with Arturo Reghini, who would influence the development of Evola's esotericism in the following years.[9] Although the group was initially supportive of Mussolini, they broke with Italian fascism after its concordat with the Catholic Church in 1929.[10]

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[2] See, for example, Chetan Bhatt's discussion of the influence of Evola's thought on contemporary far-right culture in "White Extinction: Metaphysical Elements of Contemporary Western Fascism," *Theory, Culture & Society* 38 no. 1 (2021): 27–52. The influence of Evola's thinking on contemporary far-right movements will be further discussed in the conclusion.

[3] Umberto Eco, *Il fascismo eterno* (Milan: La Nave di Teseo, 2019), 33, 35. Translation by author. Note that all translations are the author's unless otherwise noted.

[4] Furio Jesi, *Cultura di destra* (Roma: Garzanti, 1993), 91.

[5] The following biographical information about Evola is taken from Hans T. Hakl, "Julius Evola and Tradition," in *Key Thinkers of the Radical Right: behind the New Threat to Liberal Democracy*, ed. Mark Sedgwick (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 54–73.

Following this break Evola became increasingly critical of Italian fascism, as he considered it to be populistic and lacking in any spirituality. He thus became interested in political movements such as Romania's Iron Guard and Germany's SS. During the 1930s and early 1940s, Evola developed his theory of "spiritual racism," which received recognition from Mussolini and came to be seen as an alternative to the "biological racisms" developed in other countries (especially in Germany). Despite his criticism of both Mussolini and Hitler,[11] Evola's relationship with fascism and national socialism lasted until the end of the Second World War. Around the time of Italy's armistice in 1943 – which would eventually lead to Mussolini's arrest – Evola stayed at Hitler's headquarters in Rastenburg alongside several other fascist hierarchs (and Mussolini himself after he was rescued by the German Army). He then moved to Vienna, where he kept in contact with fascist and National-Socialist figures. In 1945, an allied bombing gave him a spinal injury that left him wheelchair bound. After the war he continued publishing his writings and translations. In 1951 he was accused of instigating neofascist terrorist groups but was eventually cleared of this charge. Until his death in 1975[12] he maintained his views and beliefs as a far right intellectual.[13]

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[6] Hakl, "Julius Evola and Tradition," 56.

[7] Julius Evola, *La dottrina del risveglio* (Roma: Edizioni Mediterranee, 2008), 7–8.

[8] Hakl, "Julius Evola and Tradition," 57.

[9] The Ur Group was a "loose organization" that performed esoteric practices and rituals and wrote articles about magical and spiritual topics for the journals *UR* and *KRUR*. See Hans T. Hakl, "Julius Evola and the UR Group," *ARIES* 12 no.1 (2012): 53–90.

[10] Hakl, "Julius Evola and Tradition," 58.

During the various phases of his life, Evola produced an extensive amount of writing that dealt with various topics such as art, philosophy, Asian religions, theorizations upon sexuality, and, above all, esoterism and racial theories. Evola's most famous work is probably *Rivolta contro il mondo moderno* (*Revolt Against the Modern World*). Originally published in 1934, the book was subsequently reprinted in Italy and translated and printed in a number of other countries.[14] In this book, heavily influenced by the work of the famous French occultist René Guénon, Evola outlines the characteristics of his idea of "integral tradition" (hereafter Tradition): a primordial, universal and ahistorical wisdom, the wellspring from which the myths of every major religious and spiritual tradition derived, particularly the ones Evola considered most esoteric in nature.[15] According to Evola, the Tradition should also be understood as being the source of certain values, including the ideal political order a society should have: a hierarchy with sacred features.[16] This idea is strongly tied with distinctive racial beliefs, since he claims that the Tradition has its origins in a group of mythical divine Nordic people, the original inhabitants of the hyperborean regions.[17] From this legendary hyperborean race Evola also traces the origin of the "Aryan races."[18] According to this mythical historical narrative, the Aryan races were forced to move south, colonizing Eurasia and encountering the "racially inferior" southern peoples. In Evola's telling, this narration of primordial times is connected to a cyclical conception of history, vaguely inspired by the concept of cosmic cycles (*yuga*) taken from sacred Hindu texts.[19] Evola's historical perspective implies a continuous degeneration of the original spirituality; a progressive forgetfulness of the principles of the Tradition until the end of the cycle. The historical period starting with the Renaissance and going through to the French Revolution and into Evola's own time is considered to be the maximal point of degeneration and materialism, the period precipitating the beginning of a whole new cycle and a restored spiritual era.[20]

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[11] Hakl, "Julius Evola and Tradition," 62–63.

[12] Hakl, "Julius Evola and Tradition," 64.

[13] Hakl, "Julius Evola and Tradition," 67.

[14] Julius Evola, *Rivolta contro il mondo moderno* (Roma: Edizioni Mediterranee, 1998).

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[15] Hakl, "Julius Evola and Tradition," 59.

[16] Hakl, "Julius Evola and Tradition," 59.

[17] The hyperborean region refers to a mythical region located in the North Pole.

[18] Julius Evola, *Sintesi di dottrina della razza* (Padova: Edizioni di Ar, 1978), 64–73.

[19] Hakl, "Julius Evola and Tradition," 60.

[20] Hakl, "Julius Evola and Tradition," 60.

Evola's thought is strongly anti-materialistic and his reflections upon race are no exception, as is evident by his theorization of a "spiritual conception of race."[21] Evola translated the division of body, mind, and soul into three corresponding grades of race: the physical, the psychological/intellectual, and the spiritual.[22] By doing so, Evola was able to praise people who were not "biologically Aryan," provided they presented "Aryan" spiritual values.[23] "Spiritual racism," then, is highly critical of the materialist reductionism of the concept of race operative in biological racism,[24] and instead adopts spiritual metrics of judgement. However, it is important to note that Evola did not deny the biological aspects of racism: he merely subordinated these aspects to a "spiritualistic" way of conceiving the human being. A quote from 1941's *Sintesi di dottrina della razza* (*Synthesis of the Doctrine of Race*) states:

> The character of the doctrine of race also depends on the way the human being is considered. If [the human being] is considered in material terms, this materialism will be transmitted to the concept of race; if it is considered in spiritual terms, the doctrine of race will also be spiritualistic, because *even when considering what in the human being is material and conditioned by the law of the matter,* it [the spiritual consideration of the human being] will never forget the hierarchical locus and functional dependency that this [biological] part has in the human being as a whole.[25]

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[21] Aaron Gillette, *Racial Theories in Fascist Italy* (London: Routledge, 2002), 154–176.

[22] Evola, *Sintesi di dottrina della razza*, 44.

[23] See Michele Monserrati, "Fascist Samurais," 69.

[24] Evola, *Sintesi di dottrina della razza*, 44.

[25] Evola, *Sintesi di dottrina della razza*, 44–45. Emphasis mine.

As already noted by other scholars,[26] the relationship between Italy and Japan in the years before the Second World War posed somewhat of a problem for Italian racial theorists who adhered to a biological racism, since the racial hierarchy established in Italy's racial laws of 1938 was predicated on preserving "biologically Aryan" principles. However, the racialized discourse from this period is not wholly biological: while Italian fascist propaganda did argue that the Japanese were racially inferior in a biological sense (as expressed, for example, in fascist racist journals which classified the Japanese as "yellow race"[27]), it also made serious efforts to ennoble their new Japanese ally via references to their similar "Aryan" ideals and cultural and spiritual traits.[28] Evola also considered the Japanese to belong to the "coloured races," but thought they were "one of the best races out of them" in virtue of the "special qualities" that supposedly characterized their race.[29]

However, an overview of Evola's writings shows mixed feelings toward the Japanese empire. In an article published in 1933,[30] Evola discusses his views about Orient and Occident.[31] He states that Occident is just a "synonym for the modern civilization of materialism" – for "the decadence, the deviation, the emasculation of the true Occident"[32] – and thus can only be seen as barbaric by the Asian-oriental civilizations the Occident invades, civilizations which Evola saw as more faithful to the Tradition.[33] The East is thus seen by Evola as a victim of the modern West, as it is gradually adopting the "perverted" ideologies of its invader,[34] to the point that Asian countries are, in his thought, slowly transforming themselves into "threatening new powers organized the European way."[35] The only solution, according to Evola, is to be found in a rediscovery of the Tradition common to both the Orient and the Occident but ultimately lost by the latter; after this, a new agreement between East and West could finally become possible.[36] However, Evola maintains that the opposition between the Orient and Occident is meaningless, as he believes that the only real opposition is between spirituality and degeneration.[37]

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[26] See Toshio Miyake, "Il Giappone *made in Italy:* civiltà, nazione, razza nell'orientalismo italiano," in *Orizzonti giapponesi: ricerche, idee, prospettive* ed. Matteo Cestari, Gianluca Coci, Daniela Moro, and Anna Specchio (Roma: Aracne, 2018), 607–628, and Michele Monserrati, "Fascist Samurais: The Japanese Race in the Italian Imaginary During the Second World War and Beyond," *Modern Italy* 25, no. 1 (February 2020): 63–77.

[27] Miyake, "Il Giappone *made in Italy*," 622.

[28] Miyake, "Il Giappone *made in Italy*," 622–623.

[29] Julius Evola, *Indirizzi per una educazione razziale* (Florence: Edizioni di Ar, 1979), 123.

[30] Julius Evola, "Oriente e Occidente" in *Fascismo Giappone Zen*, ed. Riccardo Rosati (Roma: Pagine editor/I libri del Borghese, 2016), 43–47.

[31] Significantly, the article is inspired by a public speech by Mussolini himself.

While the Italian fascist regime seemed to have dampened its "yellow peril" rhetoric after the new alliance with the Japanese empire[38] (as significatively shown by the case of Mario Appelius[39]), Evola reiterates this topos in his 1941 work *Indirizzi per una educa-*

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[32] Evola, "Oriente e Occidente," 43–44.
[33] Evola, "Oriente e Occidente," 43–44.
[34] Evola, "Oriente e Occidente," 45.
[35] Evola, "Oriente e Occidente," 46.
[36] Evola, "Oriente e Occidente," 46.
[37] Evola, "Oriente e Occidente," 42.
[38] Miyake, "Il Giappone *made in Italy*," 617–621.
[39] In a move aimed to praise Japan as an ally, Mario Appelius criticized the "yellow peril" idea, arguing that it was a product of the allied forces efforts to pursue their own political interests. See Linetto Basilone, "Through East Asia to the Sound of 'Giovinezza': Italian Travel Literature on China, Korea and Japan During the Fascist *Ventennio*," *Modern Italy* 24, no. 4 (September 2019): 463.

zione razziale (*The Elements of Racial Education*). Towards the end of this book, Evola states that the superiority of the white race is merely materialistic in nature, with no effective superiority when considering the spiritual domain.[40] However, Evola fears that the West's material superiority is at risk: according to him, the Japanese empire managed to master "western" technology; by doing so, the Orient is seen by Evola as a serious threat to the "white man's" supremacy.[41] He writes:

> The Orient rises as a possible adversary for the Occident only when it undergoes the most deteriorating and perverted ideologies of the latter, abandoning the true traditions of its race. It should be understood that after the first western invasion, the material one, a second has occurred, an ideological invasion, and only this one is creating favourable space for the danger of an emancipation, if not even of a counter-attack, of coloured races.[42]

Evola then provides the reader with an exhaustive list of the "perverted ideologies" that the Orient, influenced by the West, is slowly accepting: capitalism, liberalism, scientism, nationalism (meant as anticolonialism), democracy, social justice, Bolshevik communism and anarchism.[43] Evola then presents his solution to the decline of the West: Fascist Italy should serve as a guiding force in the world, re-establishing "white race's" supremacy.[44]

An article Evola published in the journal *Asiatica*[45] a year earlier, however, show different tones. The article, with the important title “Basi spirituali dell’idea imperiale nipponica” (“The spiritual basis of Japanese imperial idea”), draws inspiration from the 1936 Anti-Comintern pact and the more recent Tripartite Pact, and depicts Japan as an ideal ally for Italy. Japan, to him, represents a modern state which managed to unify the national idea with the racial and religious spheres, in virtue of the divine basis that lies at the core of its empire.[46] National Shintō is particularly important to Evola since he sees it as the reconciliation of politics and religion,[47] something he strongly advocates for. The values which, from Evola’s perspective, the Japanese empire is defending, are the very same “traditional” values the Occident has lost and that can finally be rediscovered through the new political alliance,[48] values which he thinks fascism and national socialism are bringing back.[49] The worship of the Emperor in particular is seen by Evola as the emblem of the fight against Communism, being the antithesis of it.[50] The article remarks on the racial difference between the Japanese people and the “Aryan races,”[51] even though they are united by the principles of Tradition. By mentioning the Germanic Ghibellines, the Holy Grail, King Arthur and even the Gospels,[52] Evola tries to draw spiritual similarities between the Japanese empire and Europe. Ancient Rome constitutes the predominant touchstone in this article: the Japanese people's loyalty to the emperor reflects the Latin notions of *fides* (loyalty) and *pietas* (devotion), and the empire is built according to the Roman principle of the *gens* (a community of people with a common ancestry and common ritual practices).[53] In contrast from the articles discussed above, here there is neither any mention of the Orient being a potential threat for the Occident nor any hint about its incoming modernization: Japan is described as the highest example of a traditional and spiritual society, an ideal adversary of Soviet Communism and Anglo-French modernity.[54]

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[40] Evola, *Indirizzi per una educazione razziale*, 125.

[41] Evola, *Indirizzi per una educazione razziale*, 123.

[42] Evola, *Indirizzi per una educazione razziale*, 127. Shortly after, Evola once again quotes Mussolini's words to support his thesis.

[43] Evola, *Indirizzi per una educazione razziale*, 120–130.

[44] Evola, *Indirizzi per una educazione razziale*, 130.

[45] Evola, "Basi spirituali dell'idea imperiale nipponica," in *Oriente e Occidente* (Roma: Edizioni Mediterranee, 2001), 159–66.

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[46] Evola, “Basi spirituali dell’idea imperiale nipponica,” 160.
[47] Evola, “Basi spirituali dell’idea imperiale nipponica,” 160.
[48] Evola, “Basi spirituali dell’idea imperiale nipponica,” 160.
[49] Evola, “Basi spirituali dell’idea imperiale nipponica,” 161.
[50] Evola, “Basi spirituali dell’idea imperiale nipponica,” 163.
[51] Evola, “Basi spirituali dell’idea imperiale nipponica,” 160 and 166.
[52] Evola’s relationship with Christianity is complex and cannot be discussed here, and the same goes for his antisemitism. However, it is still important to note that he considers Japanese spirituality to be different from the “Semite” approach to spirituality. See Evola, “Basi spirituali dell’idea imperiale nipponica,” 162.

A post-war article still depicts Japan as a country where loyalty means respect for one's own parents, for the hierarchical relationship between genders, for work and school ethics, for the defence of the Japanese race, and, most importantly, for the Emperor.[55] However, according to Evola, the outcome of the Second World War brought about degeneration in Japan too, making it more and more "westernized," forcing the Japanese to invest all the energy of their "race" in the economic sphere.[56] In another article published in 1950,[57] Evola shows how every hope he put in fascist Italy and the Japanese empire has faded away. This article is very similar to the 1933 publication discussed above: Evola talks about how the "white races" were living a deep crisis and how this crisis caused the rise of the Orient, which, as a nemesis born within the "western degeneration," was preparing itself for its future role of global ruler.

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[53] Julius Evola, "Basi spirituali dell'idea imperiale nipponica," 166.

[54] Cf. Toshio Miyake, "Il Giappone *made in Italy*," 620.

[55] Julius Evola, "The Way of the Samurai," in *Zen: The Religion of the Samurai*, trans. Guido Stucco (Sequim: Holmes Pub Group, 2009), 13–14.

[56] Evola, "The Way of the Samurai," 17.

[57] Julius Evola, "Ora tocca all'Asia: il tramonto dell'Oriente," in *Fascismo Giappone Zen*, ed. Riccardo Rosati (Roma: Pagine editor/I libri del Borghese, 2016), 103–108.

According to Evola this situation is all "white men's" fault,[58] and he finally wishes for a new historical cycle that will restore the dominance of the "white race."[59]

Evola and Zen

While in the aforementioned articles importance was given to national Shintō, Evola also dedicated several works to Zen,[60] and claims to have been one of the first to treat this matter in Italy.[61] Evola started writing on this Buddhist school in the early 1940s, when Japan was receiving attention in Italy due to their new political alliance.[62] His first article mentioning Zen is "La Religione del Samurai" ("The Religion of the Samurai"), which appeared in 1942 on the journal *Augustea*.[63] The article was strongly influenced by Kaiten Nukariya's 1913 book *Religion of the Samurai: A Study of Zen Philosophy and Discipline in China and Japan*, in which Zen is described as being as old as Buddhism itself and is largely interpreted according to militaristic and Bushidō war ethics.[64] In

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[58] Evola, "Ora tocca all'Asia," 103.

[59] Evola, "Ora tocca all'Asia," 108.

[60] An overview of Evola's writings on Zen can be found in Silvio Vita, "L'Oriente di Julius Evola e la fortuna dello Zen in Occidente," in *Studi Evoliani 1999*, ed. Gianfranco de Turris/Fondazione Julius Evola (Roma: Europa Libreria Editrice, 2001), 93–109. *Studi Evoliani* is the yearbook of the Fondazione Julius Evola (Julius Evola Foundation), whose aims are to collect Evola's works and spread his thought.

[61] Vita, "L'Oriente di Julius Evola e la fortuna dello Zen in Occidente," 96.

[62] Vita mentions that Zen was starting to be introduced to the Italian public by Giuseppe Tucci, see "L'Oriente di Julius Evola e la fortuna dello Zen in Occidente," 101.

[63] Julius Evola, "La religione del Samurai," in *Fascismo Giappone Zen*, ed. Riccardo Rosati (Roma: Pagine editor/I libri del Borghese, 2016), 93–102.

[64] See Kaiten Nukariya, *The Religion of The Samurai: A Study of Zen Philosophy and Discipline in China and Japan* (London: Luzac & co., 1913).

1943 Evola published the first edition of *La dottrina del Risveglio* (*The Doctrine of Awakening*),[65] wholly dedicated to Buddhism, including one chapter on Zen. After 1945 he studied the post-war writings of Eugen Herrigel, Karlfried von Dürckheim,[66] and D. T. Suzuki,[67] producing in the following years several articles for the journal *East and West*.[68] In 1956 he published "Che cosa è lo Zen" ("What is Zen?") in the newspaper *Roma*,[69] and in the early 1970s he wrote two articles concerning Zen in the journal *Vie della Tradizione*: "La via del samurai" ("The Way of the Samurai") and

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Bushidō is the Samurai code of conduct, and, according to Nukariya, Zen shares the Bushidō values of loyalty, bravery, self-confidence and self-sacrifice. Nukariya's warrior-like and militaristic representation of Zen, which greatly emphasized its ties with the Samurai class, is critically discussed in Robert Sharf, "The Zen of Japanese Nationalism," *History of Religions* 33, no. 1 (1993): 9–13.

[65] Evola, *La dottrina del risveglio*.

[66] Herrigel's book is discussed in Shoji Yamada, "The Myth of Zen in the Art of Archery," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 28, no. 1/2 (2001): 1–30, and Robert Sharf, "Buddhist Modernism and the Rhetoric of Meditative Experience," *Numen* 42, no. 3, (1995): 233–235. It should be noted that figures like Herrigel and Karlfried von Dürckheim were both close to the National Socialist Party. For an overview of these figures and their relationship to D. T. Suzuki, see: Brian Victoria, "D. T. Suzuki, Zen and the Nazis," *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Pacific Focus* 11, no. 43 (October 2013): 1–22; Karl Baier, "The Formation and Principles of Count Dürckheim's Nazi Worldview and his interpretation of Japanese Spirit and Zen," *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Pacific Focus* 11, no. 48 (December, 2013): 1–34; Brian Victoria, "A Zen Nazi in Wartime Japan: Count Dürckheim and his Sources–D. T. Suzuki, Yasutani Haku'un and Eugen Herrigel," *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Pacific Focus* 12, no. 3 (January 2014): 1–52.

[67] Vita, "L'Oriente di Julius Evola e la fortuna dello Zen in Occidente," 103.

[68] They are collected in Julius Evola, *Oriente e Occidente* (Roma: Edizioni Mediterranee, 2001).

[69] Julius Evola, "What is Zen?" in *Zen: The Religion of the Samurai*, trans. Guido Stucco (Sequim: Holmes Pub Group Llc, 2009), 11–12.

"Senso e clima dello Zen" ("The Meaning and Context of Zen").[70] The latter was subsequently modified and used as the introduction to D. T. Suzuki's three volumes of *Saggi sul Buddhismo Zen* (*Essays on Zen Buddhism*), translated into Italian by Evola himself and published after his death.[71] Although Evola's interpretation of Zen started during the war and continued until his death in 1975 – constituting a discourse on Zen that lasted for more than thirty years – his opinions on it remained consistent; there are no significant changes throughout the years, and articles written decades apart echo each other.

I argue that Zen played a key role in Evola's process of ennobling the Japanese, plausibly more than any other aspect of Japanese culture, politics, or religiosity. In Evola's writings the maximum point of proximity between the Japanese "yellow race" and the European "white race" is given by Zen spirituality, which, being a Buddhist school, Evola considers to be a form of "Aryan spirituality":

> It should be kept in mind that the primordial unity of blood and spirit that characterizes the white races, the ones who created the civilizations of the Orient and the Occident [i.e., the Iranian, Hindu, Hellenic, Roman, and Germanic civilizations] […] is a reality. *Buddhism has every right in claiming itself as Aryan*, both because it reflects to a high degree the spirit of [those] common origins, and because it preserved consistent parts of a heritage

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[70] Julius Evola, "The Way of the Samurai," in *Zen: The Religion of the Samurai*, trans. Guido Stucco (Sequim: Holmes Publishing Group LLC, 2009), 13–18, and "The Meaning and Context of Zen," in *Zen: The Religion of the Samurai*, trans. Guido Stucco (Sequim: Holmes Publishing Group LLC, 2009), 19–23.

[71] Julius Evola, "Introduction," in D. T. Suzuki's *Saggi sul Buddhismo Zen Vol. 1,* trans. Julius Evola (Roma: Edizioni Mediterranee, 1992), 7–17.

> which, as we have already said, the Westerners have progressively forgotten. […] Insisting on the antithesis of the Orient and Occident is frivolous. The real opposition is, in the first place, between modern conceptions and traditional conceptions, whether they may be eastern or western: in the second place, the real opposition is the one that exists between the frank creations of an Aryan spirit and the creations that, on the contrary, both in Orient and in Occident resent of non-Aryan influences.[72]

Relying heavily on Kaiten Nukariya's work, Evola presents Zen as a resumption of the earliest form of Buddhism[73] with distinctive esoteric and elitist traits,[74] far from doctrinal speculations and scriptural debates.[75] According to Evola, the Samurai warrior caste – defenders of the Tradition[76] – adopted Zen Buddhism as a tool for expressing their loyalty towards the emperor.[77] The Samurai's virile and heroic character, informed by Zen spirituality, is continuously remarked on by Evola: [78]

> Zen, an esoteric form of the Buddhist doctrine, has been called, in its different forms, the 'religion of the Samurai,' the Japanese warrior aristocracy. […] According to traditional Japanese ethics, if a man is a real man and not a beast, he can only be a 'Samurai': brave, straightforward, loyal, virile, dignified, ready even for an active sacrifice.[79]

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72. Evola, *La dottrina del risveglio*, 30.
73. Evola, "Introduction," 8.
74. Evola, "The Meaning and Context of Zen," 23.
75. Evola, "The Way of the Samurai," 15.
76. See Evola, "La religione del Samurai," 94, and Julius Evola, "Dal Buddhismo fino allo Zen," in *Fascismo Giappone Zen*, ed. Riccardo Rosati (Roma: Pagine editor/I libri del Borghese, 2016), 130.
77. Evola, "The Way of the Samurai," 17.
78. Evola, *La dottrina del risveglio*, 258.
79. Evola, *La dottrina del risveglio*, 258.

Evola reports that this virile character presents itself in Zen's influence on martial arts,[80] as well as in the violent exercises that the Zen novices would have to endure in their spiritual training.[81] Evola also asserts that Zen shaped the Japanese Imperial Army's soldiers during the Russo-Japanese War[82] and the Second World War, and here several mentions are specifically dedicated to the Japanese Kamikaze.[83] It is Evola's contention that Zen can, in fact, be seen to inform all aspects of Japanese society; that the influence of Zen is so relevant in modern Japan that it can be found even in the general education of the Japanese people,[84] and, notably, in the education provided to the Army's high officials, where Zen forms an essential part of their training curriculum.[85] In sum, Evola interprets Zen as playing a pivotal role in the Japanese empire and fitting within the broader context of Shintō's imperial rituals.[86] Japan is seen as a place where temporal and spiritual powers were unified,[87] and where imperial traditions and modernity coexisted.[88]

Following the war, Evola drew much information about Zen spirituality from D. T. Suzuki (1870–1966).[89] However, Suzuki is occasionally criticized by Evola[90] for adopting terms and references linked to western philosophy.[91] In Evola's words, Suzuki is "an Oriental who knows too much about western culture."[92] He also accuses Suzuki of presenting a "democratized,"[93] domesticated, and moralized form of Zen so as to make it more appealing to westerners interested in spirituality[94] (who represented the vast majority of Suzuki's readers).

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[80] Evola, *La dottrina del risveglio*, 259.

[81] Evola, "La religione del Samurai," 99.

[82] Evola, "La religione del Samurai," 96.

[83] Evola, "The Way of the Samurai," 16. Other mentions of the Kamikaze can be found in Evola, "The Meaning and Context of Zen," 23 and in Evola,

[84] Evola, "La religione del Samurai," 95.

[85] Evola, "The Way of the Samurai," 14.

[86] Evola, "La religione del Samurai," 101.

[87] Evola, "La religione del Samurai," 93.

[88] Evola, "La religione del Samurai," 102.

[89] Cf. Evola, *La dottrina del risveglio*, 214n, 248n, 260; Julius Evola, "Lo Zen e l'Occidente," in *Oriente e Occidente* (Roma: Edizioni Mediterranee, 2001), 70, 72, 74; Evola, "The Meaning and Context of Zen," 19, 21.

[90] Further criticisms that fall out of this paper regard the nature of enlighten-

With respect to western practitioners of Zen, Evola is most critical of those who reflect an existentialist, nihilistic and quasi-anarchic interpretation of it. Evola views such interpretations as showing contempt for strictly disciplined spiritual paths – such as the one taught by the historical Buddha – and believes they are based on a fundamental misunderstanding of Zen's concept of immediate enlightenment.[95] According to Evola, this approach to Zen does not reflect the idea of Tradition, and instead frames Zen in materialistic and nihilistic terms.[96] He attributes the same error in those who interpret Zen artistically – linking it to surrealism[97] – or psychoanalytically.[98] With respect to the latter – psychoanalytic interpretations of Zen – Jung is specifically attacked, for, according

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ment. See Julius Evola, "The Meaning and Context of Zen," 21, 23; Evola, *Saggi sul Buddhismo Zen Vol. 1*, 14; Julius Evola, "Yoga, immortalità e libertà," in *Oriente e Occidente* (Roma: Edizioni Mediterranee, 2001), 81.

[91] Evola, *Saggi sul Buddhismo Zen Vol. 1*, 8.

[92] Evola, *Saggi sul Buddhismo Zen Vol. 1*, 15.

[93] Evola, *Saggi sul Buddhismo Zen Vol. 1*, 23.

[94] Evola, *Saggi sul Buddhismo Zen Vol. 1*, 14; Evola, "Lo Zen e l'Occidente," 72.

[95] Evola, *La dottrina del risveglio*, 260. Significatively, D. T. Suzuki – who Evola cites in his discussion of this theme – also criticizes the antinomian or nonconformist interpretation of Zen. See Bernard Faure, *Chan Insights and Oversights: An Epistemological Critique of the Chan Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University press, 1993), 58–59.

[96] Evola, "Lo Zen e l'Occidente," 72.

[97] Evola, "Lo Zen e l'Occidente," 70.

[98] Evola, "Lo Zen e l'Occidente," 73–74.

to Evola, his interpretations of Zen are "ludicrous"[99] and "a joke."[100] More specifically, while Jung considers the unconscious and the Buddhist awakening to be comparable, Evola considers them to be completely different[101] – for him, psychoanalysis has nothing to do with Tradition.[102]

Broadly speaking, Evola thinks that it is difficult for westerners to fully understand Zen because of their mentality; however, he does maintain that it is possible – even for someone who lives in the degenerate Occident – to grasp the deeper meaning of Zen if they approach it carefully.[103] The reason for this, Evola asserts, lies in the fact that those values were once known to the West as well, despite the "racial differences":

> Several aspects of this form of spirituality will appear strange to the *western mind.* However, this is not only due to a *racial and psychic difference.* The modern European, in fact, perceives many features of this ideology as strange only because *he has made himself stranger to the traditional forms,* which once he knew as well […] It would be enough to remember the ascetic ideal of the great Knight's Orders of the Middle Ages, the Roman-Germanic ethic of *fides*, the transcendental justification of the very same imperial idea of the Ghibellines. From this perspective, it becomes possible to acknowledge that Japan has managed to cherish to this day […] a spiritual level and heritage that, through seculari-

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[99] Evola, "The Meaning and Context of Zen," 23.

[100] Evola, *Saggi sul Buddhismo Zen Vol. 1*, 13.

[101] Evola, *Saggi sul Buddhismo Zen Vol. 1*, 13.

[102] Julius Evola, "Lo Zen e l'Occidente," 74. It is interesting to notice that Jung, strongly criticized by Evola, was a collaborator of Suzuki. See Jørn Borup, "Zen and the Art of Inverting Orientalism," in *New Approaches to the Study of Religion. Vol 1: Regional, Critical and Historical Approaches,* ed. Peter Antes, Armin W. Geertz, Randi R. Warne (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2004), 472.

[103] Evola, "Lo Zen e l'Occidente," 76.

> zation's process of civilization and […] the political and aristocratic idea, we [westerners] have largely lost.[104]

This idea is also stressed in other works, where Zen values are described by Evola as consonant with the values of pre-modern western civilization.[105] Here, in a similar fashion to what has already been presented, Evola draw parallels between Japanese Zen and figures such as Sallust,[106] the Stoics,[107] and (again) the Ghibellines.[108]

Evola: A Critical Look

Before beginning my critical analysis of Evola's work, it will first be necessary to contextualize it within the period's wider fascist discourse on Japan. As already noted, Evola's racial theorizations of the 1930s and 1940s harmonized with Italy's racial laws, and his proposal of a "spiritual racism" represents one of the many endeavours that Italy's fascist government undertook in order to promote and legitimize its new alliance with Japan.[109] Moreover, Evola's constant remarks about warrior ethics and Bushidō fall squarely into the period's fascist propaganda about Japan: the supposed traditional warrior nature of the Japanese people was a classic theme in fascist journals.[110] The assumed similarities between the Japanese empire and the ancient Roman world were a recurring *topos* as well, as we can see in Roberto Suster's works – where the Japanese empire is considered to be the bearer of Roman values to Asia[111] – or in the writing of Raffaele Calzini, where the colonialist expansion of Japan was seen as similar to the Punic wars.[112] What sets Evola apart is, undoubtedly, the spiritual and esoteric feature of his thought, expressed to the highest degree in his reflections upon Zen. However, he was not the only thinker who made this link; another important figure within the fascist world who was interested both in esoteric spirituality and racism was Massimo Scaligero, director of the journal *East and West* where Evola published several times. In 1941, for example, we see Scaligero promoting the idea that, although the Japanese were not racially "Aryan," they were nevertheless spiritually "Aryan" thanks to Zen and Samurai values – a view identical to Evola's.[113]

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[104] Evola, "La religione del Samurai," 101. Emphasis mine.
[105] Evola, "The Way of the Samurai," 14.
[106] Evola, "The Way of the Samurai," 14.
[107] Evola, "The Way of the Samurai," 14.
[108] Evola, "The Way of the Samurai," 14.
[109] Miyake, "Il Giappone *made in Italy*," 607–628, and Michele Monserrati, "Fascist Samurais," *Modern Italy* 25, no. 1 (2020): 63–77, https://doi.org/10.1017/mit.2019.78.
[110] Sergio Raimondo, Valentina de Fortuna, and Giulia Ceccarelli, "Bushido

Evola's writing often asserts that no real opposition exists between East and West, but rather between Tradition and modernity. However, his reading of the "East" is filled classic orientalist tropes[114] – tropes which do place "East" and "West" into opposition

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Allied: The Japanese Warrior in the Cultural Production of Fascist Italy (1940–1943)," in *Revista de Artes Marciales Asiáticas* 12, no. 2 (July-December 2017): 82–100.

[111] Basilone, "Through East Asia," 462.

[112] Basilone, "Through East Asia," 463.

[113] Miyake, "Il Giappone *made in Italy*," 622. Other similarities between Evola's and Scaligero's thought can be detected in Scaligero's critique of psychoanalytical interpretation of Zen in Massimo Scaligero, "Zen e psicanalisi," in *Il Giappone* 5 (1965): 145–160.

[114] My argument is different from Vita's perspective in, "L'Oriente di Julius Evola e la fortuna dello Zen" in *Occidente*, 95, where Evola's focus on the opposition between Tradition and modernity, rather than between East and West, is considered to be somehow similar in spirit to the later scholarly critiques of orientalism.

with one another – and this tension forces him to frame Japan as simultaneously discrete from, yet proximate to, the Aryan Tradition that he is interested in championing. On the one hand, Evola adheres to the orientalist trope that constructs the Occident as modern, scientific, rational, and universal, in opposition to the Orient, which is constructed as traditional, irrational, intuitive and particularistic.[115] On the other hand, Evola must diminish this difference in order to legitimize his admiration of the Japanese empire and Zen spirituality, and, in certain works, to help Italy legitimize its alliance with Japan.

Accordingly, as noted above, Evola frames western modernity as degenerative – as something which has eroded the West's "true Aryan identity" – and eastern traditionalism (particularly Zen and the Samurai warrior ethic) as restorative, as something closer to the Aryan Tradition that represents the wellspring of the "true" identity of both Italy and Japan. Evola's writings thus contain a confusing mix of reverence for,[116] and fear of, the East: although it is spiritually superior in its proximity to Tradition[117] – a cause for reverence – this spiritual superiority is simultaneously something to be feared, as this superiority risks enabling a future invasion of Europe. I argue that these contrasting views are not only a consequence of the mutating political context of fascism, but also a sign of hard-to-reconcile contradictions in Evola's own thought.

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[115] Toshio Miyake, *Mostri del Giappone* (Venice: Ca' Foscari University press, 2014), 32.

[116] Cf. Miyake, *Mostri del Giappone*, 121: "in the specific case of Japan, this license of *orientality* has been gradually elaborated over the last two centuries thanks to the strategic accumulation of a vast repertoire of familiar icons that have been consolidated in Euro-American cultural history: *geisha*, *samurai*, *zen*, Mount Fuji, cherry blossoms, etc., all articulated preferably in an a-temporal or archaic way, outside of time and space. Japan is thus defined explicitly (*marked*) as *hyper-tradition*, indicating the selection and one-sided emphasis of the Euro-American gaze on its traditional or past aspects, articulated by often implicit contrast (*unmarked*) with its own 'Western' modernity."

[117] Evola, "Lo Zen e l'Occidente," 76.

As stated above, despite Evola's criticisms of Suzuki, he is nevertheless one of Evola's main sources on Zen. It is therefore necessary to examine some of the extensive critical literature on Suzuki. According to Bernard Faure, Suzuki, through a "militant comparativism," reworked orientalist images – which depicted the "Orient" and Buddhism as something to be "looked down upon,"[118] – to reframe Zen as both superior to other forms of spirituality and as the source of all mystical experience.[119] Suzuki (and others such as Nishida Kitarō) thus proposed what Faure defines as a "secondary orientalism," or a "positive modality" of orientalist discourse.[120]

Robert Sharf argues that Suzuki should be counted among those Japanese figures who condemned the West's "crass materialism, [its] inauthenticity brought about by the technologies of mass production, the crude democratization and vulgarization of aesthetic taste and value, […] the pervasive mood of spiritual alienation,"[121] as well as the imposing power represented by its technology and military prowess. However, the aforementioned figures – Suzuki included – didn't simply condemn these aspects of the West: they reappropriated orientalist tropes to construct an essentialized and ahistorical Japanese character as its perfect antithesis.[122] For Suzuki specifically, it can be said that "if the West excelled materially, the East excelled spiritually,"[123] with Zen being the heart of Asian and Japanese spirituality.[124]

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[118] Faure, *Chan Insights and Oversights,* 53.
[119] Faure, *Chan Insights and Oversights*, 64.
[120] Faure, *Chan Insights and Oversights*, 53–54.
[121] Sharf, "The Zen of Japanese Nationalism," 37.

According to Sharf, Suzuki's image of Zen should also be contextualized within the New Buddhist movement that arose during the Meiji era, when Buddhist representatives tried to recast Zen as compatible with Japan's endeavour to modernize itself,[125] thus proposing a new form of Zen that could respond to western enlightenment critiques and situate itself as a world religion.[126] Like this movement – which responded to modernity by modernizing in a way that preserved tradition – Sharf sees Suzuki mobilizing modernist notions of nationalism to articulate the Japanese nativism[127] we see underpinning his notion of traditional Zen:

> As traditional allegiances collapse, nationalist alternatives arise, promising to preserve or restore native political, social, and moral norms in the face of the threat of foreign cultural hegemony. Ironically, nationalist discourse cannot escape the ground from which it grew: nationalism is very much the product of modernity and the modernist episteme.[128]

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[122] Sharf, "The Zen of Japanese Nationalism," 37–38, and Faure, *Chan Insights and Oversights*, 64.

[123] Sharf, "Experience," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. by Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 103.

[124] Sharf, "The Zen of Japanese Nationalism," 6.

[125] See also Faure, *Chan Insights and Oversights*, 54.

[126] Sharf, "The Zen of Japanese Nationalism," 4–5.

[127] Suzuki's views increased during the wars. See Faure, *Chan Insights and Oversights*, 66.

[128] See also Robert Sharf, "Whose Zen? Zen Nationalism Revisited" in *Rude Awakenings: Zen, the Kyoto School and the Question of Nationalism*, ed. James Heisig and John Maraldo (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994), 47.

Within Suzuki's ahistorical formulation, Zen can also be described as a form of pure and unmediated experience. Sharf criticizes this idea,[129] as he does not consider the idea of pure experience to be a product of the Zen tradition. He asserts that we cannot find any traditional Zen source mentioning "experience,"[130] and, moreover, that "traditional Chan and Zen practice was oriented not towards engendering 'enlightenment' experiences, but rather to perfecting the ritual performance of Buddhahood."[131] Accordingly, Sharf believes this experiential framing of Zen is Suzuki's own invention, derived from his Euro-American influences[132] and the philosopher Nishida Kitarō.[133] Sharf further notes that Zen's supposed "universality" does not imply that it is accessible to everyone: despite his long stays overseas, Suzuki declared that he never met any enlightened or promising western disciple, and – although he never stated this explicitly – seemed to believed that it was virtually impossible for "westerners" to fully comprehend Zen.[134] A final critique that must be mentioned because of its importance for the field is the one brought by Brian Victoria, who, especially in his work *Zen at War* (1997), argues that Suzuki strongly supported Japanese militarism (especially through his writings on Bushidō) and Japan's invasion of China.[135]

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[129] Given the focus of this paper, I will not discuss many of the problematics linked to the concept of "pure experience" (i.e., whether it is possible or not). For more on this, see: Robert Sharf, "Experience," 94–116.

[130] Sharf, "The Zen of Japanese Nationalism," 21–22.

[131] Sharf, "Buddhist Modernism and the Rhetoric of Meditative Experience," 243.

[132] Especially William James. See Sharf, "Experience," 101, and Sharf, "Whose Zen?," 45.

[133] Sharf, "The Zen of Japanese Nationalism," 20.

[134] Sharf, "The Zen of Japanese Nationalism," 28.

[135] Brian Victoria, *Zen at War* (New York: Weatherhill, 1997).

However, several scholars have raised arguments against these interpretations of Suzuki. Victor Sōgen Hori, for example, contends against Sharf's thesis that Suzuki's Zen is an "invented tradition."[136] Differentiating between rituality as a process and spiritual insight as immediate,[137] Hori philologically detects in traditional Chan and Zen sources hundreds of episodes that he argues narrate a sudden enlightenment. In other words, he argues that the idea of unmediated experience is not peculiar to Suzuki, and is in fact detectable throughout the entire history of Zen and Chan.[138] Hori acknowledges that the category of experience can be employed for ideological ends, but argues that this possibility does not justify Sharf's ideological reductionism.[139] According to Hori, Suzuki "did use the concept of satori [enlightenment] as a protective strategy to claim for himself privileged access to authentic Buddhism, but in doing so he was 'reflecting' a stance taken by the Orientalist scholars a generation before him,"[140] scholars who had adopted this "protective strategy" so as to claim authority over Buddhist studies.[141] The field of Buddhist studies at this time utilized a modern, scientific, and Protestant-influenced set of criterion to define what could be considered "authentic religion," a lens which emphasized the importance of scriptures and privileged the Pali Canon on this basis.

In response to this, Suzuki claimed that a full understanding of Buddhism was possible only for those who experienced Satori and re-evaluated Mahāyāna.[142] Considering Suzuki's historical context, Hori thinks that "in claiming superiority for Japanese culture, he [Suzuki] was 'reflecting' the Western powers' assumption of the racial superiority of Europe over Asia."[143] Hori thus links Suzuki's work to a wider Japanese discourse aimed at defending Japan from the Euro-American assertion that it is was a "barbaric country."[144] Stephan Kigensan Licha also argues against Sharf's thesis, asserting that the idea of experience was not brought to Zen by Suzuki, but emerged in nineteenth century Japan as a result of both influences from overseas and creative indigenous thinkers who confronted science, as the case of the Sōtō Zen monk Hara Tanzan shows.[145]

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[136] Victor S. Hori, "D. T. Suzuki and the Invention of Tradition," *The Eastern Buddhist* 47, no. 2 (2016): 55–57.

[137] Hori, "The Invention of Tradition," 49.

[138] Hori, "The Invention of Tradition," 41–81.

[139] Hori, "The Invention of Tradition," 62.

[140] Hori, "The Invention of Tradition," 63.

[141] Hori, "The Invention of Tradition," 66.

Kemmyō Taira Satō criticizes Victoria's depiction of Suzuki as a strong supporter of Japanese militarism in *Zen at War*, a depiction he thinks was dictated more by the author's desire to portray Suzuki in a bad light than by a desire to clarifying Suzuki's thought.[146] Satō highlights a number of different occasions where he feels Victoria mischaracterized Suzuki's position, for example when he mistakes a comment about defensive war to be a comment on offensive war – Satō argues that it would be hard to consider Suzuki favourable to invading China[147] – or when he fails to acknowledge that, although Suzuki was undoubtedly patriotic, a thorough consideration of his writings on Bushidō reveals no evident references to the ongoing war, making Victoria's argument linking these writings to contemporary Japanese militarism suspect.[148] Satō argues that Suzuki expressed his opposition to war and militarism as much as he could living under a totalitarian regime,[149] and presents passages where Suzuki speaks of a Japanese spiritual revival in contrast to the disastrous events of the Second World War.[150] It is Satō's overall assessment that Victoria often proposes arguments that are "based entirely on guilt by association," and selectively chooses quotations that can be misconstrued to link Suzuki to militarism and nationalism.[151]

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[142] Hori, "The Invention of Tradition," 66–68.

[143] Hori, "The Invention of Tradition," 78.

[144] Hori, "The Invention of Tradition," 73. Significatively, Hori quotes the Chicago Parliament of Religions of 1893, writing that in that occasion Hirai Kinzō "connected the unequal treaties, religion, and racial discrimination. [...] Japan constantly sought to be accepted into the group of "civilized" nations but was never granted actual acceptance. In its relationship with the West, Japan always suffered from this Western-based racism institutionalized in the unequal treaties and expressed in the international politics of the day. D. T. Suzuki [...] grew up in the new Japan which was struggling to create a modern Japanese national identity for itself."

[145] See Stephan Kigensan Licha, "Hara Tanzan and the Japanese Buddhist discovery of 'Experience,'" *Journal of Religion in Japan* 10, no.1 (2021): 1–30. Another example of a nineteenth century Buddhist interpreter who emphasized personal experience is Kiyozawa Manshi. See Melissa Anne-Mary Curley, "Kiyozawa Manshi and the Spirit of the Meiji," *Journal of Religion in Japan* 7, no. 3 (2019): 250–275.

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146. Kemmyō Taira Satō, "D. T. Suzuki and the Question of War," *The Eastern Buddhis*t 39, no. 1, (2008): 62.
147. Satō, "The Question of War," 105.
148. Satō, "The Question of War," 90–93.
149. Satō, "The Question of War," 100. Similarly, John Maraldo identifies a "camouflaged" wartime critique in Suzuki's writings. See John Maraldo, "Questioning Nationalism Now and Then: A Critical Approach to Zen and the Kyoto School," in *Rude Awakenings: Zen, the Kyoto School and the Question of Nationalism*, ed. James Heisig and John Maraldo (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994), 340.
150. See Satō, "The Question of War," 112–114, and also John Maraldo, "Questioning Nationalism Now and Then," 140. Although they approach the topic in different ways, both Satō and Maraldo argue that Suzuki's account of Japanese spirituality was not sympathetic with militarism, but actually opposed it and provided an alternative.
151. Satō, "The Question of War," 76, 90–93.

In response to Satō's critique, Victoria argues that although Suzuki may have been personally against the war, he did not share this sentiment publicly for fear of repercussions,[152] and, moreover, maintains that Suzuki's writings on Bushidō, along with certain relationships he had,[153] seem to reflect nationalist and militaristic views[154] – views he asserts reflect a long-established tradition within Zen.[155] Satō replies to this by once again reiterating his critique of Victoria's use of sources, maintaining that he selectively choose quotations that supported his thesis, translated them according to his aims, and did not properly contextualize them.[156] He ends by asserting that Victoria's critiques seem to be based mostly on Victoria's own personal ethical standards – standards which Suzuki did not meet[157] – and, moreover, seem to be directed more towards the Zen tradition Suzuki was associated with than towards Suzuki himself.

Takashi Ogawa's stance on the question of Suzuki's nationalism and militarism will also be interesting to consider, as these have, to my knowledge, not been widely discussed in English-language discussions.[158] While Ogawa does acknowledge that nationalist and orientalist themes can be found in Suzuki's thought, he argues that Suzuki's nationalism should not be over-simplified and cast as merely expansionist, but rather carefully read within the context of Japan's own nationalism, which was constantly shifting between a self-assertion from foreign powers and aspirations of colonialist expansion in Asia. While Faure, mentioned above, discusses Suzuki's writings dealing with Japan's nationalism as if they were a unified block, Ogawa suggests that they are not unified, and that both of the aforementioned expressions of nationalism can be detected in Suzuki's writings depending on the period in which they were written.[159] In response to Faure's argument about Suzuki's Zen being a product of orientalism , Ogawa contends that this view does not account for the actual positionality of Suzuki and other Asian intellectuals during this period, who may have been using orientalism as a tool in order to make Japan's culture known outside of its borders.[160]

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[152] Brian Victoria, "The 'Negative Side' of D. T. Suzuki's Relationship to War," *The Eastern Buddhist* 41, no. 2 (2010): 112, 137.

[153] Victoria, "The 'Negative Side,'" 101–103, 115–119, 131–132.

[154] Victoria, "The 'Negative Side,'" 104–106.

[155] In other words, while Victoria acknowledges that neither Suzuki nor his contemporaries can be held accountable for formulating Zen in militaristic terms – i.e., this formulation predates them – they nevertheless do reflect this formulation in their writings. See Victoria, "The 'Negative Side,'" 123 and 131.

[156] Kemmyō Taira Satō, "Brian Victoria and the Question of Scholarship," *The Eastern Buddhist* 41, no. 2 (2010): 139–166.

[157] Satō, "The Question of Scholarship," 153–158.

[158] Takashi Ogawa, *Goroku no shisō-shi* (Tōkyō: Iwanami shoten, 2011).

When evaluating Suzuki's thought, I think that all of this scholarship must be taken into account. While I believe that the critiques of orientalism and nationalism in Suzuki's works provide an important take on Suzuki's writings and their reception – and open avenues for future research – I also believe that we do not have to make the error of looking at Suzuki as if he were a falsifier of some abstract "authentic Zen tradition." As Hori writes, "Who is the judge of what counts as authentic Buddhism? The argument continues today. D. T. Suzuki represents the side of the committed practitioner of Zen. Representing the side of rational objectivity is the scholarship of modern-day academic religious studies."[161] For his part, Jørn Borup's argues that Suzuki did reformulate the orient-

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159. Ogawa, *Goroku no shisō-shi*, 407–408.
160. Ogawa, *Goroku no shisō-shi*, 408–409.
161. Hori, "The Invention of Tradition," 75.

alist categories of the Orient and Occident with the ulterior motive of producing a mystification and mythologization of Zen, but thinks that Suzuki should be seen as a creative thinker and an "emic voice" advocating for an idealized form of Buddhism – not as a scholar of Zen.[162] Similarly, Stefan Grace clarifies that every "Zen" is inevitably going to be product of its time, and Suzuki should therefore be read, not as a perverter of tradition, but as an original thinker of the twentieth century; not as an historian, but as a voice of the Meiji New Buddhism.[163] Even if Suzuki's thought relies heavily on religious experience,[164] and even if Suzuki speaks of Zen as transcending space and time, Ogawa reminds us that his thought must be understood within its historical context, as with any other thinker:

> If we do not simplistically identify D. T. Suzuki's discourse with 'Zen' itself, but we rather relativize it as a phase in the history of Zen thought, and if we consider its internal understanding alongside with the reality of modern Japanese history, I think that the critical analysis of D. T. Suzuki will become more faceted and profound.[165]

Returning to Evola, we can say that Suzuki's writings played an important function for him: he could turn to them to confirm his *a priori* beliefs and criticize *ad hoc* any of Suzuki's points he disagreed with. Suzuki's idea of pure experience, for example, squares perfectly with Evola's esoteric belief in a universal and original Tradition,[166] and both ideas constitute their attempt to assert their own authoritative and normative discourses on Zen and religion in the face of modernity. Sharf explains this well:

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[162] Jørn, Borup, "Zen and the Art of Inverting Orientalism," 481.

[163] Grace, *Suzuki Daisetsu no kenkyū,* 9–12.

[164] Suemura, *Suzuki Daisetsu no shisō ni okeru shūkyō keiken to sono gendaiteki igi*, 2.

[165] Ogawa, *Goroku no shisō-shi*, 409.

> Japanese nativists' discomfort with the seeming triumph of scientific reason, and their yearnings for a spiritual solution to the problems of modernity, mirrored our ["we westerners"] own. The notion of "pure Zen"—a pan-cultural religious experience unsullied by institutional, social, and historical contingencies—would be attractive precisely because it held out the possibility of an alternative to the godless and indifferent anomic universe bequeathed by the Western Enlightenment, yet demanded neither blind faith nor institutional allegiance. This reconstructed Zen offered an intellectually reputable escape from the epistemological anxiety of historicism and pluralism.[167]

However, Evola failed to recognize how Suzuki's Zen and his idea of Tradition were both a product of what they were supposed to contrast: modernity. Furthermore, although Evola criticized Suzuki whenever the latter tried to approach the West using references to European culture – as if by doing so Suzuki was failing to uphold the role of "traditional representative of the true East" – this criticism was misguided from the start, as Suzuki's Zen was always "a product of a mixed marriage" between "East and West."[168] Finally, Suzuki's nativist themes were reiterated by Evola, who depicted Japan as an ideal traditional country, extolled monastic Zen practices and framed them as influencing all aspects Japanese culture, and asserted Asia's spiritual superiority against Euro-American's mere materialist power.

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[166] Cf. Robert Sharf, "The Zen of Japanese Nationalism," 43. As Sharf states, "Western investigators were ever encouraged to find their own romanticized notion of true or essential religion mirrored back to them by their Asian proteges."

[167] Robert Sharf, "Whose Zen?" 49–50.

[168] Borup, "Zen and the Art of Inverting Orientalism," 453.

As these comments indicate, Suzuki's Zen was easily appropriated to fit within Evola's political agenda, and democratic aspects of Suzuki's thinking that were dissonant with this agenda were opportunely criticized. Suzuki's attitude is well-explained through Toshio Miyake's words,

> The dilemma of Japanese modernity is conditioned precisely by the constant oscillation between such cumbersome vectors of identity as 'West' and 'East,' with different outcomes and solutions, all aimed at avoiding its inevitably inferiorising aspects: from a more defensive solution achieved through the unilateral accentuation of one's own orientality as a traditional identity that is so irrational, emotional and semi-mystical as to make it incomprehensible, indefinable and therefore uncontrollable by modern 'western' reason.[169]

Evola and Suzuki, then, both presented reformulated forms of orientalism: they participated in mirror games where the essentialist identity of each was constructed and confirmed by building off the other,[170] and, by doing so, they mobilized these identities towards their aims. Even if Evola and Suzuki were both confronting "Anglo-American modernity," one cannot help but wonder how much compatibility truly existed between Evola's "Aryan Tradition" and Suzuki's "Japanese spirituality."

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[169] Miyake, *Mostri del Giappone*, 36.

[170] Miyake, *Mostri del Giappone*, 129.

Conclusions

In concluding, it is necessary to remark how relevant a critical study of Evola's views is for the present day. Evola's thought had a strong influence on neofascist Italian terrorists during the Years of Lead,[171] and while this influence is well-studied, far less attention has been paid to several still-active associations, politically oriented, that arose in Italy in 1970s (and continue to be active today) with the aim of spreading Evola's thought and works,[172] including his ideas about Zen and Japan.[173] More recently – as shown by the *New York Times'* Jason Horowitz – Evola has found an audience in the American alt-right: not only has Evola been enthusiastically received by Richard Spencer and Milo Yiannopoulos (the foremost figures of the American alt-right), he was also quoted publicly by Steve Bannon, the former Whitehouse Chief Strategist for President Donald Trump. As Horowitz argues, this is a disturbing trend that can also be seen in Europe: Greece's far-right political party Golden Dawn has made reference to Evola, as has the Hungarian far-right group Jobbik.[174] Significatively, Bannon and Spencer have also praised Japan, participating in a phenomenon that has been described as a "love story" between white supremacists and Japan,[175] a country they view as an ideal "ethno-state" and an example of "racial homogeneity."[176]

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[171] Michele Monserrati, "Fascist Samurais," 71–73, and Mark Sedgwick: *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual History of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 179–189.

[172] For example, see: Rigenerazione Evola's website https://www.rigenerazionevola.it/ (accessed June 6th, 2021); Raido's website http://www.raido.it/ (accessed June 6th, 2021); Azione Tradizionale's website https://www.azionetradizionale.com/ (accessed June 6th, 2021).

[173] See Julius Evola's article "L'esempio giapponese" on Rigenerazione Evola's website: https://www.rigenerazionevola.it/lesempio-giapponese/ (accessed June 6th, 2021), and Julius Evola's article "Senso e clima dello Zen" posted by Centro studi la runa's website: http://www.centrostudilaruna.it/sensoeclimadellozen.html (accessed June 6th, 2021).

Exploring Evola's current influence though an exploration of contemporary fascism's metaphysical, political, and theological concepts, Chetan Bhatt has argued that the common thread linking the otherwise varied contemporary fascist scene in Europe and the US[177] is the theme of "white extinction."[178] Bhatt individuates several distinct topics that characterize the contemporary far-right and can be easily found in Evola's discourse: the critique of liberal modernity,[179] the decline of race and civilization,[180] and the rhetoric of warrior values and occultist natural laws.[181] The idea of an ancestral metaphysical knowledge, or Evola's Tradition, is discussed by Bhatt as an eternal occult intuition that underlies the current culture of the far-right.[182] Significantly, even the utopian (or dystopian) solutions that the new fascist culture proposes are both intrinsically racist and, somehow, “spiritual”: for example, discourses of “whitopia” – “the quest for a racial, social and political order governed by an ancestral racial elite”[183] – and narrations concerning lifestyles based on traditionalism and paganism.[184]

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[174] Jason Horowitz, "Steve Bannon Cited Italian Thinker Who Inspired Fascists," *The New York Times*, February 2nd, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/10/world/europe/bannon-vatican-julius-evola-fascism.html.

[175] Debito Arudou, "White Supremacists and Japan: A Love Story," *The Japan Times*, March 7th, 2018, https://www.japantimes.co.jp/community/2018/03/07/issues/white-supremacists-japan-love-story/.

[176] Carmen Gabriela Lupu, "Why is the Japan the Ideal Country According to the Alt-Right Movement," *Diggit Magazine*, May 28th, 2018, https://www.diggitmagazine.com/articles/-japan-alt-right.

[177] Bhatt, "White Extinction," 27–52.

[178] Bhatt, "White Extinction," 28, 31.

[179] Bhatt, "White Extinction," 29.

[180] Bhatt, "White Extinction," 45.

[181] Bhatt, "White Extinction," 46.

[182] Bhatt, "White Extinction," 37.

Religious studies can help in weakening such openly racist propaganda by undermining it at its roots; by showing its claims of “spiritually rooted” originality to be arbitrary assumptions. While a Japanologist can point out the many historical fallacies Evola and his sources committed regarding Zen (something that falls outside the scope of the present work), the type of discourse analysis undertaken here shows more efficacy in revealing this discourse’s racist, political, and orientalist nature. My hope is that this work contributes to broadening the critical research on Suzuki’s reception and influence, for instance, in contexts like Nazi Germany with authors like Eugen Herrigel and Karlfried von Dürckheim thanks to Brian Victoria and Karl Baier.[185] Further comparative work could consider Suzuki’s influence on the American Zen of Alan Watts and the Beat Generation – where a discourse different from Evola’s emerged – to show how different interpretations of the same religious fact can lead in opposite directions. By doing so, the attempted normative and authoritative claims of reactionary and racist narratives upon religion, which justify themselves on an unprovable *a priori* “spiritual” basis, can be attacked at their core by showing their inconsistency and manipulative nature, thus opening the door for more intercultural and inclusive perspectives.

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183. Bhatt, “White Extinction,” 39.
184. Bhatt, “White Extinction,” 47.
185. Victoria, “D. T. Suzuki, Zen and the Nazis,” 1–22; Baier, “Formation and Principles,” 1–52; Victoria, “A Zen Nazi in Wartime Japan,” 1–52.

The Racialization of Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Study of the Kingdom of Buganda

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Islam *noir* is the ideology that Islam practiced by Africans south of the Sahara is inherently inferior to the Islam practiced in North Africa and the Middle East.[1] This perception of Islam on the African continent has been espoused by not only European imperial powers, but also historically by Islamic authorities, such as leading Sheikhs and Imams, in the Middle East.[2] From the nineteenth century to the present, this racialized idea has affected the way that Muslims in Sub-Saharan Africa have interacted with the wider world. However, Islam has been present in some areas of Sub-Saharan Africa since, as early as, the time of Muhammad (ca. seventh century CE) and prior to the modern era, Islamic scholars from cities such as Timbuktu were revered across the Muslim world.[3] The racialism of

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[1] Jean-Louis Triaud, "Giving a Name to Islam South of the Sahara: An Adventure in Taxonomy," *The Journal of African History* 55, no. 1 (2014): 3–15; Preben Kaarsholm, "Zanzibaris or Amakhuwa? Sufi Networks in South Africa, Mozambique, and the Indian Ocean," *The Journal of African History* 55, no. 2 (2014): 191–210.

[2] Marie Miran-Guyon and Jean-Louis Triaud, "Islam," in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern African History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 243–259. Scott Reese, "Islam in Africa/Africans in Islam," *The Journal of African History* 55, no. 1 (2014): 17–26; Benjamin F. Soares, "Notes on the Anthropological Study of Islam and Muslim Societies in Africa," *Culture and Religion* 1, no. 2 (2000): 277–285.

[3] Rudolph Ware, *The Walking Qur'an: Islamic Education, Embodied Know-*

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colonialism and Islamic reformist movements in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, though damaging to the lives of Muslims in Sub-Saharan Africa, have not undone the prestige of Islam in the region.[4]

By using the Kingdom of Buganda, in what is now southern Uganda, as a case study, this article will examine how European interactions with, and studies of Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa have harmfully affected African Muslim populations and overly racialized Islam in this region. In the context of this article, racialized and racialization refer to the differences which can be seen in the ways that Islam and Muslims are treated by colonial powers, and later by academics, in Sub-Saharan Africa, as compared to Muslims in North Africa and the Middle East. The principal argument of this article is that the cause for this difference rests largely on the ideology of Islam *noir* and the discriminatory ways that black Africans, and thus black Muslims, have been treated historically by imperial powers and contemporaneously by historians. The idea of race, as created by imperial powers and supported through theories such as Islam *noir*, was, and continues to be, crucial to the way in which Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa interacts with and is views by those in the West. Through a review of pertinent literature, this study will seek to understand the historic roots of this issue and will examine how current historians are working to find new, and better ways of interacting with Sub-Saharan Islam. Though this article will not deal with this issue directly nor expand upon it (as it is beyond the scope of this study), it should be noted that the separation of Africa into

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ledge and History in West Africa (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014). See also: John O. Hunwick and Alida Jay Boye, *The Hidden Treasures of Timbuktu Historic City of Islamic Africa* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 2008), 82–90; Nehemia Levtzion and Randall Lee Pouwels, *The History of Islam in Africa* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2000).

[4] Anne Bang, *Sufis and Scholars of the Sea: Family Networks in East Africa, 1860–1925* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003).

Saharan and Sub-Saharan is a problematic way of understanding the continent.[5] In this article, the term Sub-Saharan will be used for the sake of simplicity, but the understanding of this research is similar to that of Richard Reid's, which views the Sahara not as an obstacle, but rather as a sort of ocean, through which (though difficult) transport and communication has flowed for centuries.[6] This study will also examine the different experiences of African Muslims in Muslim minority versus majority areas during the colonial period, and how this affected the negative racialization of these communities. Though there is still a long way to go, publications from the past two decades show that historians and other scholars in the humanities are recognizing the problematic of the racialization of Islam – and religion more generally – in Sub-Saharan Africa and are working to correct this issue.[7]

Historic Encounters: Europe and Islam

Prior to the advent of Islam and the global spread of monotheism, ancient Greeks and Romans interacted with groups of people from what would become the Muslim world. As early as the fourth century CE, Romans described Arab mercenaries they hired as barbaric, claiming they drank the blood of enemies they killed on the battlefield.[8] Otherizing outside groups, such as those from the Arab world, was and remains a prominent political technique used to gain and consolidate power.[9] To fully understand how Europeans have interacted with Islam on the African continent, we must understand how European ideas about what Islam is and who Muslims are, were formed over centuries of European-Muslim interactions. Furthermore, to dismantle long held ideas of the "Africanization" and thus inferiority of Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa, we must first understand how these ideas were formed.

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[5] For the purposes of this study, Saharan Africa is defined as that area of the African continent in which the Saharan desert sits, and includes the following countries: Egypt, Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Western Sahara, and Tunisia. Countries which reside in the Sahel region, such as Mali, Niger, Chad, and Sudan, to the south, are not included in this understanding of what is considered Saharan Africa. Sub-Saharan Africa is understood to be all those countries which reside to the south of the Sahara, beginning with those countries in the Sahel region. This understanding of the delineation between Sahara and Sub-Sahara is representative of how these regions have historically understood each other and their positionalities, especially regarding the issue of race.

[6] Richard Reid, *A History of Modern Africa: 1800 to the Present* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2020), 28–30.

[7] For examples of publications which work against the racialization of religion in SSA, see: Kwasi Konadu, *Our Own Way in This Part of the World* (Durham:

From the eleventh century, as interactions and exchanges between the European and Muslim world grew, the Islamic "other" formed, and helped determine how Europeans viewed themselves vis-à-vis this other. Unfavourable depictions of Muslims can be found in European literature throughout the medieval and early modern periods. Muslims, commonly depicted as treacherous, sexually deviant, and barbaric, were seen in contrast with the heroic, chivalrous, and noble illustrations of Christian crusaders and knights.[10] During the early modern period Europeans became more knowledgeable about Islam and the Muslim world, but much of the

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Duke University Press, 2019); Ware, *The Walking Qur'an*; Triaud, "Giving a Name to Islam South"; Benjamin Soares, "The Historiography of Islam in West Africa: An Anthropologist's View," *The Journal of African History* 55, no. 1 (2014): 27–36.

[8] Frederick Quinn, *The Sum of All Heresies: The Image of Islam in Western Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 25–26.

[9] David Blanks and Michael Frassetto, *Western Views of Islam in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Perception of Other* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), 1–10; Arolda Elbasani and Jelena Tosic, "Localized Islam(s): Interpreting Agents, Competing Narratives, and Experiences of Faith," *Nationalities Papers* 45, no. 4 (n.d.): 499–510.

[10] Savvas Neocleous, "Byzantine-Muslim Conspiracies against the Crusades: History and Myth," *Journal of Medieval History* 36, no. 3 (2010): 253–274.

literature and common conceptions from that period still portrayed Islam and Muslims in an ignorant and biased way.[11]

Another explanation for the European otherization and demonization of Islam and Muslims is that during the medieval and early modern eras the Muslim world was decidedly more culturally advanced than Europe. This is illustrated in the scholarly achievements in mathematics and the sciences, architecture, the arts, and other areas of Muslim cultural life during the period. Additionally, the Muslim world continued to be a military threat to Europe until the modern era. The geographic proximity of the Muslim world to Europe surely aided the sense of cultural inferiority which helped Europeans form negative opinions of Muslims and Islam.[12] Despite that fact that Southern European authors wrote about Islam in a more tolerant way in the early modern period it is also evident that they still noticeably distrusted it.[13] However, this is not to say that the often-negative Christian-Muslim dynamic of the modern period is solely inherited from the early modern and medieval eras. Though some continuity can be seen, the global context shifted dramatically over the course of the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries as Christian Europe rose to global preeminence and the Muslim world lost influence; affecting how the Christian-Muslim relationship developed in the modern era.[14] However, the process of otherization and distrust between Europe and the Muslim world, which began prior to the advent of Islam, has some continuity in the current period.[15] A primary example of how this distrust persisted into the modern era can be seen in European imperial projects.

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[11] Quinn, *The Sum of All Heresies,* 70–76.

[12] Quinn, *The Sum of All Heresies*, 35–38.

[13] Richard Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), 4–6.

[14] James Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East: A Hisory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), Chapters 3–4.

[15] Blanks and Frassetto, *Western Views of Islam,* Chapter 1.

When European powers began colonizing the African continent in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, they encountered Islam in a context they had never experienced before. However, the European experience of the crusades and centuries of cultural, social, political, and scholarly exchange with the Muslim world, meant that they already had well-formed ideas regarding Islam and Muslims.[16] Their long-held suspicions about Islam and their distrust of Muslims ultimately affected how they interacted with Muslims in their colonial states. In areas where there was a Muslim majority, such as in areas of West Africa, colonial powers often sought to cooperate with Muslim leaders through the common system of indirect rule.[17] But this was always done in extremely tactical ways and when Muslim leaders accumulated too much power the colonial state was quick to suppress them.[18] In areas where Muslims were a minority, policies towards Islam varied from colony to colony, with some imperialistic powers being more openly anti-Islamic than others.[19] Notably, almost all European colonial states in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw a rise in the institutionalization of Islamic policies and identities. This especially affected the education of colonized Muslims and their ability to communicate with the wider

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16. Quinn, *The Sum of All Heresies*, 18–21.

17. Benjamin Soares and Rudiger Seesemann, “Being as Good Muslims as Frenchmen: On Islam and Colonial Modernity in West Africa,” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 39, no. 1 (2009): 91–120; Gregory Mann, “Fetishizing Religion: Allah Koura and French Islamic Policy in Late Colonial French Sudan (Mali),” *The Journal of African History* 44, no. 2 (2003): 263–282.

18. Mario Artur Machaqueiro, “Foes or Allies? Portuguese Colonial Policies Towards Islam in Mozambique and Guinea,” *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 41, no. 5 (2013): 843–869.

19. David Motadel, “Islam and the European Empires,” *The Historical Journal* 55, no. 3 (2012): 831–856.

Muslim world, amongst other things. This was a situation that had not existed prior to this point, and which would continue to affect Muslims in those areas well into the postcolonial era.[20]

As the history of interaction between the Muslim and Christian world shows, by the nineteenth century Europeans held well-formed ideas about the Islamic world. This included how Europeans viewed the legitimacy of Islam as a religious institution outside of the Islamic heartland.[21] It is equally important to note that Muslim perceptions from within the Islamic world also played an important role in shaping how European imperial powers came to understand African Muslims. Since the eleventh century, even as African Muslims made valuable scholarly contributions to the global Muslim academy, Islamic scholars and religious leaders from the Islamic heartland often regarded Islam and Muslims in Sub-Saharan Africa as inherently inferior. This became especially potent during the Islamic reformist movements of the nineteenth century. These movements gave rise to a tradition of Pan-Arab discourse which sought to delegitimize any forms of Islam that were not widely practiced and normatively accepted within the Arab world, such as Sufism. Sufism is the sect of Sunni Islam that the majority of African Muslims belong to, and Sufism is more widespread in Sub-Saharan Africa than it is in any other region of the world.[22] In the nineteenth century, to be a Muslim in Sub-Saharan Africa was to belong to this group. Accordingly, when nineteenth century Islamic reformist movements depicted Sufi practices as unorthodox and anti-Islamic, this, by extension, depicted African Muslims in Sub-Saharan Africa as unorthodox and un-Islamic.[23]

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[20] Richard Reid, *Frontiers of Violence in North East Africa: Genealogies of Conflict since c.1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 109–115; James Brennan, "Constructing Arguments and Institutions of Islamic Belonging: M. O. Abbasi, Colonial Tanzania, and the Western Indian Ocean World, 1925–61," *The Journal of African History* 55, no. 2 (2014): 211–228; Chouki El Hamel, "Constructing a Diasporic Identity: Tracing the Origins of the Gnawa Spiritual Group in Morocco," *The Journal of African History* 49, no. 2 (2008): 241–260.

[21] Soares, "The Historiography of Islam in West Africa."

[22] See: Bang, *Sufis and Scholars of the Sea*; Kaarsholm, "Zanzibaris or Amakhuwa? Sufi Networks."

As the pan-Arab sentiment underlying this discourse reveals, this view of Sufi Muslims was highly racialized, and became even more so as pan-Arab movements began to gain further traction. The history of the critique of Sufism put forward by these movements is beyond the scope of this article, but it is important to note that this critique developed over time and affected the level of legitimacy which Muslims in Sub-Saharan Africa were awarded by their coreligionists in the Islamic heartland. Amongst European imperial powers this racialized way of viewing Islam and Muslims in Sub-Saharan Africa was called Islam *noir*.[24]

Islam *noir*, beginning as a French colonial ideology, affected how all European powers interacted with Muslims and Islam in their Sub-Saharan African colonies in the nineteenth to twentieth centuries. In addition to the discriminating view of African Muslims that this doctrine espoused, it also led European powers to actively marginalize Islam within their colonies. This ranged from limiting the autonomy of Muslim leaders to underfunding Muslim education to suppressing Muslims' ability to communicate with the wider Muslim world, and much more.[25] The marginalization of Sub-Saharan African Muslims took place within the context of global colonialism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In Muslim majority areas, Muslims held social and political power, meaning that they were still able to demand certain levels of respect from their colonial states.[26] However, in Muslim minority areas, such as Buganda, Muslims held no such influence and were left to survive largely on their own in racially and religiously biased colonial states.

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[23] Ware, *The Walking Qur'an,* 166–171; Bang, *Sufis and Scholars*, 133–140.

[24] Triaud, "Giving a Name to Islam South," 3–6.

[25] Kaarsholm, "Zanzibaris or Amakhuwa? Sufi Networks," 191–195; Amal Ghazal, "The Other Frontiers of Arab Nationalism: Ibadis, Berbers, and the Arabist-Salafi Press in the Interwar Period," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 42, no. 1 (2010): 105–122.

A Racialized Periphery: Sub-Saharan Islam in Academia

The marginalization of Islam by colonial states in Sub-Saharan Africa can be, to an extent, paralleled to how the academic study of Islam within Africa has been conducted. In areas of the African continent where Muslims comprised a majority of the population in the nineteenth century, such as North and West Africa and the East African coast, Islam was a feared and thus respected institution.[27] Colonial states recognized that they had to interact with Islam and as a result created specialized policies and institutions to work with Islamic leaders.[28] When these leaders were seen to wield too much power, colonial states reacted by enacting repressive measures against them and Islam more broadly or by sponsoring competing Islamic leaders who were more cooperative.[29] A similar attitude has also been adopted by western historians and thus, Islam in East and West Africa has been studied and researched extensively. Islamic institutions such as schools, religious brotherhoods, prayer methods, and social institutions have been widely studied in western academia since the mid-twentieth century.[30] In addition, the study of the political and cultural power of Islam in these areas has equally been the focus of academia exactly because they were feared and respected by imperial states.[31] However, this is not to say that historians only studied Islam in these regions because it was respected by colonial states; the fact that Islam played a prominent role in the governing of these areas during colonialism definitely contributed to academic interest.

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[26] W. Montgomery Watt, "The Political Relevance of Islam in East Africa," *International Affairs* 42, no. 1 (1966): 35–44.

[27] James McDougall, *A History of Algeria* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 58–73; Machaqueiro, "Foes or Allies? Portuguese Colonial," 844–847.

[28] Soares, "The Historiography of Islam in West Africa," 31–33; Levtzion and Pouwels, *The History of Islam in Africa*, 42–62.

[29] Soares and Seesemann, "Being as Good Muslims as Frenchmen," 93–96.

Conversely, in areas of Sub-Saharan Africa where Muslims were not a majority – such as in southern, central and east-central Africa – colonial states often did not create Muslim specific policies or institutions. In this way, the needs of African Muslims were often blatantly ignored by colonial states.[32] Though not overtly oppressive, in areas such as Buganda, this led to the Muslim community being trapped in a reinforcing cycle of under-education and lower-class existence.[33] This marginalization is in some ways reflected in the historiography dealing with Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa. Though there are notable historic works which focus on Muslims in areas where they were and still are a minority, this field remains relatively understudied when compared with the studies of Islam in Muslim majority areas of the African continent.[34] Additionally, these accounts largely focus on the political aspects of the Muslim communities they analyze, at the expense of social and cultural aspects of these groups' histories.[35]

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[30] T. G. Baye, "Muslims in Ethiopia: History and Identity," *African Studies* 77, no. 3 (2018): 412–427; Geert Castryck, "Living Islam in Colonial Bujumbura – The Historical Translocality of Muslim Life between East and Central Africa," *History in Africa* 46 (2019): 263–298; Egodi Uchendu, "Being Igbo and Muslim: The Igbo of South-Eastern Nigeria and Conversions to Islam, 1930s to Recent Times," *The Journal of African History* 51, no. 1 (2010): 63–87; Jonathan Wyrtzen, "Colonial State-Building and the Negotiation of Arab and Berber Identity in Protectorate Morocco," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 43, no. 2 (2011): 227–249. For an excellent transnational study of Islamic prayer practices, see: David Parkin and Stephen Headley, *Islamic Prayer across the Indian Ocean: Inside and Outside the Mosque* (Richmond: Curzon, 2000).

[31] Motadel, "Islam and the European Empires," 838–845.

[32] D. A. Low, *The Mind of Buganda: Documents of the Modern History of an African Kingdom* (London: Heinemann, 1971), section 20.

[33] Hansjorg Dilger and Dorothea Schulz, "Politics of Religious Schooling: Christian and Muslim Engagements with Education in Africa," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 43, no. 4 (2013): 365–378; Nathaniel Matthews, "Imagining Arab Communities: Colonialism, Islamic Reform, and Arab Identity in Mombasa, Kenya, 1897–1933," *Islamic Africa* 4, no. 2 (2013): 135–163.

Nowhere on the African continent has Islam and the lives of Muslims been dealt with in such depth as it has in the Sahara. Having centuries of interaction between themselves and Saharan Muslims, European imperial powers, while still racializing Islam, were able to recognize Islam as a potent force and came to understand some of the facets of Saharan Muslim culture and society.[36] Due to the long history of Islam in North Africa, and Europe's recognition of this, European colonial forces were aware prior to colonization that they would need Muslim specific policies and institutions in their Saharan colonies.[37] This recognition and sense of respect bestowed upon Islam in North Africa may stem from several reasons ranging from cultural similarities between Europe and Arabia, the power of the Ottoman Empire, to the relative lightness of some Northern Africans' complexion, an element that is related to and imbedded in Islam *noir*.[38] However, what is important to note is that European powers respected Islam as a legitimate cultural, social, and religious institution in North Africa in a way that they did not in Sub-Saharan Africa. As with Islam in other areas of the African continent, this has also been echoed in the way that historians of North Africa treat Islam in their studies. Islam is analyzed in North Africa in a less racialized way that in turn reveals that historians view Islam in this area as a legitimate religious institution.[39] This is not to say that racially biased accounts are not prolific in this area as well, however, there is far more research available on what it means to be Muslim in North Africa than for the rest of the continent.

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[34] For a notable example of a study of Ganda Muslims, see: A. B. K. Kasozi, *The Life of Prince Badru Kakungulu Wasajja, and the Development of a Forward Looking Muslim Community in Uganda, 1907–1991* (Kampala: Progressive Publishing House, 1996).

[35] Kasozi, *The Life of Prince Badru*; Watt, "The Political Relevance of Islam," 35–38; Jonathan Earle, *Colonial Buganda and the End of Empire: Political Thought and Historical Imagination in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), Chapter 4; Michael Twaddle, "The Muslim Revolution in Buganda," *African Affairs* 71, no. 282 (1972): 65–70; Mauro Nobili, "Reinterpreting the Role of Muslims in the West African Middle Ages," *Journal of African History* 61, no. 3 (2020): 327–340.

[36] Quinn, *The Sum of All Heresies*, 100–115; Bruce Hall, *A History of Race in Muslim West Africa, 1600–1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 69–75.

[37] Wyrtzen, "Colonial State-Building and the Negotiation," 228–233; McDougall, *A History of Algeria,* Chapter 2.

Academic representations of Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa continue to approach the topic with a distinctly Western perspective.[40] Sub-Saharan Sufism,[41] though given due consideration by western scholars, is often examined in a racialized way. As such, the rituals and healing methods in Sufism are often depicted, across the African continent, as outside of Islam and inherently unorthodox.[42] Though this is a common trope amongst historians of Islam, Ware argues that the basis of this is rooted in highly racialized ways of viewing Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa which were cemented in the West during the colonial era.[43] Studies of Islam during Muhammad's life, and shortly thereafter, reveal that many Sufi practices which have been depicted as unorthodox actually have a long and notable history in the religion.[44] The purpose of this study is not to argue for the legitimacy or illegitimacy of Sufism as a religion, as this is beyond the scope of this article. However, the history and legitimacy of Sufism are central to understanding how Sub-Saharan Islam has been racialized and how it has been depicted within academic studies. Additionally, this study will also focus on the ideas surrounding the "Africanization" of Islam and the inherent racialization of the religion, and the way that this has affected historians' perceptions of Sufism and its legitimacy as a religious institution.

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[38] Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "A Tale of Three Empires: Mughals, Ottomans, and Habsburgs in a Comparative Context," *Common Knowledge* 12, no. 1 (2006): 66–92; Derek Peterson and Darren Walhof, *The Invention of Religion: Rethinking Belief in Politics and History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 115–150; Reid, *A History of Modern Africa*, Chapter 5.

[39] El Hamel, "Constructing a Diasporic Identity," 241–260. For two other examples, see: Reid, *Frontiers of Violence in North East Africa*, and McDougall, *A History of Algeria*.

[40] Ware, *The Walking Qur'an,* 10–30.

[41] Sufism is generally portrayed as a mystical and esoteric – and therefore unorthodox – form of Islam, but in this article, I am arguing against this perception of Sufism. I argue that Sufism, as a dominant form of Islam on the African continent, is simply another sect of Islam. I also argue that this terminology works to delegitimize Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa, by portraying Sufism as an unorthodox sect, and thus this type of terminology needs to be avoided.

A Religious History of Buganda

Buganda is an interesting case in east and central Africa, because foreign religions were not introduced to the area until the mid-nineteenth century. This is around eight centuries later than when Islam arrived on the East African coast and four centuries after the arrival of Portuguese forces in the same area.[45] The study of why foreign religions took so long to penetrate the interior of East Africa cannot be undertaken in this study, but it is important to make note of it here since we will be focusing on religion in Buganda.

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[42] Levtzion and Pouwels, *The History of Islam in Africa,* Chapters 20–21; Mann, "Fetishizing Religion: Allah Koura," 263–282; M. Miran-Guyon, "'Native' Conversion to Islam in Southern Cote d'Ivoire: The Perils of Double Identity," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 42, no. 2 (2012): 95–117; Castryck, "Living Islam in Colonial Bujumbura," 275–280; Nobili, "Reinterpreting the Role of Muslims," 332.

[43] Ware, *The Walking Qur'an,* 30–36.

[44] Ware, *The Walking Qur'an*, 54–60.

Following Islam's arrival in Buganda in 1844, it spread relatively quickly by gaining converts within the *kabaka's*[46] royal court. In 1862, the first Europeans arrived in Buganda. John Hanning Speke and those who accompanied him were, like many Europeans of the nineteenth century, seeking to map out the mysterious and "dark" continent of Africa. In 1877, the first Protestant missionaries arrived in Buganda, having allegedly been called for by *Kabaka* Mutesa I via Henry Morton Stanley. Catholic missionaries from France arrived in 1879. Competition for political influence began swiftly, and, compounded by existing political rivalries and inter-clan conflict, culminated in the Religious Wars of 1888–1890 in Buganda.[47] This conflict was brought to an end with the arrival of Lord Lugard and his advanced weaponry in 1890.[48] Throughout the 1890s Protestant Ganda leaders, such as Apollo Kagwa, worked with the British to conquer and develop what is now Uganda, each relying on the other for their growing authority in the region.[49] In 1900 the Buganda Agreement was signed, cementing not only British colonization of all of Uganda, but also the hierarchy of Buganda with Protestants first, Catholics second, and Muslims a distant third.[50]

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[45] Reid, *A History of Modern Africa*, 57–59.

[46] This is the Luganda term for king.

[47] Reid, *A History of Modern Uganda,* 153–157.

[48] Reid, *A History of Modern Uganda,* 153–157.

[49] Holger Hansen, *Mission, Church, and State in a Colonial Setting: Uganda 1890–1925* (London: Heinemann, 1984), Chapter 7; Ibrahim El-Zein Soghayroun, *Islam, Christian Missions, and the Colonial Administration in East Africa: A Documental Study with Special Emphasis on Uganda* (Muscat, 1992), Chapter 3.

[50] Holly Hanson, *Landed Obligation: The Practice of Power in Buganda*

The 1900 Agreement was signed by British colonial officials and Ganda regency chiefs on behalf of the recently enthroned three-year-old *kabaka*. For the next sixty-two years the British colonial state worked with Protestant and Catholic Ganda leaders, while willfully ignoring the needs of the Ganda Muslim community.[51] Despite this atmosphere, Ganda Muslims flourished during the colonial period. By localizing Islam as a social, political, and cultural force, Ganda Muslims developed political influence and negotiated an influential space for themselves in wider Ganda society.[52]

The current state of Uganda's historiography reflects the marginalization faced by Ganda Muslims during the colonial period.[53] Though Islam has been dealt with by some notable historians, such as Kasozi and Kiwanuka, Christianity in Uganda has received a great deal more attention.[54] Additionally, historians of Uganda have largely written about religion in the region from a distinctly western perspective.[55] Religion in Buganda, as in most of Sub-Saharan Africa prior to the mid-nineteenth century, played a direct role in all areas of life.[56] When examining the colonial context this fact must be considered to fully understand how Ganda people

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(Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2003), Chapter 5.

[51] Low, *The Mind of Buganda.*; Abasi Kiyimba, "The Muslim Community in Uganda Through 140 Years," *Journal of African Religion and Philosophy* 1, no. 2 (n.d.): 84–120.

[52] Earle, *Colonial Buganda and the End of Empire*, Chapter 4.

[53] Holger Hansen, "Church and State in Early Colonial Uganda," *African Affairs*, no. 338 (1986): 55–74; D. A, Low and R. C. Pratt, *Buganda and British Overrule, 1900–1955: Two Studies* (London: Oxford University Press, 1960); Akiiki Mujaju, "The Political Crisis of Church Institutions in Uganda," *African Affairs* 75, no. 298 (n.d.): 67–85.

[54] M. S. M. Semakula Kiwanuka, *A History of Buganda* (London: Longman Group Limited, 1971); Kasozi, *The Life of Prince Badru*.

[55] Hansen, *Mission, Church, and State in a Colonial Setting*.

[56] Neil Kodesh, *Beyond the Royal Gaze: Clanship and Public Healing in Buganda* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2010), 69–80; Ware, *The Walking Qur'an*, 8–12.

thought of and sought to use religion as a social, cultural, political, and economic tool. Moreover, as noted the western perspective has greatly overshadowed the understanding of religion in the region and thus, examining Muslim communities in Sub-Saharan Africa from a less western perspective is a pressing issue facing all historians studying Islam in the region.

The racialization of Islam in the Kingdom of Buganda, and how this was used to view the group as an illegitimate organization, and then treat it in discriminatory ways, can be seen in early interactions between the Muslim Ganda and the British. As the 1900 Agreement was being negotiated, Frederick Lugard, an important British official who helped lead colonization efforts in Uganda, often referred to the Ganda Muslims as Mbogo's adherents.[57] Prince Nuhu Mbogo was a member of the Ganda royal family and a chief who had converted to Islam. He became the primary leader of all Muslims in the Kingdom of Buganda predominantly thanks to British policies which forced all Ganda Muslims into one county in the early 1890s.[58]

Prince Nuhu Mbogo represented all of the Muslims in Buganda during the negotiations for the 1900 Agreement, but the British viewed his authority over the Ganda Muslim community as stemming from a traditional context, rather than a religious one. Though this is not entirely incorrect, as Mbogo held both religious and traditional authority, the British clearly viewed him and his adherents in a less than legitimate way, as they did not refer to them as a religious group during their negotiations. This is in contrast to the way they referred to and worked with Ganda Protestants and Catholics, which were both referred to as proper religious groupings and were given much more land on which to host their communities in the agreement – the missionary societies were given ninety-two square miles while the Muslim community was given only twenty-four.[59] The disproportionately smaller quantity of land which Muslims were given and the marginalization they then faced illustrates both the lack of legitimacy they held as a religious group in the eyes of the British, and that this perception was predominantly due to their identity as both Africans and Muslims.

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[57] "The Uganda Agreement, 1900," 1900, MSS. Lugard, *Weston Library, Special Collections*, Box 81, File 4, 20.

[58] Kasozi, *The Life of Prince Badru*, 27–30.

Throughout the colonial era, ca. 1900–1962, this perception of African Muslims influenced the policies of the colonial state. The colonial state openly favoured Protestant and Catholic schools, missionaries, and, eventually, political parties.[60] Protestant and Catholic Ganda, having received what the colonial state deemed as the "correct" form of education, were able to achieve upward mobility both socially and economically and to take higher positions within the colonial state. By the mid-twentieth century, a large majority of university graduates in Uganda were either Protestant or Catholic.[61] For the first several decades of colonial rule, the British protectorate government allowed Protestant and Catholic missionaries to control the education system in Buganda, even though they knew that missionary schools – which catered to newly converted Christian boys – were leaving Muslims, girls, and other children who did not want to convert to Christianity behind.[62] This created a reinforcing cycle where better paying jobs went to Christians, those Christians sent their children to higher education, and the next generation did the same. This marginalization of Ganda

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[59] "The Uganda Agreement, 1900," 20–22.

[60] Michael Twaddle, "The Emergence of Politico-Religious Groupings in Late Nineteenth-Century Buganda," *The Journal of African History* 29, no. 1 (1988): 81–85; Hansen, *Mission, Church, and State in a Colonial Setting,* 28–30.

[61] See A. B. K. Kasozi, *University Education in Uganda: Challenges and Opportunities for Reform* (Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2003), Chapter 9.

[62] Low, *The Mind of Buganda,* Section 20.

Muslims was a result of the colonial administration's lack of attention to the community and it's needs. The refusal of the colonial state to view the Ganda Muslims' problems as legitimate concerns sprouted from their refusal to see the community as a legitimate institution within the colonial apparatus. Lack of recognition led to lack of support and then lack of development.

By the 1950s, as Uganda prepared for independence, the majority of Ugandans in positions of political power within the colonial administration or emerging political parties were either Protestant or Catholic. Additionally, most were Muganda.[63] This influenced how the newly formed nation negotiated her independence, as the developing political parties were affiliated along religious lines.[64] Due to the scope of this study this article does not examine Uganda post-1962, when the country gained its independence. However, it is important to note how instrumental the politico-religious groupings of the early 1960s were, not just in shaping how Uganda gained independence, but also in determining the following tumultuous decades. Idi Amin (former president of Uganda) was only able to come to power in 1971 because of actions taken by the religiously affiliated political parties of the 1950s and 60s.[65]

Moreover, it is important to note that the work of Protestant and Catholic missionaries, as well as the Ganda who converted to these religions, have been studied in-depth. Much of the historical canon of Buganda and Uganda examines the powerful alliances made between Protestant Ganda and the British colonial state, as well as the resulting power that Protestant Ganda held in the protectorate.[66] These studies are incredibly important for understanding Buganda history and contemporary Ganda society and culture. However, Islam and Muslims have been studied to a much lesser degree by historians of Uganda. Though many studies in the last decades of the nineteenth century have focused on Islam and Muslims, few have analyzed the role of Islam and the Muslim community in Buganda during the colonial era.[67]

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[63] Muganda refers to the people who belonged to the Ganda ethnic group of Buganda, rather than the numerous other ethnic groups which comprise Uganda.

[64] Earle, *Colonial Buganda and the End of Empire,* 5–10.

[65] Idi Amin was a powerful military dictator who came to power in 1971 through a violent coup. He remained in power until 1979 and is remembered as one of Uganda's most violent post-independence leaders.

I argue that this lack of academic attention is due to the marginalized position which Muslims and Islam held in colonial Buganda. Islam arrived in Buganda in the early 1840s, a few decades prior to the arrival of Europeans. Islam, like Christianity, quickly gained converts in the *kabaka*'s court. If it were not for the arrival of Lugard and the favouritism he showed Protestant Ganda chiefs, Buganda may not have become a Christian majority kingdom. However, Lugard did arrive, and British colonization solidified the marginalized position of Muslims in Buganda. As noted, the Buganda Agreement of 1900 allotted only twenty-four square miles of land to the Muslim Ganda community to survive and make a living on; this disproportionate allocation of land is a prime example of their marginalized status.[68] Throughout the colonial period British officials knowingly allowed the hardships facing Muslim Ganda to continue, even as they were made aware of the challenges Muslims were facing.[69]

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[66] Examples of such studies are: Frederick Welbourn, *Religion and Politics in Uganda: 1952–1962* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1965); Low and Pratt, *Buganda and British Overrule, 1900–1955*; Hansen, *Mission, Church, and State in a Colonial Setting*.

[67] For examples of studies which focus on Muslims/Islam prior to 1900, see Samwiri Rubaraza Karugire, *A Political History of Uganda* (Nairobi: Heinemann Educational Books, 1980); Twaddle, "The Emergence of Politico-Religious Groupings"; Twaddle, "The Muslim Revolution in Buganda."

[68] "Uganda Protectorate Buganda – United Kingdom The Buganda (Transitional) Agreement, 1955 Schedules and Appendices (EAF 71/6/08)," *The National Archives* (August 1955), File DO 118/115.

Despite this unfavourable treatment, the Muslim Ganda flourished during the colonial era. The Muslims of Buganda created an influential political and social niche for themselves by drawing on transnational Muslim organizations like the East African Muslim Welfare Society, overcoming divisions and creating a strong community within Buganda, using cultural and societal institutions such as education, and benefitting from gifted leaders such as Nuhu Mbogo. Over time, Muslim Ganda increased their number of university graduates, as well as the number of people in positions of power, and by the late 1950s and early 1960s they were a highly sought-after alliance as the political parties of Uganda negotiated leadership of the country.[70] By the mid-twentieth century, though other groups had already done so in the early twentieth century, Muslim Ganda had also drafted their versions of Buganda's history, an important step for a marginalized group fighting to create a more favourable position for themselves in their country.[71]

Histories about the Ganda Muslims have been written during the colonial period, but they are few. A significant source of information on Ganda Muslims during the colonial period can be found in the political histories of the time, such as those by Kiwanuka and Karugire.[72] Kasozi's work is especially notable for the focus that it places on Muslims and the Islamic community in twentieth century Buganda.[73] However, as of yet, there are no studies which focus on the Muslim Ganda experience of colonialism with the goal of understanding how this community used the resources at hand to create a better position for themselves in an acutely anti-Islamic and overtly racially discriminatory colonial atmosphere. Other studies have focused on Muslims in Uganda in relation to Idi Amin, his rule, and the years that followed, but these again do not seek to situate this moment in Buganda's history within the larger context of Islam in the kingdom. I argue that the Muslim community of Buganda carved out a political and social position for itself despite its marginalized status in the British colonial state.

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[69] Low, *The Mind of Buganda,* Section 33.

[70] Earle, *Colonial Buganda and the End of Empire,* 142–145.

[71] Reid, *A History of Modern Uganda,* 251–252.

[72] Karugire, *A Political History of Uganda*; Kiwanuka, *A History of Buganda.*

[73] Kasozi, *The Life of Prince Badru.*

Recontextualizing Religion in Sub-Saharan Africa

As contact between Europeans and the African continent increased throughout the nineteenth century they increasingly came into contact with African religions. These religions, varying across the continent, cannot be discussed in depth here, but the reaction that missionaries, colonial officials, and European anthropologists had to these religions is pertinent to understanding how European imperialist powers developed their colonial states' religious policies and how religion in Africa has subsequently been studied and misunderstood.[74]

Religion, across space and time, is both a reflection of the society which practices it and a tool which people use for a myriad of ends. In the nineteenth century, Christianity in Europe became an institutionalized system through which common people sought eternal redemption and elites sought social and cultural influence in the here and now.[75] Many Europeans were devoted to their religions on a spiritual level, however in the upper echelons of society in Europe, religion was also an avenue for societal advancement despite the fact that the continent was moving towards political secularization in the nineteenth century.[76] On the African continent, religion played a much different role. Generally, religion across Sub-Saharan Africa permeated every aspect of one's life.[77]

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[74] For an example of British colonial official's reactions to African religion in East Africa, see Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, MSS. Brit. Emp. S. 290. Box 1.
[75] Peterson and Walhof, *The Invention of Religion,* Chapter 10.

Africans believed that their livelihood, political leadership, economy, military success, and overall communal and societal wellbeing were all affected in very direct ways by religious practice.[78] The nineteenth century Christian definition of religion was simply not compatible with the African reality of religious practice. This was especially true as European states and political systems were becoming increasingly secularized.[79] However, despite this, European missionaries, colonial officials, and anthropologists used their understanding of religion to judge and then primitivize African religious practices.[80]

Examples of this devaluation can be seen across the African continent. Missionaries openly disrespected African religious beliefs, colonial policies gave an unfair advantage to those who converted to Christianity, and land policies, such as the *mailo* system in Uganda, prohibited Africans from practicing many of their spiritual and cultural traditions and rituals.[81] At the same time, the first in-depth studies of African religion were being undertaken by European missionaries, colonial officials, and anthropologists. These nineteenth and early twentieth century accounts, though often valuable due to their level of detail, are extremely racially biased and tend to cast Africans as inherently unintelligent, uncivilized, and incapable.[82] Some accounts, such as John Roscoe's, are admirable for the level of respect and genuine fascination they show towards African cultures and societies, but accounts such as these are the exception, rather than the norm.[83] It was from these biased accounts that Europeans, and much of the wider world, formed their ideas regarding religion in Sub-Saharan Africa. The presentation of African religion in these studies, and the common biases of the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries, caused those in the West to view religion in Africa as backwards, underdeveloped, idolatrous, and heathenistic.[84] These biases came from many sources in Europe, but largely they were due to the cultural superiority Europeans assumed for themselves over Africans and can be seen as a further example of politically motivated "othering" of peoples and cultures different from one's own.

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[76] Clark Christopher, "From 1848 to Christian Democracy," in *Religion and the Political Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 190–213.

[77] Kwasi Konadu, *Our Own Way in This Part*, 17–21; Peterson and Walhof, *The Invention of Religion,* 38–42.

[78] Kodesh, *Beyond the Royal Gaze,* 39–48; Neil Kodesh, "History from the Healer's Shrine: Genre, Historical Imagination, and Early Ganda History," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 49, no. 3 (2007): 527–552.

[79] Christopher, "From 1848 to Christian Democracy," 193–200; Reid, *A History of Modern Africat*, 110–116.

[80] Peterson and Walhof, *The Invention of Religion,* 37–41.

[81] Holly Hanson, *Landed Obligation: The Practice*, Chapter 5; Richard Reid, *A History of Modern Uganda*, 244–249.

Research on African religion by western scholars throughout the twentieth century, and even into the twenty-first century, was often done with a distinctly Christian and Western perspective. Looking through this kind of lens, African religion, including Islam south of the Sahara, has largely been delegitimized since the beginning of the colonial era.[85] However, there are notable examples of African religion being studied with due respect and from an appropriate methodological viewpoint.[86] Religion on the African continent has historically played a different and larger role in society than Christianity has in modern Europe.[87] To fully grasp what religion was and who African people were before and during the colonial period, we as historians must work to study African religion, including African Islam, from an unbiased standpoint independent of all colonial assumptions. In practical terms, this means that historians must strive to avoid general and inaccurate terms such as "Africanized," and dive deeper into the local character of the Islam that they study, while also placing the Muslim group which they analyze into the wider, global community of Islam in which the community operates.

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[82] MSS. Brit. Emp. S. 290. Box 5.

[83] John Roscoe, *The Baganda: An Account of Their Native Customs and Beliefs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911).

[84] Konadu, *Our Own Way in This Part,* 174–180; Julia Day Howell, "Sufism and the Indonesian Islamic Revival," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 60, no. 3 (2001): 701–729.

[85] Ware, *The Walking Qur'an,* 19–23.

Historians and anthropologists have begun the work of understanding African religion from a less western and Christian perspective. A notable example is Rudolph Ware's *The Walking Qur'an* (2014). In this work Ware explores the central role played by Qur'anic schools within West African culture, religion, and society over the course of several centuries. He specifically analyzes the more controversial aspects of Qur'an schools, such as alms taking and the "drinking of the Qur'an,"[88] as well as Sufi practices of saint veneration and spirit possession, that have been described by others as unorthodox Islamic practices. By tracing the history of these practices, back to the time of the Prophet Muhammad, Ware makes

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86. See Konadu, *Our Own Way in This Part*; Kodesh, *Beyond the Royal Gaze*; Gemetchu Megerssa and Aneesa Kassam, *Sacred Knowledge Traditions of the Oromo of the Horn of Africa* (Durham: Fifth World Publications, 2019).
87. Christopher, "From 1848 to Christian Democracy," 190–195; Holly Hanson, "Mapping Conflict: Heterarchy and Accountability in the Ancient Capital of Buganda," *The Journal of African History* 50, no. 2 (2009): 179–202.
88. This refers to the practice that is still common in West Africa where students drink the water that they have used to clean their wooden slates at the end of Qur'an lessons. This water contains the ink they used to write Quranic verses with and is thus seen as containing the holiness of the Qur'an itself.

an incredibly compelling case for the orthodoxy and history of these Sufi practices within Islam.[89] In Islam, innovations interpreted as having developed since the time of Muhammad are and have been the targets of reformist movements.[90] However, Ware shows that West African Sufi practices and Qur'an school teaching methods have a long history that perhaps date back to the time of Islam's founding, or shortly thereafter. By illustrating the historical development of Islam and Islamic practices in West Africa, Ware's work helps to call into question the idea that Islam in this region is somehow different from, and thus inferior to, the Islam of the Middle East. Thus, demonstrating that the Islamic practices of Western Africa have historic roots which date back to the time of Muhammad helps to support the claim that these practices are not unorthodox, but rather are legitimate forms of Islamic practice.

In all, Ware's work demonstrates that Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa is not an illegitimate or inferior practice of the religion. This in turn helps to discredit western and colonial notions of Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa as being inferior. Perhaps most importantly, Ware argues for the recontextualizing of Sufi Islam within an African context. Both Europeans and Muslim leaders from the Islamic heartland have argued over the last few centuries that one cannot be both authentically Muslim and authentically African.[91] Proof of this can be seen in constant historical references to the "Africanization" of Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa, in lieu of in-depth studies of what it actually means to practice Islam on the continent.[92] Ware's study of the movement of Islam to West Africa, shortly following the lifetime of Muhammad, illustrates Islam's long history in Sub-Saharan Africa. Additionally, Ware's work also shows that West African Muslims were actively contributing to, and participating in, the global Muslim scholarly tradition by as early as the fourteenth century. Arab accounts from this period note that the scholars in Timbuktu were not only black but were knowledgeable and legitimate Islamic scholars. Finally, Ware draws upon Islamic scriptures and histories to show that the Sufi practices, which are often labelled as "mystical" and unorthodox, may actually be grounded in ancient Islamic traditions.[93]

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[89] Ware, *The Walking Qur'an,* 60–65.

[90] Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East,* 240–245.

[91] Reese, "Islam in Africa/Africans in Islam," 21–26.

[92] Levtzion and Pouwels, *The History of Islam in Africa,* 270–275; Philip Gooding, "Islam in the Interior of Precolonial East Africa: Evidence from Lake Tanganyika," *The Journal of African History* 60, no. 2 (2019): 191–208.

Ware's work is an especially important example of how historians of Africa must strive to recontextualize Sufism in an African context. Many studies of Sufism in Africa describe the tradition as mystical, Africanized, unorthodox, or other such terms which, though not incorrect, are inaccurate and work to delegitimize African practice of Islam. Religion, in every corner of the world and in every moment of history, is localized to fit the needs of the society in question. However, this does not devalue the religion or the way that people practice their religion. Today the African continent's population has one of the highest proportions of Muslims of any continent in the world.[94] This Islamic population, largely known as Sufis, has been and continues to be active in shaping the global Muslim discourse. Though Sufism may be practiced differently than other forms of Islam, it is no less legitimate.[95] Religion changes and grows. It evolves throughout history and geography to fit people's needs. As we strive to create less biased historical accounts, we must recognize that Sufism, and Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa more generally, needs to be studied independent of the western perspective and instead, should be placed within its proper African context. To do this, we must dismantle racialized terms such as "Africanized religion" when we write about and seek to understand African religions.

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[93] Ware, *The Walking Qur'an,* 55–65.

[94] Drew Desilver and David Masci, "World's Muslim Population More Widespread than You Might Think," *Pew Research Center*, January 31st, 2017, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/01/31/worlds-muslim-population-more-widespread-than-you-might-think/#:~:text=However%2C%20the%20 Middle%20East%2DNorth,in%20the%20Asia%2DPacific%20region.

[95] Triaud, "Giving a Name to Islam South," 14–15.

A prime example of such recontextualization can be found in Kwasi Konadu's work *Our Own Way in This Part of the World* (2019). This study strives to understand the traditional religion of Ghana by tracing the life of a notable Ghanaian healer and analyzing how his life and experiences are mirrored by those in his immediate and surrounding communities during the colonial era. Most importantly, Konadu works to recontextualize Ghanaian traditional religion within a more African context. Unlike other studies which deal with traditional religions, this study does not devalue or delegitimize African traditional religious practices, but rather treats them as the powerful force which historically they have been in African society.[96] To understand religion in Africa, whether it is traditional African religion, Christianity, Islam, or anything else, we must first examine and grasp a society's history with religion and the role religion played in African society prior to the colonial era.

In the case of Buganda, Neil Kodesh's work is illuminating for historians seeking to understand pre-nineteenth century Ganda religious customs. Kodesh examines the evolution of religion in Buganda from the fifteenth to the sixteenth centuries and how changing religious traditions were not only influential but were implicated in creating changes in livelihoods, politics, and clan formations. Kodesh's study reveals the long, complex, and intertwined history of religion and politics in Buganda and how religion has historically been a powerful force in the kingdom.

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[96] Konadu, *Our Own Way in This Part*.

Though some have pointed to the late-nineteenth century, with the arrival of Islam and Christianity, as the point when politico-religious groupings became pronounced in Buganda,[97] Kodesh's work suggests that this has been the case for centuries. Kodesh's research is thus especially useful for this study because it details the role of religion in Buganda prior to the arrival of foreign religions in the nineteenth century.[98] Both Christianity and Islam affected major changes in Buganda, but the Baganda's efforts to use religion as a social, cultural, and political force, co-opted foreign religions into indigenous political patterns, rather than the other way around.

Conclusion

Since the first known contacts between Europe and what would be the Muslim world, Europeans have overtly racialized and demonized this non-Christian community. Even over centuries of engagement with the Muslim world, during the medieval era, Europeans remained distrustful of Islam and Muslims more generally. In the nineteenth century, as Europeans encountered Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa, they found an Islamic tradition different from what they had previously interacted with. Keeping with their historic attitudes, imperial powers racialized and sought to delegitimate the Islam they encountered in Sub-Saharan Africa. This racialization was then mirrored, to a large extent, by the anthropologists and historians who studied Sub-Saharan Islam in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This racialization, by the colonial state and western scholarship, affected the lives of Muslims and how those in the West perceived Islam and Muslims on the African continent. All of this has culminated in a lack of understanding of Muslim history in Sub-Saharan Africa and a negative perception of Sub-Saharan Islam. Historians such as Ware, Kodesh, and Konadu are working to dismantle these negative perceptions of African Islam and are seeking to understand and study African religion through a less western epistemology. These academics have made great strides, but there is still much work to be done as we seek to recontextualize Islam in Africa and gain a more holistic understanding of Muslims in Sub-Saharan Africa.

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[97] Twaddle, "The Emergence of Politico-Religious Groupings," 81–84.
[98] Kodesh, *Beyond the Royal Gaze*.

Interpreting the Muscular Ram Statue in Procession

Ana de Souza, *McGill University*

A distinctive Ram statue was used in Hyderabad, Telangana, in the annual *shobha yatra* (grace procession) between 2012 and 2018 for the occasion of Ram Navami, the festival of Ram's birthday.[1] This festival occurs each year in the larger program of Spring Navratri. *Yatra* translates from Hindi as "procession," and is used to refer to both religious and political variants, while *shobha* commonly translates as "grace." The two terms together highlight the religious aspects of the procession and its place in the ritual calendar. The first public *shobha yatra* in Hyderabad occurred in 2010. Previously, it was a more relaxed affair that was celebrated in private. This change occurred in response to the Milad-un-Nabi celebrations of the Hyderabadi Muslim community becoming public for the first time in 2010, just a few weeks before that year's Ram Navami.[2] The last *yatra* I have information about is 2018. Personal and academic factors made it impractical to continue to follow the Hyderabadi *yatra* after this date. However, the impact of pandemic restrictions on the *yatra* would be fascinating to discuss. A cursory search suggests that there were some changes made to Ram's face in post-pandemic

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1. Robin Rinehart, *Contemporary Hinduism: Ritual, Culture, and Practice* (Santa Barbara, Cali: ABC-CLIO, 2004), 139.
2. Z. Fareen Parvez, "Celebrating the Prophet: Religious Nationalism and the Politics of Milad-un-Nabi Festivals in India," *Nations & Nationalism* 20, no. 2 (2014): 218–238; see 218–219.

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celebrations.[3] The uncertainties, however, caution against (most) speculative analysis. This topic is consequently beyond my capacity to address. This discussion will therefore be limited to the pre-pandemic *yatras* of the 2010s.

This article will argue that this unique Ram statue from Hyderabad communicates both political and devotional messages through its body. These messages can be further delineated according to the immediate audience: local, national, and international. This communication hinges upon people seeing Ram, and Ram communicating with them in return. This deeply visual communication extends the field of our inquiry to encompass physical, digital, and international interactions with the god. This expansive field illustrates the simultaneity of political, religious, and social dimensions. This line of inquiry leads to the preliminary conclusion that this Ram statue acts as a floating signifier for Indian culture.[4] The particular discursive contexts interpret the content of "Indian culture" in distinctive ways. As Ram shifts between the different contexts, his specific meanings are rewritten according to the idiosyncrasies of the particular context. Yet each context maintains the connection between the signifier – Ram – and the signified, i.e., traditions in the subcontinent. The varied meanings of this Ram demonstrate the extensive range a concept like "Indian society" has, and, moreover, attests to the concept's flexibility.

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[3] Reddees, "View of Hindu God Rama Idol with Bow and Arrows in a Temple," *Deposit Photos*, April 1st, 2020, https://depositphotos.com/3595 49546/stock-photo-view-hindu-god-rama-idol.html; "Happy Ram Navami 2021: Wishes, Messages, Quotes, Images, Greetings, Facebook & WhatsApp status," *Times of India*, April 21st, 2021, https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/life-style/events/happy-ram-navami-2021-wishes-messages-quotes-sri-rama-navami-images-facebook-whatsapp-status/articleshow/82159117.cms.

[4] Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005); Silvia Elisabeth Moraes, "Global Citizenship as a Floating Signifier: Lessons from UK Universities," *International Journal of Development Education and Global Learning* 6, no. 2 (2014), 27–42.

After some caveats, I will begin with a physical description of the statue. The following sections will examine the local, national, and international contexts. The first caveat relates to the preliminary and tentative nature of my analysis and conclusions. All of the information I have accessed about the statue, the procession, and the actors involved comes from online sources. The study is also restricted to English language media (except for very simple instances, like the phrase *jai Shri Ram*/ Victory to Lord Ram). This is probably not indicative of Ram's interaction with most people online, especially with regard to the linguistic parameters. However, it provides an illuminating window of insight into the distinctions between Ram's different audiences.

The first time a super-sized Ram statue participated in the festival was in 2012. It was one statue amongst many that participated in the *yatra*, moving on top of decorated cars. As illustrated in Figure 2, the statue was created in a workshop and painted by artists.[5] While it is unclear from the available information whether a new statue is made every year, it is clear from the available photojournalism that there are multiple statues made in the same pose that have the same iconographic attributes, are of the same or very similar scale, and have the same colouring.[6] Therefore, for the purposes of this essay, the statue(s) will be taken to be the same "thing." References to "Hyderabadi Ram," "our Hyderabadi Ram," or "our Ram" are made for the purposes of clarity and differentiation between the many different Rams being discussed here; they all refer to the main statue in this discussion. It is not intended to imply any particular meaning beyond that we (author and reader) are focusing on a community-sponsored Ram in Hyderabad.

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[5] "Artist Giving Final Touches to a Statue," *Times of India*, March 27th, 2015, https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/new-section/Artist-giving-final-touches-to-a-statue/articleshowpics/46713666.cms.

[6] Noah Seelam/AFP, "An Indian Artist Puts the Final Touches to Statues of the Hindu God Lord Ram Ahead of the Sri Rama Navami Festival at a Workshop in Hyderabad on April 13th, 2016," *Getty Images*, 2016, https://www.gettyimages.co.uk/detail/news-photo/an-indian-artist-puts-the-final-touches-to-

Throughout this discussion I will be using Richard H. Davis' theoretical approach to Indian religious objects. This approach focuses on maintaining the theological postulate of animate images of gods to keep the door open for "the possible agency of art objects themselves."[7] Throughout this discussion, I will be applying Ram's "possible agency" in order to better describe the relationship of this statue to Indian society, politics, and religion. I find Davis' approach particularly useful as it foregrounds the perceptions people have of the object, making the object's "needs" entirely conditional on the construal of those around it. For example, someone who thinks Ram is a powerful Hindu deity with special significance for the Nation's enemies will likely have specific readings of the Ram statue's meaning and the appropriate responses. On the other hand, someone who thinks Ram is a spectacular, exotic example of Indian religiosity will likely have different readings of the statue's meanings and place it in a different context. Ascribing agency to the Ram statue in this way helps delineate the context in which people interact with it.

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statues-of-the-news-photo/520815068#/an-indian-artist-puts-the-final-touches-to-statues-of-the-hindu-god-picture-id520815068.

[7] Richard H. Davis, "What do Indian Images Really Want?" in *Sacred Objects in Secular Spaces: Exhibiting Asian Religions in Museums*, ed. Bruce M. Sullivan (New York: Bloomsbury, 2015), 10; Richard H. Davis *Lives of Indian Images* (Princeton, NJ: PUP, 2020), 6–8, https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400844425.

I would like to make a distinction between my approach and that of Davis before moving forward. Davis' approach to the image's identity is somewhat linear as he constructs the biographies of images and their multiple lives. This is, of course, appropriate to the kind of historical project he undertakes. It is, however, problematic when applied to the kind of digital simultaneity I wish to investigate in the life of our Ram. Digital news platforms and social media – notably YouTube – insist on the concurrent existence of Ram's many messages. They are distinguished by their geographically distinct contexts, not their time period.

In order to discuss this simultaneity with a bit more precision, I will use Laclau's concept of the floating signifier.[8] Laclau identifies the pattern of a floating signifier as a specific sign (signifier) that has a fixed referent (signified) and gets used in a variety of often mutually contradictory discursive contexts. The conclusions that the particular positioning of a sign and referent support indicates what kind of normative dynamics are being projected. By attending to the dynamics implied by a given discursive context, the floating signifier can be very illuminating. As a contested sign that is used for distinctive ends in different sites, Ram helps indicate what "Indian society" is intended to mean for the proximate audience. These distinctive uses need not be reconciled, at least for the purposes of this article. The distinctions and/or differences are the immediate focus of this study.

I will occasionally use quotation marks around the term "restoration." This does not refer to arguments against the accuracy of Hindutva conceptions of history. Here, I am thinking of Sheldon Pollack's highly detailed and eloquent opposition to the Hindutva position that Ram was a historical king whose legacy lends unambiguous support to the concept of the Hindu nation-state.[9] I use quotation marks to indicate the constructed and contextually specific location of these conceptions of history and their impact on the present. I also use quotation marks around the term "realistic" in the same way. This discussion is about exploring the various ways that this Ram statue relates to Indian culture in the minds of his audience; this is not a discussion of how truth-apt Hindutva conceptions of history are or their rigour.

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[8] Laclau, *On Populist Reason*; also see Moraes, "Global Citizenship as a Floating Signifier."

Physical description

I have so far referred to the statue as "super-sized" without being more specific. This is in part because I have been unable to determine the exact dimensions of the statue. Based on the images I have been able to find of it in the workshop, I estimate it to be 10–14 ft in height, 5–6 ft in length (hand to bow), and 2–4 ft in depth (bow to elbows).[10] The materials used are even less clear than the dimensions. It seems to be some sort of solid material that likely dries or finishes white. This seems likely as the bright colours of Ram's clothes show up very vibrantly. The actual statue is contiguous with a base or at least attached in such a way that it was more sensible to use a ladder to paint on the final details instead of laying the statue down horizontally. It is possible that the statue and the base are formed from the same larger block of material or poured into a mold.

As mentioned above, the number of statues made annually is unclear. It is possible that multiple new statues are made every year.

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[9] Sheldon Pollock, "Ramayana and Political Imagination in India," *Journal of Asian Studies* 52, no. 2 (May 1993), 261–297.

[10] Noah Seelam/AFP, "An Indian Artist Puts the Final Touches."

There could be an adjudication process that the organizing committee oversees. It is also possible that this workshop makes these statues for more than one city. This second explanation is less likely as I have been unable to find any credible claims of the statue being used in another city's Ram Navami *yatra*, although it is still possible. For the purposes of this paper, I will be working with the premise that the only statue of this kind is used in the Hyderabad procession.

All the photo and video documentation of this statue that I have been able to find depicts the same shade of blue skin, the same pink lips and cheeks, the same wide, black-lined eyes, yellow and orange *dhoti*, bare chest and arms, bulging muscles, bare feet, and the same shaped bow, quiver, and weapons (see fig. 1 and 2). These similarities, together with the evidence that only one super-sized Ram statue takes part in the procession in Hyderabad each year, are my reasons for treating these statues as if they are the same figure in this essay. I deliberately use "figure" instead of "artifact" to refer to the statue(s) to allow for the implication of possible multiple iterations.

The procession has an organizing committee called the Bhagyanagar Sri Ramanavami Utsava Samithi, but I have been unable to find any specific details about this committee's organizational structure.[11] The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) for Goshamahal, Hyderabad, has been annually involved in the *yatra* since it began in 2010. His website gives his title as: "Convenor – Shri Ram Navami Shobha Yatra."[12] However, his exact role in the *yatra*'s organization is not explained in any detail. Regarding the route, I have found indications that the 2018 *yatra* on March 25th began at the Sitarambagh temple at 11:30, made its way through many of the city's neighbourhoods, and ended at a public high school at 18:30.[13] The routes for other years, if divergent, are less clear.

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[11] Naveen Sangala, "Sri Ram Navami Shobha Yatra 2013 in Hyderabad," *Hindupad*, April 2013, https://hindupad.com/sri-ram-navami-shobha-yatra-in-hyderabad/.

[12] "Profile," on Raja Singh's official website, accessed February 28th, 2018, http://www.trajasingh.com/about/.

Local Hyderabadi Context

The atmosphere of Hindu competition with the Muslim community is deeply intertwined with our Ram's existence. This is particularly apparent in the procession's originary circumstances. In 2010, the Muslim community of Hyderabad organized a large, public festival to celebrate Milad-un-Nabi, as mentioned above. Z. Fareen Parvez examines the relationship between this 2010 festival for the Hyderabadi Muslim community and the Ram Navami/Hanuman Jayanthi festival that occurred a few weeks later. This year was the first time either of these festivals were publicly celebrated in the streets of Hyderabad.[14] Parvez demonstrates that there is considerable tension between the religious aims of the festival and the political ones of the associated political party. This tension and its violent expressions can be seen in the 2012 riots that occurred two days after the Ram Navami and Hanuman Jayanti celebrations in Hyderabad. The events are reported to have been based on insults between individuals and groups defending their respective communities.[15] This tension was still visibly felt during the 2016 celebrations, which prompted the police to go out in force during the festival and install temporary surveillance cameras along the route.[16]

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[13] Sanagala, "Sri Ram Navami Shobha Yatra"; TNN, "Ram Navami Shobha Yatra Rolls Out in Sea of Faithful," *The Times of India*, March 26th, 2018, https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/hyderabad/ram-navami-shoba-yatra-rolls-out-in-sea-of-faithful/articleshow/63459528.cms.

[14] Parvez, "Celebrating the Prophet," 218–219.

[15] "HEY RAM," Suresh Kumar's BlogSpot, accessed February 28th, 2018, http://sureshixp.blogspot.ca/2016/04/hey-ram.html (discontinued).

These tensions of Hindu/Muslim relations in Hyderabad continued into the 2018 *yatra*. The day before the *yatra*, a photo of a promotional poster featuring our Ram and Raja Singh on the wall of a mosque was widely circulated on social media.[17] Its circulation on social media elicited strong feelings in both communities. Members of the Hindu community lauded it as an example of Ram's pervasive power, while members of the Muslim community were deeply upset by the violation of their community's space. The police investigated the matter and dispelled the illusion within hours: the poster was, in fact, hanging at quite a distance from the mosque. No violent incidents occurred that day or the actual day of the *yatra*. The need for a quick response on the part of the Hyderabad police illustrates the continued tensions between these communities, which are still pervasive and easily rouse concerns.

The *shobha* half of the procession also indicates an important dimension of how people commonly participate in the event. Being in the deity's presence and exchanging glances with the god is a particularly intimate and potent source of blessing. Processing through the neighbourhood, or inspecting the god's property, is understood as a long-standing habit of the gods in India. Historically,

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16. Special Correspondent, "Shobha Yatra Procession Peaceful," *The Hindu*, March 29th, 2015, https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Hyderabad/shobha-yatra-procession-peaceful/article7044802.ece.

17. Mekhala Saran, "Ram Navami Poster Hanging from Hyderabad Mosque a Camera Trick," *The Quint*, March 28th, 2018, https://www.thequint.com/news/webqoof/a-ram-navami-poster-did-not-hang-from-a-mosque; Express News Service, "Rama Navami Begins On a Tense Note in Hyderabad," *The New Indian Express*, March 16th, 2018, https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/hyderabad/2018/mar/26/rama-navami-begins-on-a-tense-note-in-hyderabad-1792476.html.

common processional statues are often quite small in size (see fig. 3). These smaller processional statues also differ from our Ram statue in that a great deal less of the god's body is visible to devotees. The small statues are almost entirely covered in festive clothing, jewelry, and garlands.[18] In Figure 3, only the god's face and hands are visible. Our Ram statue does wear garlands (see fig. 1), but his clothing and size give his participation different parameters. Our Ram provides his large crowds of devotees with a very different experience of *darśan*, the beatific exchange of looks between god and devotee.[19] Not only does his size make him easier to spot, but a good deal more of his body is visible to the devotee. In addition, our Ram's hyper muscular physique connects him to more recent trends in how Hindu gods are depicted.

Our Hyderabadi Ram was not the first super-sized muscular god to engage with devotees in India. Philip Lutgendorf traces a series of Hanumans from the 1970s through to the 1990s.[20] He specifically ties these large gods to the Hindutva concern with promoting physical strength and prosperity within the nation.[21] Although the concern with preparing the Indian nation for self-rule was widespread throughout the groups advocating for national development, the Hindutva reformers were particularly focused on the correlation between physical strength, self-defense, and international recognition.[22] Lutgendorf connects this deeply rooted valorization of muscularity to these emphatically "ripped" gods.

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[18] Sushmita Sen, "Ram Navami: Why and How is it Celebrated; Wishes to Send to Family, Friends [PHOTOS]," *International Business Times*, March 28th, 2015, https://www.ibtimes.co.in/ram-navami-why-how-it-celebrated-wishes-send-family-friends-photos-627426.

[19] Sandhya Jain, "Hyderabad: Triumph of Sri Rama," *Vijayvaani.com*, April 6th, 2012, http://www.vijayvaani.com/ArticleDisplay.aspx?aid=2254; Sangala, "Sri Ram Navami Shobha Yatra."

[20] Philip Lutgendorf, "My Hanuman Is Bigger Than Yours," *History of Religions* 33, no. 3 (1994): 211–245, https://www.jstor.org/stable/1062737.

[21] Philip Lutgendorf, "Monkey in the Middle: The Status of Hanuman in Popular Hinduism," *Religion* 27, no. 4 (1997): 311–332, https://doi.org/10.1006/reli.1997.0095.

There is a distinctive mixture of messages communicated by our "ripped" Ram to the devotees physically present at the procession. The god's powerful physique and tensed musculature corresponds to the aesthetic category (*rasa*) of anger (*raudram*). Besides communicating Ram's anger, his large muscles indicate that his strength and force are of the mechanical, quantifiable sort that ordinary mortals use to accomplish tasks.[23] As Ram operates according to ordinary rules of existence, the size of his muscles corresponds to the degree of protection he can offer the nation. In this frame, his flexing muscles build on the atmosphere of competition. He is able and imminently prepared to defend against any threat and cut down any enemy.

This potential action communicates a very different message from his facial expression. Our Ram's face is rosy-cheeked and smiling, complete with shining eyes. These features correspond more closely to the aesthetic category (*rasa*) of peace (*śānti*). This mood communicates happiness, serenity, and tranquility to devotees, messages that are highly distinct from his flexing muscles. Lutgendorf's work on super-sized Hanumans – Ram's simian military ally and devotee – provides a suggestive frame for reconciling the different moods present in the depiction of our Ram's body. He discusses the epithet of the "delighted hero" as it relates to one of Hanuman's temples, wherein there is a very large image of him.[24] This delighted hero is physically muscular and tensed for potential action. He is prepared to attack enemies and defend his people, presenting his followers with a message of warmth and welcome while communicating a threat to opponents. He is also blissfully happy by his devotion and the peace that follows. This figure mixes a body-builder physique with the happiness of devoted peace.

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[22] Sikata Banerjee, *Make Me a Man! Masculinity, Hinduism, and Nationalism in India* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2005); Tapan Basu, *Khaki Shorts and Saffron Flags: A Critique of the Hindu Right* (New Delhi: Orient Longman, 1993).

[23] Anuradha Kapur, "Deity to Crusader: The Changing Iconography of Ram," in *Hinduism and Others*, ed. Gyanendra Pandey (New Delhi: Penguin Books India, 1993), 93, 100; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 2016), 173.

As such, he could provide an interpretive key for our Ram's contrasts. His impressive physique communicates both his ability to protect his devotees as well as his ability to bring harm to potential enemies. His radiant smile welcomes and illuminates the devotees who have come to see the god and be seen by him in return. The kind of *darśan* our Ram has with his devotees is, then, not wholly contained between the god and devotee. He simultaneously communicates warmth to his community and a physical threat to enemies. This *darśan* is, in this sense, not simply limited to devotees. Enemies are promised failure while devotees are given encouragement. The action of physical defense becomes intimately tied to the stability of tranquility.

Returning to Laclau's pattern of the floating signifier, some implications for the "signified" can be sketched. Ram's actions, actualized and potential, provide normative meaning for the community of those engaging in *darśan* with the god. Ram's tensed muscles broadcast a threat to any current or future enemies while his rosy smile shines on devotees. Their community needs protection from enemies and internal encouragement. Their communal security should be safeguarded and ensured by Ram's potential for violent action. This highlights the deeply-rooted Hindutva emphasis on physical strength and the prosperity of the nation. The cultivation and maintenance of physical strength is here a guarantee of communal security and life. His community should not only be capable of effectively eliminating opponents but also actively prepared to succeed in this area. Members of Ram's community should be happily confident in their security and other communities should act with respect towards those he protects.

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[24] Philip Lutgendorf, "Major and Minor: Hanuman in Hindu Life and Scholarly Discourse," in *Hanuman's Tale: The Messages of a Divine Monkey* (New York: OUP, 2007), 3–34.

In Hyderabad itself, the atmosphere of direct competition between the Hindu and Muslim communities actualizes these messages. The *yatra* itself is a concrete response to the first public celebration of Milad-un-Nabi which occurred through the same streets. The procession's route – i.e., the neighbourhoods, educational buildings, and places of worship it includes – is another means for actualizing these messages of self-defense. The Hindu community is broadcasting its preparedness to answer any opposition or threat from the Muslim community. Ram is also broadcasting encouragement to the devotees who physically attended to engage in *darśan.* He looks on their use of public space and their route with his rosy smile and bright eyes. This provides a pattern for how the Ram devotees should relate to others in the city of Hyderabad. The Hindu community (although this could arguably include any devotee of Ram/God/Truth as we will explore a bit more below) should be confident in their strength and that enemies of their prosperity will be correspondingly chastened.

National Context

In the national context, our Ram finds his place on a spectrum of similarly sized and disposed versions of himself. This section will detail the similarities and dissimilarities between our Ram and other versions of himself. This comparison will further attest to the mixture of peace (*śānti)* and anger (*raudram)* in our Ram's body. Besides the aesthetics, these other Rams are also evidence of the truly national character of this kind of communication. Two general modes of engaging with this kind of communication will also be explored: the more this-worldly mode and the more devotional mode. These modes continue to apply in both the national and local contexts.

There are two statues in the same *yatra* as our Ram which follow more historically common conventions. They operate on the premise that divine bodies are not exclusively mundane "sense organs," as in the Cartesian sense, but communicate specific meanings about the difference between the human and the divine. These statues have relaxed muscles, a tranquil expression, and a serene posture. As they do not require strong, tensed muscles to accomplish their goals, they are further away from the modern universe of mechanical causation.

The first statue of this kind is a super-sized Ram, crowned and sitting on a throne (see fig. 5).[25] This Ram has a serene facial expression, consistent with the *śānti* aesthetic described above. While he is carrying a bow in his left hand and an arrow in his right, any action-readiness of the mundane variety this might imply is contradicted by his jeweled ornaments and shoes. The second Ram is a bit smaller, being either of a normal human size or slightly taller than average (see fig. 4). This Ram processes as the apex of a trio with his brother on his right and his wife on his left.[26] Notably, he is crowned and less muscular than our Ram. Both of the Rams just described are crowned and ornamented with jewels, their faces serene and muscles relaxed. Their use of the aesthetic register of *śānti* extends beyond their facial expressions to the rest of their body, thus influencing their body language a great deal more than our Ram.

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[25] Dilip Merala, "Ram Navami 2017 Celebration in Hyderabad," *India.com*, April 4th, 2017, http://www.india.com/travel/articles/ram-navami-2017-celebration-in-hyderabad/.

[26] Ghanashyam, "Sri Ramanavami Celebration in Hyderabad," *Oneindia*, April

There are three other super-sized Rams that are further along the *raudram* side of the spectrum than the Rams which exhibit the *śānti* aesthetic. The first statue appeared in the annual Ram Navami procession in Hazaribag, Jharkhand.[27] The Hazaribag Ram shares many of the same attributes, colouring, and poses as our Hyderabad Ram. However, the facial expression and exact posture seem to be different. Much like the Hyderabad Ram, the Hazaribag Ram is involved in his city's Ram Navami festival, but it is unclear from the available evidence whether he actually goes on procession or is fixed to a non-mobile stage. Whichever the case, the form, colouring, attributes, and posture of both Rams are extremely similar.

Both Rams are also similar in posture and form to another Ram in Belgaum, Karnataka.[28] This Ram is also a super-sized statue on a similar scale to our Hyderabadi Ram. He has a similar posture: bow in left hand, right hand down by his side, hair coiled on top of his head and flowing down his back, quiver of arrows on his back. His feet and chest are also bare, displaying his bulging muscles.

9th, 2014, https://www.oneindia.com/photos/sri-ramanavami-celebration-in-hyderabad-46944.html#photos-3/.

[27] NS ki Duniya, "HAZARIBAG RAM NAVAMI 2018 – Ram Navami Dashmi – हज़ारीबाग़ रामनवमी दशमी 2018 | NS ki Duniya |," March 26th, 2018, YouTube video, 3:04, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mEaYvh78y9E. (Page discontinued).

[28] Shri Ram Sena Hindustan Belgaum, "Profile Picture," Facebook, April 17th, 2016, https://www.facebook.com/srsbgm/photos/a.49015513737665002.125085.490154477665068/1328732357140605/. The Belgaum Ram was a donation from a local business association, the Belgaum District Fort Bhaji Market Association, to the Belgaum's Ram Navami organizational committee, the Ram Navami Utsav Samiti.

However, the Belgaum Ram holds an arrow in his right hand and has a far more tense expression on his face. These differences allow us to classify this Ram as a third "form" of the statue.

This last Ram is a little different from the ones discussed above. He is part of a proposal and has yet to be constructed at the time of writing. In 2017 the Government of Uttar Pradesh, headed by Chief Minister Adityanath, proposed the construction of a temple in Ayodhya close to the site where many believe Ram's birthplace (*Ramjanmabhumi)* on Earth was located.[29] An early plan for this temple includes a super-sized Ram on its roof in place of the architecturally common *shikhara* (mountain peak) that towers over the sanctum sanctorum of the Hindu *mandir* (temple). The photo released by the *Times of India* shows this Ram as entirely metallic and unpainted (see fig. 6). He is almost in exactly the same posture as our Hyderabadi Ram: bow in his left hand, right hand down by his side, bare feet and chest, hair coiled on top of his head and flowing down his back, a quiver of arrows on his back. His facial expression, however, is even more tense than the Belgaum Ram. None of these Rams have the rosy smile and happy expression of our Hyderabadi Ram. They are more tense and are more representative of the *raudram* aesthetic.

This range of Ram statues indicates a spectrum of different communications occurring across the representation of this god. Despite their differences, all basically participate in the ordinary mechanics of mundane causation and proportions. The range amongst the aesthetics included in each Ram's messaging fleshes out the variety of associations linked to these monumental representations of the god. The statues more influenced by *śānti* indicate the peaceful prosperity that our Ram communicates with his smile. Those more influenced by *raudram* indicate the imminent threat that our Ram communicates with his flexed muscles.

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[29] Shailvee Sharda, "UP Government Plans 100-metre Statue of Lord Rama in Ayodhya," *The Times of India*, October 10th, 2017,http:// toi.in/2sRQla/a24gk. See also Times of India (@timesofindia), "UP Government Plans 100-metre Statue of Lord Rama in Ayodhya," Twitter, October 10th, 2017, https://twitter.com/timesofindia/status/917681251934334 976/photo/1.

Beyond indicating the mixture of aesthetics present in our Ram, they also attest to the geographical range across which these messages are being communicated. These messages are not limited to Hyderabad's annual Ram Navami *yatra*; similar messages are being broadcast, received, and reacted to across the Republic. The statues discussed above indicate the conversations happening in person. Below we will discuss some of the digital conversations of our Ram as well. This larger conversation is occurring through the various media outlets and promotional materials through which the image of our Ram travels privately and publicly within the Indian social sphere. Before discussing the mechanics and features of these domestic travels in more detail, I would first like to note some of the differences from the local context.

In this context, our Ram is dis-located from his hometown and the details of those intimate roots. Part of the Ram's conversation is separated from the inhabitants of Hyderabad. His message of encouragement for Hindus is disconnected from the streets of the *yatra* route. His message of effective reaction to potential enemies of that community is disconnected from the Milad-un-Nabi procession and the Muslim neighbourhoods through which he normally travels. The action of asserting Hindu activities in public spaces as well as spaces in which Hyderabadi Muslims are normally more autonomous is uprooted. In this national context, our Ram is no longer directly communicating with either the Hindus of Hyderabad or the city's Muslims. The intimacy of his gaze is no longer personal. The signifier is maintained in this new context yet the signified has been dislocated and enlarged. Ram now simultaneously communicates directly with devotees and potential enemies across the Republic.

This shift in the terms of interaction with our Ram has at least two major consequences that I would like to highlight. The first is that the community of devotees are unified into a connected whole, an imagined community. The image of his smile and flexed muscles permits a much wider circulation than possible through physical *darśan* at the Hyderabadi *yatra*. The full gamut of the Indian population can be divided according to those whom Ram smiles at and those whom he is poised to attack. Excluding the actual complications of inter-tradition devotional habits, our Ram deftly splits the social imagination into people who should feel encouraged by and those who should feel afraid by his presence. The Indians (Hindus) in Ram's good books should feel encouraged in their efforts to value their way of life and culture. Habits like highly elaborate and lengthy public processions of Hindu gods are beneficial activities that should be encouraged. The Indians who inspire Ram's enmity should not only be warned but should also accept these public celebrations, increasing both in grandeur and publicity, of Hindu festivals. In this way, Ram's activity of encouraging and warning becomes part of the distinctively Indian/Hindu way of life as well as part of the call for that culture to pervade all parts of Indian society.

Before we move on to the second consequence, I would like to draw the reader's attention to another important aspect relating to how the image of the god is made available. One of the most critical paths that Ram uses for these national travels is paved and maintained by the local BJP organization in Hyderabad. Just before the 2009 elections for the State Legislature, the city of Hyderabad's representation fragmented into more constituencies within the city itself. This change was precipitated by the inclusion of Hyderabad, formerly the capital city of Andhra Pradesh, within the newly created state of Telangana. More immediately relevant for our Ram is the 2014 State election in which the city's constituency of Goshamahal elected the BJP candidate T. Raja Singh to the Telangana State Assembly. The rhetoric published on his website had many markers of Hindutva elements. His website details his former involvement with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), his "cow protection" activities, and his concern for protecting the Hindu community from unnamed threats.[30] In September 2020 he was banned from Facebook and Instagram and labelled a "dangerous individual" on account of "hate speech" following a scathing article in the *Wall Street Journal*.[31]

His involvement with Hyderabad's *shobha yatra* is also given a separate paragraph on the politician's website.[32] As mentioned above, he was involved with the first *yatra* in 2010 and has been since involved in the procession's organization each year thereafter. His annual involvement in the procession is quite clear: he appears in promotional material, gives speeches, and provides commentary. The YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook pages titled "Sri Ram Channel" are all platforms for promoting the *yatra* and are also involved with the MLA's office, if not directly managed by them.[33] The YouTube channel provides the strongest evidence that all three social media accounts are being managed by his office, as these sites are named after him and include links to his official website, his office's Twitter, an outdated link to his office's Facebook page, his official Google+ profile, and his official app.[34] From these digital mechanisms, the local BJP organization is critical to Ram's national travels.

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[30] "Profile," on Raja Singh's official website, accessed February 28th, 2018, http://www.trajasingh.com/about/.

[31] Anam Ajmal, "Facebook bans T. Raja Singh of BJP, tags him as a 'dangerous individual,'" *Times of India*, Sept 4th, 2020, https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/facebook-bans-t-raja-singh-of-bjp-tags-him-as-a-dangerous-individual/articleshow/77907922.cms; Newly Purnell and Jeff Horowitz, "Facebook's Hate-Speech Rules Collide With Indian Politics," *Wall Street Journal*, Aug 14th, 2020, https://www.wsj.com /articles/facebook-hate-speech-india-politics-muslim-hindu-modi-zuckerberg-11597423346.

[32] "Profile," on Raja Singh's official website.

[33] SRI RAM Channel (@SRIRAMCHANNEL), "Home," Facebook, https://www.facebook.com/SRIRAMCHANNEL/; Sri Ram Channel (@SriRamChannel), Twitter, https://twitter.com/sriramchannel; RAJA SINGH

These digital paving stones for Ram's travels explicitly emphasize the connection between the Hindu community's prosperity, defense, and action-readiness. As discussed above, a foundational part of Hindutva discourse centers on defense of the Hindu community from foreign domination, notably the perceived power of the Muslim community in India. This is explicitly emphasized in Raja Singh's political platform. His platform explicitly describes the *yatra* as a "show of strength by the Hindu community."[35] "His bravery" in defending "Hindu families" during violence after the initial 2010 *yatra* "was widely publicized and Raja Singh's Hindu seva [service] got recognized again."[36] The need to assert the celebration of Hindu festivals in public space is identified by these descriptions as an important marker of the community's prosperity and wellbeing. Indian society should include these demonstrations and encourage their existence. In this context, these super-sized gods are flexing to embolden the national Hindu community, inspire fear in those who would do them harm, and promote a vision of Indian society where this is normatively encouraged.

MLA, "Home," YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/user/SRIRAMCHANNEEL1.

[34] RAJA SINGH MLA, "About," YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/user/SRIRAMCHANNEL1.

[35] "Profile," on Raja Singh's official website.

[36] "Profile," on Raja Singh's official website.

The second major consequence I want to highlight is rather the opposite from the one just discussed. The dis-location of our Ram also serves to de-personalize the enemy whom he threatens. The very concrete and distinct Hyderabadi community whose neighbourhoods our Ram physically travels are not the obvious target of his dis-located wanderings. Although the Hyderabadi BJP organizers from T. Raja Singh's offices might have explicitly and deliberately identified Ram's enemies with the Muslims living in India, individuals actually seeing the images they circulated might give that enemy a very different identity. Christophe Jaffrelot argues the political intentions of organizing *yatras* does not completely line up with the attendees' reasons for participating.[37] He discusses the famous 1990 *rath yatra* led by the then-president of the BJP, a chariot procession from Somnath, Gujarat to Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh. This *yatra* deliberately used the religious form of the Hindu procession itself for the political purpose of mobilizing opinion about the solidarity of Hindus against the "yoke" of Muslim oppression.[38]

This particular case is quite analogous to the *shobha yatra* of Hyderabad. Both events were religious in form and have apparent political purposes. Advani's *yatra* was specifically aimed at drumming up support for the construction of a temple dedicated to Ram at the site of a Mughal-era Mosque in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh. One of the ways this support was encouraged to take place was as a kind of fundraising campaign. Ordinary Hindus in India and abroad were encouraged to pay for individual bricks that would be used in the construction of the temple. Each brick bore the message "*Jai Shri*

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[37] Christophe Jaffrelot, "The Hindu Nationalist Reinterpretation of Pilgrimage in India: The Limits of *yatra* Politics," *Nations and Nationalism* 15, no. 1 (2009): 1–19.

[38] Jaffrelot, "*Yatra* politics," 11–12.

Ram" (Victory of the Lord Ram) on the side, making the donation of each an act of special devotion to the god. Despite the differences in the occurrence and distance covered by these events, a kind of model for the Hyderabadi *yatra* can be seen in the 1990 *yatra*. Images of our Ram provoked similar kinds of devotion from Hindus on the internet. Our Ram's travels through Facebook and Twitter are particularly marked by interaction with other participants on the social media platforms. It is important to note that this higher degree of displayed participation is due to the structure of the websites themselves; they are all designed to encourage observable interaction. Thus, the decision to put the image on these sites includes the intention to display others' interaction with it, alongside whatever religious or political goals inform the post. In this way, the political uses of our Ram on the national stage are also marked by easily observable devotional uses. Devotees often interact with posts of our Ram with variations of "*Jai Shri Ram*" in the comments sections.[39] As Jaffrelot argued for Advani's *yatra*, it is equally likely that viewers commenting on images of our Ram with devotional messages did not have the same perception of the *yatra* as its BJP organizers.

In addition to what I have discussed with respect to the second major consequence of dislocating our Ram from his hometown, the enemy he is poised to attack is also dislocated from that context. The enemy could be his mythical enemy Ravan or the temptation of whatever vices with which the devotees are struggling. These devotees might very well not be making the connection to Muslim bodies at all. It is important to note that Jaffrelot applied his argument to individuals attending Advani's *yatra* in person. Of course, there is considerable space for interpretive autonomy for individuals who are physically present at the Hyderabad *yatra* as well. Yet, the consequence of digital dis-location that I wish to highlight is the expansion of that space for interpretive autonomy through social media. The intentions of the organizers do not preclude devotees from interacting with our Ram for distinctive reasons. Indeed, the organizers' ability to determine the interpretive framework is further reduced in this context.

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[39] Raja Singh (@TigerRajaSingh), "श्री राम नवमी शोभा यात्रा के लिए इस वर्ष श्री राम, हनुमान जी, शिवाजी महाराज, शिर राम रथ बनायीं गयी मूर्ति," Twitter, March 30th, 2015, 10:45 a.m., https://twitter.com/tigerrajasingh/status/58255421 6230596608.

The other statues of Ram discussed attest to a broader conversation going on in India. Ram has an emotional range communicated through specific aesthetic conventions. This points to the increasingly mechanical and mundane depiction of gods. Ram is more like us than not, even when he is the peaceful and tranquil version of himself. His proportions and general appearance directly correspond to our own. Ram also continues to communicate messages of defense and action-readiness on behalf of his community, irrelevant of whether this be more devotional or more political. As his body encompasses both his rosy smile and his tensed muscles, so his body simultaneously broadcasts devotional and political messages to his community as well as anyone thinking of threatening that community. This gives some form to the possible range of meanings which people interpret our Ram to be saying.

There is continuity and friction in these different meanings. They assign different meanings to Ram's body, and through his body, those meanings are projected onto "Indian culture." Ram protects the distinctive "way of life" across the different physical and discursive locales he visits. He encourages it to flourish and threatens any enemies with destruction. Our Ram manages to be both flexible and rigid through his happiness and his anger.

International Context

Due to our Ram's size and photogenic appearance, he has become popular among internationally available media. While this kind of popularity in non-Indian media promises rich implications for post-colonial and related forms of analysis, the object of this section is to trace some preliminary contours of our Ram's international excursions. The following analysis is in no way intended to be comprehensive or exhaustive. I would like to focus on two examples that represent the range of contexts in which he makes digital appearances.

The first is an article designed to give *Huffington Post UK*'s non-Indian audiences the "Coles Notes" on Ram Navami (see fig. 1).[40] The article itself is a gallery post that includes factually correct, but minimal information on the actual event and emphasizes these "Stunning Images" of the celebration and Indian religiosity. This article uses an image of our Ram as its primary image, the central image accompanying the text preceding the actual photo series. Gallery articles are a useful medium for providing audiences with access to exotic, foreign, and alluring parts of the world. This article follows this format of delivering concrete evidence of what one can visually perceive as vibrant and colourful religious culture in India. The third image in the photo series is a close-up of "An Indian artist dressed as the Hindu goddess Kali" who appears to have flames coming out of her mouth.[41] Pictures and articles like this one idealize the religious practices photographed and present them to outsider eyes while rewriting much of the local context.

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[40] Sarah C. Nelson, "Ram Navami: 13 Stunning Images of The Hindu Festival Commemorating the Birth of Lord Rama (PICTURES)," *Huffington Post UK*, April 9th, 2014, https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk /2014/04/09/ram-navami-13-stunning-images-hindu-festival-lord-rama-pictures_n_5116433.html.

[41] Nelson, "Ram Navami: 13 Stunning."

Ram's physical surroundings of Hyderabadi streets, devotees, and BJP politics are infused with a different flavour. In the frame of the international media's bold, uppercase headlines and sparse, clean layout, these particulars become spectacular. This context includes them in the informational gallery of the cultured Western reader who needs to keep their conversational topics up to date. The elements in the photo become immediately accessible to the Western reader's eye. That access provides the spectator with interpretive authority over the meanings of the photo's elements. The sparse, clean format of the photo gallery stretches the range of potential meanings. The vibrant religiosity could be a positive expression of "rich cultural traditions" that are alive and well. That same vibrancy could just as easily be negatively cast as the activities of undereducated, literal understandings of reality. The photo's elements are no longer immediate interlocutors who might "talk back" to the interpreter. Ram's devotees are not in a position to disagree with the reader's interpretation. Here, Ram communicates in a different language.

The second example is hosted on the social media platform Pinterest. A solo portrait of our Ram is included in a large series of photos (board) titled "****Hindu GodS****" curated by an account named Anu. This account has 6.6k followers, 179.9k monthly views, and an extensive collection of boards or media collections.[42] The specific board containing our Ram has 2.28k followers,[43] and the image includes a watermark from the source site, mallstuffs.com. On the source site, our Ram is included in a blog post on the fabled connection between Ayodhya and a Korean princess.[44] The site itself is run alongside a YouTube and Twitter account, where the author self-describes as a "spiritual blogger" amongst other epithets.[45]

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[42] Anu (@srinivasankls), "Profile," Pinterest, accessed December 11th, 2021, https://in.pinterest.com/Srinivasankls/_saved/.

[43] Anu (@srinivasankls), "****Hindu GodS****."

The portrait of our Ram on Pinterest is much closer to the devotional engagement highlighted in the national context. In his portrait, there are no devotees present. There are some people present in the background, but they are busily engaged in some kind of activity and not engaged with the camera. Ram's full body and green plinth are fully visible, effectively presenting the god to the viewer without any intermediary. Given the devotional tone of the Pinterest board, Ram is here to engage with the viewer intimately and individually. There is no reference to politics, local or national, amongst the photo's elements. There is no mention of Hyderabad or any kind of community division. In this photo, Ram does not have anything to say about those topics. He is a convincing example of Jaffrelot's contention that a diversity of motivations and meanings are present in BJP-sponsored devotions to Ram.

These recontextualizations of our Ram indicate a point at which the encoded meanings of his body are given a markedly different content. Ram communicates very differently in both the *Huffington Post UK* article and his Pinterest portrait. He is not commenting on any divisions between Hindu, Muslim, or Indian. He is not promising a robust defense against any specific enemy. In these contexts, he indicates that his messages are contextually specific.

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[44] Sarin, "Korean Connection with Ayodhya and Lord Rama," Latest Hinduism news (blog), *mallstuffs*, March 16th, 2013, https://mallstuffs.com/Blogs/BlogDetails.aspx?BlogId=259&BlogType=Spiritual&Topic=Korean%20connection%20with%20ayodhya%20and%20lord%20rama.

[45] GyanGanga (@sarinmall85), "Home Page, "Twitter, https://twitter.com/sarinmall85.

When Ram leaves India, he has something different to say to his audience. Not only this, but Ram has something different to say when he is in a Hindu digital context from a secularized, Western one. The sign, his bonny blue figure, remains constant across all contexts. Yet the specific meaning of the signified, his messages for the audience/viewer, shift.

Conclusion

The super-sized, muscular Ram statue from the Hyderabad Ram Navami *shobha yatra* constitutes part of the social, political, and devotional context of contemporary India. He builds on historical trends in devotional representations of divine bodies and political movements in his name. Differences between earlier examples of these trends and our Ram indicate the particular meanings communicated by his body. Both the devotional and political messages of defense and action-readiness are encoded in his body and communicated through his participation in the *yatra* and the reproduction of his participation through digital media. In the local and national contexts, his body valorizes the defense of the Hindu community against perceived threats, notably Indian Muslims and their history of political success in the subcontinent. This translates more specifically into the local community of Muslims within the city of Hyderabad and the larger community of Muslims within the Republic.

While these meanings are shared by other Ram statues used for similar purposes, they are also limited by their contextual boundaries. Digital images of our Ram are dis-located from the local and national conversations of politics and devotion. In these international travels, our Ram takes on messages of spectacle and allure. Yet even in the rough waters of international media, his body also communicates devotional messages. He therefore communicates meanings that are at least contextually activated, if not contextually constituted.

As a fixed sign referring to the concept of "Indian culture," our Ram's range of meanings indicates the collaborating and contending themes that inhere in that concept. The idealized traditions that should determine the "way of life" in the streets of Hyderabad take their encouragement from the god-king who smiles upon correctly ordered societies and is also ready to destroy enemies of that order. Similar messages circulate with our Ram as well as around the Republic, encouraging the "distinctively" Indian way of life that ought to prevail all over the nation. Internationally, our Ram continues to embody the unique traditions of the subcontinent.

Our Ram, then, is a site where contemporary concerns, technology, and modes of communication impact religious, social, and political concerns of older provenance. The interaction between them produces a new, contemporary form of the god Ram who simultaneously communicates distinct messages for different people. He comes from a response to an interaction with contemporary concerns about community and nation, mediated by specific representations of reality and verisimilitude. Yet his life takes him far beyond the local meanings of his hometown, into the brave new world of social media and globalized politics.

Areas of further inquiry could include more detail on the actual *yatra*. Asking actual people organizing and participating in the *yatra* questions would be very fruitful. Specifics on how our Ram is constructed and confirming any differences in yearly iterations would also be very interesting. Comparing the pre-pandemic *yatra* with the post-pandemic one would be highly instructive. Another area of potential inquiry would be the connection between the legitimacy of Ram's community and the push towards self-determination along with the utilization of the State apparatus to maintain and support the national "self." The extent to which our Ram communicates self-defense and battle-readiness strikes an interesting parallel to the nation's right to existence and self-defense against threats.

Appendix

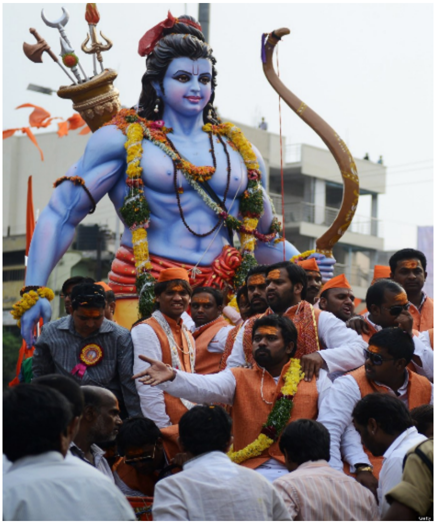

Figure 1: A portrait of our Ram on procession in Hyderabad. He is garlanded and fully painted. His rosy cheeks and smile are visible as are his tensed arms and torso, complete with popping veins. There are devotees decked out in orange, including orange *tilaks* on their foreheads. This image of Ram on procession provides a helpful view of the weapons in his quiver while he goes on procession, the garlands he wears, and his facial expression.[46]

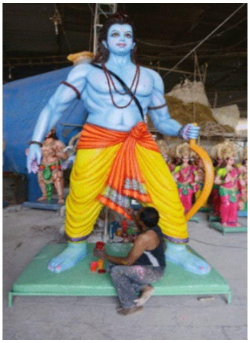

Figure 2: This picture shows an iteration of our Ram statue in the workshop being finished. The artist is continuing to paint details on Ram's clothing. Ram's bow is unfinished, and his feet are fully visible.[47]

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[46] Sarah C. Nelson, "Ram Navami: 13 Stunning Images of The Hindu Festival Commemorating the Birth of Lord Rama (PICTURES)," *Huffington Post UK*, April 9th, 2014, https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk /2014/04/09/ram-navami-13-stunning-images-hindu-festival-lord-rama-pictures_n_5116433.html.

[47] "Artist giving final touches to a statue," *Times of India*, March 27th, 2015, https://timesofindia/indiatimes.com/articlesshowpics/46713666.cms?from=mr.

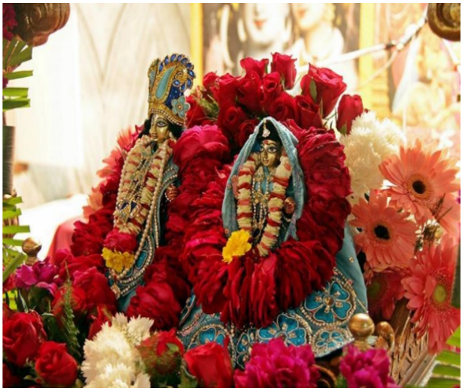

Figure 3: A small statue of Ram and another of Sita, both fully clothed, garlanded, and surrounded by more flowers. Smaller processional icons like these were historically more common.[48]

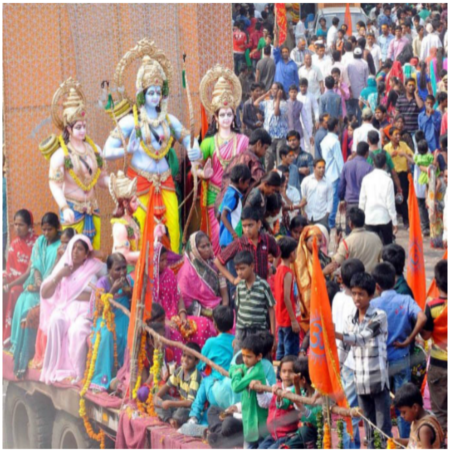

Figure 4: A human-sized Ram, Sita, Lakshman, and a smaller Hanuman on procession. Their float includes many women and boys wearing a variety of colours. These statues also participate in the Hyderabad Ram Navami *yatra*. The smaller and less emphatic muscles on Ram (and Hanuman's body), hand gestures, and pose are notable.[49]

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[48] Sushmita Sen, "Ram Navami: Why and How is it Celebrated; Wishes to Send to Family, Friends [PHOTOS]," *International Business Times*, March 28th, 2015, https://www.ibtimes.co.in/ram-navami-why-how-it-celebrated-wishes-send-family-friends-photos-627426.

[49] Ghanashyam, "Sri Ramanavami Celebration in Hyderabad," *Oneindia*, April 9th, 2014, https://www.oneindia.com/photos/sri-ramanavami-celebration-in-hyderabad-46944.html#photos-3/.

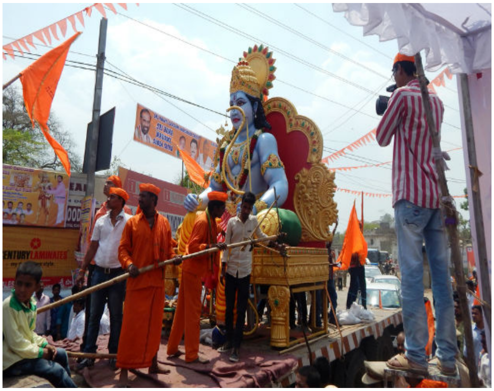

Figure 5: A super-sized Ram, his gold throne and crown matching on procession in Hyderabad. There are adult male devotees on the float, all wearing orange caps and two of them wearing a fully orange outfit as well.[50]

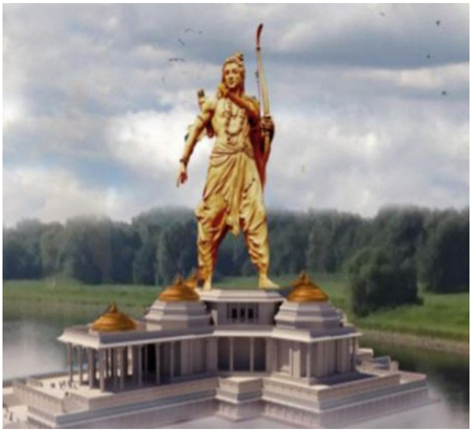

Figure 6: This Ram is in a similar posture to ours, but entirely in a metallic copper or bronze. He is not smiling in the least; nor are his cheeks rosy. A garland appears to be part of the statue. He stands in the spot generally reserved for the *shikhara* in temple architecture.[51]

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[50] Dilip Merala, "Ram Navami 2017 Celebration in Hyderabad," *India.com*, April 4th, 2017, http://www.india.com/travel/articles/ram-navami-2017-celebration-in-hyderabad/.

[51] Picture of Ayodhya mandir proposed by Adityanath's government and released by the *Times of India* on Twitter (Times of India (@timesofindia, 2017).

Book Reviews

Thematic

Ethnicity and Inclusion: Religion, Race, and Whiteness in Constructions of Jewish and Christian Identities.[1] David G. Horrell. *Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans,* 2020. Pp. 432.
Reviewed by Arazoo Ferozan, *McMaster University*

David G. Horrell's recent book, *Ethnicity, and Inclusion: Religion, Race, and Whiteness in Constructions of Jewish and Christian Identities*, goes deep into the heart of New Testament studies to examine how this line of inquiry has shaped Jewish and Christian identities in historical narratives. Horrell argues that, despite significant developments in this field and periodic paradigm shifts in scholarly thinking, the idea of a structural dichotomy between Jewish and Christian identities still prevails, a dichotomy which insists on Jewish particularism and Christian universalism.

Horrell's objective is to understand the origin of this assumed dichotomy and then to demonstrate to what extent scholarly perceptions about Jewish and Christian identities have changed over time. He approaches this research in three ways: by surveying New Testament scholarship from the late nineteenth century to the present, by analyzing ancient sources to compare certain practical and ideological aspects of Christianity and Judaism, and finally, by reflecting on his findings in light of socio-political changes and epistemological factors. The nine comprehensive chapters of the text progress slowly from a broad introduction to New Testament studies to a critical observation about how and why some of the most dominant but inaccurate theories and concepts about Jewish and Christian identities still exist in scholarship.

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[1] Editorial note: given how relevant this book is to the theme of the present volume, we've accepted two reviews of it – presented in succession – as each review highlights different facets of the book.

To understand the scholarly origin of this "structural dichotomy," Horrell begins with nineteenth century New Testament studies based on the critical works by Ferdinand Baur, E. P. Sanders, and James Dunn, and demonstrates that Western colonialism and racial ideologies of White Christian superiority influenced nineteenth century New Testament studies. These scholars suggested that Jewishness was a form of ethnicity or racial identity, one that was exclusive. At the same time, Christianity was an all-embracing and inclusive faith – in a way, a multi-ethnic community. Development in the social scientific studies in the works of Johnson Hodge, Philip Esler, and others, according to Horrell, reconstructed these ideas as a response to socio-political developments of the post-war era, such as the civil rights and feminist movements, and later within "whiteness studies" in the 1990s. However, the widely accepted dichotomy remains a dominant part of race and ethnicity studies, despite significant shifts in scholarly thinking.

The core of Horrell's research takes place in the second part of his book. Horrell's objective in this section, which contains the bulk of his chapters, is to find the origin of the "structural dichotomy" in Jewish and Christian ancient texts. He focuses on some practical and ideological aspects of Judaism and Christianity, such as genealogical kinship, cultural and social practices, territoriality, self-consciousness, ethnicity, and conversion – factors often related to or seen as part of ethnic identity. Horrell demonstrates that while their socio-cultural practices differed to a degree, one can categorize both Christians and Jews as ethnic groups because genealogy, kinship, and religious identity created a sense of peoplehood and cohesion. Both Jews and Christians valued socio-cultural practices as a source of community life, not exclusive of their religious beliefs. Often ethnicity and religion are presented as being interconnected or overlapping with one another. As both these identities are socially constructed, boundaries between religious and ethnic discourse can often be blurred – a phenomena clearly visible within Christian and Jewish ancient texts and practices.

Horrell ultimately shows that scholarship still has a long way to go to understand the complexity of Jewish and Christian identities. In many ways, both religions use discourse and social practices to construct their ethnic identities. However, the distinction between religious and ethnic identity is often difficult to discern and hard to extract from ancient texts. Focusing on whiteness studies in the last section of his book, Horrell concludes that Christian whiteness, superiority, and universalism is a socially constructed concept and an ideologically driven method that lacks objectivity. Horrell suggests a more thorough investigation of New Testament studies, as the source and origin of this dichotomy, to determine the relationship of ethnicity and religion in cohesion, not in contrast.

In recent years, events such as the American election, the Black Lives Matter movement, the progression of the Palestinian and Israeli crisis, the Mediterranean migration, the growth of nationalism around the world, growing anti-refugee, anti-Jewish and anti-Muslim sentiments, and, more recently, anti-Asian hatred, tells us that Horrell's book is relevant not only to New Testament scholarship but as a source that brings attention to some of the underlying issues of our contemporary societies based on assumed "differences" in race, ethnicity, and religion.

Horrell shows that framing Christianity as a cohesive "inclusive" White society inadvertently places Christians in opposition to "racial others," thus enforcing nineteenth century ideas of colonialism and religious superiority. Horrific realities such as discovering the unmarked graves of children in residential schools in Canada make this socially constructed identity of "inclusive" Christianity questionable. The concept of Christian universalism goes against the harsh realities of our much-divided societies, racially and religiously. Horrell may not offer a specific solution to these issues; however, he contributes to a much-needed conversation about the responsibility scholars have in exploring, revising, and reinterpreting "traditional" notions about race, ethnicity, and religion. Challenging dominant and previously established theories while considering current socio-political developments may divert us from writing static historical narratives based on contrast and division rather than similarities and cohesion.

Ethnicity and Inclusion: Religion, Race, and Whiteness in Constructions of Jewish and Christian Identities. David G. Horrell. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2020. Pp. 432.
Reviewed by Louis-Joseph Gagnon, *Concordia University*

David G. Horrell's recent book *Ethnicity and Inclusion* explores how the categories of "ethnic" and "religious" function in Jewish and Christian texts as ways of defining each identity. Horrell is a professor of New Testament studies and director of the Centre for Biblical Studies at Exeter University whose research focuses on Christian identity, ethnicity, and race. *Ethnicity and Inclusion* challenges the important distinctions drawn between Jewish and Christian identities in modern New Testament scholarship. More precisely, Horrell criticizes what he calls the "structural dichotomy" mode, which conceives Jewish identity as exclusive and particularist and in opposition to an all-inclusive and universalist Christianity. Horrell undertakes a vast analysis of Biblical and extra-Biblical texts, questioning how they construct Jewish and Christian identities. He approaches these texts by using Anthony Smith and John Hutchinson's definition of ethnic group as a key hermeneutical feature to outline the essential characteristics of both identities in order to compare them appropriately. Horrell concludes that the "structural dichotomy" that has been employed in New Testament studies is unsound. As a result, this leads Horrell to ask why modern scholars have structured the Jewish and Christian identities as being in stark opposition to one another. He argues that the answer lies in the context of scholarly production – one of White Western European countries exploiting the narrative of superiority at a time of colonization.

The book is divided into three parts. In the first part, the first two chapters offer a selective but elucidating literature survey from the nineteenth century to the present era. The author aims to account for the existence of the "structural dichotomy" in New Testament studies. Horrell highlights the studies of several prominent scholars within the field: Ferdinand C. Baur, E. P. Sanders, as well as several studies from the social-scientific perspective. He observes that although the consistency and terminology change in regard to the way scholars conceptualize Jewish and Christian identities, a "structural dichotomy" persists and continues to shape the discussion on the matter. Chapter 3 offers two reasons to undertake a criticism of such a framework. First, religion and ethnicity are modern categories, and one has to pay close attention when using them in reconstructing antiquity. Second, the separation of religion and ethnicity in the modern age is not a constitutive element of social life in antiquity. Horrell suggests reconsidering the differences between both identities through an examination of "how various facets of what social scientists have identified as typical characteristics of ethnic groups appear in early Jewish and Christian texts" (301). He draws on Smith and Hutchinson's six components of the definition of ethnicity: a common proper name, a myth of common ancestry, shared historical memories, elements of common culture, a link with a homeland, and a sense of solidarity.

In the second part, chapters four to seven explore the components of Smith and Hutchinson's definition of ethnicity. The method of examination asks both Jewish and Christian texts – Biblical and extra-Biblical, such as Philo or Josephus – how they echo with the components of ethnicity. Horrell then describes their construction of identities. Chapter 4 examines the second facet of the definition, the myth of common ancestry. He explains how the comparison takes place in terms of ancestry, kinship, marriage, and family. Both religions, in their own ways, appeal to ancestry and brotherhood to create narratives of group identity. The identity is passed on through family in Judaism by means of endogamous marriage. The New Testament says little about rules on marriage, although Horrell points out Paul's preference of inter-Christian couples and Jewish influence in that matter. Chapter 5 deals with the fourth component, elements of common culture, which Horrell renames as the "way of life." Similarities include the adhesion to a way of life as a necessary characteristic of membership, significant emphasis on socializing children into the culture, and paralleled distinctive practices, like circumcision/baptism, food laws/Lord's Supper, and Sabbath/Sunday meeting. Here, "salience" is the determinative concept to understand what differentiates one group from another. Salience is the significant emphasis which signals the important aspect of one group in comparison to other ethnicities in the same area (Egyptians, Greeks, Idumeans, etc.). Chapter 6 explores the fifth component, a link with the homeland. Horrell advocates for a more nuanced line between a Jewish land rootedness and a deterritorialized Christianity. The existence of the Jewish diaspora acknowledges a distinction between "motherland" (Jerusalem) and "homeland" (πατρίς). This symbolic orientation toward Jerusalem is a theme exploited by New Testament authors. Chapter 7 investigates the sixth component, a sense of solidarity. Horrell explores self-consciousness of belonging to a people by focusing on the ancient vocabulary of "peoplehood": ἔθνος γένος λαός. Although the newness of Christianity limits the signification, the early Christian discourse attests to the emergence of self-consciously being a people (notably in Paul's letters and 1 Pet 2:9–10).

Chapter 8 broadens the discussion on solidarity. Horrell sees mission and conversion as features that intersect with the components of common culture and sense of solidarity. The author shares the view of most contemporary scholars that Judaism was not characterized overall by an effort of proselytization, despite the claim of exclusiveness. One had the possibility to join the Jewish community as a sympathizer, God-fearer, or proselyte. In the same line of thought, Horrell does not perceive strong differences in the way Christians integrate newcomers in their ranks. Rather, he thinks the two cases of mission and conversion assume similarities. Judaism and Christianity welcomed new members by the "model of mission" he calls "passive attraction," that is, the communities drag people in by examples of life rather than by proactive proselytizing actions. With the comparative analysis of Jewish and Christian identities, Horrell criticizes the very existence of the "structural dichotomy" and concludes that both religions show more similarities than sharp differences in the way they construct group identity.

In the third part of the book, Horrell accounts for the existence of the "structural dichotomy" as an explanatory paradigm between Jewish and Christian identities in New Testament studies. The answer lies in the context of production. As he puts it: "New Testament studies, as a Western European production precisely concurrent with the period of European imperialism (and its associated racist ideologies) is shaped by and implicated in that wider socio-historical context and specifically in its ideologies of religion and race" (342). To support his claim, he turns to the insights given by whiteness studies aiming to shape a critical reflection on New Testament scholarship. The attempt to universalize claims in that specific field while taking into account the context of production of Biblical texts does not factor in the context of New Testament scholarship. Thus, it leaves out the question of whether scholars can engage with reconstruction without being tainted or flawed by the era of redaction they find themselves in.

Horrell's book is insightful for understanding a particular state of mind deployed in New Testament studies. Through the surveys, Horrell introduces important authors and scholars within the field. He grounds his reflections on meaningful citations, providing the reader with a direct access to outside sources. Even the neophyte could easily navigate through the clarity of the explanation. Horrell summarizes and gives a comprehensive view of the analysis. The author takes into account the multidisciplinary aspect of the research. He articulates the results and theorization of social sciences in a useful exegesis of the text.

We could, however, ask why Horrell passes over the first and third components of Smith and Hutchinson's definition, rendering the analysis incomplete. One could also debate whether the context of the works Horrell surveys of modern New Testament studies is actually one of White Western Europeans engaged in a narrative of superiority and imperialism toward a colonized world. The survey extends from the time of F. C. Baur in the first half of the nineteenth century to the present day. Therefore, it can be asked: was the European context rather one of decline in political power, both in Europe and around the globe, with the rise of nationalism and the independence of the colonies? How can the "structural dichotomy" resist the second half of the twentieth century after the horror of anti-Semitic Nazism, the racial revolution in the United States, and the internationalization of knowledge? Furthermore, the attempt to account for the existence of the "structural dichotomy" by referring to the context using whiteness studies alone seems problematic. Is the context surrounding the cultural and racial identity in which an author operates self-explanatory? It seems one has to take into account the micro-context of the author himself as well as his freedom in regard to the macro- and micro-cultural contexts. Otherwise, how can one criticize current positions if the cultural context shapes the very paradigm? It would become the task of further generations, too biased by their own context. Thus, it reveals a contextual loophole in which knowledge is never genuine and original.

Beyond Babel: Translations of Blackness in Colonial Peru and New Granada. Larissa Brewer Garcia. Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2019. Pp. 321.
Reviewed by Eduardo Dawson, *University of Notre Dame*

In *Beyond Babel: Translations of Blackness in Colonial Peru and New Granada,* Larissa Brewer Garcia exposes the ways in which early seventeenth century Africans in the colonial Americas forged a sense of "Blackness" as linguistic and spiritual intermediaries within Catholic settings. The book contains six chapters which revolve around Garcia's core theme: the articulations of an African translator named Andrés Sacabuche (the translator for the "missionary of the blacks," Pedro Claver) and the spiritual mystic Ursula de Jesus. Garcia bases these developments of "Blackness" in and against the confluence of Iberian Renaissance humanism and the Counter Reformation traditions. The writers within these literary movements situated Black people as hierarchically subordinate in the social realm while also underscoring their potential to be Christianized.

Drawing on the testimonies of Sacabuche and Ursula de Jesus as detractors from the Renaissance's normative narratives, Garcia claims that Africans furthered the literary Black subject by shaping new understandings of Christianity and language as they related to Blackness in seventeenth century texts. Garcia's work offers fresh insights into the lived experiences of Africans in what has been, for reasons she explores, a scant historiography. As a detailed and historically insightful read, the book critically underlines the creation and advancement of Blackness as an early modern Renaissance reality.

Garcia's first chapter, "Black Types between Renaissance Humanism and Iberian Counter Reformation Theology," captures the "Black typology" that existed in elite forms of early modern literature and theater. She begins by depicting the *bozal* – an Iberian term for an undomesticated horse that was later used to describe Black people in the Iberian New World – as a trope within Jesuit missionary Geronymo Pallas's *Mission a las Indias* (1619). The *bozal* was a farcical character often caricatured as an ill-spoken brute incapable of intellectual dexterity. According to Garcia, this representation of Black life captured the Renaissance humanist notion (relying on Aristotle's natural slave thesis and praxis regarding the behavioral effects that refined speech creates) which claimed that heightened civility was dependent on exquisite use of language and intellectual capacity. Since early Black people were unable to express themselves in polished Castilian discourse, their depiction in artistic works reinforced the belief that they were civilization's lowest members.

In this same chapter, Brewer exposes how this typology overlapped and diverged from descriptions of Black people in Counter Reformation literature. Specifically, she cites Jesuit missionary Jose de Acosta's treatise *De procuranda indorum salute* (1589), where he similarly placed Black people at the base of society but believed that with proper tutelage and acceptance of the Christian faith they could be civilized. *De procuranda* offers critical ideas about how to convert African peoples, as Acosta suggests that relying on physical force would eventuate a softer reception of biblical ideas. Acosta's treatise was exceedingly influential in educating future Jesuits who would work closely with Africans upon their arrival in Cartagena de las Indias. As the intellectual backdrop to Garcia's presentation, and of colonial society at the time, the details exposed in these two intellectual movements constitute the relevant background from which Black linguistic and spiritual intermediaries formed their unique sense of "Blackness."

In her second chapter, Garcia explores the colonial processes of language standardization that occurred in Bogotá and Peru. Here, Garcia juxtaposes the process of language standardization in Amerindian languages with that of African languages. In the Amerindian case, Fray Domingo de Santo Tomás and Fray Alonso Molina made early attempts to create a grammar of Quechua (Tomás in 1560) and Nahuatl (Molina in 1571). Utilizing these works, the Jesuits arrived in the Spanish Americas in the 1560s and quickly developed catechisms in Quechua and Aymara to train priests in those languages. The Third Lima Council, held in 1584, adopted their *Doctrina cristiana y catecismo para instrucción de los indios* which created a standardized catechism that dictated Catholic law in Spanish with a same-page Quechua and Aymara correspondence. The Order ensured that derivations from this standard were to be punished by law. Garcia stresses how this codification of language emphasized who would have the power to translate and command language, and thereby teach native populations: namely, Jesuit priests. In the African case, however, this same rule did not apply.

Garcia cites Jesuit priest Alonso de Sandoval's *Naturaleza, policia sagrada* (1627) as the main guide used to assist missionaries in evangelizing Black people. Unlike the Indigenous situation, however, Sandoval's guide did not rely on priests learning Black languages but on the use of African interpreters. Given the complexity of African ethnic groups and languages, which Sandoval attempts to describe in his treatise, Black interpreters used to circumvent timely language absorption on the part of priests. For this cause, Sandoval encouraged priests to create a census that recorded all enslaved and free Black men and women within a parish. Although these regulations were given and followed, Garcia points out, no instructions were given to monitor the evangelical language communicated between African interpreters and newly arrived African subjects.

Garcia's third and fourth chapters particularize the Black linguistic interpreters who presented the gospel to newly arrived African slaves and yet are often ignored in early colonial historiography. Garcia situates these intermediaries as the crucial means by which Christianity reached Black people, provided that priests and missionaries often did not speak African languages due to the disparate and varied nature of the tongues. By engaging with Jesuit catechism scripts and testimonials from African translators, Garcia affords insight into the language used by translators to illicit responses from newly arrived African slaves. This language, Garcia asserts, constructed a sense of Black beauty and virtue within Cartagena and the vice-regal capital of Peru.

Garcia works meticulously with Sacabuche's portrayal of Pedro Claver's catechism as presented in *Proceso de Beatificación de San Pedro Claver* (1676). The catechism employed earlier Jesuit practices such as bodily inscriptions and verbal repetitions as a way of presenting the gospel. It also added the use of pictorial representations of newly-converted African believers. As African interpreters (Sacabuche and others) delivered their own verbal and visual rendition of Claver's thought to new arrivals, Garcia shows how they would mention the luminosity of the Black body after baptism. The dialogue between African translators and African enslaved subjects on the virtue and beauty of the Black body, Garcia claims, offers fresh insights into what she refers to as "Blackness" in the New World. This insular, and discrete, conversation diverged from narratives of Black life within the Renaissance humanist movement.

This language carries over into Garcia's fifth chapter on the spiritual diary of Ursula de Jesus. As one of the only works on the inner life of a Black servant, Ursula's diary (written between 1650–1661) shares her intercessory experiences intervening for

Black souls in purgatory. During these mystical episodes, Ursula would describe the spiritualized Black beings she perceived as “very beautiful” and “brilliantly Black” (244). Similar to the language used by translators, Ursula’s description of Black virtue and beauty emphasized that Black people were capable of civilization as devout and exemplary Christians. Coupled with Sacabuche’s engagement with Africans, Ursula’s language also thwarts humanist tropes by relying on Christianity as a universalizing force and promising space in which “Blackness” might flourish.

Garcia’s work offers sharp insights into the African creation of social and literary possibilities within the parameters of Christianity. Her work deserves applause not only for the literary and historical insights it reveals but also for giving life to the creative forms of subjecthood exercised by Sacabuche and Ursula de Jesus. To be sure, Garcia’s critical intervention that African people used European norms to redefine who could exist and thrive in a Euro-dominated New World is an acute contrast to the Renaissance humanist mode of writing about Africans. However, within the universalizing discourse of Christian Renaissance humanism, the work also invites us to reinterpret Black people as humans within a universal project as opposed to distinctive “ethnic” subjects.

Medical Stigmata: Race, Medicine, and the Pursuit of Theological Liberation. Kirk A. Johnson. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019. Pp. 190.
Reviewed by Sarah Hodge, *McMaster University*

Over the past few years in the United States, issues of race and reconciliation have been at the forefront of societal concerns. In particular, the growth of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020 unveiled the perpetuation of deeply entrenched racist attitudes and consequentially the systemic nature of racism across the United States. Kirk A. Johnson's recent publication *Medical Stigmata: Race, Medicine, and the Pursuit of Theological Liberation* tackles this issue directly, focusing on the systemic racism inherent in the practice of medicine. Johnson's work examines the historical maltreatment of Black bodies through the predominance of race-based medicine (RBM) – the use of race as a biological category within the medical field as "the primary indicator for the predispositions of certain diseases" (9) – in the American medical system since the late-nineteenth century, and how Black theology was used as a mechanism of solidarity to combat racial prejudice in medicine. Johnson, an associate professor at Montclair State University, provides a multi-disciplinary background on the issue. His knowledge of the Medical Humanities and Religious Studies, as well as serving as a member on the Atlantic Health Systems Bioethics Committee, proves to be particularly valuable in elucidating the connection between medicine, race, and religion.

The focus of his work is framed around a case study of the first race-based drug "BiDil" which was initially developed by scientists and later cleared by the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) as a drug specifically designed to treat Black people with heart disease. His case study which examines the path to approval for BiDil reveals a harrowing reality – racial theories are still being applied to pharmaceuticals even in the twenty-first century.

Johnson's central argument is that race-based medicine is an ineffectual means of conducting medical research and treatment as it "undermine[s] minority communities' health" (2). In the past, RBM endorsed pseudo-scientific racial theories regarding inherited diseases such as Tay Sachs Disease (TSD) (which was deemed a Jewish Disease) and Sickle Cell Anemia (SCA) (which was deemed an African American disease). At the same time, the rise of eugenics in the mid-nineteenth century and its acquisition by the sciences legitimized xenophobia, racial myths, and discriminatory treatment of minorities in North America. While Johnson does a good job of surveying the many discriminatory actions carried out against minorities such as Jews and Latinos under the guise of RBM in the first chapter, the rest of his work focuses solely on discrimination experienced by members of the Black community because of race-based medicine. Johnson concludes his work with an examination of how Christian spirituality and scripture are used as a means of reconciliation. He demonstrates that as an act of resistance against this race-based medicine, Black people have turned to Black theology as means of holistic treatment. Johnson later concludes that racial categories in medicine should be abandoned in favour of "ancestry and geographic location" (97) as used in genome-wide association studies.

Johnson's chapters cover a wide breadth of topics such as the history of RBM, experimentation on Black bodies, maltreatment of Black patients, research into RBM, bioethics and international codes as well as Black theology. Particularly interesting is Chapter 3, where Johnson examines the historical maltreatment of Black bodies. Slavery in America as well as the influence of eugenic discourse during the nineteenth century allowed for the proliferation of myths regarding what Johnson terms the “Black body” (40). The “Black body” was associated with several myths and stereotypes such as “Black hardiness,” the idea that Black people were better suited to tolerate “extreme conditions or illness” (43), and the idea that the Black brain was underdeveloped when compared to Whites and thus less capable of intellect. These myths allowed for White members of society to rationalize the discriminatory attitudes and maltreatment of Black people in society and medicine. It also allowed for hundreds of medical experiments to be carried out on Black bodies where sufficient consent had not been obtained. Slaves were experimented on in the 1830s to test typhoid fever and smallpox inoculations (49–50). Some experiments, Johnson explains, were entirely cruel and had no scientific explanation whatsoever. He describes one experiment which involved placing a slave in an “open-pit oven” to peel back layers of his skin to see how deep his dark skin went (51). Perhaps the most disturbing part of this entire chapter is that many of these illusions regarding “Black hardiness” and unethical experimentation persisted well into the late-twentieth century. Government-sponsored agencies such as the United States Office of Scientific Research and Development, Central Intelligence Agency, and the Atomic Energy Commission have used a disproportionate amount of Black test subjects in their experiments since 1946 (55). Into the 1970s, various pharmaceutical and shampoo companies were able to test their products on prison inmates. Johnson reveals the lack of “informed consent” amongst Black inmates was nearly always a factor in these unethical experiments, often resulting in permanent damage or death (61–62). Ultimately, Johnson argues that this historical maltreatment has created a deep loss of personhood amongst Black people as well as a distrust of medical professionals, often resulting in “blacks’ poor health literacy” (65). This analysis reveals an inequity in the clinical treatment of Black people which still needs to be rectified today.

While Johnson does an excellent job surveying the history of maltreatment and unethical treatment of Black bodies, his analysis falls short in his examination of Black theology as a means of reconciliation to "mend the harms of race-based medicine" (125). Johnson is entirely correct in his evaluation that a large part of healing is sought through spirituality as opposed to physical treatment (125), but some of his definitions seem contradictory at times. For example, he asserts that Black theology "analyzes the oppression of black people, affirms the personhood of black people, and advocates their social and political liberation"[1] through reinterpretations of scripture as a response to "labels of race and illness" (126–127). Unlike race-based medicine, which provides a "truncated look at black experiences," Black theology, he claims, offers "multiple black perspectives and experiences." (127). However, this statement is complicated as he later states that "black theology is not solely based upon what whites did to blacks, but a symbol of justice for everyone who are oppressed. It is an extension of progressive action for anyone who are victims of the status quo" (129). Johnson is not clear as to whether Black theology is a mechanism used solely by members of the Black community or whether it is to be considered a universal means of reconciliation amongst all those oppressed minorities. Further, he does not offer any ways those Black people of alternative faith or belief systems might seek reconciliation for the lasting effects of race-based medicine. For example, how would a Black person who identifies as atheist use these pieces of

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1. Kirk A. Johnson, *Medical Stigmata,* 126, as cited in Cheryl J. Sanders, "European-American Ethos and Principlism," in *On Moral Medicine: Theological Perspectives in Medical Ethics,* ed. M. Therese Lysaught and Joseph J. Kotova (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2012), 78.

reinterpreted scripture when they might not have belief in the Bible itself? Despite the confusion with definitions, Johnson's message through his analysis of pieces of scripture such as Jeremiah 13:23, Numbers 12:1–15 and Mark 1:40–45 illustrates the deep importance of scripture in reconciliation and empowerment amongst minority patients.

Johnson concludes by reiterating that RBM is "not compatible with genetics and causes maleficence because one drug is not adequate to solve and entire racial groups' illness" (164). Instead, Johnson advocates for the use of Genome-Wide Association Studies (GWAS) and EIGENSTRAT (a population genetics software) technologies in the development of medical diagnoses and treatment, which use genetics, geography, ancestry, and genome biography to account for disease prevalence (164). While it is undoubtedly correct that genetic diseases are a result of one's genes and not one's race, practitioners and the general public often conflate race and ancestry. This is something Johnson himself acknowledges (94–97). The question remains: how do we extricate racial groups from ancestry when various government agencies often do just this so that these GWAS and EIGENSTRAT technologies can be used effectively without being tied to racial categories?

Nonetheless, Kirk A. Johnson's *Medical Stigmata* is a fascinating multidisciplinary perspective on the dark history of race-based medicine in North America. It demonstrates how easily racist attitudes can be subsumed and normalized through the continued use of racial categories in determining disease prevalence within the medical field. At the same time, this work brings to light the importance of spirituality in healing, something that is often either forgotten or discounted in modern medical practice. Overall, Johnson's work contributes valuable information on race-based medicine and offers important steps that can be taken within the medical field to fix these issues.

The Making of a Salafi Muslim Woman: Paths to Conversion. Anabel Inge. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018. Pp. 322.
Reviewed by R. Scott Bursey, *Florida State University*

Running against the grain of Western secular modernity, the allure of Salafism to young Muslims in Britain is an unexpected and poorly understood idiosyncrasy of the post-9/11 era. While Salafism is mentioned liberally both in popular media and politics (brandished about more as a tool for othering than defining), voices from within Salafi communities are almost entirely absent from public discourse in Britain. The work of Anabel Inge, in her monograph *The Making of Salafi Muslim Woman: Paths to Conversion*, tackles the virtual absence of "academic publications on Salafism in Britain, which do not provide any in-depth insight into the women's side of this strictly gender-segregated community" (3).

Inge's project wrestles with the existing "academic accounts of Salafism in Britain, which have mostly focused on men, internal politics, doctrine, and security-related issues" and the decontextualized images of "niqab-wearing and [youth] radicalization [… which] dominate media portrayals of Salafism, while the voices of Salafi women remain largely absent from the public sphere" (221). Moving beyond the almost formulaic jihadist lens of critique, Inge's findings are understood through the methodological approach of new religious movements (NRMs), the output of which is the first sustained empirical research on Salafi women in the UK beyond the work of Katherine Brown, who focuses on the study of young British Muslims who are radicalized while attending university. Through a reverent respect for the women interviewed and a declarative stance on the role and practice of fieldwork as a non-participant observer, Inge was able to transcend the social and sacred boundaries of Salafism to tell a story of a minority within a minority. Her focus on the normative and sometimes mundane aspects of women's lives in the Brixton Mosque where Inge conducted her field work allows her project to present a rich description of everyday life, akin to the acclaimed work of Saba Mahmood's *The Politics of Piety*. Inge's work offers a bridge into the reflexive world of Salafi conversion, sisterhood, and the pain of searching for a good husband in the rat race of contemporary London.

As the introduction to Inge's work expounds, her interest in the lived experience of female Salafi adherents came after attending a circle of knowledge at a central London Mosque during her master's degree (3). Moving beyond the sensitive political climate of being a Muslim in the UK following the 2005 London Underground attack, Inge was surprised by the ease with which these Salafi supplicants accepted her not as an outsider but as an honoured guest. Moreover, the topic of study in this circle of knowledge was not rooted in the Islamist diction of racialization, but in the *da'wah* of new adherents searching for value and guidance in the confusion and conscious consumption of intense individualism. Inge's work is divided into six chapters. The structure of the first is rooted in the history of Salafism in Britain, where a growing disdain for ethnic and/or nationality-specific mosques has led to a grassroots demand for Salafi mosques, which put being a Muslim ahead of migrant identity. Ironically, however, the parishioners Inge works with are almost exclusively from migrant communities of Caribbean descent. The second chapter is focused on Inge's fieldwork methodology as well as the social dynamic of the Brixton Mosque where her research was based. The third chapter details the circuitous route by which Inge's observed *Salafi* adherents converted to Salafism. Inge makes a determined effort to illustrate that the vast majority of *Salafi* adherents in the UK today were not born into the movement and instead converted, although much of the community comes from a Muslim-majority background (62). Inge identifies two primary catalysts for conversion, specifically, "gradually [becoming] bored with their lifestyle and […] feeling guilty about doing 'un-Islamic' things to 'fit in'; or a crisis [which] led them to reassess what they were doing" (75). The transition to becoming Salafi is projected through religious devotion, donning the sartorial accoutrement of the *jilbab* and seeking religious knowledge. The latter is the topic of the fourth chapter, where religious adherence is forged in circles of knowledge that are exclusively attended by women. In an unabashedly paternalistic schism of Islam which openly prioritized male dominance, these circles of knowledge provided a space for both religious study and female empowerment (101). The fifth chapter "investigates several areas in the lives of young Salafi women in London – community, household, higher education, and employment – where clashes between Salafi ideals and social realities frequently occurred" (143). The final chapter focuses on marriage in the context of the religious imperative to get married – as an "often repeated phrase among *Salafis* is that 'marriage completes half your *din* [religion],' an expression taken from a *hadith* (Tirmidhi 3096)" (180).

The primary thematic contribution in Inge's work is rooted in her exclusive focus on normative Salafi women, both in the context of religious worship and in how her interviewees navigate daily life. In diametric opposition to media portrayals of *Salafi* woman, Inge makes a determined effort to challenge normative stereotypes such as poor education attainment and a lack of female agency with the Salafi community. By taking this approach, Inge was able to touch on the importance of self-actualization within the Islamic frame. In other words, once the subjective pretense of Salafism was removed from the positionality in her work, her adherents were able to expound on a cogent alternative to secular modernity, “an internalization of a Qur’anic ‘worldview’” (53). Beyond the sartorial changes involved in claiming Salafi credentials, or the rigorous religious study required of adherents, or even the myriad of social rules and constructs which govern daily life, Inge’s work goes a layer deeper. Beyond the superficial garb, or even the habitual prayers, the banality of secular consumerism is challenged as these Salafi women turn toward the sacred as the primary guiding principle in daily life. This is where Inge’s work is its most promethean in scope, as she was able to enter the community without pretense, garner the trust of her fellow adherents and in doing so, break through the thick black cloth which separates these women from British civil society. Yet the real magic in her work is two sided, as her reverence for her subjects is shown with the precision with which she references numerous *hadiths* and Qur’anic *ayahs* to explain Salafi justifications for daily practice. It is evident that the rigorous textuality of Salafi thought was not only something she experienced in her fieldwork, and I would assert that the perceptive ease with which she references these textual justifications is more than just good fieldwork notes but is a lasting influence of her time spent with this group, utilizing celestially codified justifications to define the gray areas of daily life.

The care, attention, and professionalism which Inge brings to this project leaves little ground for substantive critique. The stated goal of the project was to problematize the virtual absence of academic accounts of Salafism in the UK that were not codified in the security centered diction of the “other.” By assessing these women on their own terms, Inge was able to cut through the problematic political ethos to bring forward the voices of interviewees. However, in the success of this approach, by only assessing her interviewees on the basis of their individual perceptions, we lose out on the opportunity for a more explicit comparison with other orbiting factors. Inge's interview questions, although open-ended, did not present an avenue by which more esoteric questions of belief, structures of the *real*, or self-imposed power could be assessed and problematized.

I applaud Inge's choice not to dwell on Western feminist-centered structures of critique in her ethnographic approach. As she states, this choice is specifically due to "the complexity of the construction and logic of a Salafi identity," so "no one theory can accommodate [her] findings" (225). Yet at the same time, gender is not sufficiently theorized and is not leveraged as a primary source of critique in her work. It's apparent that Inge did not want her work to get lost in a reflexive critique of Salafi beliefs from a feminist lens, but, nevertheless, a deeply ensconced gender hierarchy exists (which she acknowledges), and this is not sufficiently problematized. Regardless, Inge's work makes a serious contribution to the study of Salafism in the West, both in the scope and depth of her work with Salafi women in the UK, a minority within a minority. Searching for purpose and meaning in our lives is a battle we all fight on a daily basis. For Inge's adherents, the value rooted in textuality and a community-centric focus within the Brixton Islamic Community reconciles the vapid nature of individualism whilst also projecting forward a canonically codified way to live within a Quranic world view. Whether you are seasoned reader of Islamic studies or just an interested third party, this work presents an important intervention into a world about which the general public knows little but comments liberally.

Non-Thematic

The Divine Ideas Tradition in Christian Mystical Theology. Mark McIntosh. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019. Pp. 217.
Reviewed by Daniel Fishley, *McGill University*

Mark McIntosh was an Anglican priest, scholar, and author of multiple books on the history, study, and practice of Christian mysticism. His latest book, published just before his death in October of 2021 due to complications resulting from ALS, is titled *The Divine Ideas Tradition in Christian Mystical Theology*. In this work he addresses what he argues is a key component of mysticism in general and Christian theology in particular: the divine ideas tradition (abbreviated throughout as DIT). This tradition, more broadly identifiable as the Augustinian illuminationist tradition, holds that in God's "eternal knowing and loving of Godself, that is, in the eternal begetting of the Word and breathing forth of the Spirit, God also knows and loves all the ways in which creatures might participate in God's life through God's gift to each creature of existence" (12). McIntosh's text, following the work of scholars like Bernard McGinn and Douglas Hedley, is aimed at exploring this relational dynamic. By way of a robust appeal to analogical thought, McIntosh deploys an exemplarist theology that builds upon the writing of pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, Maximus the Confessor, Scotus Erigena, St. Bonaventure, St. Thomas Aquinas, Meister Eckhart, and Thomas Traherne among others. Rejecting commonplace critiques that see in the DIT a Platonic intrusion to the Gospel message, McIntosh argues that the epistemological, ontological, and spiritual elements of this tradition are ingredients to the Christian religion. McIntosh, however, goes further and asserts that the DIT is not only fundamental to Christianity, but also offers resources to combat a host of issues that he sees facing the modern world.

McIntosh's work is divided into five chapters with a short introduction. His introduction establishes the aims of his text and argues for the importance of a hermeneutic that sees God as the sustaining ground of all phenomena. To accomplish this, McIntosh seeks to unpack a set of metaphysical claims, i.e., "explaining how things come to exist as they are," as well as a set of noetic claims, i.e., "explaining how the truth of things can be known" (4). In light of these two themes, McIntosh's text seeks to show the Christological and soteriological foundation of the DIT.

In chapter one, McIntosh unpacks the historical discrepancy between a classical conception of an idea and a modern one. In many classical contexts, ideas approximate something like an archetype which pre-exist within the mind of God (18); while in modernity – i.e., a post-Cartesian framework – an idea has come to be understood as a mental representation located solely within the mind of the thinker. The parameters established by the former position, McIntosh argues, assumes that an idea's intelligibility signaled its participation within the divine mind (19). McIntosh goes on to assert that this classical epistemological framework provided early Christians a means by which to posit a connection between their own finite existence and God's infinite spiritual reality (23). Indeed, according to McIntosh, it was via the conceptual resources found within the DIT's notion of an idea that doctrines such as the trinity were given shape by the early Church (26).

In his second chapter, McIntosh reflects on modern issues such as the looming environmental crises and the theme of disenchantment. He argues that only the sacramental attitude expressed by the DIT can confront these issues. Drawing on

Origen, Maximus the Confessor, and St. Bonaventure, he argues that a properly sacramental attitude extended towards creation sees in nature a "beautiful expression of God's inexhaustible goodness and truth, an expression worthy of human joy, wonder, and care" (44). He finds in this sacramental attitude a possible remedy to an ecological crisis that he argues can be traced to a worldview that sees nature as a mere instrument (55). Here following Hans Blumenberg and Louis Dupré, McIntosh draws a direct line that connects the impulses brought about by a late-medieval nominalism which saw in nature mere extended objects cut-off from their divine ground, the utilitarianism of modern capitalist society, and the ecological crisis. In nominalist thinkers like Scotus, he argues, not only was nature perceived to be disconnected from a realist metaphysics, but, God, too, was absolutized and conceptualized as utterly alien to the created order of things. The outcome of this process was that any sense of God's self-communication with finitude was denied (63). For McIntosh, only the DIT imbues nature with a fullness that engenders respect and awe – attributes he argues are necessary to a proper ecological movement.

In the third chapter, McIntosh demonstrates the Christological foundation of the DIT. McIntosh's position is that what underscores this tradition is the self-giving revelation he argues was innate to Christ's message. This Christological focus hinges upon a relational ontology in which the fullness of God, shared through Christ, is met via the subject through prayerful and contemplative acts (89). Through an analysis of pseudo-Dionysius, Scotus Eriugena, Aquinas, and Bonaventure, McIntosh hones in on three key issues in the DIT. First, ontologically, he sees in the Word an overflowing creative abundance from which arises a relational dynamic between the Being of God and the becoming of humanity (91). Second, epistemologically, he sees in Christ the illuminative source through which the comprehension of, and loving participation with, all things arise (91). Third, Christologically, he argues that when one fully shares in the death and resurrection of Christ, one's own isolated suffering is transformed and made generative in their identification with the Word. For McIntosh, because the ground of all creatures is sustained in and by Christ, then the "return and re-creation of all creatures" to a state of wholeness emerges only via a fidelity to Christ (103).

In Chapter 4, McIntosh reflects on the nature of the paschal mystery via an adhesion to the thought of Augustine and thinkers like Traherne. As he does throughout his work, McIntosh shows here the vast influence that Augustine has had on the DIT. He deploys Augustine's illuminationist theory as a way to continue his critique of nominalism. Here, repeating themes he touches on throughout his work, he turns to Augustine's *On The Trinity* as further evidence of the unification of the mind of the subject with God (120). However, in this chapter, he argues that the liturgical act and symbol of the paschal mystery contains within it a means by which to more fully experience God, and the self-communication of God, via the imaginary impulse that the death and resurrection of Christ signifies. In a rather novel discussion, in which Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age* is engaged to again think through the tension of disenchantment and modernity, McIntosh appeals to the imaginative resources exhibited in the writing of C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien. McIntosh argues that Tolkien and Lewis offer a way in which to think about the value of myth and religious thought in disenchanted modernity – both writers offer a means of re-enchanting a cosmos that has become subordinated to a utilitarian logic (131). Finally, via a discussion of Traherne's contemplative vision of nature, McIntosh argues that a mythical framework saturated in a paschal vision which sees

Christ as the unifying centre of the cosmos is the only way past these modern tensions.

In his concluding chapter, McIntosh revisits and restates his text's central theme: that in God's self-knowledge arises an "eternal act of self-knowing" which is the ground of truth itself, *Scientia dei causa rerum*. From this act arises, McIntosh writes, "the beatitude or happiness that is the very life of God" (167). The awareness of this theological claim, abstracted from sensible experience signals, McIntosh notes, a salvific reality that he argues is at the heart of the Christian message (171). In this final section, too, McIntosh discusses a sub-theme that runs throughout his book: the status of truth in modernity. He argues that the rise of "fake-news," ongoing issues surrounding racism, environmental crises, and the "untruths and obvious denials of fact" regarding the pandemic all stem from a worldview that denies the sacrality of the human experience in their communion with God (181).

McIntosh's text, in summary, provides a clear and focused historical overview of the DIT, mysticism, and Christian theology. Certainly, his is a biased perspective; he is roundly sympathetic to the claims and assertions made by those within the DIT. His text thus does not provide a critical account or analysis of the tradition. This lack of critical analysis does not, I would argue, hamper the excellence of the historical insight his text provides into a rather long and complex theological history. This latter theme makes his text valuable for scholars of theology in general and of mystical theology in particular.

Divine Perfection and Human Potentiality: The Trinitarian Anthropology of Hilary of Poitiers. Jarred Austin Mercer. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019. Pp. xvi + 305.
Reviewed by Jessica Gauthier, *McGill University.*

The Rev. Dr. Jarred A. Mercer has issued a challenge to academic and practical theologians alike with *Divine Perfection and Human Potentiality: The Trinitarian Anthropology of Hilary of Poitiers*. Mercer encourages the reader to engage with Saint Hilary of Poitiers on his own terms, rather than imposing anachronistic thought-categories onto his work or brushing it off as being a mere steppingstone on the road to more developed theologies, discounting him as an ante-Nicene Father who can safely be laid aside in favour of Augustine. The book seeks to demonstrate how Hilary's anthropology is grounded in trinitarian Christology. In order to understand what it means to be human, Mercer argues, Hilary would have us understand what it means for Christ to be both human and divine.

In Chapter 1, "Divine Generation and Human Potentiality," Mercer explores the thought-world of Origen, Tertullian, Novatian, and Athanasius. He shows how Hilary constructed his trinitarian anthropology on the scaffolding of their imagery and linguistic tools, specifically with reference to John 1:1–4, which for Hilary becomes a foundation for developing his ideas about the eternal and infinite birth of the Son from the Father. Mercer wants the reader to begin thinking about human "potentiality and fulfillment, origin and destiny" as being, for Hilary, "both founded and perfected in the infinite self-giving productivity of God" (54).

At this point I feel compelled to note that there are well over one hundred appearances of the word "birth," and over a hundred more of the word "generation," in this book. Mercer himself states, "I use "generation" and "birth" interchangeably throughout in reference to Hilary, who directly states that the *natiuitas* is none other than the *generatio* of the Son from the Father" (13, n.1). There are only two mentions of the word "woman," both found on page 91 and referring to Mary's use as a vessel from which the physical body of Jesus could be made. On page 171 there is the only use of the word "female," citing Genesis 1:27 in attributing *imago Dei* to women as well as men. It appears Mercer has opened a door, with his choice of words, to someone wishing to do serious work on what a Hilarian understanding of woman's humanity might mean in terms of the *imago Dei* or for God as the divine giver of birth.

In Chapter 2 Mercer begins to hint at how finite humans can know an infinite God. From their finite perspective, they can know God infinitely. Holding this notion at the back of one's mind will be helpful as Mercer develops his reading of Hilary's anthropology. He notes Hilary's cautious approach to naming God in any terms other than those found in Scripture and giving historical arguments about name and nature, such as how "Father" and "Son" signify something about God. Hilary equated God's infinity with eternity in the divine birth discussed by Mercer in Chapter 1, so that the mediation of the *Logos* "is rather a union of two contradictory realities: the infinite and the finite, the limited and the illimitable" (76). Mercer notes here that the tendency of modern scholarship to emphasize "the philosophical shift that takes place in metaphysics" from classical Greek thought to Christianity often takes the focus away from more important categories (80).

Hilary's reading of Proverbs 8:22 is placed next to the readings of his contemporaries to show how deeply this passage relates to the prologue of John's Gospel. Mercer now begins to make the argument that "for Hilary, to form a doctrine of God is also to form an anthropology" (94). Understanding Jesus as being God from God leads to understanding humanity as being meant for "perpetual increase in the divine life" (98).

Chapter 3 considers Hilary on "Divine Unity and the 'Ladder of Our Nature.'" Mercer explains the importance of John 10:30 for the generations preceding Hilary, both orthodox and heterodox, before reiterating the centrality of divine generation for Hilary. Speaking in terms of Father and Son, indeed, in terms of birth, allows Hilary to imagine a Son who is equal to the Father in every way because of His origin. It allows Hilary to imagine that Jesus Christ could submit to the Father without being in any way subordinate to or weaker than the Father. Hilary argues further for divine unity by showing that the Son and the Father "possess the same Holy Spirit, not two different spirits" (119). This mutual indwelling is, itself, Unity: a divine action showing the Trinity where words fail.

Mercer now shows how Hilary developed the analogical Father-Son language of Tertullian and Novatian. Human finitude in the face of divine infinity necessitates analogical thinking despite its ultimate insufficiency. Hilary comes to an understanding of "image" that weaves together an intertextual reading of John 10:30 and 14:9. The divine nature of the Son is invisible just as the Father is, since they share the same divine qualities. It is in the *incarnate* Christ that we see a visible image of the invisible God, so that "the Father is not seen in the physical body of Jesus, but in the divine works that are accomplished in that physical existence" (144). Christ, "the begotten God, who is Life and received his birth from Life" (147), is the ladder by which finite humanity can approach the infinite God.

Now that the framework has been laid for an in-depth examination of Hilary's use of language of "image," Mercer uses Chapter 4 to discuss the Platonic notion of "image" and to trace the gradual abandonment by Christian theologians of "the classical notion of inferiority" of the image (150). Hilary embraces the idea argued by Basil of Ancyra that "image corresponds with essence, for a substantial image" (155), and this helps him in his argument that the Son is consubstantial with the Father, equal to the Father, having the same divine nature. Now the *imago Dei*, the image of God in which humanity was created, is imbued with a sense of hope. Mercer links this discussion of divine image to a discussion of Christ as the perfect *imago Dei*. He is therefore able to argue that "Hilary's trinitarian anthropology is necessarily Christological, as Christ is the definition and goal of all human life" (177).

"For Hilary, Christ is the human par excellence, and no one else is" (218). Hilary's anthropology is that Christ represents normative humanity, whatever fallen human experience without Christ might look like. Mercer notes that Hilary is the first theologian to offer "a theologically coherent explanation of Christ's possession of a fully human soul and will, while at the same time affirming equal divinity of Christ and the Father, through that human soul and will being predicated on the single subject of the eternal Son of God" (197). Mercer suggests more careful reading of Hilary's Christology by modern academics is called for. He argues that Hilary's reading of Philippians 2:6–7, combined with a Stoic (rather than a Platonic) understanding of the Body-Soul relationship will exonerate him from any perceived Docetism thus far attributed to him. Hilary's portrayal of Christ suffering painlessly can be explained in terms of moral choice.

In Chapter 5, Mercer examines Hilary's intertextual reading of how John 17:1–6, 1 Corinthians 15:21–28, and Philippians 3:21 illuminate a vision for human potentiality. Mercer shows us an inside glimpse of Hilary painting a beautiful picture in which Christ, taking up humanity through the incarnation, is then received by the Father in his ascension. In receiving Christ, the Father also receives humanity, which has been assumed by Christ in a unity described by Hilary with the word *universitas*. Mercer argues for a Stoic, rather than a Platonic, reading of humanity: all of humanity rather than “a generalized human nature” (230). Human potential in Christ is a “destined life of infinite increase” (254).

Throughout this work, Mercer critiques the tendencies of modern theologians to read Hilary through lenses that render his thought difficult to understand or even, as Mercer contends, distort his meaning altogether. Hilary understood the complexities of language; he knew how to use the fluidity of language to transform it; he carefully chose his polemical tools and just as carefully excluded certain vocabulary. Knowledge of Latin, Greek and French is helpful for reading this book, but not absolutely necessary. The meticulously organized footnotes and excellent indices invite the reader to swim in the deeper waters of historical theology. *Divine Perfection and Human Potentiality* is a challenging read, but well worth it. You may find yourself eager to read Hilary for yourself, or read him again, and if that happens, I suspect Mercer will have achieved his primary objective.

The Michel Henry Reader. Michel Henry. Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 2019. Pp. xviii + 266.
Reviewed by A.J. Smith, *McGill University*

Michel Henry's reception in English-speaking scholarship has been fragmentary at best. His phenomenological work has yet to be fully received and, accordingly, has hardly ever been fully comprehended. There is no English-language example of a detailed section-by-section exegesis where his work is systemically read and synoptically interpreted, where its internal motivations and developments are highlighted, and its theses are contextualized within the histories of French phenomenology and German idealism.[1] Although many of his monographs have appeared in English translation, his voluminous articles and occasional works have not – until now. Despite this relative Anglophone scholarly invisibility, Henry's work is important. Understanding Henry's historical significance is necessary to comprehend the shape of twentieth and twenty-first century French philosophy, and the shape of Francophone reception of Husserl and Heidegger in particular. Henry's inauguration of a so-called theological turn within a phenomenological sphere – surely one of the most important developments in French thought of the twentieth century – presages and makes possible that of other iterations or reactions significantly more famous in the English- speaking world, such as in Ricoeur, Derrida, Levinas, Marion, and Laruelle. In order to understand both the importance and limitation of this collection, it is useful to note

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1. This is because Henry's work was translated in English relatively late. Published originally in French in 1963, Henry's magnum opus, *L'essence de la manifestation* (*The Essence of Manifestation*), was translated into English in 1973. Much of the rest of Henry's work, however, would remain untranslated in English until the 1990s, long after his French contemporaries had appeared.

the particular difficulty in understanding Henry's work. It is rightly situated within the tradition of phenomenology, but in many ways, it is a rejection of phenomenology. In the author's preface at the beginning of the English translation of *The Essence of Manifestation*, Henry writes that his principal work "was born of a refusal, the refusal of the very philosophy from which it has sprung."[2] By this, Henry means it repudiates the deepest philosophical presuppositions that nonetheless gave it birth; not only the phenomenological works of Husserl and Heidegger, but also the history of philosophy stretching back to Greek antiquity. Henry argues that an external critique of phenomenology would be nonsensical, and so instead seeks to offer a critique internal to the very presuppositions he rejects, enacting what he describes as a philosophical mutation of these ideas. The result is a philosophy that deepens the phenomenological insights by moving beyond what Henry argues are the limitations imposed on thought in antiquity and taken up by Husserl and Heidegger.

The philosophical *mise-en-scène* of Henry's project is an examination of the ontological meaning of ego, one that is fundamental in the most originary sense. But it is not an examination like that found in psychology, where the ego is treated in terms of its psychic or mental functionality. Henry seeks to understand the essence of subjectivity rather than document what it is like to be a subject. Henry's interest is not, then, the mere datum of lived experience, but rather the origin (i.e., the essence) of lived experience itself. Henry endeavors to give a properly ontological account of the ego, and so is firmly opposed to a merely descriptive phenomenology that seeks to empirically exhaust lived experience. It is, instead, the ontological coordinates of subjective being in all its lived modalities (including in politics and art) that comprises Henry's project.

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[2] Michel Henry, *The Essence of Manifestation* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973), xi. This refers to the English author's preface not included in the French original.

Given that it covers each of these modalities, the appearance of *The Michel Henry Reader* is an exciting event for English phenomenology and philosophy of religion. While not quite as exciting as having all the volumes of *Phénoménologie de la vie* translated and made available to readers without French, this sampling of Henry's essays from the aforementioned collection allows for the broad re-contextualization of Michel Henry's phenomenology and philosophy for English readers that was simply not possible before.

The editors of this collection were judicious and included not just Henry's phenomenological work, but the political, theological, and aesthetic theory that derive therefrom. *The Michel Henry Reader* is made up of essays categorized into four sections: Phenomenology; Subjectivity; Politics, Art, and Language; and lastly Ethics and Religion. They derive both their content and titles from the collection of essays assembled and published in French in a series called *Phénoménologie de la vie*.[3] However, they include just a few of the essays in that collection. This is to be regretted. That being said, the editors have chosen carefully, providing crucial instances of Henry's considered philosophical opinions. Most important for Henry's English reception, in my estimation, are the essays "The Four Principles of Phenomenology" and "The Phenomenology of Birth." These essays clarify Henry's relationship with phenomenological ontology, in particular the relationship between being and appearing that is fundamental to his philosophy. While this collection by no means fills all the gaps impeding Henry's English reception, it goes a long way to facilitating this much delayed task.

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[3] For the full collection, see Michel Henry, *De la phénoménologie*, Vol. I (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France), 2003; *De la subjectivité*, Vol. II (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2003); *De l'art et du politique*, Vol. III (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2004); *Sur l'éthique et la religion*, Vol. IV (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2004).

My criticisms of *The Michel Henry Reader,* if minor, are regarding this contextualization. Though this collection covers a wide area of philosophical topics, in my estimation it tries to accomplish too much with too little. The genre of a reader should include not only a topically but historically diverse set of texts that trace the development of a philosopher. This reader is merely a sampling of texts taken from a single collection of texts and represent the end point of his philosophical development. These texts presuppose the results of Henry's philosophical history, rather than tracking its course. Henry's work largely takes the forms of lengthy hermeneutical critiques of figures and traditions where his philosophical ideas are developed – these conceptual mutations. Because these essays come along at the end of his philosophical development and presuppose knowledge of much of it, the otherwise able introduction has the insurmountable burden of explaining almost the whole of Henry's philosophy for these texts to be fully understandable. Ideally, it is the primary texts assembled in a reader that make a philosopher comprehensible. *The Michel Henry Reader* is not so much an English-language introduction or stand-alone entrée to Henry's thought, but something to be read alongside, or after, Henry's earlier works.

This critique is, in the end, a minor one; and perhaps an unfair one as well. The texts they have chosen are important and clarify crucial aspects of Henry's thinking, in particular his critiques of Heidegger and Husserl in the context of phenomenological ontology. The translations are articulate and consistent, and this volume is a nice accompaniment to the translation of Henry's *Incarnation* published previously by Northwestern University Press in 2015. In the end, the problem with this work is that it leaves one wanting. To accomplish the task they set out for Anglophone Henry scholarship, more yet needs to be translated.

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Arc is an interdisciplinary, refereed journal published annually by McGill University’s School of Religious Studies. The journal combines the talents of professors and graduate students in offering space for scholarly discussions on various aspects of the academic study of religion.

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For first-time citations, a full bibliographic reference should be given in a note:

- Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (London: Harvard University Press, 1989), 123
- M. Jimmie Killingsworth and Jaqueline S. Palmer, "Millennial Ecology: The Apocalyptic Narrative from *Silent Spring* to *Global Warming,*" in ed. Carl G. Herndl and Stuart C. Brown, *Green Culture: Environmental Rhetoric in Contemporary America* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 21–45.
- Pierre Hadot, *The Veil of Isis,* trans. Michael Chase (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), 18.

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- Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class?,* 124.
- Killingsworth and Palmer, "Millennial Ecology," 34.
- Hadot, *The Veil of Isis*, 25.

**Please avoid the use of "ibid"* (See: Chicago Manual of Style, 17th ed., 14.34).

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