

Introduction

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Introduction

Featuring essays by BC graduate students, *Illumine* is a peer-reviewed, interdisciplinary journal produced by the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society (CSRS) Graduate Student Association at the University of Victoria. *Illumine* provides a forum for graduate work that contemplates religious and other moral, spiritual and philosophical systems enmeshed in diverse cultural, societal, temporal and geographic settings. The fine essays in this third issue of *Illumine* explore the ways in which religious values, spirituality, and moral ideologies are reflected in assorted cultural products, such as film, art, literature, oral histories, and print media. This year's issue has a strong focus on the entanglements of spiritual beliefs, religious practices, and value judgments in everyday life, in international contexts, and with state politics.

Eve Millar's unique experiences traveling in India for graduate research left her thinking about the spiritual significance of cows. Eve's article, "Linking Afro-Asian and European Traces of Bovine Veneration to India's Sacred Cow," traces the visual remains of cow reverence across temporal and geographic lines, from the Palaeolithic to the modern era, and from Ireland to Asia. Exploring bovine imagery in cave art, pottery, and mythology, she finds that in some circumstances the cow's veneration is related to its association with abundance and feminine fertility. In other circumstances, it is only clear that the cow was a significant spiritual figure in many parts of the world. Eve's paper is a thought-provoking contemplation on ancient values found in residual cultural artefacts.

Several authors in this issue explore how political and other authorities use religious or moral ideologies to articulate their vision of a modern nation. In the period after Mexico achieved independence from Spain, Mexican intellectuals took on the project of defining, articulating and producing a modern nation. Clint Westgard's article explores the scientific, religious, and "modern" philosophies of the Mexican elite, particularly those expressed in literature and poetry. In this postcolonial setting, Westgard argues, the elite were interested in trying to generate natural, social and moral order. His essay provides an insightful example of the way that religious and scientific faith intermingled with class differentiation, inequality, and the persistence of colonial discourses in the project of building the modern nation of Mexico.

Jennifer Lee's essay about anti-Semitic films in Nazi Germany discusses the German state's expression of religious-based hatred through popular media. She explores how the National Party used popular culture and the mass media to influence the German public and to promote conformity to state ideologies about the Jewish people. In particular, her paper discusses the representations of "the Jew" and "the Aryan" in film and film advertisements, arguing that the Nazi government's attempt to appeal to the public and sell films, and yet create a repulsive and non-human figure out of Jewish people resulted in complex representations of characters, plots, and themes. Her essay provides a provocative example of how state political and religious philosophies were expressed in film and marketing in the Third Reich.

Writing about state ideologies on development in contemporary Indonesia, Jenny Munro's paper finds that the seemingly neutral concept of "human resource development" is invested with strong value judgments. Through an examination of state discourse on "human resources" in Indonesian newspapers, her essay highlights the authoritarian state as a source of ideologies about correct behaviour and proper perspectives, and suggests that these moral ideologies can be used to obscure inequality and marginalization.

Anne Nguyen's article, "Two Villages," is a personal narrative about her travels to Vietnam in 2003. On that journey she began the process of collecting oral histories that reflect on the religious and political life of two villages, one Catholic and one Buddhist, each affected in its own way by the events of the war in Vietnam. Using detailed and articulate descriptions of local religious practices, her story considers spiritual activities, beliefs and affiliations that were, and were not, influenced by state politics in a time of conflict. Her contribution offers a story of two groups of people placing their affiliations to each other above potentially antagonistic religious and political attachments.

The essays in this issue contain thoughtful discussions of religious and moral ideologies, practices, and expressions that permeate the lives of people in distant places and, in some cases, divergent times. Nonetheless, it is clear from the quality of the authors' engagements that these topics, of sacred cows, of anti-Semitism, of the mixing of religious and moral ideologies in settings of inequality or conflict, resonate in closer and more immediate quarters. The vitality of the contributions in this issue

of *Illumine* is a testament to the scholarly inspiration that awaits those who venture into the entanglements of religion and society.

The CSRS graduate student fellows who formed the editorial board for this issue would like to express sincere thanks to all of the contributors for the effort they took to make their interesting pieces even more expressive and engaging, as well as those students who contributed submissions that were not published. We would like to extend appreciation to all of the editors of previous issues of *Illumine*, Andrew Wender, Angela Andersen, and Eve Millar, for setting excellent standards and welcoming our many queries. Support from the CSRS and its administrative staff, Moira Hill, Susan Karim and Leslie Kenny, was central to the completion of this project.

Jenny Munro and Jennifer Lee
Editorial Board 2004